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THE LANGUAGE OF PROVIDENCE IN THE LIVES OF
JOSEPH STENNETT AND GILBERT BURNET

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THE LANGUAGE OF PROVIDENCE IN THE LIVES OF
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PREFACE.....	ix
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION TO PROVIDENTIALISM, JOSEPH STENNETT, AND GILBERT BURNET.....	1
Introduction to Providentialism.....	1
Providentialism as the Language of Faith	6
Two Models of Providentialist Preaching.....	8
Introduction to Joseph Stennett	8
Introduction to Gilbert Burnet	12
Thesis	17
State of the Question	18
Methodology	21
Background to the Study.....	26
2. PROVIDENTIALISM DURING THE GLORIOUS REVOLUTION	29
The Flight of James II	30
The Trial of The Seven Bishops	35
The Rise of William III.....	38
Anglican Response to William of Orange	43
Rejection of William of Orange on the Basis of Divine Right.....	44
Reception of William of Orange on the Basis of Divine Right.....	54

Chapter	Page
3. THE LANGUAGE OF PROVIDENCE USED: JOSEPH STENNETT’S FAITHFUL WITNESS.....	66
Introduction	66
Stennett’s Political Doctrine	66
Stennett on Civil and Religious Liberty	67
“A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704”	69
“A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706”	72
“A Sermon Preach’d on the 1st of May, 1707”	74
“A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708”	76
Summary of Stennett on Civil and Religious Liberty	81
Stennett on “Our English Israel”	82
“A Poem to the Memory of Mr. Timothy Cruso”	82
“A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704”	83
“A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706”	86
“A Sermon Preach’d on the 1st of May, 1707”	89
“A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708”	92
Summary of Stennett’s “English Israel” Motif.....	94
Stennett on the “Happy Revolution”	101
Summary of Stennett’s Political Doctrine	104
Stennett’s Understanding and Use of Providence.....	105
Stennett’s Understanding of Providence	105
The <i>1689 Confession</i> : Paragraph One on Providence	105
The <i>1689 Confession</i> : Paragraph Two on Providence.....	108
The <i>1689 Confession</i> : Paragraph Three on Providence.....	109
The <i>1689 Confession</i> : Paragraph Four on Providence	111
The <i>1689 Confession</i> : Paragraph Five on Providence.....	114

Chapter	Page
<i>The 1689 Confession: Paragraph Six on Providence</i>	116
<i>The 1689 Confession: Paragraph Seven on Providence</i>	120
Summary of Stennett’s Understanding of Providence.....	123
Stennett’s Use of Providence.....	123
Stennett’s Political Use of Providence	124
Stennett’s Pastoral Use of Providence.....	133
Summary of Stennett’s Use of Providence.....	138
4. THE LANGUAGE OF PROVIDENCE ABUSED: GILBERT BURNET’S REVOLUTION RHETORIC, 1665–1688	140
Introduction.....	140
Overview of Burnet’s Life and Ministry	140
Burnet as Pastor-Politician	141
Burnet’s Controverted Legacy.....	142
Burnet on Providence and Passive Obedience.....	144
Burnet in Scotland under Charles II (1669–1673).....	146
<i>Modest and Free Conference</i> (1669).....	147
<i>Vindication</i> (1673).....	150
Burnet in London under Charles II (1674–1684)	152
<i>The Dutiful Subject</i> (1674).....	154
<i>The Royal Martyr</i> (1675).....	159
The Execution of Lord Russell (1683)	161
Burnet’s Sermon at Rolls Chapel (1684).....	168
Burnet in Voluntary Exile (1685–1687).....	170
Burnet’s Reflections on James II’s Toleration (1687).....	172
High Treason in 1687	177
Burnet on The Eve of Revolution (1688)	179

Chapter	Page
<i>Parliamentum Pacificum</i> (1688).....	180
Dr. Burnet’s Vindication of Himself (1688).....	182
An Enquiry into the Measures of Submission (1688)	184
William of Orange’s Declaration (1688)	188
 5. THE LANGUAGE OF PROVIDENCE ABUSED:	
GILBERT BURNET’S REVOLUTION RHETORIC, 1688–1715	190
Burnet on Providence and Passive Obedience	190
Burnet in The Revolution (1688).....	190
Burnet’s Revolution Sermon (1688).....	193
Burnet’s Enquiry in 1689.....	197
Burnet’s Sermon before the House of Commons (1689)	199
Burnet’s Sermon at The Coronation of William and Mary (1689).....	201
Burnet’s Pastoral Letter Concerning Allegiance (1689)	201
Burnet after the Revolution (1689–1702).....	204
Burnet’s Sermon at Westminster Abbey (1689).....	207
Burnet’s Sermon on Christmas Day (1689).....	208
Burnet’s Sermon at Whitehall (1690).....	209
Burnet’s Sermon at Whitehall (April, 1691)	211
Burnet’s Sermon at Whitehall (November, 1691).....	212
Burnet’s Sermon at Whitehall (1694).....	214
Burnet’s Sermon at Archbishop Tillotson’s Funeral (1694)	216
Charles Hickes’ Discourse Against Gilbert Burnet (1695)	217
Burnet’s Response to Charles Hickes (1696)	221
The Assassination Plot of 1696	224
Burnet’s Sermon at Whitehall (1697).....	226
Burnet’s Sermon at St. James’ Chapel (1702).....	230

Chapter	Page
Burnet in Controversy to The End (1709–1715)	231
Burnet at the Trial of Henry Sacheverell (1709)	234
Burnet’s Last Defense of the Glorious Revolution (1713).....	238
Burnet’s Death (1715)	242
Summary of Burnet’s Understanding and Use of Providence	242
Summary of Burnet’s Understanding of Providence	242
Summary of Burnet’s Use of Providence	247
Burnet’s Pre-1688 Use of Providence	247
Burnet’s Post-1688 Use of Providence.....	249
6. CONCLUDING COMPARISON OF STENNETT AND BURNET	251
Introduction	251
Comparing Two Preachers of Providence.....	251
Gilbert Burnet: An Imaginative Propagandist	256
Joseph Stennett: A Pattern in Preaching and Behavior	259
BIBLIOGRAPHY	265

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Finally, this project is unreservedly dedicated to my dearest friend, Mary—the one whom I love most.

Soli Deo gloria.

Jeremy Ray Pllum

Louisville, Kentucky

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO PROVIDENTIALISM, JOSEPH STENNETT, AND GILBERT BURNET

Introduction to Providentialism

Historian Blair Worden has rightly observed that “providentialism is to be found at the centre of seventeenth-century political argument and decision-making.”¹ However, such seventeenth-century providentialism has been largely abandoned by twentieth- and twenty-first-century thinkers.² In 1977, J. P. Kenyon wrote that the providentialism of the Glorious Revolution should be regarded as little better than “devotional platitude” and “very much the small change of polemical or intercessory vocabulary.”³ For Kenyon, the rhetoric of providence in the seventeenth century “did not

¹Blair Worden, “Providence and Politics in Cromwellian England,” *Past & Present* (1985), 55. Worden notes, “‘Necessity’ may have been ‘the tyrant’s plea,’ but in the early modern period it retained reputable philosophical credentials as a brand of ‘providence’” (Worden, “Providence and Politics in Cromwellian England,” 55). Additionally, Worden wrote, “So ubiquitous was providentialism indeed, and at times so repetitive and predictable in its expression, that our familiarity with it may breed, if not contempt, then at least neglect” (Worden, “Providence and Politics in Cromwellian England,” 55). See also Alexandra Walsham, “Miracles of this Latter Age: Providence, Confessional Politics, and Patriotism,” in *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999): 225-80.

²Even twenty-first-century Christian historians are retreating from the notion of “providentialism” as a viable method of historical inquiry; for example, see Jay Green, *Christian Historiography: Five Rival Versions* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2015), 146.

³J. P. Kenyon, *Revolution Principles: The Politics of Party 1689–1720*, Cambridge Studies in the History and Theory of Politics (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 25. Kenyon additionally explains why providentialist rhetoric spiked in the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution,

Providence had firm official backing; it was used in the proclamation of William and Mary as king and queen in February 1689, and it was enshrined in the new prayers for the thanksgiving service held on 5 November: “We adore the wisdom and justice of the Providence which so timely interposed in our extreme danger, and disappointed all the designs of our enemies.” (Kenyon, *Revolution Principles*, 25)

With regard to the proclamation of William and Mary as king and queen, Kenyon is referring to the English Bill of Rights published on February 13, 1689, where “the Lords Spiritual and

change men's minds, it only confirmed them in decisions they had already reached for other reasons."⁴ Kenyon's "main objection" with the providentialism of the late seventeenth century was that "it existed merely to stamp worldly success with the brand of divine approval, an easy and tempting doctrine for which the Puritans had been sharply criticised."⁵

In 1992, Linda Colley concluded her magnificent study on twenty-first-century British identity with these words: "God has ceased to be British, and Providence no longer smiles."⁶ Colley, of course, was referring to the demise of Christianity's influence on British identity.⁷ Consequently, Colley recognized the abandonment of a central British "providential destiny" and mission. "God had entrusted Britons with empire, they believed, to further the worldwide spread of the Gospel and as a testimony to their status as the Protestant Israel."⁸ Now, according to Colley, that central purpose has been forgotten, and the nationalist language of faith no longer forms the basis for British identity.⁹

In 2008, Genevieve Lloyd observed "the disappearance of providence" from contemporary Western academic thought: "The idea of providence has for us retreated

Temporal and Commons" expressed, "We adore the wisdom and justice of the Providence which so timely interposed in our extreme danger, and disappointed all the designs of our enemies." "A.D. 1689. Bill of Rights," in *Select Charters and Other Illustrations of English Constitutional History*, edited by William Stubbs, 4th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1881, 526.

⁴Kenyon, *Revolution Principles*, 25.

⁵Kenyon, *Revolution Principles*, 25.

⁶Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging The Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 383.

⁷"Protestantism, that once vital cement, has now a limited influence on culture, as indeed has Christianity itself" (Colley, *Britons*, 383).

⁸Colley, *Britons*, 368.

⁹Colley, *Britons*, 368-70.

from philosophical and political thought.”¹⁰ Lloyd lamented the fact that providence was no longer a “living concept” but had become merely the “stuff” of sermons:

If we look for [providence] now as a living concept—one that might give rise to lively disputation or to rival accounts or approaches—we turn not to the works of contemporary philosophers but to religious discussion. Providence is now the stuff not of philosophical seminars but of sermons.¹¹

In 2009, Philip Ziegler forcefully denounced “the unrestrained volatility of providence in political theology,” and he warned that providentialist language could too easily “become a hollow cipher for the irresistible power at work in the world.”¹² Unlike Kenyon, who was reacting to seventeenth-century abuses, Ziegler was reacting to more recent twentieth-century abuses—specifically, Adolf Hitler’s repeated insistence that he too was specially guarded and guided by the hand of providence.¹³ In view of Hitler’s

¹⁰Genevieve Lloyd, *Providence Lost* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 301.

¹¹Lloyd, *Providence Lost*, 302.

¹²Philip Ziegler, “The Uses of Providence in Public Theology,” in *The Providence of God: Deus Habet Consilium*, ed. Francesa Aran Murphy and Philip G. Ziegler (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2009), 315.

¹³Ziegler cited two instances where Hitler invoked the doctrine of providence. First, in a speech delivered on August 11, 1935, Hitler said, “What we are we have become not against, but with, the will of Providence. And so long as we are true and honourable and of good courage in fight, so long as we believe in our great work and do not capitulate, we shall continue to enjoy in the future the blessing of Providence.” Adolf Hitler, “Speech at Rosenheim,” in *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler: April 1922-August 1939* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1969), 2:388. Second, in a speech delivered on June 27, 1937, Hitler declared,

As weak as the individual may ultimately be in his character and actions as a whole, when compared to Almighty Providence and His will, he becomes just as infinitely strong the instant he acts in accordance with this Providence. Then there will rain upon him the power that has distinguished all great phenomena of this world. And when I look back on the five years behind us, I cannot help but say: this has not been the work of man alone. Had Providence not guided us, I surely would often have been unable to follow these dizzying paths. That is something our critics above all should know. At the bottom of our hearts, we National Socialists are devout! We have no choice: no one can make national or world history if his deeds and abilities are not blessed by Providence. Max Domarus, *The Essential Hitler: Speeches and Commentary* (Wauconda, IL: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, 2007), 153.

Domarus documented several other occasions where Hitler used the doctrine of providence to affirm the Nazi cause; for examples, see Domarus, *The Essential Hitler*, 21, 24, 73, 152, 154,

exploitation of providentialist language, Ziegler warned that “providentialism” as political rhetoric “is naïve as it is dangerous.”¹⁴ When wielded by people in power, Ziegler insisted that providentialism “can only stand proxy for raw power, and thus, one in which historical and political ascendancy is the sole sacrament of divine presence and purpose.”¹⁵

Even Christian theologians have noticed the abandonment of providence language and providence doctrine. For example, G. C. Berkouwer wrote in the 1950s, “One cannot give thought to the Church’s confession of faith in Providence without very soon being impressed by the distance between this confession and modern thought.”¹⁶ Berkouwer observed, “The confession of God’s providence has become, now more than ever, a stone of stumbling.”¹⁷ Another theologian asked in the 1960s, “Why has Providence in our generation been left a rootless, disembodied ghost, flitting from footnote to footnote, but rarely finding secure lodgment in sustained theological discourse?”¹⁸ In the 1980s, Carl F. H. Henry noted a “feeling of gloom and despair hanging over contemporary life.”¹⁹ Henry believed this feeling of gloom and despair was

161, 162, 195-96, 310, 312, 425, 434, 478-80, 705-6, and 791. Moreover, after the failed assassination attempt by Stauffenberg, the Führer remarked to Joseph Goebbels, “It was Providence that saved me. This proves that I’m on the right track. I feel that this is the confirmation of all my works.” Eric Metaxas, *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2010), 603.

¹⁴Ziegler, “The Uses of Providence in Public Theology,” 316-7.

¹⁵Ziegler, “The Uses of Providence in Public Theology,” 317.

¹⁶G. C. Berkouwer, “The Crisis of the Providence Doctrine in Our Century,” in *Studies in Dogmatics: The Providence of God* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1952), 7.

¹⁷Berkouwer, “The Crisis of the Providence Doctrine in Our Century,” in *The Providence of God*, 13.

¹⁸Langdon B. Gilkey, “The Concept of Providence in Contemporary Theology,” *The Journal of Religion* 43, no. 3 (1963): 171.

¹⁹Carl F. H. Henry, “God Who Stays: Divine Providence,” in *God, Revelation and*

related to a loss of confidence in the doctrine of providence:

Long before the turn of the century Feuerbach, Nietzsche and Marx had already declared the doctrine of providence a diversionary illusion that romanticizes the real world. Many Gentiles lost faith in divine providence on the battlefields of World Wars I and II and for many Jews the doctrine perished as an article of faith in the aftermath of Nazi atrocities at Auschwitz and Buchenwald.²⁰

In the 1990s, Stanley Grenz wrote, “The events of the twentieth century and the theological rearrangement of the doctrine of providence that these events have produced call into question the viability of the Christian confession of God as the providential governor of the world.”²¹ As recently as 2011, Dennis Jowers observed that belief in divine providence had “waned considerably during the past century”:

Faith in divine providence has waned considerably during the past century. The brutality of such events as two world wars, China’s Cultural Revolution, and the 9/11 attacks, coupled with sharply declining belief in the authority and trustworthiness of the Bible, have led countless persons, even among those who profess to be Christians, to abandon entirely the doctrine of divine providence.²²

These examples demonstrate that contemporary academic writing largely regards providence as an abused and abandoned doctrine.²³

Authority (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1983), 6:465.

²⁰Henry, “God Who Stays: Divine Providence,” 6:465.

²¹Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1994), 119.

²²Dennis Jowers, “Introduction,” in *Four Views of Divine Providence*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry and Dennis Jowers (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 7.

²³G. R. Cragg’s dismissiveness towards the theological politics of the latter seventeenth century should be noted. Cragg described the entire theological and political discourse from the time of restoration (1660) until the reign of Queen Anne (1702) as “intolerably trivial, and in retrospect appears as sordid and inconsequential as an ale-house brawl” (G. R. Cragg, *From Puritanism to the Age of Reason: A Study of Changes in Religious Thought with the Church of England 1660 to 1700* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966], 11). Cragg was not suggesting that the politico-religious conversation during this period was of no consequence; rather, Cragg was critiquing the content of the conversation as trivial. Accordingly, Cragg wrote, “Many of the influential figures were second-rate in their ability and made no striking contribution because they had no original thought.” G. R. Cragg, *From Puritanism to the Age of Reason: A Study of Changes in Religious Thought with the Church of England 1660 to*

Providentialism as the Language of Faith

Fundamentally, the doctrine of providence represents an attempt to articulate the personal action of the transcendent God in and among his created order. In the Old Testament, the notion of a transcendent God relating to the Jews by way of special covenant required careful articulation. N. T. Wright explains how difficult it was for Jewish monotheists to build a vocabulary that appropriately articulated God's covenantal presence and his providential action:

Language about supernatural agencies other than the one god has to do with the theological problem of how to hold together providence (with covenant as a special case of providence) and a belief in a transcendent god. Unless this god is to collapse back into being a mere absentee landlord, in which case providence and covenant go by the board, or unless he ceases to be in any meaningful sense transcendent, moving instead toward pantheism or paganism, one is bound to develop . . . ways of speaking about the divine action in the world which attempt to do justice to these different poles of belief. Thus it is that language about angels, about the Shekinah or 'presence' of Israel's god, about Torah, about Wisdom, about the Logos—all of these make their appearances, not as mere fantasy or speculative metaphysics, but as varied (and not always equally successful) attempts to perform a necessary theological task. At one level this task was purely linguistic: speaking of the divine 'presence' or 'word' enabled one to speak of the one god active in his world without committing the solecism of suggesting that this god was somehow contained within this action, or indeed within the world.²⁴

Wright was by no means “declining away from ‘pure’ monotheism” by referring to “supernatural agencies.”²⁵ Rather, Wright was defending the language of “providence” as an historical attempt to “perform a necessary theological task.” Similarly, despite historical abuses and even the contemporary unpopularity of the doctrine of providence, modern theologians insist that God's providence should continue to be articulated. Thus, G. C. Berkouwer writes,

1700 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 10.

²⁴N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992), 258-59.

²⁵Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 258.

These are times in which the Church of Christ must ask herself whether she still has the courage, in profound and unshakable faith, in boundless confidence, to proclaim the providence of God. . . . Dare she still, with eyes open to the facts of life—no less than those who *from the facts* conclude an imperative atheism—still confess her old confession?²⁶

Like Berkouwer, Carl F. H. Henry understood that Christianity would lose all sense of eschatological purposiveness without the doctrine of providence:

Over against all the secular hubs of history, those supposed unique “turning-times” held to be decisive for human affairs, Christianity insists on the eternal centrality and supremacy of the once-for-all incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the risen and returning King who will judge and consummate history.²⁷

Similarly, Stanley Grenz explains, “We confess that God provides the only ultimate meaning of creation. In so doing, he prevents the universe and its history from slipping into meaninglessness.”²⁸ The “chief end” of providence, according to Grenz, was and is a history that is primarily about Jesus Christ:

The faith commitment of Christians is in the God who is the source or the goal for all creation and who orders all of history towards the completion of that purpose. In the face of evidence to the contrary, Christians believe that history is moving somewhere. . . . We believe that the eschatological goal of history is revealed in Jesus Christ. . . . We rest confident that God will bring history to its goal—community with him—because the one who guides history is the God who raised Jesus from the dead.²⁹

As Berkouwer, Henry, and Grenz have indicated, the doctrine of providence remains

²⁶Berkouwer, “The Crisis of the Providence Doctrine in Our Century,” 10; emphasis added. Berkouwer added,

It is necessary to pause over this question, the more since God’s Providence seems to be one of the most self-evident articles of the Church’s confession. The confessions of the churches contain a common witness to the Providence of God over “all things,” those of the Roman Catholic as well as those of the Lutheran and Reformed churches. In Protestant confessions there is a remarkably uniform definition. In the handbooks of theology, too, the definitions and distinctions appear in striking consensus. We read in all of them of sustenance and rule, and of God’s embracing in His prescient government all that occurs in the universe. (Berkouwer, “The Crisis of the Providence Doctrine in Our Century,” 10)

²⁷Henry, “God Who Stays: Divine Providence,” 6:466.

²⁸Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 120.

²⁹Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 120.

central to the Christian faith. Indeed, Christianity cannot survive without the doctrine of providence. Therefore, rather than capitulate on the doctrine of providence, the church of Jesus Christ must “confess her old confession.”³⁰

Two Models of Providentialist Preaching

This dissertation presents two seventeenth-century preachers who articulated the “old confession” of providentialism: Joseph Stennett (1663–1713) and Gilbert Burnet (1643–1715). Both Stennett and Burnet unreservedly used the doctrine of providence to explain the Glorious Revolution. Both were staunch supporters of English liberty and the wider Protestant interest. However, Stennett is presented in this dissertation as a faithful and convictional model of providentialist preaching, and Burnet is presented as an illustration of compromise. Accordingly, Stennett is presented as a model worthy of emulation, while Burnet is presented as a model unworthy of emulation.

Introduction to Joseph Stennett

Joseph Stennett was a “renowned” Baptist preacher in England during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century.³¹ Though Stennett was a renowned dissenter, he was highly esteemed by the royal court (after 1688), esteemed by the Whig lords of parliament, and esteemed even by the Established Church of England. In fact, “an Anglican prelate once remarked that if Stennett were willing to relinquish his Baptist convictions and join the Established Church, no post within that church would be beyond his merit.”³²

³⁰Berkouwer, “The Crisis of the Providence Doctrine in Our Century,” 10.

³¹Michael A. G. Haykin, “Living under The Cross,” in Anthony L. Chute, Nathan A. Finn, and Michael A. G. Haykin, *The Baptist Story: From English Sect to Global Movement* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2015), 54.

³²Haykin, “Living Under The Cross,” 54. See also, “Some Account of His Life,” in *The Works of the Late Reverend and Learned Mr. Joseph Stennett* (London, 1732), 1:25. Hereafter cited as *Works*. The author of “Some Account of His Life” is unknown.

Stennett ministered during a critical time in English life. During Stennett's lifetime alone, the epoch-shaping Glorious Revolution occurred; William of Orange was installed on the English throne as a Protestant alternative to the Catholic absolutist James II; the Toleration Act of 1689 was passed; the Assassination Plot of 1696 was discovered and thwarted; the Acts of Union (1707) were passed; and the Kingdom of Great Britain was officially birthed (May 1, 1707). During these and other tumultuous circumstances, Stennett was a significant Baptist voice contending for the Protestant interest in London.

A close review of Stennett's surviving works reveal a pervasive theological theme: the doctrine of divine providence. Stennett's firm hold on the doctrine of God's providence affected his view of life, theology, politics, pastoral ministry, preaching, and even parenting. In fact, the doctrine of providence helped Joseph Stennett make sense of life. Stennett, in turn, used the doctrine of providence to help others make sense of their lives too.

In the pulpit, Stennett used the doctrine of God's providence to help his hearers submit to God with humility. Thus, on November 28, 1708, Stennett preached to the Barbican congregation of Baptists: "Can anything be more reasonable and just, than that we should serve the God who made us, and resign ourselves to the providence of Him who is infinitely wise, gracious and merciful?" Stennett answered his own question: "There is nothing more reasonable."³³

On another occasion, Stennett preached these words to the Joiners-Hall congregation on March 24, 1706: "The greatest degree of despising the chastening of the Lord is when men, with an insolent contempt, deny the providence of God."³⁴ In this same sermon, Stennett concluded,

³³Joseph Stennett, "Keeping God's Commandments the True Character of our Love to Him," in *Works*, 3:113.

³⁴Joseph Stennett, "The Unreasonableness and Folly of an Indecent Behaviour Under Afflictions Considered: Sermon I," in *Works*, 3:248.

We are therefore to be thoughtful and considerate, to watch the motions of our heavenly father, and so advert to the conduct of his providence, upon all accounts, as to observe the favour that he bestows upon us, that we may be thankful to him; and so to observe his hand in afflicting us, as to submit ourselves to his will.³⁵

In another sermon, Stennett applied the doctrine of divine providence directly to England's political context. With respect to the Revolution of 1688, Stennett reminisced,

Our own memory can furnish us with an account of the revolution, under the conduct of the late king William, whose name will always appear bright in our English history, as long as the love of liberty and religion shall obtain among us, that liberty which he so gloriously restored, and that religion which he so happily secured by the favourable providence of God.³⁶

In 1696, an assassination plot against King William was discovered and thwarted. Because Baptists were open dissenters from the Church of England, they needed to voice their loyalty to the crown with both integrity and conviction. Stennett was selected for the task:

Mr. Stennett was fixed on by the Baptists to draw up their address, which accordingly he did, and presented it the ninth of April 1696 being introduced by the right honorable Earl of Monmouth, now Earl of Peterbrow.³⁷

The opening lines of Stennett's address employed the language of providence:

After having paid the grateful tribute of our humble thanks at the throne of the King of Kings for the signal favour wherewith his providence has blessed your Majesty, these your kingdoms, and the whole Protestant interest abroad, in the seasonable discovery and defeat of the late barbarous conspiracy of the blood-thirsty enemies of your Majesty's government and life; a life highly endear'd to us by the many successive dangers, to which your Majesty has so generously exposed it in the

³⁵Stennett, "Unreasonableness and Folly: Sermon I," in *Works*, 3:254-55.

³⁶Joseph Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706," in *Works*, 1:293.

³⁷"Some Account of His Life," in *Works*, 1:15. Elsewhere, Stennett's biographer noted, "When committees of the whole body of the dissenting ministers in London were appointed, [Stennett] usually was one, and 'tis well known how far his judgment was regarded among them. He had commonly a considerable hand in the addresses they made to government" ("Some Account of His Life," in *Works*, 1:23).

defense of all that's valuable to us, and by those remarkable instances of the divine protection, by which it has been as often guarded: we your Majesty's most loyal and obedient subjects, with all becoming respect, beg leave to congratulate your Majesty of this so eminent and happy deliverance.³⁸

In 1706, Stennett was selected by the general body of London Baptists to make their address to Queen Anne (1665–1714) at Windsor. Not surprisingly, Stennett made use of divine providence in this address too:

May the divine providence, that has made your Majesty not only head of the Protestant interest, but chief in the Confederacy for the glorious cause of common liberty, give your Majesty the satisfaction of seeing both more firmly established than ever.³⁹

In 1708, Joseph Stennett was called upon by the citizens of London to address the “august assembly” of Parliament on behalf of the Baptists in London. In his address, Stennett subordinated the great assembly of Parliament to the hand of God's providence:

'Tis your fortune to be chosen at a very critical juncture of time: and the august assembly, of which you are to be a part, will in all appearance have before them some of the most important affairs that ever were debated in Parliament; on the prudent management of which (under the divine providence) not only the happiness of this city and nation, but the welfare of the whole Protestant interest, and of the greatest part of Europe depends.⁴⁰

Thus, Stennett made use of the doctrine of providence in both his pastoral sermons and political addresses. In truth, Stennett's understanding of the doctrine of divine providence framed much more than his sermons and political addresses. By the witness of Stennett's *Works*, the doctrine of divine providence shaped Stennett's understanding of salvation, Christian duty, Christian parenting, suffering, death, war, political responsibility, national disaster, *et al.* For Stennett, the doctrine of divine providence was all-encompassing. Accordingly, Stennett's understanding and use of providence is the

³⁸“Some Account of His Life,” in *Works*, 1:16.

³⁹“Some Account of His Life,” in *Works*, 1:24.

⁴⁰“Some Account of His Life,” in *Works*, 1:26. Parenthesis original.

focus of this dissertation.

Introduction to Gilbert Burnet

Gilbert Burnet was a highly controversial Anglican divine often regarded as the leader of William of Orange's propaganda campaign during the time of the Glorious Revolution. One scholar notes, "the ideal of courtly reformation was broadcast by an imaginative group of propagandists under Bishop Gilbert Burnet."⁴¹ Burnet was not only an Anglican cleric; he was also a dear friend and spiritual advisor to William and Mary from the very onset of the Glorious Revolution.⁴² But Burnet did more than simply befriend William and Mary and provide spiritual counsel; Burnet "part-wrote" the seminal document of the Glorious Revolution: *The Declaration of His Highness William Henry, Prince of Orange, &c. Of the Reasons Inducing Him to Appear in Armes in the Kingdome of England, for Preserving of the Protestant Religion, and for Restoring the Lawes and Liberties of ENGLAND, SCOTLAND and IRELAND.*⁴³

⁴¹Tony Claydon, *William III and The Godly Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), i.

⁴²In May of 1686, Burnet traveled to Utrecht (Netherlands) and found "letters writ to me by some of the Prince of Orange's Court, desiring me to come first to the Hague, and wait on the Prince and Princess, before I should settle anywhere" (T. E. S. Clarke and H. C. Foxcroft, *The Life of Gilbert Burnet: Bishop of Salisbury* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907], 215). After this initial meeting, William essentially tolerated Burnet, but William was not overly fond of the "dispossessed" divine. On the other hand, William's wife, Mary, held Burnet in highest esteem. Mary's father, James II (Catholic King of England during this time) did not share Mary's high esteem for Burnet. In fact, James II "expostulated with his daughter for countenancing" Burnet, who was "a disgraced man" as far as James II was concerned (Clark and Foxcroft, *The Life of Gilbert Burnet*, 221). In 1684, James II had sent orders to the Master of Rolls to "dismiss Burnet, as a person disaffected, from a chapel which the King chose to number with his own" (Clark and Foxcroft, *The Life of Gilbert Burnet*, 205). Nevertheless, Mary did not heed her father's expostulations, and she did not spurn Burnet, for she esteemed him too highly. Rather, the Princess showed Burnet the letters that her father, James II, had written, and she "even consulted [Burnet] as to the tone her answers should take" (Clark and Foxcroft, *The Life of Gilbert Burnet*, 221). See also Claydon, *William III and The Godly Revolution*, 29.

⁴³Claydon writes, "Much of [Burnet's] time in 1688 was taken up with the *Declaration*, a document which he part-wrote, advertised and defended in print" (*William III and the Godly Revolution*, 30-31). Lisa Jardine has also written,

The *Declaration* depicted William of Orange as God’s gift of deliverance to England “for preserving the Protestant religion, and for restoring the laws and liberties of England, Scotland, and Ireland.”⁴⁴ Moreover, the *Declaration* vilified James II’s “evil counsellors” (i.e., Catholic priests and ultra-Tories) and emphasized their “execrable” plans to subject England to popery and slavery.⁴⁵ The *Declaration* provided a clear statement of purpose, including a lengthy justification for appearing on English soil with a Dutch army trained for war:

Wee have thought fit, to goe over to England, and to carry over with us a force sufficient by the blessing of God, to defend us from the violence of those Evill Councillours. AND WEE being desirous that our Intentions in this may be rightly understood, have for this end prepared this *Declaration*.⁴⁶

And finally, the *Declaration* culminated into a call for local English support:

As a piece of writing, William of Orange’s *Declaration* was a masterly effort in collaborative drafting on the part of the Prince, his English and Dutch advisers at the Hague, and selected members of the English expatriate community there. . . . The final text was produced months ahead of the campaign, during the early autumn of 1688, by Gaspar Fagel—a leading political figure in the States of Holland, and William’s chief spokesman in the Dutch government. It was further edited and translated into English by Gilbert Burnet, an expatriate Scottish cleric who had become close confidant and adviser to William and Mary, and who was to play a leading part in orchestrating the acceptance of the new English royal couple. Lisa Jardine, *Going Dutch: How England Plundered Holland’s Glory* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2008), 29.

⁴⁴William III, *The Declaration of His Highness William Henry, Prince of Orange, &c. Of the Reasons Inducing Him to Appear in Armes in the Kingdome of England, for Preserving of the Protestant Religion, and for Restoring the Lawes and Liberties of ENGLAND, SCOTLAND and IRELAND* (Hague, 1688); hereafter referred to as *Declaration*. A printed version of William’s “Declaration” can be found in Robert Beddard, *A Kingdom without a King: The Journal of The Provisional Government in the Revolution of 1688* (Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1988), 124-49.

⁴⁵In his *Declaration*, William of Orange was careful not to criticize James II directly. Rather, William criticized and denounced James II’s “evil counsellors” no fewer than twenty times in his *Declaration*. In reality, James II was the focus of William III’s attack, and the “evil counsellors” in William’s *Declaration* were a front for attacking James II.

⁴⁶William III, *Declaration of His Highness William Henry, Prince of Orange*; emphasis original.

Wee doe in the last place invite and require all Persons whatsoever, All the Peers of the Realme, both Spirituall and Temporall, all Lords Lieutenants, Deputy Lieutenants, and all Gentleman, Citisens and other Commons of all ranks, to come and assist us, in order to the Executing of this our Designe; against all such as shall Endeavour to Oppose us.⁴⁷

Immediately upon landing at Torbay on November 5 (1688), the Prince of Orange and his team of propagandists employed a “distribution machine” that “launched fully into action” to distribute his *Declaration*.⁴⁸ William’s publicists were effective, for as Jardine explains,

[William’s] agents began distributing copies everywhere. Not only was London inundated with copies, but the Declaration was now being spread all over England, and a separate Declaration of the Prince for Scotland was circulating north of the border. Simultaneously, the Declaration in Dutch, French and German was released in the Dutch Republic, the English ambassador reporting that “the manifesto is now sold publickly and in all languages.” The pamphlet’s coordinated propaganda, and the build-up of expectation before it was finally released, ensured that the Declaration had a major impact, not only in England and the United Provinces but throughout Europe.⁴⁹

Soon after landing in Torbay, William and his Dutch force began marching to London. The troop stopped in Exeter along the way to solicit support for the revolution. Support was successfully enlisted in Exeter, but not in the political setting of Exeter’s town square; rather, support was enlisted in the religious setting of Exeter’s cathedral. William’s *Declaration* was read from the pulpit by none other than Gilbert Burnet. Again, Jardine describes the scene,

At Exeter – the first official stop for William and his army en route for London – the Prince’s chaplain, Gilbert Burnet, took over the cathedral and “commanded” the local clergy to sing a celebratory Anglican *Te Deum*, and then obliged them to listen

⁴⁷William III, *Declaration of His Highness William Henry, Prince of Orange*; emphasis original.

⁴⁸Jardine, *Going Dutch*, 30-31.

⁴⁹Jardine, *Going Dutch*, 30-31. “Altogether, twenty-one editions in four languages appeared in 1688, eight of them in English” (Jardine, *Going Dutch*, 30-31).

while he, from the pulpit, read aloud the Prince's Declaration and reasons for this his expedition.⁵⁰

William and his entourage continued towards London and eventually entered the city on December 18, 1688. On December 23, only five days after their arrival in London, Burnet preached a critically important sermon at St. James church in London from Psalm 118:23,⁵¹ and he applied this verse to the "extraordinary Revolution" that had just occurred. Here were Burnet's opening lines:

Things do sometimes speak, and Times call aloud; and as all Men are before-hand with me, in the choice of this Text, at least in applying it to the present time, so that amasing Concurrence of Providences, which have conspired to hatch and bring forth, and perfect this extraordinary Revolution, would lead one very naturally to use these words, even tho we had no such Verse in Scripture; for we have before us a Work, that seems to our selves a Dream, and that will appear to Posterity a Fiction: a Work about which Providence has watched in so peculiar a manner, that a Mind must be far gone into Atheism, that can resist so full a Conviction as this offers us in favour of that Truth.⁵²

Furthermore, on this same occasion, Burnet used the language of providence to solicit political support for William.⁵³ These were Burnet's concluding lines from the sermon:

Upon the whole matter then, since God has wrought so extraordinary a deliverance for us, let us adore him, who is the true Author of it; and under him let us pay all the returns possible of Respect and Gratitude to that Blessed Instrument on whom he has laid so much Glory. Let us improve it to the highest and noblest ends that can be thought on; let us live under it as becomes those who take care to do nothing that may render them unworthy of the continuance of it: and let us all, in our several Stations, study to behave our selves so, That the Glory as well as the Safety of the Nation, and the lustre as well as the establishment of our Religion, may be raised up

⁵⁰Jardine, *Going Dutch*, 30-31.

⁵¹Ps 118:23, "It is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes."

⁵²Gilbert Burnet, *A Sermon Preached in the Chappel of St. James's Before His Highness the Prince of Orange, The 23^d of December, 1688*, 2nd ed. (London, 1689), 1; emphasis original.

⁵³In chaps. 4 and 5 of this dissertation, Burnet's understanding of providence will be addressed in greater detail. Though Burnet's understanding of divine providence differed significantly from Stennett's understanding of divine providence, one finds Burnet using the doctrine of providence to gather political support for William and the revolution.

to that pitch, that the Name of an Englishman and a Protestant may have a sound all the World over, that may give Terror as well as create Esteem; and that this Work, which is now brought to so great a forwardness, may in due time attain to its full perfection; and that then we may all have reason to break forth in the Triumphant words with which this *Psalm* begins; *O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, because his mercy endureth for ever. Let Israel now say, That his mercy endureth for ever. Let the house of Aaron now say, That his mercy endureth for ever: and let them that fear the Lord say, That his mercy endureth for ever.*⁵⁴

In 1689, multiple editions of Burnet's sermon preached at St. James church were "printed by his highness's special command" and distributed throughout London.

While Burnet was a principal voice applying the doctrine of God's providence to the political context of the Williamite revolution, he was not the only one talking about God's providence at this time. In an important work entitled *Anglican Reaction to the Revolution of 1688*, Gerald Straka observes,

Not only Burnet, but Atterbury, Robert Fleming, John Norris, Moore of Norwich, Sherlock, Sharp of York, Lloyd, Patrick of Ely, practically every noted churchman of the Revolution discoursed and preached on providence, raising it to as great a theological consideration as passive obedience enjoyed in the years before 1688. Tillotson even worked out a theory of providence that excluded the need of man's active participation in worldly affairs. William himself believed there could be no suitable explanation for the part he had played in history than that providence had selected him to lead a Protestant coalition against France. The role of providence in history always had been stressed in Anglican homilies, especially those dealing with the Armada defeat, the Gunpowder Plot, and the Restoration; but the Revolution raised the prestige of the idea *far above anything it had enjoyed before.*⁵⁵

⁵⁴Burnet, "A Sermon Preached in the Chappel of St. James," 32-33; capitalization and emphases original. Note the way that Burnet describes William of Orange as the "blessed instrument on whom [God] has laid so much glory."

⁵⁵Gerald Straka, *Anglican Reaction to the Revolution of 1688* (New York: Books Craftsmen Associates, 1962), 66; emphasis added. Straka, like Claydon and others, also stresses the critical importance of sermons from this era: "The sermons of the Revolution era, full of implied and expressed Anglican political theory, have remained unread since William's reign, yet these also have been available for study for years" (Straka, *Anglican Reaction to the Revolution of 1688*, ix). Straka also emphasizes that for Anglicans of the Revolution era, "The Revolution was not a departure, but a restoration of true divine right Protestant monarchy and a return to the national unity of Elizabeth's great days. It probably will be most difficult for the modern reader to understand this, but unless he does, he will have no sympathy for the Anglican position recreated in the succeeding pages" (Straka, *Anglican Reaction to the Revolution of 1688*, ix).

In the immediate aftermath of the Revolution, the Anglican church invoked the doctrine of providence to justify her political support of William III despite established Anglican political doctrine.⁵⁶ Again, Straka explains:

Considering the power the pulpit exercised, the sermon acting as the weekly editorial, it was vital to have a Williamite clergy, and easily half of revolutionary propaganda was ‘written for the satisfaction of some of the Reverend Clergy who yet seemed to labour under some scruples concerning . . . the Settling of the Succession to the Crown. The Church itself was conscious of the weight it carried in the control of public opinion. Gilbert Burnet, as soon as he became bishop of Salisbury, issued a *Pastoral Letter to the Clergy of his Diocese, Concerning the Oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy to K. William and Q. Mary*. . . . [Burnet] recognized the place of the clergy in the public’s regard and hoped to make the Church an effective agent in winning greater support for the Revolution.”⁵⁷

Thus, Burnet and a host of Anglican clerics articulated the political and religious rhetoric of the Glorious Revolution—the rhetoric of divine providence.

Thesis

The thesis of this dissertation is that Joseph Stennett’s use of the doctrine of providence was consistent with his self-professed Baptist convictions; by contrast, Gilbert Burnet’s use of the doctrine of providence was inconsistent with his self-professed, pre-1688 Anglican convictions—particularly the doctrine of passive obedience. In other words, the language of providence was abused during the time of the Glorious Revolution by propagandists like Gilbert Burnet, but Joseph Stennett used the doctrine of providence in a manner faithful and consistent with his biblical convictions.

⁵⁶Specifically, the political doctrines of divine right, passive obedience and nonresistance were set aside almost overnight in favor of the Williamite Revolution. Thus, Straka notes, “Churchmen overthrew the divine right of hereditary succession for the divine right of providential election, pointing out that William, like Henry VII, had succeeded to the throne through the right of conquest and God-given victory” (Straka, *Anglican Reaction to the Revolution of 1688*, viii).

⁵⁷Straka, *Anglican Reaction to the Revolution of 1688*, 16.

Several sets of questions drive this research project. The first set of questions addresses the political context of England in the late seventeenth century. Such questions include the following: why was the language of providence used so widely by preachers and politicians alike during and after the Glorious Revolution? What made the language of providence politically expedient during this time? Was the same confidence in God's providence expressed and maintained during the reign of Catholic James II? Who were the principal voices interpreting and articulating the hand of providence during the time of the Glorious Revolution?

The second set of questions specifically addresses the theological foundations of Stennett's and Burnet's use of providence language: Were Stennett and Burnet biblically and theologically justified to use the doctrine of providence the way that they did? While Stennett and Burnet were both using the language of providence, were they using the language of providence with the same goals and purposes in mind? How did the doctrine of passive obedience factor in Stennett and Burnet's respective theologies? Were Stennett and Burnet consistent in their understanding and use of the doctrine of divine providence throughout their public lives and ministries?

The third and final set of questions addresses the present significance of Stennett and Burnet's seventeenth-century use of the doctrine of providence. What role did the doctrine of providence play in the political arena then and now? Are present-day preachers advised to use the doctrine of providence as Stennett and Burnet used the doctrine of providence in the late seventeenth century?

State of the Question

Many scholars have identified the significance of a "providentialist rhetoric" surrounding William's rise to power in 1688.⁵⁸ The occasion of James II's abdication

⁵⁸See, for example, Claydon, *William III and the Godly Revolution*, 31; Straka, *Anglican Reaction to the Revolution of 1688*, 66; Lois G. Schworer, "Propaganda in the Revolution of 1688-9" *The American Historical Review* 82 (1977): 843-74; See also Colley,

and William III's accession to the throne was immediately recognized and celebrated by the Protestant English nation as a Glorious Revolution. In the years following 1688, countless pastors, politicians and pamphleteers explained the Glorious Revolution as an extraordinary act of God's providence. Indeed, the language of providence filled the theological and political conversations of Englishmen at the end of the seventeenth century.

Because the language of providence was so prevalent during the time of the Glorious Revolution (1688-89), some modern scholars regard the providentialist language of the latter seventeenth century as mere propaganda. Lois Schwoerer, for example, stresses the important role that "propaganda"⁵⁹ played in the "English Revolution of 1688–89":

During the English Revolution of 1688–89 Prince William of Orange and his adherents in England and Holland carried on an intensive propaganda campaign. They shaped the public image of the prince, interpreted his purposes and policies, and presented events in ways favorable to his interests, while at the same time they blackened the character and policies of King James II.⁶⁰

Schwoerer also identifies sermons as a primary form of propaganda that was used during the time of the Revolution: "The effort in 1688–89 included time-honored methods of spreading news and views—sermons, poems and odes, firework displays, and

Britons, 43. Such rhetoric was, in fact, not new to English politics. A similar language of providence saturated the political conversation in 1547 when Edward VI succeeded Henry VIII. The curiosity of providentialist rhetoric during the time of William III was that it was used to outmaneuver the established Anglican doctrines of passive obedience and hereditary succession—doctrines which should have secured the loyalties of conscientious Anglicans who swore oaths of allegiance to James II.

⁵⁹Schwoerer admits that the term "propaganda" has "a pejorative connotation." Nevertheless, he uses this word negatively with the following meaning in mind: "any systematic scheme or concerted effort for the propagation of a particular doctrine or point of view" (Schwoerer, "Propaganda in the Revolution of 1688–9," 844).

⁶⁰Schwoerer, "Propaganda in the Revolution of 1688–9," 843.

ceremonies.”⁶¹

In agreement with Schwoerer, Tony Claydon dedicates an entire monograph to the Protestant-based language of providence that became characteristic of the Williamite revolution.⁶² Claydon writes,

The regime of William III did not rely upon legal or constitutional rhetoric as it attempted to legitimate itself after the Glorious Revolution, but rather used a Protestant, providential, and biblically based language of “courtly reformation.” This language presented the king as a divinely protected godly magistrate who could both defend the true church against its popish enemies, and restore the original piety and virtue of the elect English nation.⁶³

Consequently, many of these same scholars insist that the sermons of late seventeenth-century England are “understudied” and worthy of research. For example, Claydon notes that the sermons and public prayers of the late seventeenth century (including official days of fasting and thanksgiving) are “hitherto understudied sources.”⁶⁴ Craig Rose describes the Protestant literature of the late seventeenth-century (including sermons) as “under-researched.”⁶⁵ Straka notes that “the sermons of the Revolution era, full of implied and expressed Anglican political theory have remained unread since William’s reign, yet these also have been available for study for years.”⁶⁶

⁶¹Schwoerer, “Propaganda in the Revolution of 1688–9,” 844.

⁶²Tony Claydon uses the language “royal propaganda” in *William III and The Godly Revolution*, i. See also Schwoerer, “Propaganda in the Revolution of 1688–9,” 844.

⁶³Claydon, *William III and The Godly Revolution*, i. See also the “providentialist context” for reformation in the 1690s in Craig Rose, “Providence, Protestant Union and Godly Reformation in the 1690s,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 6, no. 3 (1993): 151-70.

⁶⁴Claydon, *William III and The Godly Revolution*, i. Interestingly, Schwoerer also writes, “The nature and use of propaganda in the Revolution of 1688–89 have not been systematically treated” (Lois G. Schwoerer, “Propaganda in the Revolution of 1688–9,” 843); for Schwoerer, “propaganda” includes sermons.

⁶⁵Rose, “Providence, Protestant Union and Godly Reformation in the 1690s,” 151-70.

⁶⁶Straka, *Anglican Reaction to the Revolution of 1688*, ix.

Schwoerer provides an even stronger recommendation for research on revolution-era sermons: “A study of preachers and their sermons in London and elsewhere during the Revolution of 1688–89 would be worth doing.”⁶⁷ This dissertation examines some of the “under-researched” sermons of the late seventeenth century. More specifically, this dissertation explores the language of providence in the surviving sermons of a renowned and politically engaged Baptist who ministered during and after the Glorious Revolution (1688). By way of contrast, this dissertation also explores how providence language was used by Gilbert Burnet to circumvent a stipulation of obedience and submission to James II. In the end, Burnet’s understanding and use of the doctrine of providence will serve as an illuminating foil to the language of providence in the life and ministry of Joseph Stennett.

Methodology

The primary methodology for this dissertation is an inductive analysis of Joseph Stennett’s surviving works, particularly Stennett’s use of the language of divine providence in his sermons.⁶⁸ Secondly, and for the sake of contrast, a chronological analysis of Gilbert Burnet’s use of the doctrine of providence and passive obedience will be critical for this dissertation too. As Burnet’s understanding and use of the doctrine of

⁶⁷Schwoerer, “Propaganda in the Revolution of 1688–9,” 844.

⁶⁸Analysis of Stennett’s use of providence is necessarily inductive. Stennett did not formally subscribe to any of the confessions or creeds of his day. Neither did Stennett draft an extensive creed for the Pinners-Hall Baptists whom he pastored. The only creed-like statement to which Stennett and the Pinners-Hall Baptists officially subscribed was one written by Francis Bampffield: “We own the Lord Jesus Christ to be the one and only Lord and Lawgiver to our Souls and Consciences. And we own the Holy Scriptures of truth, as the one and only rule of faith, worship, and life: according to which we are to judge of all our cases” (Joseph Ivimey, *History of the English Baptists* [London, 1814], 479; capitalization original). Regarding this brief statement of faith, Ivimey also noted, “We are enabled to give an account of this transaction written by Mr. Joseph Stennett, who copied it out of a former church-book written by Mr. Bampffield, into the church-book now in possession of the Rev. Mr. Burnside” (Ivimey, *History of the English Baptists*, 479). Therefore, research on Stennett’s use of providence must be established by inductive means of investigation, not on the basis of creedal exposition.

providence is compared and contrasted with Stennett's, remarkable continuities and discontinuities between these two influential figures will become apparent. Finally, because Stennett and Burnet were both outspoken advocates of William of Orange and the events surrounding the Glorious Revolution, the political context of England in the late seventeenth-century will be surveyed.

At first glance, Joseph Stennett's extensive use of the doctrine of divine providence may appear indistinguishable from Burnet's political program. However, Stennett's use of providence possessed a theological and convictional integrity that is missing in Burnet's legacy and works. In both understanding and use, Stennett's handling of the doctrine of providence differed significantly from Burnet's. Thus, the major challenge of this dissertation will be demonstrating the disparity between Joseph Stennett's convictional use of the doctrine of divine providence and Gilbert Burnet's expedient use of the doctrine of providence.

Stennett's collected works are the primary sources for establishing Stennett's understanding and use of providence. Stennett's collected works include thirty-six sermons, of which nineteen make specific use of the doctrine of God's providence.⁶⁹

⁶⁹While the notion of providence presents itself in nearly all thirty-six of Stennett's surviving sermons, the following nineteen sermons explicitly use the doctrine of providence: Joseph Stennett, "The Reasonableness and Advantages of an Early Conversion to God Demonstrated: Sermon II," in *Works*, 1:49-100; Stennett, "The Reasonableness and Advantages of an Early Conversion to God Demonstrated: Sermon III," in *Works*, 1:101-50; Stennett, "The Groans of a Saint, Under the Burden of a Mortal Body," in *Works*, 1:151-212; Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704," in *Works*, 1:213-58; Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706," in *Works*, 1:259-309; Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on the 1st of May, 1707," in *Works*, 1:341-82; Stennett, "The Rest of the People of God," in *Works*, 1:382-444; Stennett, "Preach'd before an Assembly of Ministers at Joiners-Hall, on March 25, 1706," in *Works*, 2:1-46; Stennett, "Preach'd before the Societies for Reformation of Manners, as Salters-Hall, June 26, 1703," in *Works*, 2:47-74; Stennett, "Preach'd at the Ordination of the Reverend Mr. David Rees, and Two Deacons, at Limehouse, Feb. 19, 1705-6," in *Works*, 2:75-127; Stennett, "Preach'd at Spittle-fields, June 16, 1700," in *Works*, 2:128-163; Stennett, "Preach'd at Pinders-Hall, August 30, 1707," in *Works*, 2:197-227; Stennett, "Preach'd at Pinders-Hall, Sept. 6, 1707," in *Works*, 2:228-51; Stennett, "Preach'd at Pinders-Hall, Feb. 3, 1704-5," in *Works*, 2:356-94; Stennett, "Of Loving the Lord Our God," in *Works*, 2:423-51; Stennett, "Preach'd at Barbican, Nov. 28, 1708," in *Works*, 3:83-119; Stennett, "Preach'd at Joiners-Hall, March 24, 1705-6," in *Works*, 3:235-65; Stennett, "Preach'd at

Also preserved in Stennett's collected works are several remarkable political addresses, including Stennett's address to King William on behalf of the Baptist denomination in London, Stennett's address to Queen Anne on behalf of the "Protestant Dissenting Ministers" in London and Westminster, and Stennett's address to Parliament on behalf of the citizens of London, particularly those "zealous assertors of English liberties."⁷⁰ All three of these addresses make specific use of the doctrine of divine providence. Finally, the fourth volume of Stennett's collected works contain fifty-one non-sermonic forms, including letters, hymns, psalms, and poems.

The primary works of Gilbert Burnet are also indispensable to this dissertation. Burnet's voice was critical to the popular success of the Glorious Revolution in England, and the doctrine of providence was leveraged by Burnet not only in the pulpit⁷¹ but also in political pamphlets, letters, and court memorandums in support of William and Mary.⁷²

Joiners-Hall, March 24, 1705–6," in *Works*, 3:266-300; Stennett, "Death to Good Men a Desirable Release," in *Works*, 3:372-411.

⁷⁰"Some Account of His Life," in *Works*, 1:25.

⁷¹One particularly important sermon that Burnet preached is titled, "A Sermon Preached in the Chappel of St. James's Before His Highness the Prince of Orange, The 23d of December, 1688"; this sermon was "printed by His Highness's special command" by Richard Chiswell in 1689 and made available throughout London. Other important sermons include the following: "A Sermon Preached before the House of Commons, on the 31st of January, 1688, Being the Thanksgiving-day for the Deliverance of this Kingdom from Popery and Arbitrary Power, by His Highness the Prince of Orange's Means (1688)," "A Sermon Preached at the Coronation of William III. and Mary II. King and Queen Of England,—France, and Ireland, Defenders of the Faith; In The Abby-Church of Westminster, April 11. 1689," "A Sermon Preached before the House of Peers in the Abbey of Westminster, on the 5th of November 1689, Being Gun-Powder Treason-Day, as Likewise the Day of His Majesties Landing in England (1689), "A Sermon Preached before the King and Queen, at White-Hall, on the 19th Day of October, 1690, being the Day of Thanksgiving, for His Majesties Preservation and Success in Ireland," "A Sermon Preached at White-Hall, on the 26th of November 1691. Being the Thanksgiving-Day for the Preservation of the King, and the Reduction of Ireland."

⁷²The following works represent some of the more significant political tracts and letters that Burnet wrote: "An Enquiry into the Measures of Submission to Supream Authority: And of the Grounds upon which it may be lawful or necessary for Subjects to defend Their Religion, Lives, and Liberties" (London, 1688), "An Enquiry into the Present State of Affairs, and in particular, whether We Owe Allegiance to the King in these Circumstances" (London, 1688), "A Review of the Reflections on the Prince of Orange's Declaration" (London, 1688),

Burnet also wrote a *History of His Own Time*,⁷³ and he maintained an extensive personal collection of memoirs.⁷⁴ All of these primary sources will prove valuable to this research project.

Finally, I have selected a handful of secondary sources to frame the historical and political (and also religious and rhetorical) context of the late seventeenth-century. The first resource is Thomas Babington Macaulay's classic *History of England*.⁷⁵ Macaulay is well-disposed towards William III and the Glorious Revolution, primarily because Macaulay's political convictions are so radically parliamentary. Macaulay's *History of England* points to William III as a powerful and favorable force for English parliamentary government. While Macaulay's *History of England* should not be considered unbiased, it nevertheless represents the classic Whig interpretation of English history, which looks favorably upon William's revolution.

Despite Macaulay's gallant interpretation of English history, there remains an unpacified Tory conscience. In truth, William III – with the aid of the Dutch army and the support of the English nation – forced the abdication of James II, England's king by divine right. After 1688, the Anglican church sought to legitimize William III by

“Reflections on a Paper Entitled His Majesty's Reasons for Withdrawing Himself from Rochester” (London, 1689), and “A Pastoral Letter Writ by the Right Reverend Father in God, Gilbert, Lord Bishop of Sarum, to the Clergy of the Diocess, Concerning the Oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy to K. William and Q. Mary” (London, 1689).

⁷³Gilbert Burnet, *Bishop Burnet's History of His Own Time, With the Suppressed Passages of the First Volume, and Notes*, 6 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1823).

⁷⁴Gilbert Burnet, *A Supplement to Burnet's History of My Own Time; Derived from His Original Memoirs, His Autobiography, His Letters to Admiral Herbert, and His Private Meditations, all Hitherto Unpublished*, ed. by H. C. Foxcroft (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1902). Foxcroft compiled and edited these valuable memoirs on Gilbert Burnet. Foxcroft also part-wrote the authoritative biography on the life of Gilbert Burnet: T. E. S. Clark and H. C. Foxcroft, *A Life of Gilbert Burnet, Bishop of Salisbury* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907).

⁷⁵Thomas Babington Macaulay, *History of England From the Accession of James II*, 4 vols. (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1906). David Hume's *History of England* was previously considered the gold standard until Macaulay wrote his own *History of England*.

appealing to the doctrine of providence. This is precisely why Tony Claydon writes off the language of providence as mere “propaganda” in *William III and the Godly Revolution*.⁷⁶ Claydon credits Gilbert Burnet as the man who supplied the English nation with the religious rhetoric needed to justify a Williamite revolution. Thus, Claydon’s portrayal of William and the Revolution of 1688 lacks the high sense of English pride and approval found in Macaulay’s *History of England*.⁷⁷

Finally, this dissertation draws upon Linda Colley’s important work on British identity: *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837*. Colley writes without that sense of pride and approval found in Macaulay’s *History of England*, but she also engages the Protestant worldview of the late seventeenth century far less cynically than Claydon. Colley concedes that late seventeenth-century Englishmen suffered from an enormous Protestant conceit—specifically, that Protestant England was specially favored by God in her politics and religion. Nevertheless, Colley insists that this British conceit “has to be recognized and taken seriously,” because it was not just “ignorant insularity, though some of it certainly was. It was bound up with a Protestant world-view which helped men and women make sense of their lives.”⁷⁸ Colley’s judgment is both fair and helpful as one considers the language of providence as it was understood and used by men like Joseph Stennett. One need not imbibe Macaulay’s optimism nor Claydon’s cynicism to discern how the language of providence was understood and used in the late seventeenth-century. Undoubtedly, the language of providence was used to justify a revolution, but the language of providence was also used nobly during this period too. In the case of Joseph Stennett and Gilbert Burnet, this dissertation seeks to distinguish Joseph Stennett from

⁷⁶Claydon, *William III and The Godly Revolution*, i.

⁷⁷Macaulay and Claydon comment extensively on the character of Gilbert Burnet, but these sketches will be reserved for chap. 4 of this dissertation.

⁷⁸Colley, *Britons*, 43.

the kind of specious providentialist rhetoric that was used by Gilbert Burnet to promote a political revolution.

Background to the Study

I first heard the name Joseph Stennett in a “Puritan and Evangelical Spirituality” seminar at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary with Michael A. G. Haykin, who described Joseph Stennett to me as a “renowned” London Baptist preacher of the late seventeenth century who preached openly political sermons.⁷⁹ Haykin also informed me that, though the Stennett corpus is both interesting and manageable, there has been very little work done on Stennett’s sermons to this point. In fact, no one has undertaken an inductive analysis of Stennett’s sermons, much less the significance of his understanding and use of the doctrine of providence. Currently, work on Stennett has been limited to a handful of cameo-sketches of biographical interest. And yet, the consensus among these cameo-sketches is that Stennett was a renowned preacher in his day, a gifted hymn writer, and a “pillar of the dissenting establishment.”⁸⁰ So with the encouragement of Haykin, I began to research the life and preaching of Joseph Stennett.

Not only did Haykin introduce me to Joseph Stennett, he also helped me recognize the value of identifying models of Christian life and Christian ministry. Identifying “models” of Christian life and ministry is a particularly important element of Baptist identity. Thus, Haykin has written:

From the origins of Christianity, the Church has recognized the important role that Christian heroes and heroines play in modelling for other believers what Christianity is all about. The author of Hebrews, for example, can point his readers to a long line of ‘faith-full’ men and women who, he is clearly hoping, will act as an encouragement to his readers to persevere in their Christian commitment (Hebrews

⁷⁹Haykin, “Living under the Cross,” in *The Baptist Story*, 54.

⁸⁰Elizabeth Clarke, “Hymns, Psalms, and Controversy in the Seventeenth-century,” in Isabelle Rivers and David L. Wykes, *Dissenting Praise* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 31.

11; see also Hebrews 13:7). The early acts of the martyrs, written between the second and early fourth centuries, served a similar function: strengthening their readers in the face of persecution from the Roman state.⁸¹

Moreover, Haykin points out how vital heroes and heroines have been for Particular Baptists:

Particular Baptists, like other Christian groups, recognized the vital importance of Christian heroes and Christian biography. Thus, the earliest Baptist histories by Thomas Crosby (c. 1683–c. 1752) and Joseph Ivimey (1773–1834) made abundant use of biography as they sought to explain to their readers who exactly were the Baptists and what was the nature of their theological convictions. Baptist preachers used the opportunity of funeral sermons to set forth deceased members of their community as role models of the Christian life.⁸²

Stennett’s funeral sermon was preached by Nathanael Hodges in precisely the manner described by Micahel Haykin. As Hodges preached, he lifted Joseph Stennett up as a model for his hearers to emulate. Said Hodges of Stennett: “Tho he is dead, he yet speaks, and will speak by his excellent works, so long as Protestant knowledg [sic] and Protestant liberty endure in these kingdoms.”⁸³ Hodges also said, “His piety towards God was very great and very exemplary.”⁸⁴ And Hodges concluded with these words: “Let us all follow the faith of this great man.”⁸⁵

Admittedly, Stennett was not perfect. No model is perfect, except Christ alone. However, echoing the endorsement of Nathanael Hodges, Stennett will be presented in this dissertation as a good model of faithful, convictional, political

⁸¹Haykin, “British Particular Baptist Biography,” in *British Particular Baptists*, 1:15.

⁸²Haykin, “British Particular Baptist Biography,” in *British Particular Baptists*, 1:16-17.

⁸³Nathanael Hodges, *The Christian’s Gain by Death. A Funeral Sermon Occasion’d by the Death of the Reverent Mr. Joseph Stennett* (London: Printed by John Darby, 1713), 29; capitalization original.

⁸⁴Hodges, *The Christian’s Gain by Death*, 30.

⁸⁵Hodges, *The Christian’s Gain by Death*, 36.

engagement, not only in his pastoral and political discourses, but particularly in his understanding and use of the doctrine of providence.

CHAPTER 2
THE LANGUAGE OF PROVIDENCE DURING THE
GLORIOUS REVOLUTION

In the late seventeenth century, the language of providence possessed the power to dethrone kings, to justify high treason, and to validate the accession of a foreign Dutch aggressor. In retrospect, some doubt whether the Glorious Revolution of 1688 represents the triumphant will of God as much as it represents the triumphant will of the people.¹ Nevertheless, the language of providence transcended the English pulpit in 1688 and became the language of English politics. Naturally, England's divines considered themselves among the best qualified to comment on the hand of God's providence with respect to current affairs. Consequently, the pulpits of London reverberated with political commentary robed in the language of providence:

Practically every noted churchman of the Revolution discoursed and preached on providence, raising it to as great a theological consideration as passive obedience enjoyed in the years before 1688. Tillotson even worked out a theory of providence that excluded the need of man's active participation in worldly affairs. William himself believed there could be no suitable explanation for the part he had played in history than that providence had selected him to lead a Protestant coalition against France. The role of providence in history always had been stressed in Anglican homilies, especially those dealing with the Armada defeat, the Gunpowder Plot, and

¹Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging The Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 48. After 1688, the Anglican doctrine of providence would pace the political environment of English politics by becoming decreasingly monarchical and increasingly democratic. Straka explains,

Providential right maintained that William had been raised by God's will, yet it was equally true that the representative of the people had voted to confer the crown on William and Mary. Link these facts, as did the Church, with the belief that God frequently controls men's thoughts and action to bring about His will, and the conclusion will be close to *vox populi, vox dei*. Gerald Straka, *Anglican Reaction to the Revolution of 1688* (New York: Books Craftsmen Associates, 1962), 111.

the Restoration; but the Revolution raised the prestige of the idea *far above anything it had enjoyed before.*²

The “prestige of the idea” of providence owed in part to its political expediency. While the established doctrine of divine right, hereditary succession, and passive obedience ostensibly secured James II on the English throne, the elevation of the doctrine of divine providence would challenge James’ claim to the throne after 1688. William of Orange would be touted as the godly and rightful claimant to the throne by the decrees of providence, regardless of the stipulations divine right and hereditary succession. Thus, with the throne of England hanging in the balance, the people of England had to decide the will of God and articulate their decision carefully. What follows is a selective overview of the political and ecclesiastical tensions surrounding the retreat of James II and the rise of William III in 1688. The context of James II’s flight from England and William III’s subsequent rise to power will shed light on the English clergy’s response to the Revolution of 1688.

The Flight of James II

On December 23, 1688, James II fled England for France and surrendered the English throne to William of Orange. The circumstances that culminated in the flight of James II reveal that he was tragically out of touch with his people. James was an avowed Catholic and a resolute monarchist; he was “determined never to be a Constitutional monarch or to abandon his efforts to secure the ultimate ascendancy of his religion.”³ “I will either win all or lose all,”⁴ said James, and “his subsequent flight to France was only the final proof of his determination not to remain king at the price of abandoning his

²Straka, *Anglican Reaction to the Revolution of 1688*, 66; emphasis added.

³G. M. Trevelyan, *The English Revolution 1688–1689* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1938), 57.

⁴John Stevens, *The Journal of John Stevens, Containing a Brief Account of the War in Ireland 1689-1691*, ed. Robert H. Murray (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1912), 55.

designs.”⁵

James II was king of a people who were avowedly Protestant and squeamishly monarchical. England had already committed regicide (1649) and had more recently rejected Cromwell’s Interregnum (1649-1660). England wanted a monarch again, but England wanted the monarch’s powers to be limited. Yet, James resolutely resisted limitations to his power. Consequently, as the will of the king clashed with the will of the people, the record of history shows that the will of the people triumphed in 1688, irrespective of established law and established church doctrine.

With respect to the law, the crown of King James II was betrayed by more than a few of his closest political lords and subjects. Of course, everyone in England knew that treachery against the crown was punishable by death, and James II was known for his severity against disloyalty.⁶ Nevertheless, after William landed on the shores of Torbay on November 5, 1688, countless Englishmen rallied to give public support to the revolution against James II. Over the course of the next two months (November and December of 1688), no major battle would be fought and very little blood would be shed. Indeed, “no encounter of the least military importance took place.”⁷ However, James’ political system systematically imploded as officers from his own army began to join the

⁵Trevelyan, *The English Revolution*, 57.

⁶James II had already shown himself to be unmerciful when James Scott, the Duke of Monmouth and one of Charles II’s illegitimate sons, committed high treason in 1685. Scott commanded a rebel uprising, which James II quickly quashed at the Battle of Sedgemoor. Scott was soon captured by a search party after the battle, and he was promptly brought to James II. [Scott] threw himself on the ground, and crawled to the King’s feet. He wept. He tried to embrace his uncle’s knees with his pinioned arms. He begged for life, only life, life at any price. By the ties of kindred, by the memory of the late king, who had been the truest of brothers, the unhappy man adjured James to show some mercy. James gravely replied that he was sorry for the misery which the prisoner had brought on himself, but that the case was not one for lenity. A declaration, filled with atrocious calumnies, had been put forth. The regal title had been assumed. For treasons so aggravated there could be no pardon on this side of the grave.” Thomas Babington Macaulay, *Macaulay’s History of England: From the Accession of James II* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1953), 1:466.

⁷Trevelyan, *The English Revolution*, 62.

rank and file of William and his Dutch invaders. Even James' own daughter, Princess Anne, betrayed him. Yet, the *coup de grâce* was delivered when James discovered that John Churchill (1650–1722) was in league with William too, “for Churchill was one on whom [James] had heaped favours all his life.”⁸ With Churchill's secret betrayal, James was effectively broken. One historian marked the effect on James II: “His health and nerves were shaken, and for three days he was confined to his room with a violent bleeding of the nose.”⁹ When James II finally recovered, he “ordered a retreat to London,” which “amounted to an acknowledgement that William had won.”¹⁰ Consequently, “Churchill, Grafton, Kirke, and many others went straight over to William's camp.”¹¹ Admittedly, the precise relationship between the English king and the English constitution was unclear at this time,¹² but such mass treachery was

⁸Trevelyan, *The English Revolution*, 62. Churchill was trusted by James II, because Churchill had helped James II squash Monmouth's Rebellion in 1685.

⁹Trevelyan, *The English Revolution*, 62-63.

¹⁰Trevelyan, *The English Revolution*, 62-63.

¹¹Trevelyan, *The English Revolution*, 62-63.

¹²The English monarch's “royal prerogative” remains unclear. According to modern Parliament's own admission in 2004, “royal prerogative” is “a notoriously difficult concept to define adequately” (House of Commons, “Taming the Prerogative: Strengthening Ministerial Accountability to Parliament” [London: The Stationary Office Limited, 2004], 5). Nevertheless, the House of Commons consciously follows A. V. Dicey's understanding of royal prerogative. Dicey (1835–1922) was a nineteenth-century authority on British jurisprudence, and he described prerogative as follows:

A term which has caused more perplexity to students than any other expression referring to the constitution. The ‘prerogative’ appears to be both historically and as matter of actual fact nothing else than the residue of discretionary or arbitrary authority, which at any given time is legally left in the hands of the Crown. The King was originally in truth what he still is in name, ‘the sovereign.’” A. V. Dicey, *Introduction to the Study of the Law of the Constitution* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1889), 348.

Dicey additionally noted that royal prerogative was altered after the Revolution of 1688. Thus, historically,

The power of the Crown was in truth anterior to that of the House of Commons. From the time of the Norman Conquest down to the Revolution of 1688, the Crown possessed in reality many of the attributes of sovereignty. The prerogative is the name for the remaining portion of the Crown's original authority, and is therefore, as already pointed out, the name for the residue of discretionary power left at any moment in the hands of the Crown,

indisputably illegal—even “unpardonable.”¹³ At any rate, James wrongly believed that the English nobility and the English army would maintain their loyalty to the head that wore the crown despite despotic tendencies. James was gravely mistaken.

James was not only gravely mistaken about the loyalty of the English army: James had also gravely overestimated the loyalties of the Anglican Church. Indeed, James trusted that “the members of the Church of England would act up to their principles.”¹⁴ James believed that the Anglican divines would remain loyal to the Crown on the basis of settled Anglican doctrine: passive obedience and nonresistance. James knew that passive obedience had been “proclaimed from ten thousand pulpits” and that it had been “solemnly declared by the University of Oxford” and that “even tyranny as frightful as that of the most depraved of the Caesars did not justify subjects in resisting the royal authority.”¹⁵ Therefore, James wrongly concluded that “the whole body of Tory gentlemen and clergymen would let him plunder, oppress, and insult them, without lifting

whether such power be in fact exercised by the Queen or by her Ministers. Every act which the executive government can lawfully do without the authority of an Act of Parliament is done in virtue of this prerogative. (Dicey, *Introduction to the Study of the Law of the Constitution*, 349)

In the days of James II, royal prerogative was often called “dispensing power”; with respect to the repeal of law, royal prerogative was called “suspending power.” James was unwilling to admit limitations to his power. Even as late as September 1688, in view of William’s impending Dutch invasion, James “refused to give way on the fundamental issue, the Suspending Power” (Trevelyan, *The English Revolution*, 57).

¹³“In his own day, and ever since, many have called it *unpardonable* treachery in Churchill to remain in the King’s service the better to betray him. Not only the Jacobites but the Whig historian Macaulay took this view.” (Trevelyan, *The English Revolution*, 63; emphasis added).

¹⁴Macaulay, *The History of England*, 1:548.

¹⁵Macaulay, *The History of England*, 1:548, *passim*. See also Abednego Seller, *The History of Passive Obedience since the Reformation* (Amsterdam, 1689). Seller was an Anglican cleric in Exeter prior to the Glorious Revolution. Seller refused to swear allegiance to William III in 1689. Seller insisted that Passive Obedience was “the unquestion’d Doctrine of all the Members of this Church” of England prior to the Revolution (Seller, *History of Passive Obedience*, 72).

an arm against him.”¹⁶ Indeed, James believed that the Anglican clergy would assuredly support him, if not on the basis of sympathy, then on the basis of doctrine and conviction. James would discover too late that “people sometimes do what they think wrong.”¹⁷

Half of the Tories, who were the strongest advocates of nonresistance and passive obedience, decidedly rebelled against their king in 1688:

The doctrine of non-resistance demanded only passive, not active, obedience to a tyrannical King. According to the High Church divines, St. Paul had taught that the Christians should submit to Nero, but not that they should fly to arms to defend their persecutor against a conspiracy of the Praetorian Guard. The enemies of James, therefore, calculated that the King’s power would fall, because all the Whigs and half the Tories would be active in rebellion, while the other half of the Tories looked on with folded arms.¹⁸

Thus, James was soundly rejected. James was rejected by his political opponents, the Whigs; James was rejected by treacherous generals like Churchill; James was rejected by countless soldiers of the English army; and James was even rejected by most of the ministers of the Church of England. When reality settled over James that the English nation had largely rejected him, he lost his nerve and fled to France.¹⁹

¹⁶Macaulay, *The History of England*, 1:548.

¹⁷Macaulay, *The History of England*, 1:548.

¹⁸Trevelyan, *The English Revolution*, 51.

¹⁹James *successfully* fled England on December 23, 1688. James had previously attempted to retreat from London on Tuesday, December 11, but this first attempt was thwarted by fishermen on the Kentish coast. For details concerning the first and second departure of James II from England, see Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:305-23. William of Orange was not pleased by James II’s first unsuccessful retreat from England, because William did not want to be accused of stealing the crown from James. William wanted to fill a vacated English throne. Therefore, “arrangements were expeditiously made” by William’s men to ensure that James’ flight from London on the evening of December 22 would be successful. By the afternoon of December 23, “the tidings of the flight reached London” (Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:323).

The Trial of The Seven Bishops

Before describing the rise of William III, an important episode known as the Trial of the Seven Bishops must be briefly described. Ecclesiastical dissent against James II had already been publicly foreshadowed by the Trial of the Seven Bishops in May of 1688. On April 4, 1687, James II drafted his Declaration of Indulgence and tried to foist this declaration upon the English nation in May 1688. James' declaration essentially granted religious toleration for all the English—including Catholics, Protestant dissenters, Jews, and even Muslims. With James' declaration, worship within the Church of England was no longer required by law. Moreover, James' declaration removed obstacles for non-Anglican clergy and parishioners to hold civil and military office.²⁰ On April 27, 1688, James reissued his 1687 Declaration of Indulgence under a different title: *The King's Declaration for Liberty of Conscience*.²¹

In 1688, James determined that all officiating ministers “in these kingdoms” should read the Declaration of Indulgence during Sunday service on May 20 and May 27 in London and on June 3 and June 10 in other parts of the kingdom. The Anglican clergy feared that James was using religious toleration as a cover to overhaul the English government and English army by filling both with Catholic sympathizers. Consequently, seven bishops from within the Established Church drew up a petition on May 18, 1688.²²

²⁰The full text of James' Declaration of 1687, which was reproduced in 1688, can be found in “Declaration of Indulgence, 1687,” in *English Historical Documents, 1660–1714*, ed. Andrew Browning (London: Routledge, 1996), 386-87. See also Richard E. Boyer, *English Declarations of Indulgence, 1687 and 1688* (The Hague: Mouton and Co., 1968).

²¹James opens: “Our conduct has been such in all times as ought to have persuaded the world that we are firm and constant to our resolutions. Yet that easy people may not be abused by the malice of crafty, wicked men, we think fit to declare that our intentions are not changed since the 4th of April 1687, when we issued our declaration for liberty of conscience” (“Declaration of Indulgence, 1688,” 390). Next, James II essentially restated the stipulations of 1687 in his 1688 declaration.

²²The full text of the “Petition of The Seven Bishops, 1688” is also published in *English Historical Documents, 75-76*. The “Petition of the Seven Bishops” was signed by the following men: William Sancroft, Archbishop of Canterbury; William Lloyd, Bishop of St. Asaph; Francis Turner, Bishop of Ely; John Lake, Bishop of Chichester; Thomas Ken, Bishop of

In this petition, “all disloyalty, all intolerance, was earnestly disclaimed. The king was assured that the Church still was, as she had ever been, faithful to the throne.”²³

However, the seven bishops insisted that “Parliament had, both in the late and in the present reign, declared that the sovereign was not constitutionally competent to dispense with statutes in matters ecclesiastical.”²⁴ As far as the seven bishops were concerned, “the declaration was therefore illegal; and the petitioners could not, in prudence, honor, or conscience, be parties to the solemn publication of an illegal declaration in the house of God.”²⁵

The seven bishops determined to present their petition to the king without delay, for James required his Declaration to be read on Sunday morning, May 20, and “it was now late on Friday evening,” May 18.²⁶ The bishops were permitted an audience with James. Macaulay tells the story of James’ immediate response:

James read the petition; he folded it up; and his countenance grew dark. ‘This,’ he said, ‘is a great surprise to me. I did not expect this from your Church, especially from some of you. This is a standard of rebellion.’ The bishops broke out into passionate professions of loyalty; but the king, as usual, repeated the same words over and over. ‘I tell you, this is a standard of rebellion.’ ‘Rebellion!’ cried Trelawney, falling on his knees. ‘For God’s sake, sir, do not say so hard a thing of us. No Trelawney can be a rebel. Remember that my family has fought for the crown. Remember how I served your majesty when Monmouth was in the west.’ ‘We put down the last rebellion,’ said Lake. ‘We shall not raise another.’ ‘We rebel!’ exclaimed Turner; ‘we are ready to die at your majesty’s feet.’ ‘Sir,’ said Ken, in a more manly tone, ‘I hope that you will grant to us that liberty of conscience which you grant to all mankind.’ Still James went on. ‘This is rebellion. This is a standard of rebellion. Did ever a good Churchman question the dispensing

Bath and Wells; Thomas White, Bishop of Peterborough; and Sir Jonathan Trelawney, Bishop of Bristol.

²³Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:142.

²⁴Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:142.

²⁵Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:142.

²⁶Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:142.

power before? Have not some of you preached for it and written for it? It is a standard of rebellion.’²⁷

Remarkably, the “Petition of the Seven Bishops” was printed and distributed throughout London, and the city of London responded with approbation for their prelates for taking a stand against James.²⁸ When Sunday finally arrived, London wondered whether her Anglican divines would submit to James’ demands. Of approximately a hundred parish churches in London, only four obeyed James and read his declaration. Thus, the Anglican Church had disobeyed her king.

In the days that followed, London was ablaze with excitement, and James was nonplussed. The bishops were immediately notified that they must appear before the king in council on June 8. Though two more Sundays would pass before June 8, the bishops remained resolute in their stand; they would not read James’ declaration in their parishes. Consequently, the fame of the seven bishops spread like wildfire throughout the kingdom.

After a few weeks of legal dispute, a trial was eventually set for June 29. The bishops were summoned before the Court of the King’s Bench. London packed the courtroom like never before as the seven bishops were accused of “false, malicious, and seditious libel.”²⁹ Both sides, prosecution and defense, presented their cases until “the galleries were furious.”³⁰ The debates wore late into the evening of June 29 until, after dark, the jury retired for deliberation. Finally, around 6am the next morning, the jury reached their decision. Macaulay gives the conclusion:

²⁷Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:141-43.

²⁸“Before the sun rose on Saturday morning, May 19, the Bishops’ Petition was printed, as a broadsheet, and hawked through all the streets of London.” J. C. Ryle, *James II and the Seven Bishops* (East Sussex: Focus Christian Ministries Trust, 1987), 7.

²⁹Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:165.

³⁰Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:166.

At ten the court again met. The crowd was greater than ever. The jury appeared in their box; and there was a breathless stillness. Sir Samuel Astry, Clerk of the Crown, spoke. 'Do you find the defendants, or any of them, guilty of the misdemeanor whereof they are impeached, or not guilty?' Sir Roger Langely answered, 'Not Guilty.' As the words were uttered, Halifax sprang up and waved his hat. At that signal, benches and galleries raised a shout. In a moment, ten thousand persons, who crowded the great hall, replied with a still louder shout, which made the old oaken roof crack; and in another moment the innumerable throng . . . set up a third huzza.³¹

Thus, after seven Anglican prelates resisted James II's despotic agenda, they were officially acquitted of all charges in "the greatest historical drama that ever took place before an authorized English law court."³² In the aftermath of the trial, as Whig politics allied with popular resentments, James II was conclusively deemed an absolutist who was "determined never to be a Constitutional monarch or to abandon his efforts to secure the ultimate ascendancy of his religion."³³ For most of England, the Trial of the Seven Bishops "showed as nothing else would have done that the most revered and the most loyal subjects in the land would be broken if they refused to become active parties to the King's illegal designs."³⁴

The Rise of William III

Though William officially landed on English soil on November 5, 1688, revolutionary fervor had reached fever pitch months prior. On June 30, 1688 – the very same day that the seven bishops were acquitted of seditious libel – a formal invitation was sent to William of Orange entreating him to descend upon London in arms. The

³¹Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:168.

³²Trevelyan, *The English Revolution*, 48.

³³Trevelyan, *The English Revolution*, 57.

³⁴Trevelyan, *The English Revolution*, 48. Six months after James retreated from England, William and Mary managed to push a proposal for religious toleration through Parliament: The Toleration Act of 1689. The difference, of course, was that William was an avowed Protestant while James was a devoted Catholic with a perceived absolutist agenda for politico-religious reform.

invitation was signed in cipher by seven Englishmen of high reputation.³⁵ Having received this invitation, William made speedy preparation to descend upon England with his Dutch armada. In the meantime, James invited the Catholic Irish to England to police his kingdom, and England resented James for this decision. “Of the many errors which James committed, none was more fatal than this,” Macaulay wrote.³⁶ “Not even the arrival of a brigade of Louis’s musketeers” would have “excited such resentment and shame as our ancestors felt when they saw armed columns of Papists, just arrived from Dublin, moving in military pomp along the high roads. The blood of the whole nation boiled.”³⁷ The confluence of these events, along with the new threat of a Roman Catholic successor to the English throne,³⁸ turned the kingdom of England against James.

³⁵The “seven chiefs of the conspiracy” who dispatched an invitation to the Prince of Orange to descend on English soil in arms were Charles Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury; William Cavendish, Earl of Devonshire; Thomas Osborne, Earl of Danby; Richard Lumley, Viscount Lumley; Henry Compton, Bishop of London; Edward Russell, and Henry Sidney (Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:187). In their “invitation,” these “seven chiefs” assured the Prince of Orange that “there are nineteen parts of twenty of the people throughout the kingdom who are desirous of a change” and that “if the circumstances stand so with Your Highness that you believe you can get here time enough, in a condition to give assistances this year sufficient for a relief under these circumstances which have been now represented, we who subscribe this will not fail to attend Your Highness upon your landing and to do all that lies in our power to prepare others to be in as much readiness as such an action is capable of” (“Letter of Invitation to William of Orange, 1688,” in Browning, *English Historical Documents*, 110-11).

³⁶Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:199.

³⁷Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:199.

³⁸James III was born on June 10, 1688. Though it appears that James III was the legitimate male offspring of James II and Queen Mary Beatrice, a popular rumor circulated that James III was illegitimate. Rumor was that James III had been smuggled into the queen’s bedchamber in a warming pan. At any rate, James III was declared by James II to be legitimate. Trevelyan notes,

The birth of the Prince made the quarrel between the King and the nation far more serious and irreconcilable [because] there was now an heir apparent to the throne, a boy who would by right displace the presumptive Protestant heirs, his half-sisters Mary and Anne. And no one could doubt that his Roman Catholic parents would bring him up in their own faith. Hitherto many Tories had been prepared to wait patiently for relief till the death of James, when all his plans would fall to the ground on the succession of his Protestant daughters. But now a long line of Roman Catholic kings would carry his policy, unless his subjects resorted to armed resistance. (Trevelyan, *The English Revolution*, 49)

Consequently, when William finally landed on the shores of Torbay on November 5, England was prepared to betray her king.

After landing on English soil, William positioned himself in Exeter³⁹ for two weeks and patiently waited for England to betray her king. The first major defector from James' camp was Edward Viscount Cornbury. Word spread to London of Cornbury's defection, and James was outraged. In turn, James assembled his "principal officers" and "addressed the assembly in language worthy of a better man and a better cause."⁴⁰ Within a week's time, however, three of England's "principal officers" betrayed James and joined William. By November 25, Churchill had defected and Kirke had "refused to obey orders" from Salisbury (where James was located).⁴¹ At this point, the English army had suffered no real major blood loss, except a royal nose bleed; however, the morale of James' army was devastated by reports of defection. "No man knew whom to trust or whom to obey."⁴² Consequently, from November 25 to December 11, the English continued to desert James.⁴³

As James' support base dissolved, William cautiously proceeded. William carefully avoided any direct claim on the English throne, and William also avoided any direct disparagement of James' person. In fact, William's publicists made clear that the Anglo-Dutch force marched only against James' "evil counsellors," not against James

³⁹Exeter was located about forty miles north of Torbay. Meanwhile, James' army rallied in Salisbury, approximately halfway between Torbay and London.

⁴⁰Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:257. Lieutenant-General John Churchill, Percy Kirke, and Charles Trelawney were among the "principal officers" whom James addressed; in turn, these three men convincingly pledged their loyalty to James. Thus, "all was ripe for the execution of the long-meditated treason" (Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:265).

⁴¹Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:266.

⁴²Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:267.

⁴³Lieutenant-General John Churchill's morale-crushing defection occurred on November 25, and defections continued until James' first failed flight to France on December 11.

himself.⁴⁴ More importantly, William articulated that his purpose for invading England was only “for preserving the Protestant religion, and for restoring the laws and liberties of England, Scotland, and Ireland.”⁴⁵ Of course, William displayed military strength and continued to plod towards London. However, due to William’s careful “scheme of policy,” the revolution was “gloriously” preserved as a largely bloodless revolution: “the ‘glory’ of that brief and bloodless campaign lies with William, who laid deep and complicated plans and took great risks in coming over at all.”⁴⁶ The “glory” of the revolution did not reside with the English, “who had only to throw up their caps for [William] with sufficient unanimity.”⁴⁷ Macaulay’s assessment concurs with Trevelyan’s: “the success of William's vast and profound scheme of policy” was that James essentially “ruin[ed] himself.”⁴⁸ As Jacobite defections continued to mount in proportion with Williamite popularity, James lost his nerve and abdicated the throne.⁴⁹

⁴⁴In his *Declaration*, William denounced James II’s “evil counsellors” no less than twenty times.

⁴⁵William III, *The Declaration of His Highness William Henry, Prince of Orange, &c. Of the Reasons Inducing Him to Appear in Armes in the Kingdome of England, for Preserving of the Protestant Religion, and for Restoring the Lawes and Liberties of ENGLAND, SCOTLAND and IRELAND* (Hague, 1688). A printed version of William’s *Declaration* can be found in Robert Beddard, *A Kingdom without a King: The Journal of The Provisional Government in the Revolution of 1688* (Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1988), 124-49.

⁴⁶Trevelyan, *The English Revolution*, 4.

⁴⁷Trevelyan, *The English Revolution*, 4.

⁴⁸Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:288.

⁴⁹On “abdication” see Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:342, 2:350, 2:358, and 2:371. Kenyon prefers to say that James II “forcibly abdicated” (J. P. Kenyon, *Revolution Principles: The Politics of Party 1689–1720*, Cambridge Studies in the History and Theory of Politics (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), x. Moreover, Kenyon noted that the language of abdication was part of the revolution’s “propagandist weapon” (Kenyon, *Revolution Principles*, xi). Kenyon puzzled over this word “abdicate”: “Why did the Commons choose the awkward and controversial word ‘abdicate’ when, as the Lords argued, ‘deserted’ would have done their business?” (Kenyon, *Revolution Principles*, xi). At any rate, the language of “abdicate” was used to insist that James II had vacated the throne. The word “abdicate” was used to justify William’s occupancy of the throne, even while safeguarding William from charges of usurpation.

With James having fled to France, the lords of England determined that “it was necessary to the public safety that there should be a provisional government.”⁵⁰ A provisional government was established, which Archbishop Sancroft chaired and “under his presidency, the new Archbishop of York, five Bishops, and twenty-two temporal Lords, determined to draw up, subscribe, and publish a declaration.”⁵¹

By this instrument they declared that they were firmly attached to the religion and constitution of their country, and that they had cherished the hope of seeing grievances redressed and tranquility restored by the Parliament which the King had lately summoned, but that this hope had been extinguished by his flight. They had therefore determined to join with the Prince of Orange, in order that the freedom of the nation might be vindicated, that the rights of the Church might be secured, that a just liberty of conscience might be given to Dissenters, and that the Protestant interest throughout the world might be strengthened. Till His Highness should arrive, they were prepared to take on themselves the responsibility of giving such directions as might be necessary for the preservation of order. A deputation was instantly sent to lay this declaration before the prince, and to inform him that he was impatiently expected in London.⁵²

William accepted the invitation of the Provisional Government *tout suite* and arrived in London on December 18. Then, William summoned the Convention Parliament, which met on January 22, 1689. The Convention Parliament moved as follows:

King James II, having endeavored to subvert the constitution of the Kingdom by breaking the original contract between King and people, and, by the advice of Jesuits and other wicked persons, having violated the fundamental laws, and having withdrawn himself out of the kingdom, had abdicated the government, and that the throne had thereby become vacant. . . . The motion was adopted by the Committee without division. It was ordered that the report should be instantly made.⁵³

⁵⁰Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:294. For a fascinating discussion about the doctrine of passive obedience in connection with Archbishop Sancroft’s “rebellious” role in the “Provisional Government” of 1688, see Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:295-96.

⁵¹Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:294.

⁵²Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:294-95; Macaulay also noted, “Never, within the memory of man, had there been so near an approach to entire concord among all intelligent Englishmen as at this conjuncture; and never had concord been more needed. Legitimate authority there was none” (Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:297).

⁵³Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:348-51, *passim*.

After further deliberation, the convention also decided that the crown should be presented to both William and Mary, though Mary alone was the next rightful and lawful heir behind James II. William determined only to accept if the crown was presented to him for life. Consequently, the crown was presented to both William and Mary, which they “thankfully” accepted on February 13, 1689.⁵⁴ William and Mary’s coronation took place on April 11, 1689.

Anglican Response to William of Orange

After the coronation of William and Mary on April 11, all office holders within the English realm were required to swear oaths of allegiance to the new king and queen. If any Anglican office holder within the Established Church refused to swear allegiance to William and Mary, he would be deprived of his livelihood. Despite the threat of ruin, many Tories of tender conscience believed that they could not swear allegiance to William and Mary as their “rightful and lawful” sovereigns. A solution was determined that new oaths would be written which excised the language “rightful and lawful.” To pacify the most scrupulous of Tories, the new oaths would simply read: “I, A. B., do sincerely promise and swear to bear allegiance to their majesties King William and Queen Mary.”⁵⁵ Thus, “the swearer was not called upon to believe that William and

The majority [of the convention] was made up of two classes. One class consisted of eager and vehement Whigs, who, if they had been able to take their own course, would have given to the proceedings of the convention a decidedly revolutionary character. The other class admitted that a revolution was necessary, but regarded it as a necessary evil, and wished to disguise it, as much as possible, under the show of legitimacy.” (Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:349-50)

⁵⁴Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:374.

⁵⁵William Palin, *The History of the Church of England: From The Revolution to the Last Acts of Convocation, A.D. 1688–1717* (London: Francis & John Rivington, 1851), 65. Straka also noted the “seeming harmlessness” of the new oaths: “I, A. B., do sincerely promise and swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to their majesties King William and Queen Mary, So help me God” (Straka, *Anglican Reaction to the Revolution of 1688*, 39).

Mary were ‘rightful and lawful’ sovereigns.”⁵⁶ Moreover, the Anglican clergy would not be “forced to declare that their previous oath was unlawful or that the doctrine of resistance was to be held in abhorrence.”⁵⁷ Jane Garrett explains the significance of the rephrased oaths:

Since no one could claim that [William and Mary] had inherited the crown by divine right, the oath of allegiance had to be re-phrased. James and his predecessors were sovereigns *de jure*, but for the new rulers the phrase *de facto* was substituted. The oath was a test of loyalty to the new regime, and no one who refused to sign it could hold public office. It was subscribed by all the Whigs and most of the Tories, but *many of the latter signed it with private reservations*; as they saw it, a ruler *de facto* need only be obeyed for as long as he could hold the throne he had usurped and no further allegiance would be due to him if he were replaced by James or his son.”⁵⁸

Thus, the Tories were only asked to subscribe their loyalty to William and Mary as King and Queen *de facto*; no formal rejection of James II’s hereditary right was required. Despite such concessions, a remnant of staunch Jacobites and High-Church Tories could not be persuaded to swear allegiance to William and Mary.

At this point, I will outline two basic responses to the Revolution of 1688 under the following heads: rejection of William of Orange on the basis of divine right and reception of William of Orange on the basis of divine right.

Rejection of William of Orange on the Basis of Divine Right

Rejection of William of Orange occurred both inside and outside of the Anglican communion. These men and women were broadly called Jacobites, and their ideology consisted of four basic tenets of divine right doctrine: “the divine institution and status of monarchy; the descent of the title to the crown by hereditary right; the

⁵⁶Straka, *Anglican Reaction to the Revolution of 1688*, 39.

⁵⁷Straka, *Anglican Reaction to the Revolution of 1688*, 39.

⁵⁸Jane Garrett, *The Triumphs of Providence: The Assassination Plot of 1696* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 10-11; emphasis added.

accountability of kings to God alone, not to subjects possessing a right of deposition; and the unequivocal scriptural injunction of non-resistance and passive obedience, even towards monarchs of whom subjects might disapprove.”⁵⁹ For strict Jacobites, James II was the God-appointed king of England whether anyone liked it or not. Moreover, the Jacobites rejected the popular notion that James II was lawfully deprived of the English throne through willing abnegation; consequently, the Jacobites refused to recognize William and Mary’s Convention Parliament as legitimate. As far as Jacobites were concerned, James was unlawfully deprived of the English throne and William III was a usurper.⁶⁰

In Ireland, James was openly supported. The Jacobite cause in Ireland was chiefly led by an unscrupulous man named Richard Talbot (1630–1691), the Earl of Tyrconnel, whom Macaulay has described as “the fiercest and most uncompromising of all those who hated the liberties and religion of England.”⁶¹ Talbot, nicknamed “Lying Dick,”⁶² was first introduced to Charles II and James II during the Interregnum as “a man fit and ready for the infamous service of assassinating the Protector.”⁶³ Though the Catholic Irish already favored James II over William III, Talbot worked diligently with Jacobite priests and bishops in Ireland to ensure that the Irish army would serve only James II.⁶⁴

⁵⁹J. C. D. Clark, *English Society 1660–1832: Religion, Ideology and Politics During the Ancien Regime*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 89. See also Straka, *Anglican Reaction to the Revolution of 1688*, 80.

⁶⁰Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:401-2.

⁶¹Macaulay, *History of England*, 1:537.

⁶²Tyrconnel “had long before earned the nickname of Lying Dick Talbot; and, at Whitehall, any wild fiction was commonly designated as one of Dick Talbot’s truths” (Macaulay, *History of England*, 1:609).

⁶³Macaulay, *History of England*, 1:537.

⁶⁴Macaulay, *History of England*, 1:609-11.

On the island, Jacobites were often designated as either Melfordians or Middletonians. In Scotland, the Jacobite cause was strongly maintained by John Drummond (1649–1714), styled Lord Melfort. Drummond was a practical man with political ambitions. Consequently, Drummond exchanged his Protestantism for the king’s Catholicism in 1685, a conversion that greatly pleased James II.⁶⁵ In time, Drummond would acquire “unbounded influence over James.”⁶⁶ Drummond led a group of Jacobites in Scotland called “Noncompounders.” The Noncompounders believed—on the basis of divine right—that James II should not negotiate away any of his God-given kingly authority in order to regain the English throne.⁶⁷ For Noncompounders, it was “downright Whiggery, downright rebellion, to take advantage of His Majesty’s unfortunate situation for the purpose of imposing on him any condition.”⁶⁸ For the Noncompounder,

The plain duty of [James II’s] subjects was to bring him back. What traitors [James] would punish and what traitors he would spare, what laws he would observe and with what laws he would dispense, were questions to be decided by himself alone. If [James] decided them wrongly, he must answer for his fault to heaven, and not to his people.⁶⁹

Thus, the Noncompounders encouraged James’ absolutist agenda. Later, these Jacobite Noncompounders would be called Melfordians.

⁶⁵“John Drummond,” in *Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. Leslie Stephen (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1888), 16:35.

⁶⁶“John Drummond,” in *Dictionary of National Biography*, 16:35.

⁶⁷For a primary source that uses the designations “Middletonian” and “Melfordian,” see Jacques Abbadie, *The History of the Late Conspiracy Against the King and the Nation with a Particular Account of the Lancashire Plot, and all the other Attempts and Machinations of the Disaffected Party since His Majesty’s Accession to the Throne* (London, 1696), 123. In 1694, Melfort was outlawed by William’s government.

⁶⁸Macaulay, *History of England*, 4:5.

⁶⁹Macaulay, *History of England*, 4:5. Macaulay also points out that Noncompounders were “chiefly to be found among the Roman Catholics” (Macaulay, *History of England*, 4:5).

In England, the Jacobite interest was carefully maintained by Charles Middleton (1650–1719), the Earl of Middleton. Prior to James’ accession, Middleton fought on behalf of the Crown against Cromwell in the English Civil War. After James’ accession in 1685, Middleton “was entrusted . . . with the chief management of the House of Commons.” After William was handed the English Crown, Middleton remained a member of the English Privy Council. “He was practically the head of the less extreme section of the Jacobites known as the ‘Compounders.’”⁷⁰ As a Jacobite, Middleton acknowledged James II’s divine right to rule. However, after 1688, Middleton believed that James needed to accept a limitation of power if he ever hoped to regain popular English support. Thus, Middleton “made it his chief aim to set on foot a movement for a restoration, accompanied by guarantees which would have restrained James from persevering in his former fatal policy”—a policy of absolutism and Roman Catholic ascendancy.⁷¹ Middleton remained in the English court until his flight to James’ Court at Saint-Germain in France in 1693.⁷²

Other Protestants in England pressed their Jacobite agenda more discreetly, even anonymously. One speech, written by a Jacobite Protestant, was published and distributed throughout London under the title, “A Speech to His Highness the Prince of Orange, by a True Protestant of the Church of England, as Established by Law.” In this speech, William is celebrated by an anonymous writer for restoring civil and religious liberty in England; however, William is also implored to “refuse the false glitterings of the crown” and to see to it that the true “King be restor’d to the Title.”⁷³

⁷⁰“Charles Middleton,” in *Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. by Sidney Lee (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1894), 37:339.

⁷¹“Charles Middleton,” in *Dictionary of National Biography*, 37:339.

⁷²Garrett, *The Triumphs of Providence*, 16-17.

⁷³“A Speech to His Highness the Prince of Orange, by a True Protestant of the Church of England, as Established by Law” (London, 1689).

Within the Anglican communion, many bishops and clerics refused to sign the oath of allegiance to William and Mary because they believed that James was still the “rightful and lawful” King of England on the basis of divine right. Indeed, “in spite of the fact that the oaths avoid referring to William and Mary as ‘rightful and lawful’ sovereigns, the Archbishop of Canterbury,⁷⁴ five bishops and about four hundred of the lower clergy felt that they were inconsistent with their former oaths to James II, who was still living.”⁷⁵ These bishops and clerics within the Church of England who refused to swear allegiance to William and Mary became known as Nonjurors,⁷⁶ and the schism within the Anglican church that resulted after 1688 is now called the Nonjuring Schism.

⁷⁴William Sancroft (1617–1693) was the Archbishop of Canterbury, and he was also one of the “Seven Bishops” who opposed James II.

⁷⁵E. Neville Williams, *The Eighteenth Century Constitution: Documents and Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 7. Macaulay expressed his astonishment that there were not more Nonjurors who resisted William: “In a Church which had as one man declared the doctrine of resistance unchristian, only four hundred persons refused to take the oath of allegiance to a government founded on resistance. In the preceding generation, both the Episcopal and Presbyterian Clergy, rather than concede *points of conscience not more important*, had resigned their livings by thousands” (Lord Macaulay, *Critical and Historical Essays Contributed to the Edinburgh Review* [London: Longman, Brown, Green, & Roberts, 1858], 1:91). Garrett similarly relates: “A number of more die-hard Tories refused the oath and lost their employment in consequence. Most of the clergy took the oath to the new sovereigns, but five of the bishops, headed by Sancroft, Archbishop of Canterbury, refused to do so; they were followed by about five hundred of the lesser clergy and an unknown number of sympathisers” (Garrett, *The Triumphs of Providence*, 10-11). Thus, Sancroft not only led the charge of opposition against James II; he also refused to swear loyalty to William III. In short, Sancroft deemed James unfit to be King *in effect*, and he deemed William III unfit to be king *by law*; thus, if Sancroft had his way, then James II would be King “in semblance” while William III would be a kind of *de facto* regent without formally assuming the royal title. According to Sancroft, William could rule underneath the authority and title of James II until James could be delivered from his “defect” of “absence,” “infancy,” “lunacy,” “deliracy,” or “apathy” (Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:340-41; *passim*).

⁷⁶“Nonjuror” is derived from Latin, and it means “not swearing.” Thus, Nonjurors were those Anglican church officers who refused to swear the oath of allegiance to William and Mary. The Nonjuring bishops who lost their livelihood after the Revolution are sometimes referred to as “the Deprived Fathers.” William Palin has provided a short list of “English Ecclesiastical Nonjurors of the reign of William III,” in Palin, *The History of the Church of England*, 407-13. Overton has also provided a longer, alphabetical list that twenty-five pages in length of clerical and lay Nonjurors in England during the aftermath of the Revolution (John Henry Overton, *The Nonjurors* [New York: Thomas Whittaker, 1903], 471-96).

“The Church, these non-jurors maintained, had solemnly ratified King James' divine right to the throne at his coronation; to deny this divine right by owning allegiance to his *de facto* supplanter would be to deny the authority of the Church, which, under God, had conferred it.”⁷⁷ For the strict Nonjuror, even the death of James II in 1701 “did not release them from their obligation; for they had sworn to be faithful, not only to the King himself, but to ‘his heirs and lawful successors.’”⁷⁸ Overton continued:

Indeed, their difficulty was greatly intensified, because an Act of Parliament was quickly passed requiring them ‘to abjure the pretended Prince of Wales,’ whom they honestly believed to be the ‘lawful heir’ of James II.⁷⁹

Overton also related the centrality of the doctrine of passive obedience for the conscientious Anglican prior to the Glorious Revolution:

Rightly or wrongly (and I am by no means prepared to say ‘rightly’), the doctrine of passive obedience or non-resistance (the two expressions mean practically the same thing) to those monarchs who had the divine, hereditary, indefeasible right had long been considered not only as *a* doctrine, but as *the* peculiar doctrine of the Church of England—that is, the doctrine which distinguished English Churchmen from ‘papists’ on the one hand who set the Pope, and ‘plebists’ on the other who set the people, above the Lord’s anointed. They applied the principles of the patriarchal government and of the Mosaic law to the existing state of affairs in England. They contended that kings were fathers of their people, and ought to be implicitly obeyed as such.⁸⁰

Remarkably, five of the seven bishops who opposed King James at “The Trial of the Seven Bishops” refused to sign the oath of allegiance to William and Mary: William Sancroft (Archbishop of Canterbury), Thomas Ken (Bishop of Bath and Wells), John Lake (Bishop of Chichester), Francis Turner (Bishop of Ely), and Thomas White (Bishop of Peterborough). These men have been credited with setting the Revolution into

⁷⁷Garrett, *The Triumphs of Providence*, 10-11.

⁷⁸Overton, *Nonjurors*, 2.

⁷⁹Overton, *Nonjurors*, 3.

⁸⁰Overton, *Nonjurors*, 3-4.

motion by their refusal to read James' Declaration of Indulgence—an act considered to be the “proximate cause” of the 1688 Revolution.⁸¹ Nevertheless, though these Anglican bishops “rendered very material assistance” to the Revolution, they refused to acknowledge William as king of England on the basis of divine right doctrine.⁸² Consequently, “The reward which they received for their services was the despoiling of their goods and the absolute ruin of all their worldly prospects.”⁸³ Many other Nonjurors who refused to swear allegiance to William and Mary were deprived of their livelihoods in the aftermath of the Revolution also.

The years immediately following the Revolution were years of Jacobite optimism and expectation. “King James is a 'coming,” the Jacobites assured themselves.⁸⁴ And with the promise of military help from Louis XIV, the Jacobites had some reason for optimism.⁸⁵ The Jacobite would boast, “The late King shall enjoy his own again;—which is so clear by its own Light, there needs no further illustration.”⁸⁶

⁸¹“The trial of the seven bishops was the proximate cause of the invitation to William of Orange to ‘come over and deliver the English nation from Popery and Arbitrary Power’” (Overton, *Nonjurors*, 26). On June 30, 1688, the exact day that the Seven Bishops were acquitted of charges of seditious libel, an invitation to William of Orange to invade England was dispatched to The Hague.

⁸²Overton, *Nonjurors*, 26.

⁸³Overton, *Nonjurors*, 26. The deprivation of Anglican clergy became the outrage of Arth Trevor. Thus,

Who are the real authors of the Revolution? Who first dared to place themselves in the breach? Who were foremost in protesting against the unconstitutional proceedings of their king? The answer is obvious:—The clergy of the Established Church; they who chose to obey God rather than man, and who, following the mandates of an heavenly King, feared not what an earthly one could do against them. To the heroic firmness, to the unshaken energy of the clergy of England, posterity is indebted for all the advantages insured to them by the Revolution of 1688. Arth Trevor, *The Life and Time of William the Third, King of England, And Stadtholder of Holland* (London, 1836), 1:386.

⁸⁴Garrett, *The Triumphs of Providence*, 4.

⁸⁵See also Garrett, *The Triumphs of Providence*, 14-15.

⁸⁶“A True and Impartial Narrative of the Dissenters New Plot; With A Large and Exact Relation of All Their Old Ones. Together with an Account of the Chief Conspirator's

But with each Williamite military victory, the hopes of a Jacobite restoration grew fainter. One letter, written by Humphrey Prideaux after an important Williamite military victory, captured the loss of Jacobite morale in 1692:

Till this happy turn our Jacobites were come to that height of confidence to talke openly that all was now their own, and some of them suspended payment of ye taxes; and at ye bishops visitation at Norwich . . . the Jacobite clergy would not own his jurisdiction and refused to appear; but on Sunday night ye news coming of ye victory, they all came the next day and made their submission, and I hope now they will have ye witt to carry themselves better.⁸⁷

Nevertheless, Jacobite sentiment persisted after 1692. In 1696, the Jacobites came closest to assassinating King William. The assassination plot failed, and Jane Garrett explains why:

The Assassination Plot of 1696 was the last and most serious of a series of [assassination] conspiracies. . . . Like its predecessors the plot failed, and for two reasons. Firstly, there were too many accomplices, with the inevitable result that some of them betrayed their fellows. But the second and more important reason for its failure was that supporters of the Jacobites were a minority party. The majority of Englishmen, though they might grumble at Dutch William, preferred his rule to that of a papist king who, they were convinced, had scant respect for their hard-won civil and religious rights. They did not want James back.⁸⁸

Names and Principle Consults; as well as of Several Persons of Quality who have Abetted and Encourage Them. Declared, and Ready to be Deposed for Any of His Majesty's Justices of Peace," in *A Third Collection of Scarce and Valuable Tracts, on the Most Interesting and Entertaining Subjects* (London: 1751), 3:66.

⁸⁷Humphrey Prideaux, *Letters of Humphrey Prideaux*, ed. Edward Maunde Thompson (London, 1875), 151; spelling original. Prideaux (1648–1724) was an English Churchman who was politically aligned with the Whig party of Parliament. In this same letter, Prideaux also noted,

I remember when last at London, I was with one of ye deprived Bishops, who seemed as confident goeing home again, but I thank God he is like now to be disappointed. I perceive the French King and our Jacobites deceaved each other; he made them believe wonders he would doe for them, and they made him believe as much that they [would] doe for him. I hope they will now be both undeceived, and an end be put to that great confidence w^{ch} was between them. (Prideaux, *Letters of Humphrey Prideaux*, 151; spelling original)

⁸⁸Garrett, *The Triumphs of Providence*, 3. Garrett interestingly notes, The fear and suspicion with which Catholics were regarded was out of all proportion both to their numbers and to their political influence. Recent estimates have put them between 4.0 and 1.9 percent of the total population of England, and moreover since the reign of

After the Assassination Plot of 1696 was discovered and thwarted, a remarkable broadside was distributed throughout England entitled, “The Triumphs of Providence over Hell, France & Rome, in the Defeating & Discovering of the Late Hellish and Barbarous Plott, for Assassinating His Royall Majesty King William III.”⁸⁹

The true extent of Jacobitism in the aftermath of the Revolution remains a matter of some debate;⁹⁰ however, vibrant pockets of Jacobitism unquestionably persisted well into the eighteenth century. At any rate, convictional Jacobites remained committed to the “King Over the Water”—the true King of England by divine right; by contrast, William III, whatever his merits, could never be the true God-ordained King of England

Elizabeth they had suffered under sever penal laws designed to render them politically harmless. Their small numbers and lack of political and religious freedom were, however, partly offset by the fact that they were most numerous among the landed gentry. (Garrett, *The Triumphs of Providence*, 5)

Jane Garrett does not write in sympathy with Macaulay, though she admits that England did not want James II as king. Garrett writes, “James was an exceedingly obstinate man who clung to his faith with all the ardour of a convert. He was not, at any rate in his earlier days, as stupid as his later detractors have made out, and was far from being the blood-boltered and tyrannical idiot depicted by Macaulay” (Garrett, *Triumphs of Providence*, 7).

⁸⁹To see the broadside reproduced, see Garrett, *The Triumphs of Providence*, viii. This broadside was printed in 1696 and is now held at the British Museum. Garrett explains the panel pictures of the broadside as follows:

The top centre panel shows an imaginary papal procession for the success of the ploy. The pope is borne on men’s shoulders, with the devil whispering in his ear. The centre panel, surmounted by LIMP—Louis, Iacobus [James], Mary and the Prince of Wales—shows Louis VIX vomiting up the spoils of war, with a physician in attendance. In the background are James, his family and advisers. Inset above an ape administers a clyster. At the sides are a four-headed Jesuit and a triple-headed courtier. The lower centre panel depicts the scene of the intended murder. The would-be assassins wait for their victim, while William in his coach is protected by the “Eye of Providence [which] sees All.” The side panels show real and imaginary scenes of the intended invasion and conspirators’ progress towards Tyburn. (Garrett, *The Triumphs of Providence*, viii)

⁹⁰“It is impossible to calculate how many men would actually have taken up arms for King James had he landed in England. Some were determined enough but a great many more, although happy to indulge in seditious talk and to drink the king's health over the water, were not prepared to risk life and fortune for his sake” (Garrett, *The Triumphs of Providence*, 40). Some references to Jacobite loyalty are less serious and simply humorous, like the account of the “nine butchers on their way to Thames” who were “held up by nine highwaymen who, having robbed them, made them sit in a row and drink King James' health” (Garrett, *The Triumphs of Providence*, 42).

for these convictional Jacobites and Anglican Nonjurors.

Jacobite and Tory interpretations of the “1688 Revolution” persist. As recently as 1988, some three-hundred years after the Revolution, Robert Beddard criticized the 1688 Revolution as an unlawful, “forcible deposition” of James II:

By specifically showing how it was that the Kingdom came to lose its lawful, God-given King in 1688, not by abdication, nor by desertion, but by forcible deposition on 18 December, well before the so-called transfer of the crown in the Convention of 1689, I wish to emphasize the most revolutionary phase, and, I submit, the most revolutionary aspect of the 1688 Revolution. I mean, of course, the dynastic revolution, which was effectively over, if not entirely done with, before December was out, and which a hastily summoned Convention was called upon to ratify in the new year. For the first time since 1485 the legitimate reigning monarch was overthrown, and with him the rightful House of Stuart. His son and heir, the Prince of Wales, was callously cast aside, and the claims of legitimacy spurned by the triumphant usurper. Little wonder that Archbishop Sancroft saw “no difference” between Lord Protector Cromwell and the Prince of Orange, “but that the one’s name was Oliver, and the other William.”⁹¹

Beddard also dismissed William’s expeditionary force as a hodge-podge of “disreputable types”:

[William’s fleet] included in their ranks enough disreputable types to disturb any decently run kingdom that did not happen to agree with them—disgruntled peers, redundant MPs, proclaimed traitors, escaped spies, fugitive rebels, suspected republicans, renegade officers, and mischievous divines.⁹²

⁹¹Beddard, *A Kingdom without a King*, 6.

⁹²Beddard, *A Kingdom without a King*, 20-21.

With respect to “mischievous divines,” Beddard specifically identified Gilbert Burnet as a “maverick Episcopalian.”⁹³ For Beddard, the 1688 Revolution was primarily about “ultra-Protestant ‘Whigs’” enforcing their “policy of excluding ‘a Popish successor.’”⁹⁴

Thus, rejection of William of Orange on the basis of Divine Right doctrine was maintained by Jacobites and conscientious Tories in the late seventeenth centuries. In like manner, modern historians like Beddard continue to defend the Jacobite cause according to the seventeenth-century claim of divine right.

Reception of William of Orange on the Basis of Divine Right

“It used to be said that the Revolution of 1688 was justified after the fact, but this is understatement.”⁹⁵ After the Prince of Orange assumed the throne of James II, William’s accession stood in desperate need of legitimization. However, legitimizing William’s accession was no easy task. Remarkably, nearly half of the Tories who swore allegiance to William III in 1689 had previously sworn allegiance to James II no earlier than 1685 and had consequently affirmed divine right doctrine along with the inflexible doctrine of nonresistance.⁹⁶ The fourfold tenets of divine right doctrine would not be as

⁹³“Among the Protestant ministers of religion three were of note: the maverick Episcopalian, Gilbert Burnet, the canting Presbyterian, William Carstares, and the nonconformist Robert Ferguson—suggesting the embryonic pan-Protestant alliance which the Prince, an old-fashioned predestinarian Calvinist, personally favoured.” (Beddard, *A Kingdom without a King*, 16)

⁹⁴Beddard, *A Kingdom without a King*, 16. Beddard does concede, however, that William’s camp did eventually “acquire a Tory dimension” (Beddard, *A Kingdom without a King*, 21).

⁹⁵Straka, *Anglican Reaction to the Revolution of 1688*, 3.

⁹⁶Trevelyan, *The English Revolution*, 51. The fact that half of the Tories swore allegiance to William continues to astound. Accordingly, Overton, an admirer of the Nonjurors, wrote with incredulity,

Strange to say, none had committed themselves more distinctly to the doctrine of non-resistance than those who afterwards became the staunchest supporters, on the ecclesiastical side, of the Revolution. Tillotson and Burnet had impressed it upon poor Lord William Russell, when he was under sentence of death, as if it were an article of faith, without the

easily dismissed, for “there was no question in the mind of the average Anglican that the ordinary rule of succession to the crown of England was hereditary.”⁹⁷ Moreover, the Anglican church knew that the doctrine of divine right was not invented by James II either. The doctrine of divine right certainly predated the 1688 Revolution. James I, for example, had delivered a speech before his Lords and Commons in Whitehall on March 21, 1609, in which he articulated an absolutist understanding of divine right doctrine:

The state of monarchy is the supremest thing upon earth; for kings are not only God’s lieutenants upon earth, and sit upon God’s throne, but even by God himself they are called gods. There be three principal similitudes that illustrate the state of monarchy: one taken out of the word of God; and the two other out of the grounds of policy and philosophy. In the Scriptures kings are called gods, and so their power after a certain relation compared to the divine power. Kings are also compared to fathers of families; for a king is truly *parens patriae*, the politic father of his people. And lastly, kings are compared to the head of this microcosm of the body of man.

Kings are justly called gods, for that they exercise a manner or resemblance of divine power upon earth; for if you will consider the attributes to God, you shall see how they agree in the person of a king. God hath power to create or destroy, make or unmake at his pleasure, to give life or send death, to judge all and to be judged nor accountable to none, to raise low things and to make high things low at his pleasure, and to God are both soul and body due. And the like power have kings they make and unmake their subjects, they have power of raising and casting down, of life and of death, judges over all their subjects and in all causes and yet accountable to none but God only. They have power to exalt low things and abase high things, and make of their subjects, like men at chess,—a pawn to take a bishop or a knight,—and to cry up or down any of their subjects, as they do their money. And to the king is due both the affection of the soul and the service of the body of his subjects.⁹⁸

explicit acceptance of which there could hardly be any hope of salvation. Tenison did the same when ministering to the unfortunate Duke of Monmouth before his execution. Stillingfleet defended it with his usual force and ability, so did Patrick; so did Beveridge; so did White Kennett; and all these accepted bishoprics under the Revolution settlement which to the ordinary mind seems absolutely irreconcilable with it. William Sherlock, afterwards Master of the Temple and Dean of St. Paul’s, wrote in 1684 one of the ablest defences of it in its extremest form—“The Case of Resistance”—and six years later an equally able treatise in opposition to it—“The Case of Allegiance.” (Overton, *The Nonjurors*, 4-5)

⁹⁷Straka, *Anglican Reaction to the Revolution of 1688*, 50.

⁹⁸James I’s *Speech to Parliament* is cited from James Harvey Robinson, *Readings in European History* (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1906), 2:219-20. Like James I, almost every bishop of the Revolution would point to Rom 13:1-7 as the biblical basis for nonresistance and

By the time of the Glorious Revolution, divine right (according to the Jacobite understanding) was an established political doctrine:

There was no end to the sources of divine right. . . . The good Anglican could cite any one of hundreds of the century's sermons to support his argument—he could use Spinoza, Hobbes, Filmer, the discourses of Bishop Hooper, or the poetry of John Donne—or but take down his copy of the popular *Whole Duty of Man* and read that kings, as the ministers of God, are never to be resisted.⁹⁹

More troublesome for Williamites, the doctrine of divine right was not just a High-Church doctrine; it had become “essentially a popular theory”:

The seventeenth century concept of divine right was essentially a popular theory, proclaimed in the pulpit, published in the market place, witnessed on the battlefield. No one philosopher developed it; it was powerful in that it was held as a universal truth among all conditions of men. Four ideas were involved in the belief: that monarchy was a divinely-ordained institution; that hereditary right was indefeasible;

passive obedience. James II, in political and religious lockstep with Louis XIV, aimed at no lower a view of divine right:

Nowhere is the divine nature of the kingly power set forth with more eloquence and ardor than in the work of the distinguished prelate, orator, and theologian, Bossuet, whom Louis XIV chose as the preceptor of his son, the dauphin (1670–1681). His treatise on Politics drawn from the Very Words of Holy Scripture was prepared with a view of giving the heir to the French throne a proper idea both of his lofty position and of his heavy responsibilities. No one can read this work without being profoundly impressed with the irresistible appeal which kingship, as Bossuet represents it, must make to a mind that looked to the Scriptures for its theories of government. The essential characteristics of royalty, Bossuet explains, are, first, that it is sacred; second, paternal; third, absolute; and fourth, subject to reason. (Robinson, *Readings in European History*, 2:272-73)

Abednego Seller advanced the same notion of divine right with respect to James II and the “Oath of Supremacy” in *History of Passive Obedience*:

In our Oath of Supremacy we swear, *That the King is the only supreme Governor; Supreme*, so none (not the Pope) above him; and *only Supreme*, so none coordinate, or equal to him; so that by our known Laws our King is *solo Deo minor*, invested with such a Supremacy, as excludes both Pope and People (and all the World, God Almighty only excepted by whom Kings do Reign) from having any Power, Jurisdiction, or Authority over him. —This Book hath its *Imprimatur*, not from any mean hand, but from my Lord Bishop of London himself. (Seller, *History of Passive Obedience*, 72)

Seller also noted that Gilbert Burnet's *Vindication* was “full to this purpose” (Seller, *History of Passive Obedience*, 73).

⁹⁹Straka, “Divine Right and the Defense of Royal Supremacy after 1688,” in *Anglican Reaction to the Revolution of 1688*, 80-81.

that kings were accountable to God alone; and that nonresistance and passive obedience were enjoined by God.¹⁰⁰

Thus, England did not reject James II because she was ignorant of the tenets of divine right doctrine, including the stipulations of hereditary succession and passive obedience; England had rejected James II in spite of the doctrine and stipulations of divine right theory.¹⁰¹

Nevertheless, William's men were prepared to meet the challenge posed by divine right doctrine head-on. James II's reign officially ended on December 11, 1688;¹⁰² William entered London on December 18, 1688; and concrete evidence of a new kind of divine right doctrine was articulated by Williamites as early as December 23, 1688.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰Straka, "Divine Right and the Defense of Royal Supremacy," in *Anglican Reaction to the Revolution of 1688*, 80.

¹⁰¹Claydon depicts William, not as a time-honored English hero, but rather as a fix for England's Jacobite problem. Consequently, William "has not been greatly lauded, despite exerting himself in ways which usually earn lionization from the British: opposing a continental threat and acting to establish a parliamentary constitution. His disappearance began almost immediately. The monument the privy council planned for the king in Westminster Abbey, and in some 'public place,' was never erected, and the political nation seemed willing to forget him under Queen Anne" (Tony Claydon and W. A. Speck, *William & Mary* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007], 88). Claydon provides many reasons for William's loss of popularity, including his preoccupation with French conquest, his "multifaceted lack of sociability," his poor health, his ill features, and the "little pains" he took to actually "gain the affections of the nation" (Claydon, *William & Mary*, 90).

¹⁰²Parliament passed a declaration on February 13, 1689, that reckoned the English throne to be vacant as of December 11, 1688, when James II fled for France and thereby abdicated his office.

¹⁰³Gilbert Burnet, *A Sermon Preached in the Chappel of St. James's Before His Highness the Prince of Orange, The 23^d of December, 1688*, 2nd ed. (London, 1689). It is possible that the language of providence may have been used prior to December 23, 1688. Robert Beddard notes that after his "first night ashore," William began unfurling his political and theological justification for invading England. "With William's connivance," Beddard writes, "Burnet took over prayers in Exeter Cathedral, while Ferguson commandeered the Dissenter's meeting-house. Both were strenuous advocates of [William's] cause in pulpit, prayer, and propaganda" (Robert Beddard, *A Kingdom without a King*, 22); See also Lisa Jardine, *Going Dutch*, 25, and Tony Claydon, *William III and The Godly Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 54-55. The sermon that Burnet preached in Exeter may be surmised; however, December 23 provides the earliest piece of incontrovertible evidence of pro-William use of the doctrine of divine providence in a pulpit setting.

The new formulation of divine right would not be based upon indefeasible hereditary succession, for that would exclude William's right to rule. The new formulation of divine right would override the normal rules of hereditary succession according to divine determination. "The Church," Straka explained, "would only need to "make one change in the older form of the idea":

For in formulating the divine right of providence to set up one king in the stead of another, it solved the theological problem of hereditary right and its sacredness. Thus divine right was saved by the transition it made after the Revolution by being linked to a greater universal providence which politics could not touch.¹⁰⁴

William could not upend the doctrine of divine right and hereditary succession all on his own; neither could parliament. William needed the Anglican church to generate popular approval of his kingly reign with Mary on the basis of divine right by providential appointment. The English divines did not disappoint the Orange cause; they set themselves to the task of validating William and Mary's accession by this new doctrine of divine right by providence.

In the years following the Glorious Revolution, providentialist rhetoric proliferated in tracts, pamphlets, broadsides, and especially sermons. Claydon explains:

William made intense use of sermons to justify his armed expedition to England in the autumn of 1688, and to legitimate his acceptance of James' crown from a constitutional convention a few months later. . . . William's claim to be saving English Protestants from the Catholic James may also have inclined him to the medium. Choosing this argument, the prince posed as protector of a people who had always insisted on preaching as the core of religious life, so it made sense to use a form of propaganda that implicitly supported its message.¹⁰⁵

As the prospect of sitting on the English throne became more and more plausible, "the

¹⁰⁴Straka, "Divine Right and the Defense of Royal Supremacy," in *Anglican Reaction to the Revolution of 1688*, 80.

¹⁰⁵Tony Claydon, "The Sermon Culture of the Glorious Revolution: Williamite Preaching and Jacobite Anti-preaching, 1685–1702," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Early Modern Sermon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 481.

Orange party began to stress the providential case for the prince's greatness, which it had put from the pulpit, rather than the legal reason of its manifesto."¹⁰⁶ Claydon continues:

A vital step [for the Orange cause] was to recruit the London clergy. A group of the capital's clerics had led Anglican resistance to James II's policies after 1685; they had become widely respected for this, as well as for their popular pulpit oratory; and, once William had arrived at St. James's Palace, they were comprehensively wooed. Won over by William's invitations to meet him, . . . ministers such as John Tillotson, Simon Patrick, William Wake, and Edward Stillingfleet began a series of preached addresses. These prepared the public for the prince's advance to the throne, and then justified his elevation once it occurred on 13 February, 1689.¹⁰⁷

Gilbert Burnet was the undisputed ring leader of these pro-Williamite sermonizers;¹⁰⁸ however, other prominent ministers supported the Williamite cause also. For example, William Lloyd (1627–1717), the great Bishop of Asaph, was a preacher of providence and a defender of the Williamite revolution. In a sermon preached before Queen Mary, Lloyd provided criteria by which an act may be “appropriated to God”:

First, when it is so surprizing a work, that we can assign no other Cause, from which it does, or can, proceed, but God only. Secondly, when, beside the unaccountableness of the Cause, we see the effect is such as we may reasonably believe that God is concern'd for. Thirdly, when we see there was a great and near danger of losing that which God was concern'd for, if this had not happened for its preservation. I think these three that I have named are sure tokens by which we may Judge, without danger of mistake, that anything that happens in this manner is of God's doing.¹⁰⁹

The “Protestant wind” figured prominently in the minds of many who believed

¹⁰⁶Claydon, “The Sermon Culture of the Glorious Revolution,” 482.

¹⁰⁷Claydon, “The Sermon Culture of the Glorious Revolution,” 482.

¹⁰⁸Gilbert Burnet's important role in the Williamite Revolution will be treated in greater detail in chaps. 4 and 5.

¹⁰⁹William Lloyd, “*A Sermon Preached before Her Majesty, on May 29, being the Anniversary of the Restauration of the King and Royal Family. By the Bishop of S. Asaph, Lord Almoner to Their Majesties*” (London, 1692), 5. Lloyd's sermon was subsequently printed “by her majesty's command.” Interestingly, Lloyd's sermon was based upon Ps 118:23—the same text that Burnet preached on December 23, 1688, after William arrived in London.

that William was God's king by a divine right of providence. Indeed, the "Protestant wind" became one of the seminal proofs that God had appointed William III to be King of England. Commenting on the famed "Protestant Wind," Macaulay wrote,

The weather had indeed served the Protestant cause so well that some men of more piety than judgment fully believed the ordinary laws of nature to have been suspended for the preservation of the liberty and religion of England. Exactly a hundred years before, they said, the Armada, invincible by man, had been scattered by the wrath of God. Civil freedom and divine truth were again in jeopardy; and again the obedient elements had fought for the good cause. The wind had blown strong from the east while the Prince wished to sail down the Channel, had turned to the south when he wished to enter Torbay, had sunk to a calm during the disembarkation, and, as soon as disembarkation was complete, had risen to a storm, and had met the pursuers in the face.¹¹⁰

Even Robert Beddard, who is certainly no sympathizer of the Williamite cause,¹¹¹ admitted,

In the end it was the arrival of a strong east wind—the celebrated "Protestant wind" of Whig epic—that decided the direction [William] took, not advance planning . . .

¹¹⁰Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:243-244. Macaulay marks the politico-religious significance of William's landing on November 5, 1688:

Nor did men omit to remark that, by an extraordinary coincidence, the Prince had reached our shores on a day on which the Church of England commemorated, by prayer and thanksgiving, the wonderful escape of the royal House and of the three Estates from the blackest plot ever devised by Papists. Carstairs, whose suggestions were sure to meet with attention from the Prince, recommended that, as soon as the landing had been effected, public thanks should be offered to God for the protection so conspicuously accorded to the great enterprise. This advice was taken, and with excellent effect. The troops, taught to regard themselves as favourites of heaven, were inspired with new courage; and the English people formed the most favourable opinion of a general and an army so attentive to the duties of religion. (Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:244)

See also Geoffrey Parker, "Of Providence and Protestant Winds: The Spanish Armada of 1588 and the Dutch Armada of 1688," in *The Anglo-Dutch Moment: Essays on the Glorious Revolution and Its World Impact*, ed. Jonathan I. Israel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 335.

¹¹¹Beddard describes William III as a "practiced opportunist"; of William's expedition, Beddard writes, "William's expedition resulted in usurpation, even though he had repeatedly disclaimed any such intention in coming into his father-in-law's kingdom" (Beddard, *Kingdom without a King*, 6).

William's fleet in 1688, like Philip II's Armada in 1588, was at the disposal of providence. *Deus flavit*.¹¹²

Many Anglican clergymen of the Revolution reinforced the notion that God was on William's team, and they pointed to the winds of providence as confirmation of God's approval of William. For example, John Tillotson (1630–1694), who became Lord Archbishop of Canterbury by William's appointment after 1688, preached a thanksgiving sermon entitled, "A Sermon Preached before the King and Queen at White-Hall, the 27th of October, being the Day Appointed for a Publick Thanksgiving to Almighty God." In this sermon, Tillotson considered "how very often and remarkably the Providence of God doth interpose to cast the Victory on the unlikely side."¹¹³ Tillotson declared,

One way, among many others, whereby the Providence of God doth often interpose to decide the events of War, is by a remarkable change of the Seasons and Weather in favour of one Side: As by sending great Snows, or violent Rains, to hinder the early motion and march of a powerful Army, to the disappointment or prejudice of some great Design: By remarkable Winds and Storms at Sea, to prevent the conjunction of a powerful Fleet: and by governing all these for a long time together so visibly to the advantage of one Side as utterly to defeat the well laid design of the other. Of all which, by the great mercy and goodness of God to us, we have had the happy experience in all our late Signal Deliverances and Victories. And here, I cannot but take notice of a passage to this purpose in the Book of Job: Which may deserve our more attentive regard and consideration, because I take this Book to be incomparably the most ancient of all other, and much elder than Moses: And yet it is written with as lively a sense of the Providence of God, and as noble Figures and flight of Eloquence as perhaps any Book extant in the world. The Passage I mean is, where God to convince Job of his ignorance in the secrets of Nature and Providence poseth him with many hard Questions, and with amongst the rest, *Hast though entred into the treasures of the Snow? Hast though seen the treasures of the Haile? Which I have reserv'd against the time of trouble, against the Day of Battel*

¹¹²Beddard, *Kingdom without a King*, 19. Beddard has refused to acknowledge William's "scheme of policy." Contra Macaulay and Trevelyan, Beddard has insisted that the Revolution "was not the product of a minutely conceived and carefully executed plan on William's part" (Beddard, *Kingdom without a King*, 6; cf. Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:288, and Trevelyan, *The English Revolution*, 4).

¹¹³John Tillotson, "A Sermon Preached before the King and Queen at White-Hall, the 27th of October, being the Day Appointed for a Publick Thanksgiving to Almighty God" (London, 1692), 10. The frontispiece of this sermon carries King William and Queen Mary's endorsement: "Published by their Majesties special command."

and War: The meaning of which is, that the Providence of God doth sometimes interpose to determine the events of War, by governing the Seasons and the Weather, and by making the Snows and Rains, the Winds and Storms to fulfil his word and to execute his pleasure.¹¹⁴

Tillotson closed his sermon by beseeching “Almighty God, that he would long preserve to us the invaluable Blessing of our two Excellent Princes;¹¹⁵ whom the Providence of God hath sent amongst us, like two good Angels.”¹¹⁶

Similarly, Symon Patrick (1626–1707), Lord Bishop of Ely, refers to the winds of providence in a sermon entitled, “A Sermon Preached before the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, in the Abby-Church at Westminster, Nov. 5, 1696, being the Anniversary Thanksgiving, for the Happy Deliverance from the Gunpowder Treason, and also, for the Happy Arrival of His Present Majesty on this Day, for the Deliverance of Our Church and Nation.”¹¹⁷ In this sermon, Patrick discussed “the extent of God’s dominion and providence,”¹¹⁸ specifically in regard to William III, his expedition to England, and the Glorious Revolution. Patrick preached,

God was pleased to raise up the spirit of our present sovereign [i.e., William III] to enterprise our deliverance, and with the hazard of his own person to endeavour our preservation. . . . God turned the hearts of the whole realm to favour his design so far as to wish prosperity to him in his voyage hither. And he turned the winds also to be so favourable, that if they had been absolutely at his own disposal, he could not have commanded them to be more obsequious to him than he found them. For

¹¹⁴Tillotson, “A Sermon Preached before the King and Queen at White-Hall,” 10-11; emphasis original.

¹¹⁵By “two excellent Princes,” Tillotson is referring to William III and Mary II.

¹¹⁶Tillotson, “A Sermon Preached before the King and Queen at White-Hall,” 35.

¹¹⁷Symon Patrick, “A Sermon Preached before the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, in the Abby-Church at Westminster, Nov. 5, 1696, being the Anniversary Thanksgiving, for the Happy Deliverance from the Gunpowder Treason, and also, for the Happy Arrival of His Present Majesty on this Day, for the Deliverance of our Church and Nation,” in *The Works of Symon Patrick, D.D., Sometime Bishop of Ely*, ed. Alexander Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1863): 8:523-43.

¹¹⁸Patrick, “A Sermon Preached before the Lords Spiritual and Temporal,” in *The Works of Symon Patrick*, 8:528.

when he was brought to our coast by a strong gale in a very speedy course, and had overshot his port, the wind changed immediately and brought him back to his desired haven. . . . [God] made him appear like a hand out of a cloud to rescue us from our eminent danger; being so befriended from above. . . . A deliverer was sent unexpectedly to us when we were ready to perish, and without any contrivance of ours we saw all the contrivances of those that hated us utterly broken in pieces. This we must acknowledge was brought about by the singular providence of God. . . . We cannot ascribe such a wonder revolution of affairs to mere human force, which was very small; but to the omnipotent hand of God.”¹¹⁹

In this way, a new version of divine right doctrine based upon God’s providence was used to justify William’s reign.

One final note regarding the doctrine of passive obedience is necessary before concluding this overview. Most remarkably, William’s government retained the doctrine of passive obedience *in toto*. On the one hand, the rhetoric of providence enabled Williamites to trump James II’s rightful claim to the English throne; however, on the other hand, divine right of providence theory retained its chief safeguard against popular English resistance to the crown. Thus, Gilbert Burnet would write to his fellow Anglican Divines concerning William’s government:

I do not know one of all the Divines that have sworn to the present Government, who are not still of the same Opinion that they were formerly of, and that do not still judge Resistance on the account of Religion to be unlawful.”¹²⁰

Of course, after 1688, the doctrine of passive obedience was wielded in support of William III, not James II. Consequently, the Nonjurors and Jacobites found Williamite

¹¹⁹Symon Patrick, “A Sermon Preached before the Lords Spiritual and Temporal,” in *The Works of Symon Patrick*, 8:537-38. A bit later, Patrick again emphasizes, If God demonstrate his providence in anything here in this world, (and I have proved he shows it in all things), he exercises it in the governing, defending, and protecting of public persons and societies. And never was there a more visible appearance of the Divine Providence over a kingdom than in the discovery and prevention of the gunpowder treason, and in the late defeat which he unexpectedly gave to the same conspirators against our religion and liberties. (Symon Patrick, “A Sermon Preached before the Lords Spiritual and Temporal,” in *The Works of Symon Patrick*, 8:540)

¹²⁰Gilbert Burnet, *Reflections Upon A Pamphlet, Entituled, Some Discourses upon Dr. Burnet and Dr. Tillotson, Occasioned by the Late Funeral-Sermon of the Former upon the Later. By the Right Reverend Father in God, Gilbert Lord Bishop of Sarum* (London, 1696), 43.

insistence upon the doctrine of passive obedience to be outrageously hypocritical and self-serving.¹²¹ Yet, many pro-William clergymen continued to herald passive obedience, even as they supported the revolution using providentialist rhetoric. So, for example, William Sherlock, Dean of St. Paul's and Master of the Temple, urged:

Those who believed the Doctrine of Non-resistance and Passive Obedience to be a good Doctrine before may think so still, and be never the less Friends of the present Government; and I have often thought it a wonderful Providence of God, that in an Age, wherein the strictest Loyalty and Obedience had been so earnestly pressed on Men, so great a Revolution should be brought about, while the generality of Subjects were merely passive, and surprized into a Deliverance.¹²²

Charles Hickman (1648–1713), Bishop of Derry, likewise urged, “All that Obedience which the Scripture requires us to pay unto the King, we must now look upon as devolv'd upon their present Majesties.”¹²³ Finally, as late as 1697, John Moore (1646–1714), Lord Bishop of Norwich, preached to the House of Lords and insisted that those who were guilty of the “Sin of Resistance” against William's government would “receive to

¹²¹In an anonymous publication from 1693, a hypothetical Tory speaks to a hypothetical Whig:

Come, you will make no Prince have the worse Opinion of us for that; The Right Line, Passive Obedience, and Non-Resistance, Prerogative, &c. will always sound well in every King's Ear. And when he considers us Enemies to his Title only out of a Principle of Loyalty, he will have reason rather to accuse his own Misfortune, than our Vertue; we plainly and honestly told him our Principles, that we believ'd him a King *de facto* only; and our Honour in this Point made him rely upon our Honour in others. *Dialogue Betixt Whig and Tory, Aliàs Williamite and Iacobite. Wherein the Principles and Practices of each Party are fairly and impartially stated; that thereby Mistakes and Prejudices may be Removed from amongst us, and all those who prefer English Liberty, and Protestant Religion, to French Slavery and Popery, may be Inform'd how to choose fit and Proper Instruments for our Preservation in these Times of Danger* (London, 1693), 25.

¹²²William Sherlock, *A Sermon Preach'd before the Honourable House of Commons, at St. Margaret's Westminster, January the XXXth, 1691/2* (London, 1692), 22-23.

¹²³Charles Hickman, *A Sermon Preached before the Honourable House of Commons at St. Margarets Westminster, on Sunday the 19th of October, 1690, Being the Thanksgiving-Day for the Wonderful Preservation of His Majesties Person* (London, 1690), 24.

themselves damnation.”¹²⁴ The Bishop of Norwich concluded his sermon with expressions of thanksgiving to God for King William:

The Sinful People of this Land, have yet more and fresh Arguments of rendering Praises and Thanksgivings to our God, who, when our Religion, Freedoms, and Laws, no long time since, were reduced to Extremity of Danger, insomuch as the whole Nation, even to a small Handful of Men, did despair of their Continuance among us, was pleased then to secure them, and work a Deliverance for us by His Excellent Majesty King William.¹²⁵

Therefore, while the doctrine of providence was used to discard divine right by hereditary succession, passive obedience was retained and used to support the Orange cause in the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution.

Conclusion

Divine right of providence theory obviously sprung from the necessities imposed upon the Church by the Revolution. When Lloyd or Burnet talked about the irresistibility of providence’s disposal of kingdoms, they obviously meant that the Revolution was not to be opposed because it was providentially divine.¹²⁶

Prior to the Revolution of 1688, James II was the indisputable king of England on the basis of settled Anglican doctrine: the doctrine of divine right, including the stipulations of indefeasible hereditary succession and passive obedience. In spite of such doctrinal provisions, William III’s accession to the English throne was justified on the basis of a revolutionary doctrine: the divine right of providence.

¹²⁴John Moore, *A Sermon Preach'd before the House of Lords in the Abby-Church at Westminster, upon Monday January 31, 1697* (London, 1697), 21.

¹²⁵Moore, *A Sermon Preach'd before the House of Lords*, 34.

¹²⁶Straka, *Anglican Reaction to the Revolution of 1688*, 73.

CHAPTER 3

THE LANGUAGE OF PROVIDENCE USED: JOSEPH STENNETT'S FAITHFUL WITNESS

Introduction

Joseph Stennett has already been introduced as a renowned Baptist preacher in England during the tumultuous late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. This chapter examines Stennett's political theology—particularly Stennett's consistent and convictional use of the doctrine of providence. Sufficient sources exist to represent Stennett's political doctrine as well as Stennett's understanding and use of providence.

Stennett's Political Doctrine

Joseph Stennett was a “truly public spirit.”¹ Indeed, Stennett was a key figure in bringing the Baptists “into the royal esteem”—particularly in the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution.² Stennett's name was known to both King William and later to Queen Anne; however, Stennett remained steadily committed to his pastoral charge. There is no evidence in his Stennett's *Works* that political life compromised his personal integrity, pastoral priorities, or pastoral convictions. While Stennett's *Works* are limited to five volumes, they provide sufficient material to discern the following: (1) Stennett's perspective on civil and religious liberty, (2) Stennett's “English Israel” motif, and (3) Stennett's perspective on the Glorious Revolution. These perspectives undergird Stennett's use of the doctrine of providence.

¹“Some Account of His Life,” in *The Works of the Late Reverend and Learned Mr. Joseph Stennett* (London, 1732), 1:32. Hereafter cited as *Works*. The author of “Some Account of His Life” is unknown.

²“Some Account of His Life,” in *Works*, 1:31.

Stennett on Civil and Religious Liberty

Stennett's earliest biographer, who is anonymous, described him as one "bred up with a true sense of the value of English liberty."³ Stennett learned a "principle of liberty" from his father, Edward, who fought on the side of Parliament with Cromwell's army during the English Civil War.⁴ Moreover, in the reign of King Charles II, young Joseph Stennett "attended his father a considerable time in prison for the cause of conscience and religion."⁵ Yet, Stennett's convictions of liberty and conscience were not merely inherited. Stennett's political and religious "principles" were resolutely "formed on a diligent and impartial study of the Scripture themselves."⁶ Whether properly interpreted or not, Stennett was pleased to consider his political doctrines to be thoroughly biblically-based.⁷

Stennett's *Works* betray a love for liberty, as well as a disgust for tyranny. Stennett's love for liberty was often expressed in terms of esteem and appreciation for King William III and later Queen Anne. Because Stennett's extant political sermons dated in the 1700s, Queen Anne's wise administration was often the focus of Stennett's political commentary. However, Stennett believed that William III was the real "hero" of the seventeenth century. According to Stennett, William III made Englishmen "doubly free, with civil and religious liberty."⁸ For that reason, Stennett believed that William's

³"Some Account of His Life," in *Works*, 1:9.

⁴"Some Account of His Life," in *Works*, 1:4.

⁵"Some Account of His Life," in *Works*, 1:9.

⁶"Some Account of His Life," in *Works*, 1:9. Moreover, Stennett was "willing to receive light, being fond of no opinion, either for its novelty or antiquity, if it did not appear to be true; nor ashamed of any notion in religion, because it was grown out of fashion" ("Some Account of His Life," in *Works*, 1:8-9).

⁷Stennett's biographer also wrote, "I have often heard [Stennett] say with pleasure, that he was the better satisfied with his principles, because they were formed on a diligent study of the holy Scripture themselves" ("Some Account of His Life," in *Works*, 1:9).

⁸Joseph Stennett, "Poem to the Memory of K. William III," in *Works*, 4:208.

name would “always appear bright in our English history, as long as the love of liberty and religion shall obtain among us, that liberty which he so gloriously restored, and that religion which he so happily secured by the favourable providence of God.”⁹ Conversely, Stennett excoriated “Lewis” (i.e., Louis XIV) as the great enemy of civil and religious liberty.¹⁰ From the perspective of providence, Stennett believed that God had divinely vindicated the cause of English liberty by thwarting the tyranny of arbitrary princes like Louis XIV and James II.

Stennett’s love of liberty is primarily evidenced in four thanksgiving sermons¹¹

⁹Joseph Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:293.

¹⁰Stennett, “Poem to the Memory of K. William III,” in *Works*, 4:209-10; See also Joseph Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704,” in *Works*, 1:240-43.

¹¹Proclamations for a “general fast” or a “solemn thanksgiving” were common in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries—particularly during the reigns of William III (1689–1702) and Anne (1702–1714). Not all of these proclamations are still extant; however, William and Mary’s proclamation on May 30, 1690, provides a sense of how these proclamations were worded:

Whereas for above a Year last past a Wicked Rebellion hath been Carried on and Maintained against Their Majesties in Their Kingdom of Ireland, Which hath been Contrived, Encouraged, and chiefly Supported by the French King, designing by that means to make an absolute Conquest of the said Kingdom, and hold it as a Province, or else to bring a total Ruine and Destruction upon the same; for which (amongst other Causes) Their Majesties have been Obliged to enter into a Just and Necessary War against the said French King. And whereas His Majesty is Resolved, by the Assistance of God, Vigorously to Prosecute the said War by Sea and Land; And so effectually to Reduce that Kingdom to its due Obedience, that Their Majesties good Subjects there may not only be Rescued from the present Force and Violence; but be Secured against all such Aggressions for the Future, and be Settled in a Firm and Lasting State of Peace, Safety, and Prosperity: For which purpose His Majesty hath determined to make a Royal Voyage and go thither in Person, putting His Trust in Almighty God (who hath by his marvellous Providence hitherto Preserved and Conducted His Majesty) That he will vouchsafe a special Blessing on His Righteous Undertaking, and thereby Consummate the Deliverance of these Kingdoms. Their Majesties taking the Premises into Their most Serious Consideration, have thought sit to Appoint, and do by and with the Advice of Their Privy, Council, hereby Appoint and Command a General and Publick Fast and Humiliation to be Observed throughout the said Kingdom of Ireland, in most Devout and Solemn manner, for Supplicating Almighty God for Pardon of Our Sins, and Imploring His Blessing and Protection in the Preservation of His Majesties Sacred Person, and Prosperity of His Arms, to be Religiously Kept and Observed on Wednesday the Five and twentieth day of June next, throughout the said Kingdom of Ireland, and thereafter to be Observed on the Third Wednesday in every Month

that unmistakably celebrate the providence of God in securing England's civil and religious liberty: "A Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704,"¹² "A Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,"¹³ "A Sermon Preach'd on the 1st of May, 1707,"¹⁴ and "A Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 17th of February 1708."¹⁵ Each of these sermons will be addressed in view of Stennett's perspectives on civil and religious liberty.

"A Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704" (a thanksgiving sermon for the victory at Hochstet). The first of Stennett's extant thanksgiving sermons was preached in 1704 in commemoration of an English victory

successively, during the present War. And for the more Orderly Solemnizing of the said several Fast Days, Their Majesties have taken Care to Transmit herewith a Form of Prayers suitable to this Occasion, to be used in all Churches and Chappels, and other Places of Publick Worship within the said Kingdom; And have given Charge for the Dispersing thereof through the said Kingdom. And Their Majesties do most Expressly Charge and Command that the said Fastings and Prayers be Reverently and Decently Performed by all Their Loving Subjects, as they tender the Favour of Almighty God, and upon Pain of such Punishments as Their Majesties can Justly Inflict upon all such as shall Contemn or Neglect so Religious a Work. *By the King and Queen, A PROCLAMATION For a GENERAL FAST* (London, 1690).

¹²Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704," in *Works*, 1:213-58. In Stennett's *Works*, the publisher repeatedly referred to this sermon as "A thanksgiving sermon for the victory at Hochstet" (Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704," in *Works*, 1:213-58).

¹³Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706," in *Works*, 1:293. In Stennett's *Works*, the publisher repeatedly referred to this sermon as "A thanksgiving sermon for the victory at Ramillies" (Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706," in *Works*, 1:259-309).

¹⁴Joseph Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on the 1st of May, 1707," in *Works*, 1:310-40. In Stennett's *Works*, the publisher repeatedly referred to this sermon as "A thanksgiving sermon for the union of England and Scotland" (Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on the 1st of May, 1707," in *Works*, 1:310-40).

¹⁵Joseph Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708," in *Works*, 1:341-82. In Stennett's *Works*, the publisher repeatedly referred to this particular sermon as "A thanksgiving sermon for the many successes in 1708" (Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708," in *Works*, 1:310-40).

over the French at Blenheim near Hochstet. In this sermon, Stennett compared England's warring with France to Israel's warring with the Canaanites in Judges 4-5. According to Stennett, Jabin was "a heathen tyrant" who "had actually enslaved this free people."¹⁶ Yet, in spite of Jabin's lust for power, "God was pleased to crown [Israel's] government with a glorious victory."¹⁷ Stennett described Israel's victory over the Canaanites using the language of liberty:

A victory to a nation under so great oppression, and living in fear of being loaded with yet heavier chains, was a kind of resurrection. The revival of the glorious cause of their religion and liberty, furnished an occasion of joy and thanksgiving fit to be celebrated by the tongue and pen of that prophetess [Deborah], who had, under God, the chief hand in the work, . . . brought destruction on the forces of Jabin [King of the Canaanites], and returned liberty and peace to the tribes of Israel.¹⁸

"The consequence of this wonderful victory," Stennett explained, "was not only the reestablishment of the liberty of the Israelites, but the dissipation of all their fears, the enemy being overthrown beyond a possibility of rallying again."¹⁹

Stennett enthusiastically applied Judges 4-5 to his own English situation by "consider[ing] the hopeful prospect that is hence taken of the future victories to be expected by the church on like occasions, *So let all thy enemies perish, O Lord.*"²⁰ To

¹⁶Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704," in *Works*, 1:217.

¹⁷Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704," in *Works*, 1:213-214.

¹⁸Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704," in *Works*, 1:223.

¹⁹Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704," in *Works*, 1:226.

²⁰Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704," in *Works*, 1:227; emphasis original. Moreover, Stennett wanted to erase all "doubt in the mind of any person, whether such a prayer as this, tho used by the Israelitish church, is suitable to the mild and forgiving temper of the evangelick administration" (Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704," in *Works*, 1:227). Stennett rejected the notion that "under the dispensation of the Old Testament a much greater liberty was taken by holy men to invoke the divine vengeance against their enemies, than is allowed under then new" (Stennett, "A Sermon

Stennett's mind, the English were engaged in a fight for liberty with the French, just like the Israelites of old were engaged in a fight for liberty with the Canaanites. Stennett was careful to admit that, unlike Israel of old, England actually remained in full possession of her liberty and religion in 1704;²¹ yet, Stennett also insisted that England's warring with France was nevertheless a fight for civil and religious freedom.²² After recounting the many victories that attended the Battle of Blenheim, Stennett implored his hearers to pray for English liberty, even in a modified imprecatory manner:

Let us pray that those who attempt to banish liberty, peace, and the true religion from the earth, may see their pernicious designs prove abortive, and that the forces they unjustly employ to execute such wicked purposes, may become as dust to the swords and as driven stubble to the bows of those who favour the cause of truth and justice.²³

Preach'd on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704," in *Works*, 1:228). Stennett believed that Christians were required to hope and pray for both the eternal and temporal welfare of the wicked—even one's own enemies. However, Stennett considered that if wicked men "persist in their injustice and malignity" and could not be "reduced by no milder method" then Christians may pray that the wicked "may rather fall into that ruin they have prepared for others, than prosper in their unjust and cruel designs against the innocent." (Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704," in *Works*, 1:229)

²¹Thus, Stennett admitted, "Tis true, we have not been enslaved to France, we have not felt what it is to be oppressed, as the Israelites were under the yoke of Jabin. We were in the possession of our liberty and religion, when God was pleased to give us the late victory" (Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704," in *Works*, 1:240).

²²Of note is the emphasis on liberty versus slavery as Stennett described Maximilian II Emanuel (1679–1726), who was Louis XIV's ally and the elector of Bavaria:

The French king began the present war, and before the late defeat of his troops near Hochstet, had made great advances in Germany by the assistance of the elector of Bavaria: a prince who . . . thought fit to sacrifice his own honour and authority, as well as the blood of his subjects and peace of his country, to the humour of a tyrant, and to have the satisfaction of lending his assistance to enslave Europe, for whose liberty he formerly appeared in the field; as if he now thought it more eligible to be a vassal of France than a sovereign prince, and more honourable to draw his sword against the common liberty than in defence of it. (Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704," in *Works*, 1:243)

²³Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704," in *Works*, 1:223.

Moreover, Stennett pressed his hearers to offer praise to God for the liberties that God graciously provided.²⁴ Thus, in his sermon on the 7th of September, 1704, Stennett encouraged his hearers to praise God for their liberties, to pray for the cause of liberty, and to pray moderate imprecatory prayers against the enemies of English liberty. Stennett also publicly endorsed England's fight for liberty against French tyranny.

“A sermon preach'd on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706” (a thanksgiving sermon for the victory at Ramillies). In his thanksgiving sermon of 1706, Stennett celebrated the English victory at the Battle of Ramillies over the French and the Spanish.²⁵ In this sermon, Stennett preached from Deuteronomy 33:29 and recounted the history of God's faithfulness to Israel by preserving her from foreign tyranny.²⁶ Beginning with Israel's emancipation and exodus from Egypt, Stennett articulated the motif of liberty:

That nation must needs appear to have been very happy, who were delivered from a most abject state of slavery, and whose liberty was asserted from heaven by a long train of miracles who, as they were eminently preserved by God from the insults of their enemies in their march to a land flowing with milk and honey.²⁷

As Stennett imagined the Israelites leaving Egyptian slavery and entering the Promise Land, Stennett asked, “Can any one doubt of the happy state of that nation” upon finally

²⁴Stennett, “A Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704,” in *Works*, 1:255.

²⁵Stennett, “A Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:259-309.

²⁶Deut 33:29, “Happy art thou, O Israel! Who is like unto thee O people, saved by the Lord! The shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! And thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee, and thou shalt tread upon their high places.”

²⁷Stennett, “A Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:287-88.

experiencing “the true relish of liberty?”²⁸ After the exodus, Joshua carried forward the ministry of liberty which Moses receive from God; accordingly, Joshua led the children of Israel to take “possession of the promis’d land.”²⁹ After Joshua, Israel’s liberties were defended by God-appointed “Judges”:

The time of the Judges in the like manner furnishes us with the many strange exploits and memorable victories of those great men whom God raised up to assert the liberty of Israel and avenge them of their malicious enemies.³⁰

Such examples of a “liberty” motif abound in Stennett’s thanksgiving sermon of June 27, 1706.³¹

Eventually, Stennett transitioned from the Israelite cause of liberty in the Old Testament to the English cause of liberty in the Gospel age. For Stennett, the transition from Old Testament Israel to “New Testament” England was seamless:

When any nation, or large society of men, are engaged in a just quarrel, and with true humiliation for their sins and reformation of their lives, seek the favour of God, and depend on his assistance, ’tis the constant course of providence to espouse their cause, and render them victorious over the enemies of their liberty and religion.³²

According to Stennett’s theology, such a perspective seamlessly applied to Stennett’s England:

²⁸Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:288.

²⁹Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:281.

³⁰Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:281.

³¹Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:279-87.

³²Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:278.

The present condition of England does in so many instances resemble the antient state of Israel, that while I have been discoursing of the privileges of the one, I am sure you could not forget the happiness of the other.³³

Stennett next reminded his hearers that “the more extensive the good consequences of our triumphs are, the more joy they ought to inspire in the heart of every good man, . . . who values his liberty and the free exercise of his religion.”³⁴ Consequently, Stennett enjoined upon his hearers a duty of Thanksgiving, in keeping with the solemn purpose of their gathering:

And now what shall we render to the Lord for all his benefits? If we have any sense of religion, gratitude, or ingenuity, the service of this day, which is to offer the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, will be as agreeable to us, as it is just and reasonable in itself. God has been pleased to maintain the righteous cause in which we are engaged!³⁵

Thus, Stennett asserted the cause of English liberty as a noble endeavor in his “Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706.” Similar to his thanksgiving sermon in 1704, Stennett again enjoined his hearers to pray for the cause of liberty, to offer praise to God for cherished liberties, and to pray against the enemies of English liberties. Again, in his thanksgiving sermon of 1706, Stennett publicly endorsed England’s fight for liberty against French “tyranny.”

“A sermon preach’d on the 1st of May, 1707” (a thanksgiving sermon for the union of England and Scotland). Stennett’s third thanksgiving sermon was

³³Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:278. Stennett urged, “It is necessary I should remind you of the danger we have formerly been in of losing both [i.e., civil and religious liberty], and how much blood and treasure has been expended for their security! Are there not instances enough in the world of the miseries of those people, who have been so unhappy as to fall under tyrannick power, particularly that of France?” (Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:301).

³⁴Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:301.

³⁵Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:304.

preached in 1707, and he celebrated the union of England and Scotland—a union that marked the official birthdate of Great Britain. On this occasion, Stennett discoursed generally on Judges 5 and specifically on the “divisions of Reuben” in Judges 5:15b.³⁶ Stennett interpreted the “divisions” of Reuben to represent Israel’s own “feuds and animosities” and their corporate “want of unanimity.”³⁷ Moreover, Stennett believed that Reuben’s “divisions” posed a threat to the common cause of liberty among the Israelites:

[Reuben] could come to no fix’d resolution of falling into those wood measures which were taken by the greatest part of the tribes for the recovery of their liberty, and for their future security from tyranny and oppression: that tho they had a zeal equal to that of the other tribes for the general interest of Israel, in which their own welfare was involv’d yet their intestine animosities and disputes made them too regardless of the common danger, and deprived them of an opportunity of finalizing their valour, equally with their brethren, against the great enemy of their country.³⁸

Stennett selected this text (and context) with England and Scotland’s historic unification of 1707 in mind; thus, Stennett stated his purpose plainly in the opening lines of this sermon: “to make us comprehend how much we owe, first to the divine providence, and then to the good conduct of the government under which we live, for giving us this occasion of publick rejoicing.”³⁹ Indeed, as Stennett reflected upon the “divisions” and “intestine animosities” that had previously existed between England and Scotland, he could only give thanks to God for his providence in securing such an advantageous union—a union that would serve and expand the common cause of liberty for England and Scotland.⁴⁰ To this end, Stennett pressed:

³⁶Judg 5:15b, “For the divisions of Reuben, there were great thoughts of heart.”

³⁷Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on the 1st of May, 1707,” in *Works*, 1:315.

³⁸Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on the 1st of May, 1707,” in *Works*, 1:315.

³⁹Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on the 1st of May, 1707,” in *Works*, 1:315.

⁴⁰For more on Stennett’s hope that England and Scotland’s unification would contribute to the wider cause of liberty (and Protestantism) in Europe, see Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on the 1st of May, 1707,” in *Works*, 1:336-38.

The advantages to be expected from this union [are] less obvious, than the dangers we had to apprehend from the continuance of division. Who is it that sees not how much it conduces to render Great Britain more considerable to its allies, and more formidable to its enemies? That it tends to inspire all of us, who love our liberty and religion, with those generous principles of charity and moderation, but which the publick peace and safety is best secured, and the hounour of our holy religion best vindicated?⁴¹

Finally, as Stennett celebrated the providence of God, which not only mended Reuben's divisions of old, but also mended more recent "divisions" between England and Scotland, he prayed that Britain's common "liberty" would be "intirely secured" and that Protestantism would be firmly established at home and abroad:

May the same good providence, which has given her [i.e., Queen Anne] the chief honour of breaking the chains of Europe, give her also the satisfaction of seeing liberty intirely secured, and its peace restored, and the same divine hand, that has succeeded her in uniting her Protestant subjects at home, make her the glorious instrument of re-establishing the reform'd religion abroad!⁴²

Thus, in his thanksgiving sermon for the unification of England and Scotland, Stennett celebrated the advance of liberty as a work of God.

"A sermon preach'd on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708" (a thanksgiving sermon for the many successes in 1708). In the fourth extant thanksgiving sermon, Stennett did not celebrate one specific British victory from 1708; rather, he celebrated the "many and great success of the confederate arms" that Britain and her allies had experienced throughout the year of 1708.⁴³ The text that Stennett selected for the occasion was Genesis 14:18–20.⁴⁴ Much of Stennett's sermon revolved

⁴¹Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on the 1st of May, 1707," in *Works*, 1:335.

⁴²Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on the 1st of May, 1707," in *Works*, 1:337-38.

⁴³Joseph Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708," in *Works*, 1:341-82.

⁴⁴"And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said; Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth. And blessed be the most high God, who hath delivered thine

around the person of Abram and the “congratulation” that Melchizedek offered Abram. Stennett presented Abram as an example of the kind of person that God blesses, and then Stennett showed how Queen Anne possessed so many of the same noble traits that Abram possessed. Secondly, Stennett used Melchizedek’s “congratulation” as an example for the British to emulate. Thus, following the pattern of Melchizedek, Stennett urged his British hearers to offer their congratulation, or “thanksgiving,” to God. Remarkably, both of these “accommodations” emphasized some aspect of “liberty.”⁴⁵

At first, Stennett referred to Abram by the customary titles of “father of the faithful,” the great “patriarch,” and the “friend of God”; however, as the sermon progressed, Stennett also uniquely referred to Abram as “the first asserter of the common liberty and scourge of arbitrary princes.”⁴⁶ Indeed, according to Stennett, Abram “endeavoured to diffuse the blessing of liberty among mankind, as far as he was capable, by his victorious arms, as well as that of the true religion by his exemplary faith and piety.”⁴⁷ Moreover, Stennett preached that Abram “obeyed the heavenly call” in Genesis 12 in order that “he might restore those, who groan’d under the burden of slavery, to the enjoyment of their antient rights and privileges.”⁴⁸ Still later, in specific connection with Genesis 14, Stennett described Abram as one “who took too great a pleasure in mortifying the pride of tyrants, and in doing right to the injured, to desire the possession

enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all” (Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708,” in *Works*, 1:341).

⁴⁵Stennett used the word “accommodate” in the sense of “application” for his hearers.

⁴⁶Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708,” in *Works*, 1:342. Later in this same sermon, Stennett described Abram as one who took “pleasure in mortifying the pride of tyrants” (Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708,” in *Works*, 1:350).

⁴⁷Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708,” in *Works*, 1:342.

⁴⁸Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708,” in *Works*, 1:343.

of their estates as the price of their liberty.”⁴⁹ Moreover, Stennett explained that “the providence of God had so signally favoured” Abram’s “noble cause of liberty.”⁵⁰

Stennett’s depiction of Abram as a pious assertor of liberty in Genesis 14 was seamlessly applied to Queen Anne—particularly in view of the victories of the British confederate arms in 1708:

’Tis evident to every one who reflects on the state of publick affairs, that the people of this nation, and our allies, have the like reason to congratulate her majesty on the train of successes which has attended the confederate arms, that the kings of Canaan, and their people, had to shew the same respect to Abram, much more to offer solemn thanksgiving to the most high God, to whose special providence we owe all those victories and advantages which give us so just reason of joy at this time. The cause in which her majesty is engaged is just and glorious, and of the same nature with that which Abram espoused. ’Tis to set bounds to the exorbitant power of a great tyrant and of the princes confederate with him, if they may still be called princes who have basely sacrificed their honour, and their people’s liberty, as much as in them last, to the ambition of a tyrant.⁵¹

Moreover, Stennett elsewhere declared more pointedly that God had “rewarded [Queen Anne’s] piety and moderation, in giving her so many triumphs over her enemies and so great an esteem and affections in the hearts of her people.”⁵² Indeed, Stennett urged concerning Anne, “she may well be congratulated on this happy occasion as Abram was by Melchizedek.”⁵³

Regarding Melchizedek’s “congratulation” to Abram, Stennett explained,

⁴⁹Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708,” in *Works*, 1:350.

⁵⁰Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708,” in *Works*, 1:359.

⁵¹Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708,” in *Works*, 1:373.

⁵²Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708,” in *Works*, 1:380.

⁵³Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708,” in *Works*, 1:381.

When our text says Melchizedek blessed Abram, it may reasonably be supposed that the king of Salem, at this interview, saluted the patriarch with great marks of affection and respect, that he commended his generosity and publick spirit, who so willingly drew his sword in defence of the rights of mankind, . . . [and] cleared the country of those tyrants whose barbarity was become insupportable, since they had laid waste to many fruitful countries, and depopulated so many cities already, and were likely to extend their exorbitant power much faster in a very little time, that he returned thanks to Abram, as the restorer and defender of the common liberty.⁵⁴

In like manner, Stennett “accommodated” the Melchizedekian “congratulation” to his English context,

And now that the sense of our text has been explained by the history of Abram’s expedition to which it refers, it appears to be no difficult matter to accommodate it to our present circumstances, and the occasion of our joy and thanksgiving to God this day. ’Tis evident to every one who reflects on the state publick affairs that the people of this nation, and our allies, have the like reason to congratulate her majesty on the train of successes which has attended the confederate arms, that the kings of Canaan, and their people had to shew the same respect to Abram, much more to offer solemn thanksgiving to the most high God, to whose special providence we owe all those victories and advantages, which give us so just reason of joy at this time. The cause in which her majesty is engaged is just and glorious and of the same nature with that which Abram was espoused. ’Tis to set bounds to the exorbitant power of a great tyrant and of the princes confederate with him, if they may still be called princes, who have basely sacrificed their own honour, and their people’s liberty as much as in them lay to the ambition of a tyrant and were rather willing to become his vassals, in hope to tyrannize in their turn over slaves of inferior rank.⁵⁵

Moreover, Stennett asserted, “As Abram’s expedition against the four tyrants of Canaan was both approved of God, and applauded by men, so the present war against France, and its allies, may be easily vindicated on the same principles.”⁵⁶ Thus, Stennett justified England’s alliance with “heathen neighbours” on the basis of Abram’s example also:

⁵⁴Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708,” in *Works*, 1:363.

⁵⁵Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708,” in *Works*, 1:372-73.

⁵⁶Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708,” in *Works*, 1:374.

Tho some of our allies differ very much from us in their sentiments as to matters of religion, this can't render our confederacy with them in defence of the publick liberty more unlawful, than Abram's alliance with Mamre, Eschol, and Aner, his heathen neighbours, and his taking part with the five kings of the plain on a like occasion.⁵⁷

Stennett also interpreted Melchizedek's "congratulation" in the language of "liberty"—a congratulation which Stennett insisted was worthy of emulation. Said Stennett,

He took th[e] opportunity, not only to shew his hospitality to Abram and his troops, who were probably much fatigu'd with long and speedy marches, but to express his affection to the noble cause of liberty, which Abram had vindicated with so much courage, resolution, and good conduct, and which the providence of God had so signally savoured, in crowning his enterprises with desired success.⁵⁸

Stennett elsewhere explained that Melchizedek "returned thanks to Abram as the restorer and defender of the common liberty."⁵⁹ Stennett paraphrased the Melchizedekian blessing with these words,

'Tis as if the royal priest said, "May the supreme Ruler of the world, who has an undoubted right to govern the universe which [He] himself has created and upholds; may he, who has so signally exerted his power in favour of those who fear and serve him, in opposition to the proud and cruel attempts of arbitrary princes, continue to crown thee with his blessing, who, in confidence of his assistance and defence, hast fought his battles, and vindicated the cause of liberty, which the Almighty so much approves."⁶⁰

With the Melchizedekian blessing paraphrased in these words, it is not surprising that Stennett would "accommodate" Melchizedek's "congratulation" to his own British

⁵⁷Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708," in *Works*, 1:374.

⁵⁸Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708," in *Works*, 1:359.

⁵⁹Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708," in *Works*, 1:363.

⁶⁰Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708," in *Works*, 1:365.

context by urging his fellow countrymen to render thanksgiving to God for securing their civil and religious liberties.⁶¹ Accordingly,

If we should trace the many remarkable steps of the divine providence for some years past, and take a view of the surprising methods by which our civil and religious rights have been secured against the secret designs and open force of our enemies; the reflection would easily engage our wonder, and might justly raise our devotions.⁶²

By contrast, Stennett warned of the “divine vengeance” that would surely fall upon the British if they should demonstrate any “ingratitude to heaven” after having enjoyed “so signal a deliverance from their enemies.”⁶³ To Stennett’s mind, the only proper British response to God for the military success of 1708 with secured civil and religious liberty was “thanksgiving” and “joy” to God for the kindness He had shown in 1708.⁶⁴

Summary of Stennett on civil and religious liberty. Stennett consistently supported the cause of civil and religious liberty. Indeed, Stennett believed that God himself providentially maintained the cause of liberty among godly nations.⁶⁵ Thus, Stennett believed that a principle of liberty was founded upon “the Scripture themselves”; therefore, he did not hesitate to assert the cause of liberty from his London pulpit.

⁶¹Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708,” in *Works*, 1:372.

⁶²Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708,” in *Works*, 1:375-76.

⁶³Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708,” in *Works*, 1:380.

⁶⁴Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708,” in *Works*, 1:381.

⁶⁵Stennett avers, “When any nation, or large society of men, are engaged in a just quarrel, and with true humiliation for their sins and reformation of their lives, seek the favour of God, and depend on his assistance, ’tis the constant course of providence to espouse their cause, and render them victorious over the enemies of their liberty and religion” (Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:278).

Stennett on “Our English Israel”

Stennett’s *Works* consistently portrays God’s providential care for England in terms both presumptuous and reminiscent of the unique love that God demonstrated to corporate Israel in the Old Testament.⁶⁶ The strongest expressions of the “English Israel” motif in Stennett’s *Works* are found in the following five pieces: “A Poem to the Memory of Mr. Timothy Cruso,” “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704,” “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” “A Sermon Preach’d on the 1st of May, 1707,” and “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708.” Each will be examined for an “English Israel” motif.

“A Poem to the Memory of Mr. Timothy Cruso.” In this poem, Stennett mourned the death of his fellow London “prophet” and friend, Timothy Cruso.⁶⁷ Stennett affectionately referred to Cruso as his deceased “Jonathan”:

Dear Jonathan, the best of men, the best of friends:
O may that heavenly muse my bosom fill!
Diffuse thro’ all my soul her wond’rous skill!
While in soft numbers I attempt to tell
The grief that wounds our English Israel.⁶⁸

Elsewhere, Stennett referred to London as a “British Zion,” the “abode of Israel’s prophets” and “Israel’s God”:

O London! With what grace hast thou been crown’d!
Long hast thou heard the jubil-trumpet’s sound,
Our British Zion thou, the blest abode
Of Israel’s prophets, and of Israel’s God.
To thee our priests, to thee our tribes repair,

⁶⁶Stennett was consistent but not systematic in his articulation of an “English Israel” motif. This was primarily because Stennett’s *Works* were pastoral in nature, not dogmatic. In other words, Stennett did not systematically marshal biblical proofs and arguments to demonstrate that England was God’s new Israel; neither did Stennett directly argue that God had bound Himself to England by irrevocable promise. Nevertheless, as will be demonstrated, Stennett did articulate a consistent “English Israel” motif.

⁶⁷Joseph Stennett, “A Poem to the Memory of Mr. Timothy Cruso,” in *Works*, 4:173.

⁶⁸Stennett, “Poem to Timothy Cruso,” in *Works*, 4:174.

In numerous crowds to offer praise and pray'r:
Heav'n smiles on thee with such indulgent rays,
Thy walls Salvation, and thy gates are praise.⁶⁹

Thus, while mourning the death of his beloved Cruso, Stennett described England as an "English Israel," London as a "British Zion," and Timothy Cruso as a prophet of the British Zion.⁷⁰

"A sermon preach'd on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704" (a thanksgiving sermon for the victory at Hochstet). On September 7, 1704, Stennett preached a thanksgiving sermon celebrating the great English victory over the French and their allies at Hochstet. In this sermon, Stennett did not state the "English Israel" motif as baldly as in the Cruso poem; nevertheless, Stennett's sermon moved upon several convictions: that Judges 5:31 shows God's providence in giving Israel victory over Jabin and the Canaanites, that the "church in ages to come" could likewise expect God's providential care in the scattering of her enemies, and that God defeated Louis XIV and the French at Hochstet in the spirit of Judges 5:31. Evidences of each of these convictions will be provided.

First, Stennett explained that Judges 5:31 was "the conclusion of a song of triumph," which was "occasioned by an eminent victory which God was pleased to give the troops of Israel, under the conduct of Deborah and Barak, over the army of Jabin king of Canaan."⁷¹ To Stennett's mind, Israel defeated the Canaanites entirely by the "favourable providence" of God. Consequently, "the thanksgiving of Deborah and Barak . . . was becoming so great an instance of the divine compassion and goodness . . .

⁶⁹Stennett, "Poem to Timothy Cruso," in *Works*, 4:176.

⁷⁰Stennett, "Poem to Timothy Cruso," in *Works*, 4:176.

⁷¹Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704," in *Works*, 1:213-14.

and their hearts were full of gratitude for the great victory.”⁷² Accordingly, Stennett declared,

While the church prays that all God’s enemies may perish like the forces of Jabin, she owns that the decision of battles belongs to the Lord of hosts, and that the victory obtained over the Canaanites, was owing to the God of Israel.⁷³

Second, Stennett argued that the “deliverance” that God gave to Israel was a “figurative representation” of the “compleat deliverance” from a “mystical Babylon” that God would give to the church “in the latter ages of the world.”⁷⁴ And again, Stennett emphasized that God’s faithfulness to Israel served as a “model and pattern” of deliverance from God’s enemies, which the “church in ages to come” could reasonably “desire and hope” from God.⁷⁵ Several pages later, Stennett repeated this point:

I may add, what was intimated before, that these words may be commodiously interpreted as a prophecy of the happy state of the church in the latter days, with the promises whereof the Scripture abounds, and often describes it with the like metaphorical expressions.⁷⁶

Finally, Stennett “improved”⁷⁷ upon the text by insisting that England should

⁷²Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704,” in *Works*, 1:214.

⁷³Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704,” in *Works*, 1:234.

⁷⁴Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704,” in *Works*, 1:215-16.

⁷⁵Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704,” in *Works*, 1:217.

⁷⁶Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704,” in *Works*, 1:233. Stennett cited Song 6:10 as an example of an Old Testament text applied to New Testament contexts (Rev 12:1). Also, on another occasion, Stennett again observed “the humble ascription that is made to the Almighty of the victory obtained, as well as a dependence on the same mercy and power for the like advantages to be hereafter expected; express’d in this prophetick petition, *So let all thy enemies perish, O Lord*” (Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704,” in *Works*, 1:234, emphasis original).

⁷⁷Stennett often used the word “improve” or “improvement” to signify an ancient text’s contemporary application. For some examples, see Joseph Stennett, “The Reasonableness

“imitate the zeal of Deborah and Barak” by returning praise to God for his decisive deliverance of the English and her allies over the French at Hochstet:

We are now assembled to look back with joy and gratitude on the late glorious victory it has pleased God to give the confederate arms against those of a great modern tyrant, so we may thence take occasion to look forward with hope for the like future success against all the enemies of God and his church, and to sing in concert with Deborah and the rest of the triumphing Israelites, *So let all thy enemies perish, O Lord.*⁷⁸

Stennett continued to explain that God had delivered the English from the French. “The French were very confident of success,” Stennett explained, but the English “encountered [the French] with a courage like that which king Hezekiah inspired the Jewish captains, against the powerful army of the king of Assyria.” Moreover, God “has given us a victory that has no parallel in the present age, and all things considered, there are few examples in history which can equal it, excepting those miraculous instances among the Israelites in the time of the judges.”⁷⁹ “Many squadrons,” Stennett announced, “which escaped the edge of the sword, were precipitated into the Danube, and drowned therein, as the Canaanites were in the river Kishon, and the Egyptians before in the Red-Sea.”⁸⁰ Moreover, Stennett assured his hearers,

We may also hence take occasion with the same Israelites to look forward with hope and to pray for, I had almost said presage, the like glorious acts of providence in

and Advantages of an Early Conversion: Sermon III,” in *Works*, 1:112; Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704,” in *Works*, 1:239; Joseph Stennett, “On the Intercession of Christ,” in *Works*, 2:275.

⁷⁸Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704,” in *Works*, 1:216; emphasis original.

⁷⁹Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704,” in *Works*, 1:246.

⁸⁰Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704,” in *Works*, 1:246.

favour of the righteous cause in which this nation, with some other states, is engaged against the most dangerous tyrant and greatest persecutor of the age.⁸¹

More quotations could be provided, but these are sufficient to show how Stennett referred to England's victory over the French at Hochstet in a manner commensurate with Israel's victory over Canaan in Judges 4 and 5. Thus, though Stennett admitted that England was "an unworthy and sinful nation," he preached as though God's promises and providential care of Israel in Judges could be directly applied to England's warring with France in 1704.

"A sermon preach'd on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706" (a thanksgiving sermon for the victory at Ramillies). On June 27, 1706, Stennett preached another political sermon that celebrated the "late glorious progress of her majesty's arms, and those of her allies, in Flanders and Spain."⁸² In this sermon, Stennett articulated his "English Israel" motif. Indeed, the overarching theme of the sermon moved upon two central convictions: that Israel was especially blessed by God and that England was especially blessed by God just as Israel was.

With respect to Israel's special favor by God, Stennett expounded on the opening line of Deuteronomy 33:29, "Happy art thou, O Israel! Who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord!" Stennett explained why Israel should be sensible of their own unsurpassed happiness:

It must be confessed no people might compare with Israel for happiness, seeing they surpassed all other nations for the equity and perfection of their laws, and the purity of their worship, as well as for their miraculous deliverances and surprising victories.⁸³

⁸¹Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704," in *Works*, 1:239.

⁸²Stennett, "Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706," in *Works*, 1:275.

⁸³Stennett, "Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706," in *Works*, 1:266.

Similarly, Stennett emphasized that Israel's happiness was uniquely located in their relationship to God:

Upon the whole it appears, that as our text contains the last words of Moses, the expiring prophet in an ecstasy of joy and wonder, therein represents the great and peculiar happiness of the Israelitish nation, in that they were under the special care and protection of the true God who made them successful and victorious, while he frustrated the designs and disappointed the attempts of their enemies, and made them submit to their power, and furnish matter for their triumphs.⁸⁴

After establishing that Israel was uniquely favored by God, Stennett applied the blessings of Deuteronomy 33:29 to England's situation. Indeed, Stennett was not subtle in his transition from Israel to England; Stennett told his hearers:

I am now to apply the things on which I have insisted to our own circumstance, and especially to the happy occasion that has brought us together to celebrate the praises of God on this joyful day. The present condition of England does in so many instances resemble the antient state of Israel, that while I have been discoursing of the privileges of the one, I am sure you could not forget the happiness of the other. The temperature of our climate, and the fruitfulness of our soil, our commodious situation for trade, the wise constitution of our government, the good provision made by our laws for the preservation of our liberty and property, and the truth and excellency of our religion, render the comparison too obvious not to have been made in your own minds. The indulgence of heaven towards us, in defeating the secret plots and open attempts of our enemies in protecting our country from design'd invasions, and the best of our kings from the sword abroad, as well as from

⁸⁴Stennett, "Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706," in *Works*, 1:272. Stennett is careful to nuance his affirmation of Israel's peculiar status in these terms: "These words are not to be thought absolutely to predict an uninterrupted series of success to this people, after what manner soever they should behave themselves, but with certain limitations and conditions, which God made, in order to keep them in a constant subjection to his laws and dependence on his providence" (Stennett, "Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706," in *Works*, 1:273-74). In other words, Stennett affirmed Israel's unique and happy status as peculiarly favored by God; however, Stennett was admitting that God would allow all kinds of trouble into Israel's experience if they strayed from His covenant. Moreover, Stennett nuanced his argument even further by adding these words: "The predictions in our text, and those of the like kind in other parts of the holy Scripture, are not to be extended to the case of every good man but to those civil communities in which the true worship of God is maintained, and moral virtues countenanced and promoted" (Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706," in *Works*, 1:278). This second qualification admits a distinction between the favors of God bestowed upon corporate Israel rather than each individual Israelite.

the assassinating dagger at home, all shew how much we have been the objects of God's peculiar favour.⁸⁵

In light of such divine "favour," Stennett invoked the text of Deut. 33:29 and applied it to his own beloved England: "God is the shield of our help and the sword of our excellency."⁸⁶

Stennett invested several pages worth of discourse enlarging on the French defeat at Hochstet, the Duke of Marlborough's victory in Flanders, and the "glorious victory at Ramillies"; all of these great victories were consigned to "divine providence"—the "memory of which will descend to all succeeding ages."⁸⁷ Moreover, Stennett could not "forbear to observe" that "it has pleased God principally to honour the protestant troops in the confederacy as if the design of providence was hereby to soften the minds of the Romanists."⁸⁸ Thus, for Stennett, the war between England and France was not primarily about ethnic identity but religious ascendancy; Stennett believed that God was honoring and expanding the protestant cause as championed by the English and Dutch troop.

While England momentarily enjoyed the favors of God, Stennett issued a warning that God's favor could be withdrawn:

How great an unhappiness would it be if those who have in so many respects been made by the indulgence of God to resemble the Israelites, his once peculiar people, should makes themselves like them too in that ingratitude and folly, by which they too often interrupted the course of God's blessings and incurred his severe displeasure.⁸⁹

⁸⁵Stennett, "Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706," in *Works*, 1:292.

⁸⁶Stennett, "Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706," in *Works*, 1:293.

⁸⁷Stennett, "Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706," in *Works*, 1:294-97, *passim*.

⁸⁸Stennett, "Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706," in *Works*, 1:300.

⁸⁹Stennett, "Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706," in *Works*, 1:300.

Stennett's concern was that God would remove his favor if England should become rebellious and faithless. Indeed, if England "should imitate [Israel's] sins," then Stennett asked, "What reason have we to promise ourselves impunity any more than they who by their folly, became at last as remarkable examples of God's extraordinary judgments?"⁹⁰ "Let us beware,"⁹¹ Stennett warned. "Let not our thanksgiving evaporate into pride and levity,"⁹² and "let us always depend on his almighty power, and the wise conduct of his providence."⁹³ And may it be "said of England as it was of Israel," Stennett prayed as he reworked Moses' benediction:

Happy art thou, O England! Who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord! The shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency. And thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places.⁹⁴

"A sermon preach'd on the 1st of May, 1707" (a thanksgiving sermon for the union of England and Scotland). On May 1, 1707, Stennett preached a thanksgiving sermon from Judges 5:15 and celebrated "the happy union of England and Scotland."⁹⁵ In this sermon, Stennett again reflected upon the good providence of God that attended Reuben's division of land, and Stennett related the "great thoughts of heart" that accompanied Reuben's allotment among the tribes of Israel to the "happy union" of England and Scotland. In his sermon, Stennett mostly reflected upon "the danger of the divisions of Reuben" and also "the good consequences to be hop'd from their union with

⁹⁰Stennett, "Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706," in *Works*, 1:306.

⁹¹Stennett, "Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706," in *Works*, 1:307.

⁹²Stennett, "Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706," in *Works*, 1:307.

⁹³Stennett, "Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706," in *Works*, 1:307.

⁹⁴Stennett, "Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706," in *Works*, 1:309.

⁹⁵Stennett's sermon focused on the latter half of Judg 5:15, "For the divisions of Reuben, there were great thoughts of heart."

the rest of the tribes.”⁹⁶ However, Stennett’s reflections upon Reuben’s singular allotment served as a useful figure to address England and Scotland’s union.

First, in describing Israel’s situation in Judges 5, Stennett declared, “We may be sure all those Israelites who had a true relish of liberty, and a sincere love to their religion, were not a little concerned at the divisions of Reuben.”⁹⁷ In like manner, Stennett continued to describe the situation in Judges 5 in terms relevant to the English situation in 1707:

The circumstances of Israel at this time rendered the danger so much the more terrible, in that the tribes had been long groaning under tyranny, and one . . . should have learn’d so much moderation and prudence as to suspend lesser quarrels, at least while they were companions in misery, and bowing under the yoke of a common oppressor, that they should have sacrificed their civil controversies to the publick welfare and united all their forces to recover their antient liberty, and to secure to themselves the free exercise of their religion. How great was the risk they ran on this occasion who rather chose to maintain their unreasonable divisions, than with united strength to attempt the stopping of that inundation of misery which threatened them all with equal ruin.⁹⁸

Stennett is, of course, referring to the threat that Jabin posed against Israel; however, the language also fits the context of England and Scotland’s unity in view of the threat of French political and religious “tyranny.” Moreover, Stennett urged, “Who can recount the miseries which might have befallen Israel, if their divisions continued, and broke out into a civil war?”⁹⁹ Again Stennett pressed, “What a hinderance would this have been to their commerce?”¹⁰⁰

Moreover, as Stennett described Israel’s situation in Judges 5, he repeatedly

⁹⁶Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on the 1st of May, 1707,” in *Works*, 1:321.

⁹⁷Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on the 1st of May, 1707,” in *Works*, 1:319.

⁹⁸Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on the 1st of May, 1707,” in *Works*, 1:322.

⁹⁹Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on the 1st of May, 1707,” in *Works*, 1:322.

¹⁰⁰Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on the 1st of May, 1707,” in *Works*, 1:322.

referred to the wise conduct of Deborah (i.e., Israel's "princess") in lavish and complimentary terms. Thus, Stennett ascribed the following praise to Deborah, Israel's "princess":

[It is] the special commission of this wise and religious princess who, by the success of her arms, as well as by the clemency and moderation of her government, was become equally the joy of her people and the terror of her enemies, and much more capable of disposing the minds of the Israelites to union and a good correspondence, than a less gracious and wise governor could be. But seeing these thoughts of heart, both of Deborah and the nobles of Israel, . . . they apprehended from division, the good effects to be expected from a firm union.¹⁰¹

When Stennett transitioned from Israel's situation to Britain's situation, he said,

This joyful day gives us occasion to celebrate the success the divine providence has given the queen of Great Britain, in accomplishing the union of these two kingdoms, which if they had remain'd divided, threatened us with no less dangers than those we have before enumerated, and now they are united, give us a no less happy prospect than what we have been taking of the union of the tribes of Israel; tho our British was in danger of being obstructed by yet greater difficulties than those I have been reciting.¹⁰²

Part of Stennett's genuine optimism about the union between England and Scotland was that "the succession of Protestant princes to both nations" would be secured and that no "intestine quarrel might give opportunity to some foreign power to introduce slavery and popery into the whole island."¹⁰³ Stennett continued in this benedictory strain with respect to the union of England and Scotland and the reign of Queen Anne and her "generous and Christian example" until finally closing with a lavish blessing that was interwoven with the text of Ezekiel:

May the union that takes place this day be never dissolved by our follies and sins!
May Ephraim never more envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim! May England and Scotland be for the future as much one in inclination and affection, as they are

¹⁰¹Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on the 1st of May, 1707," in *Works*, 1:320-21.

¹⁰²Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on the 1st of May, 1707," in *Works*, 1:333-34.

¹⁰³Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on the 1st of May, 1707," in *Works*, 1:335.

obliged to be by their duty and interest, that what has been solemnly confirmed on earth, may be ratified in heaven; and that what God has joined together, no man may put asunder! That this union may be like that of Judah and Israel predicted by Ezekiel: *Thus saith the Lord, Behold I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen whither they are gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land. And I will make them one nation in the land, upon the mountains of Israel, and one king shall be king to them all. And they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all.*¹⁰⁴

“A sermon preach’d on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708” (a thanksgiving sermon for the many successes in 1708). On February 17, 1709, Stennett preached a thanksgiving sermon celebrating the military successes of the English army in 1708. Stennett’s sermon text was Genesis 14:18–20, and Stennett primarily focused upon the “congratulation” that Melchizedek offered to Abram. With respect to the “English Israel” motif, Stennett compared Queen Anne to Abram in a couple of important ways. First, Stennett believed that God blessed the children of Abram directly because of Abram’s piety; moreover, in like fashion, Stennett believed that God blessed England because of Anne’s exemplary piety.¹⁰⁵ Secondly, Stennett portrayed Abram as “the first assertor of the common liberty and scourge of arbitrary princes.”¹⁰⁶ In like fashion, Stennett lauded Queen Anne: “the cause in which her majesty is engaged, is just and glorious, and of the same nature with that which Abram espoused.”¹⁰⁷ And again, Stennett compared: “Certainly all who are guided by principles of reason and have any relish of religion, must own it to be a very glorious enterprise,” for “as Abram’s expedition was both approved of God and applauded by men, so the present war against

¹⁰⁴Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on the 1st of May, 1707,” in *Works*, 1:330-40; emphasis original.

¹⁰⁵Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708,” in *Works*, 1:374-75.

¹⁰⁶Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708,” in *Works*, 1:342, *passim*.

¹⁰⁷Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708,” in *Works*, 1:373.

France, and its allies, may be easily vindicated on the same principles.”¹⁰⁸ To Stennett’s mind, Queen Anne was engaged in the exact same cause (i.e., the cause of liberty) that Abram was engaged in Genesis 14:18–20. Moreover, because Queen Anne’s cause could be vindicated on the same principles as Abram’s cause, divine providence granted military victories in 1708.¹⁰⁹

Because Anne shared Abram’s piety and Abram’s concern for liberty, Stennett thought it fitting to pronounce the Melchizedekian blessing upon Queen Anne also:

Since God has blessed her majesty’s reign with . . . a long train of surprising victories and successes, since he has rewarded her piety and moderation, in giving her so many triumphs over her enemies, and so great an esteem and affection in the hearts of her people, as appears by the unanimity and zeal of their representatives for the support of her government, she may well be congratulated on this happy occasion as Abram was by Melchizedek, *Blessed be queen Anne of the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be the most high God who has delivered her enemies into her hands.*¹¹⁰

Moreover, Stennett also called upon “those who minister in sacred things” to “bless her majesty, in the words of the 20th Psalm,” in which Stennett revised the gender of the LORD’s “anointed” in verse 6 accordingly:

We will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners: the Lord fulfill all thy petitions. Now know I, that the Lord saveth his

¹⁰⁸Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708,” in *Works*, 1:373-74.

¹⁰⁹As “the divine providence interposed to favour Abram with success” so also “the same good providence blessed our troops with a considerable victory” (Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708,” in *Works*, 1:368, 1:377, *passim*). Indeed, Stennett urged his hearers “to offer thanksgiving to the most high God, to whose special providence we owe all those victories” (Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708,” in *Works*, 1:373).

¹¹⁰Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708,” in *Works*, 1:381; emphasis original.

anointed, he will hear *her* from his holy heaven, with the saving strength of his right hand.¹¹¹

Summary of Stennett’s “English Israel” motif. Linda Colley has rightly described British national identity in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century as theo-political:

Protestant Britons believed they were under God’s special care. They knew that they were bound to be regularly tested by periods of extreme sin and suffering, and they took it for granted that struggle – especially struggle with those who were not Protestants – was their birthright. But they also believed that under Providence they would secure deliverance and achieve distinction. In short, they believed, many of them, that their land was nothing less than another and a better Israel.¹¹²

While Stennett did not develop the “English Israel” motif in the modern language of “replacement theology,”¹¹³ he did articulate a discernible “English Israel” motif that closely approximated Colley’s judgment. First, as described by Colley, Stennett believed that England was under God’s special, providential care, and this theme will be developed more fully as Stennett’s understanding and use of providence is delineated.

¹¹¹Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708,” in *Works*, 1:382; emphasis original.

¹¹²Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging The Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 29-30. Stennett was not the only one articulating an “English Israel” motif in his day. For example, when Isaac Watts (1674–1748) “Christianized” the Pss of David, he “included several references to Britain and Great Britain” (John Hull, “Isaac Watts and the Origins of British Imperial Theology,” *International Congregational Journal* 4, no. 2 [2005]: 59). Watts (like Stennett) did not articulate a careful and developed doctrine of supersessionism, but Watts (like Stennett) unreservedly portrayed Britain as providentially favored by God like Israel in the Old Testament. In fact, in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, Watts’ *Psalms of David* are described as “not a metrical psalter of the ordinary pattern.” On the contrary,

It leaves out all the imprecatory portions, paraphrases freely, infuses into the text the Messianic fulfilment and the evangelical interpretations, and adjusts the whole (sometimes in grotesquely bad taste, as in the substitution of ‘Britain’ for ‘Israel’) to the devotional standpoint of his time. The total number of pieces in the various books must be about six hundred, about twelve of which are still in very general use. “Isaac Watts,” in *Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. Sidney Lee (London: The Macmillan Company, 1899), 60:69.

¹¹³Cf. Michael Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel? A Theological Evaluation* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2010) 9-12.

Second, as also described by Colley, Stennett believed that the English would be regularly rebuffed by sin and regularly tested in their religious duty, yet finally delivered by God in mercy. Thus, Stennett would excoriate the “many crying sins of this nation, and the great aggravation of its guilt in so long refusing to be reformed.”¹¹⁴ What a “dismal sight we might now have,” Stennett would say, “if . . . God had thought fit to deal with us according to our sins, and to reward us after our iniquities.”¹¹⁵ Yet, Stennett believed, “God has spoken to us by his providence as he did formerly to the Jews by his prophets: For my name’s sake will I defer mine anger and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off.”¹¹⁶ Moreover, Stennett urged the Christian duty of thanksgiving as the proper return to God for his mercy:

Need I add any thing to excite you to praise the God of our mercies, after I have represented to you how much an unworthy and sinful nation has been the care of his providence? The duty of thanksgiving is reasonable, necessary, and pleasant; tis the business and pleasure of the highest order of rational creatures. . . . We cannot neglect this duty [of thanksgiving] without contracting the guilt of the blackest ingratitude and incurring the displeasure of a jealous God. . . . ’Tis an ease and pleasure to a grateful mind, to acknowledge the obligations which it can never discharge. . . . ’Tis a pleasing duty to all that sincerely perform it. . . . For who shall harm us, if we be followers of that which is good? And if God be for us who can be against us?¹¹⁷

In this manner, Stennett linked many important themes of national significance: the undeserved prosperity of the English nation along with the hope of future corporate prosperity; a summons to thanksgiving and worship along with the threat that all God’s

¹¹⁴Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704,” in *Works*, 1:241.

¹¹⁵Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704,” in *Works*, 1:244.

¹¹⁶Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704,” in *Works*, 1:245.

¹¹⁷Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704,” in *Works*, 1:257-58.

kindness to corporate England could quickly turn to wrath and judgment if the English persisted in sin.¹¹⁸

Finally, Stennett believed that England was especially privileged to be the foremost contender for the “Protestant interest” in the world, and this is the key to understanding Stennett’s “English Israel” motif. Theologically, Stennett did not favor English Protestantism to French Protestantism or Dutch Protestantism. Admittedly, Stennett prized English politics to French politics and Dutch politics, but again, Stennett prized theological Protestantism as the hallmark of “true religion” in his day, regardless of national identity. To Stennett’s mind, England was specially blessed by God because

¹¹⁸Stennett repeated these exact emphases in all four of his political sermons. In his sermon of June 27, 1706, Stennett declared after the victory at Ramillies,

If our hearts were generally so affected with the triumphs God has given us, as to engage us to declare and maintain an irreconcilable war against our sins, we might reasonably hope, that as our enemies have been already *found liars*, both on the account of their fraud and treachery and in regard of their vain-glory and boasting, so we shall be blest with repeated victories, till we shall see peace and righteousness, the stability of our times, and that it shall still be said of England as it was of Israel: *Happy art thou, O England! Who is like unto thee, O People, saved by the Lord!* (Stennett, Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:308-9)

In his sermon preached on May 1, 1707, Stennett declared,

We should bless the Lord with all our souls and with all that is within us bless his holy name, for the union of England and Scotland; for the security he has hereby given us from the dangers we feared, for the hopeful prospect of the good consequences we have in view, and which will certainly arrive, if our sins prevent not, by provoking the Almighty to mingle a perverse spirit among us: for our destruction after all this may be from ourselves, or we may be altogether given up into the hands of our foreign enemies. God forbid! That we should abuse so great mercies as those we now enjoy and provoke him to punish us after so terrible a manner. (Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on the 1st of May, 1707,” in *Works*, 1:338)

Finally, in his sermon on February 17, 1709, Stennett urged his hearers toward repentance and praise to God in view of Her majesty’s success in arms in 1708,

All these . . . ought to dispose our minds to bless and adore the Almighty, and to rejoice in his salvation, in whose name we set up our banners and to encourage our addresses to him for the continuance of his favour, that all these successes may at length be crowned with an honourable and a lasting peace. In the mean time the goodness of God should lead us to repentance, lest after so many deliverances from the hands of our enemies, and so many victories over them, he should at last suffer them to prevail against us, and to triumph over us: or lest he should punish us for our sins more severely, and more immediately by his own hand. And how terrible a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God! (Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708,” in *Works*, 1:379-80)

England was the foremost contender for Protestantism in the world, which is the reason why the “English Israel” motif regularly surfaced in Stennett’s *Works*. To state the point somewhat syllogistically, Stennett believed that (1) Israel represented “true religion” in the Old Testament age,¹¹⁹ (2) Protestantism represented “true religion” in Stennett’s day,¹²⁰ (3) England was the foremost contender for Protestantism in Stennett’s day,¹²¹ and therefore (4) England functioned like an “English Israel” in service of “true religion.” By contrast, Stennett did not believe that the English were specially privileged by God on the

¹¹⁹In several sermons, Stennett referred to the faith of Israel as “true religion.” Stennett even contrasted the “true religion” of Israel with false religion of Israel’s “heathen neighbors.” For “true religion,” see the following: Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:260, 1:265, 1:275; Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on the 1st of May, 1707,” in *Works*, 1:325, 1:329, 1:340; Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708,” in *Works*, 1:342-44. For a contrast between Israel and her “heathen” neighbors, see the following: Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704,” in *Works*, 1:218-19; Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:265; Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on the 1st of May, 1707,” in *Works*, 1:340; Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708,” in *Works*, 1:353.

¹²⁰That Stennett believed the Protestant religion to be the “true religion” is beyond doubt. In his thanksgiving sermon after the English defeated the French at Hochstet, Stennett preached,

We may hence take encouragement after the example of the Israelites in our text, to hope and pray for the like eminent displays of the divine justice and mercy hereafter. *So let all thy enemies perish, O Lord: but let them that love him be as the sun when he goes forth in his might. . . .* Let us pray that those who attempt to banish liberty, peace and the true religion from the earth, may [they] see their pernicious designs prove abortive (Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704,” in *Works*, 1:249; cf. Stennett, “Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:289, 292-93).

In this exact same context, Stennett expressed his confidence that God would thwart England’s enemies so that “the protestant interest may flourish and prosper” (Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704,” in *Works*, 1:251). In this way, Stennett linked “true religion” and the “protestant interest” with England’s success in battle.

¹²¹This point will be addressed more fully in the next pages. However, for Stennett, this point was tied to the ascendancy of a uniquely Protestant monarchy typified in William III, perpetuated by Anne, and secured by the Act of Settlement in 1701, which stipulated a Protestant successor to the throne of England in perpetuity; on the Protestant succession, see the transcript of Stennett’s address to Parliament in 1708 (“Some Account of His Life,” in *Works*, 1:29).

basis of their Englishness alone,¹²² on the basis of their unique godliness,¹²³ or on the basis of their land.¹²⁴ Thus, for Stennett, “the Jewish nation was allowed to have been a type of the Christian church” in the following manner:

The deliverances and victories of the former may well be accounted so many pledges and patterns of the wonderful preservation and triumphs of the latter, especially in such ages of the world wherein the circumstances of the one should resemble those of the other.¹²⁵

As England was, to Stennett’s mind, the foremost corporate contender for the “true religion” of Protestantism in the world, England was “under God’s special care.”¹²⁶ With this conviction in mind, Stennett addressed Queen Anne as “head of the Protestant

¹²²On many occasions, Stennett widened the purview of God’s blessings to include the Scottish, Dutch, and even French Protestants. Referring to the Dutch, Stennett expressed, “It has pleased God principally to honour the protestant troops in the confederacy” (Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:300), and this confederacy included “both the English and Dutch generals” (Stennett, Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:298); for the Scottish, see Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on the 1st of May, 1707,” in *Works*, 1:334-35; Moreover, for the French Protestants, Stennett even prayed “that the Protestant interest may flourish and prosper, and those of the reform’d religion in France, who have long hazarded their lives in the defence of that and their civil liberty, may be effectually delivered from the hands of their enemies” (Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704,” in *Works*, 1:250). So Stennett did not account French Protestants as enemies of “England” or enemies of God. Rather Stennett entrusted even the French Protestants to God’s providential care. Finally, and more widely, Stennett prayed for the “the violated rights of protestants” and “common liberty” for all of Europe (Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708,” in *Works*, 1:374).

¹²³Stennett repeatedly excoriated the “sinfulness” of the English nation.

¹²⁴Contra Colley’s judgment in *Britons*, 29-30. In *Works*, there is no conclusive evidence that Stennett applied the land promises of Scripture to his English context.

¹²⁵Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:276-77. Stennett immediately followed this point with these words: “The predictions in our text, and those of the like kind in other parts of the holy Scripture, are not to be extended to the case of every good man but to those civil communities in which the true worship of God is maintained, and moral virtues countenanced and promoted” (Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:278). Thus, Stennett envisioned a corporate application for the New Testament church, which somehow worked itself into a corporate English application, as is this case here.

¹²⁶Colley, *Britons*, 29-30.

interest” in 1706:

May the divine providence, that has made your Majesty not only head of the Protestant interest, but chief in the Confederacy for the glorious cause of common liberty, give your Majesty the satisfaction of seeing both more firmly established by the influence of your councils, and success of your arms.¹²⁷

Again in 1706, Stennett expressed to his Pinners-Hall congregation an awareness of the global impact that their English affairs had in securing the Protestant interest in Europe:

Need I add any thing to excite you to praise the God of our mercies, after I have represented to you how much an unworthy and sinful nation has been the care of his providence and how much we owe him for that important change he has made in the state of affairs in Europe in favour of the Protestant interest?¹²⁸

In another sermon in 1708, after another English victory over her Catholic enemies, Stennett preached, “I can’t forbear to observe, that on this occasion, as well as formerly, it has pleased God principally to honour the Protestant troops in the confederacy.”¹²⁹

Also in this same sermon, Stennett expressed his conviction that Queen Anne’s personal piety served “constantly to recommend the just cause wherein [we] are engaged” to “that righteous and merciful God to whom victory belongs.”¹³⁰ Indeed, Stennett insisted, “God has been pleased to maintain the righteous cause in which we are engaged.”¹³¹ With only a touch of moderation, Stennett expressed a sense that England might play a role in reestablishing the Protestant religion around the world:

¹²⁷“Some Account of His Life,” in *Works*, 1:24. Also, in his address to King William, Stennett assured His Majesty that he had “paid the grateful tribute at the throne of the King of Kings, for the signal favour wherewith his providence has blessed your Majesty, these your kingdoms, and the whole Protestant interest abroad” (“Some Account of His Life,” in *Works*, 1:16).

¹²⁸Stennett, “Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704,” in *Works*, 1:258.

¹²⁹Stennett, “Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:300.

¹³⁰Stennett, “Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:301.

¹³¹Stennett, “Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:304.

Is there not just ground of hope, that the honour God has done the protestant princes and states, in giving their arms such extraordinary success, is in order to give them one day an opportunity of expressing their gratitude to heaven, by reestablishing the protestant religion in those countries from whence it has been extirpated, by the most barbarous and perfidious methods, contrary to all law and justice the most solemn oaths and sacred treaties? And who knows whether a work so just, so charitable, so pious, and every way so glorious, is not reserved for the reign of Queen Anne, whose forces both by sea and land have had so great a hand in the mortification of that grand enemy of our religion, and of the liberty of mankind?¹³²

Moreover, Stennett betrayed a conviction that England's Protestantism was the primary reason why the English enjoyed "divine favour":

God has been pleased to maintain the righteous cause in which we are engaged, and not only to defend us from the insults of our enemies, but to punish their treachery and ambition, by making them fall before us in the field. Hereby he has preserved to us the enjoyment of whatever is justly valuable among men: hereby he has secured her majesty's throne and the protestant succession, and confirmed our hope of transmitting our holy religion. . . . How highly should we esteem those blessings which have been endeared to us by so many wonderful turns of providence employed for their preservation! What warmth and lasting impression ought so many signal instances of the divine favour to make on all our minds! Especially when we consider how unworthy of the least of all God's mercies our sins have rendered us, and how justly he might have punished us.¹³³

Also in 1708, Stennett reminded the "august assembly" of Parliament of their unique responsibility with respect to the larger "Protestant interest":

Tis your fortune to be chosen at a very critical juncture of time: and the august assembly, of which you are to be a part, will in all appearance have before them some of the most important affairs that ever were debated in Parliament; on the prudent management of which (under the divine providence) not only the happiness of this city and nation, but the welfare of the whole Protestant interest, and of the greatest part of Europe depends.¹³⁴

Thus, for Stennett, the English Israel motif was not expressed in terms of an irrevocable promise that God made to England alone. Rather, for Stennett, England functioned like

¹³²Stennett, "Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706," in *Works*, 1:304.

¹³³Stennett, "Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706," in *Works*, 1:304-5.

¹³⁴"Some Account of His Life," in *Works*, 1:26.

OT Israel insofar as England represented the Protestant interest, which was the “true religion” of his day, just as Israel represented “true religion” among the heathen nations of the Old Testament.

Stennett on the “Happy Revolution”

In light of Stennett’s “English Israel” motif and his passionate embrace of the cause of liberty, one is not surprised that Stennett’s *Works* contain many positive references to the Glorious Revolution and to “the late King William of glorious memory,” who was the champion of the Glorious Revolution.¹³⁵ Regarding the Revolution, Stennett was a staunch and uncompromising advocate. In 1708, as Stennett made his address to Parliament, he urged the lords of Parliament to ensure “the security of the succession in the Protestant line” on the basis of “the just and glorious principles of the late happy Revolution.”¹³⁶ On another occasion, Stennett wrote a poem commemorating the “the Illustrious Prince of Orange” on “His Expedition into England, Anno 1688,” in which he referred to the Revolution as “the best and noblest cause.”¹³⁷ Thus, according to Stennett, the Revolution was “the best and noblest cause”¹³⁸ and was founded upon “just and glorious principles.”¹³⁹

Stennett’s perspective of the Glorious Revolution was profoundly connected to Stennett’s personal admiration for William of Orange. Indeed, Stennett could hardly

¹³⁵Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704,” in *Works*, 1:242.

¹³⁶“Some Account of His Life,” in *Works*, 1:29.

¹³⁷Joseph Stennett, “To the Illustrious Prince of Orange on His Expedition into England, Anno 1688,” in *Works*, 4:264.

¹³⁸Stennett, “To the Illustrious Prince of Orange,” in *Works*, 4:264.

¹³⁹“Some Account of His Life,” in *Works*, 1:29. Elsewhere, Stennett wrote that the Revolution’s “design [to] support a falling state” was both “just and generous” (Stennett, “To the Illustrious Prince of Orange,” in *Works*, 4:265).

think about the Glorious Revolution in contradistinction from William of Orange. As regards William, Stennett was completely spellbound. For Stennett, William not only embodied the spirit of Protestantism, he embodied the very heart and soul of English liberty. In his political sermons, Stennett repeatedly referred to William as “the late King William of glorious memory.”¹⁴⁰ More specifically, in his political sermon of 1704, Stennett publicly celebrated the “prudent counsels, indefatigable industry, and victorious arms of the late king William of glorious memory.”¹⁴¹ In 1706, Stennett celebrated William’s revolutionary exploits with these words:

Without mentioning the many deliverances and victories wherewith God has honoured this nation, since reformed from the Romish religion, our own memory can furnish us with an account of the Revolution under the conduct of the late King William, whose name will always appear bright in our English history, as long as the love of liberty and religion shall obtain among us, that liberty which he so gloriously restored, and that religion which he so happily secured by the favourable providence of God, and which the same divine hand has preserved to us by many remarkable successes.¹⁴²

In another sermon in 1708, Stennett queried his hearers: “Can we forget the late happy Revolution, and the good consequences of it in the glorious reign of the late king William, without being unjust to the memory of that illustrious prince?”¹⁴³ In his poem

¹⁴⁰On at least three occasions (1704, 1706, and 1707), Stennett referred to William as “the late king William of glorious memory” (Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704,” in *Works*, 1:242; Stennett, “Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:299; and Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on the 1st of May, 1707,” in *Works*, 1:336).

¹⁴¹Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704,” in *Works*, 1:242.

¹⁴²Stennett, “Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:293. In this same sermon, Stennett referred once again to “the late king William of glorious memory” as one “who engaged in battle for us in the same cause of liberty, which is now against so vigorously asserted by the allies, and so happily favoured by the providence of God” (Stennett, “Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:299).

¹⁴³Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708,” in *Works*, 1:376.

“To the Illustrious Prince of Orange,” Stennett referred to William exultantly:

Mighty hero! Born to be, Heaven’s delight and Europe’s wonder;
Born for easy victory, Born to trample tyrants under!¹⁴⁴

On another occasion, Stennett described God’s providence towards England as “the indulgence of heaven” because William III had been protected from “the assassinating dagger”:

The indulgence of heaven towards us, in defeating the secret plots and open attempts of our enemies in protecting our country from design’d invasions, and the best of our kings [i.e., King William] from the sword abroad, as well as from the assassinating dagger at home, all shew how much we have been the objects of God’s peculiar favour.¹⁴⁵

After William died, Stennett composed yet another poem in honor of King William. In this poem, Stennett not only celebrated William’s life, he urged the world to mourn the death of “the best of kings”:

Take up your lyres, and touch the charming strings,
To weep the exit of the best of kings.
Tell the sad world, what they already know,
Tell ’em Britannia’s tears so largely flow.
Because the great, the good king William’s gone;
Britannia’s tears shall be your Helicon
Tell ’em what earth has lost, what heaven has gain’d
How he shines there, who here so brightly reign’d.¹⁴⁶

To Stennett’s mind, even the great and powerful Louis XIV was no king compared to William:

While Lewis frights the world with pride and rage,
William stands up to prop the drooping age:
One age our danger and deliverance brings,
The worst of tyrants, and the best of kings.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴Stennett, “To the Illustrious Prince of Orange,” in *Works*, 4:263.

¹⁴⁵Stennett, “Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:292-93.

¹⁴⁶Joseph Stennett, “A Poem to the Memory of K. William III,” in *Works*, 4:204-5.

¹⁴⁷Stennett, “Poem to the Memory of K. William III,” in *Works*, 4:210.

In like terms, Stennett extolled William's religion, reign, speech, mind, charms, fame, and piety. Stennett's admiration for William of Orange was total, and Stennett unreservedly declared himself and his fellow Baptist ministers in London to be King William's "most loyal and most dutiful subjects and servants."¹⁴⁸

Summary of Stennett's political doctrine. In sum, Stennett's *Works* convey a political doctrine oriented towards a "metaphorical"¹⁴⁹ and "figurative"¹⁵⁰ interpretation of Israel's theocratic model of government. To be clear, Stennett did not argue for a pure theocracy; neither did he argue for a government of "Judges" or "Elders." Stennett was actually content with English monarchy—so long as the monarchy was limited¹⁵¹ and the monarch himself was not "tyrannick"¹⁵² or "despotick"¹⁵³ or "threaten[ing]" to the English constitution.¹⁵⁴ Nevertheless, Stennett insisted that Israel served as a "model and pattern" for England from a perspective of piety. Like Israel of old, Stennett believed that God would specially and providentially "reward" England if England remained dedicated to "true religion."¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁸"Some Account of His Life," in *Works*, 1:9.

¹⁴⁹Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704," in *Works*, 1:215-16.

¹⁵⁰Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704," in *Works*, 1:233.

¹⁵¹"An absolute monarchy is a form of government not safe for any human society, because of the frailties and vices, and evil passions of men" (Joseph Stennett, "The Least in the Kingdom of Heaven Greater than John," in *Works*, 2:311).

¹⁵²Stennett, "Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706," in *Works*, 1:302.

¹⁵³Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704," in *Works*, 1:240.

¹⁵⁴"Some Account of His Life," in *Works*, 1:10.

¹⁵⁵Stennett, "Sermon to Societies for the Reformation of Manners," in *Works*, 2:65. Of course, Stennett believed that the "true religion" in his day was Protestantism, and he believed that God's ordinary course of providence was to grant "rewards" to righteous nations. Such

Stennett's Understanding and Use of Providence

The doctrine of providence uniquely ties the disparate themes of Stennett's political doctrine together. In what follows, Stennett's understanding and use of the doctrine of providence will be explored. Again, because Stennett was so closely identified with the Particular Baptists, Stennett's understanding of the doctrine of providence will be assessed according to the standards of the *1689 Confession*. Second, Stennett's use of the doctrine of providence will be examined from both a pastoral and political perspective.

Stennett's Understanding of Providence

Stennett's convictions concerning the doctrine of providence were nearly indistinguishable from the description of divine providence provided by the 1689 London Baptist Confession. The *1689 Confession* provided seven paragraphs on the doctrine of providence; by the witness of Stennett's *Works*, Stennett's understanding of divine providence concurred with all seven paragraphs on providence in the *1689 Confession*. In what follows, all seven paragraphs of the *1689 Confession* will be compared with quotes drawn from Stennett's *Works*.

The 1689 Confession: Paragraph 1 on providence. The first paragraph on providence in the *1689 Confession* reads:

God, the good creator of all things, in His infinite power and wisdom, doth uphold, direct, dispose and govern all creatures and things, from the greatest even to he least, by His most wise and holy providence, to the end for that which they were created, according unto His infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of His will; to the praise of the glory of His wisdom, power, justice, infinite goodness and mercy.¹⁵⁶

rewards included fruitful soil, "commodious" trade, wise government, the preservation of liberty and property, victories in battle, etc. (Stennett, "Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706," in *Works*, 1:292).

¹⁵⁶"Of Divine Providence," in *1689 Confession*, 41.

Stennett affirmed every aspect of this first paragraph on providence. Indeed, Stennett loved to think about “the methods of divine providence in the government of the world,” and his *Works* are full of such considerations.¹⁵⁷ In one sermon, Stennett explained “what is included in this title of *creator*, here attributed to God” from the text of Ecclesiastes 12:1.¹⁵⁸ Stennett insisted that the title “creator” meant (1) that “God is the author and original being of man,” (2) that “he is the upholder and preserver of our being, (3) that “he is the restorer and reformer of man,” and (4) that “he is the sovereign arbiter and disposer of our being.”¹⁵⁹ In the same sermon, Stennett also explained that God “created the matter of which we are composed, as well as that of all the other parts of the universe.”¹⁶⁰ Stennett continued, “All being of which world consists, all that we have any notices of, either from reason or Scripture, are either spiritual or corporeal, and all these are the works of God.”¹⁶¹ Moreover, as God is creator of all persons and things, Stennett elsewhere insisted that God “has an equitable claim to us as long as we have a being” and that it is “just that what we received from his hand, should be again offer’d to

¹⁵⁷Stennett, “Reasonableness of Bearing Afflictions with Patience: Sermon II,” in *Works*, 3:270. Moreover, by the evidence of his *Works*, Stennett was exactly the kind of man who “loves to survey the works of God, and to inquire into the effects of his power and providence” (Stennett, “Obedience the Proof of Love to God,” in *Works*, 3:100). Accordingly, Stennett instructed his church “to consult the providence of God continually” (Stennett, “Reasonableness of Bearing Afflictions: Sermon II,” in *Works*, 3:300).

¹⁵⁸Stennett, “Reasonableness and Advantages of an Early Conversion: Sermon 1,” in *Works*, 1:14; emphasis added. Additionally, Stennett cited Ecclesiastes 12:1, “Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when though shalt say, I have no pleasure in them” (Stennett, “Reasonableness and Advantages of an Early Conversion: Sermon 1,” in *Works*, 1:1).

¹⁵⁹Stennett, “Reasonableness and Advantages of an Early Conversion: Sermon 1” in *Works*, 1:14.

¹⁶⁰Stennett, “Reasonableness and Advantages of an Early Conversion: Sermon 1” in *Works*, 1:14.

¹⁶¹Stennett, “Reasonableness and Advantages of an Early Conversion: Sermon 1” in *Works*, 1:14.

him, that since we live by his good will, we should live to his glory.”¹⁶² Stennett additionally affirmed, “The great God, whose chief end in all he does is his own glory, because that is the best and most excellent end of all, made us, and continues our being for his own pleasure and glory.”¹⁶³

Paragraph one of the *1689 Confession* specifically emphasized God’s wisdom, power, justice, infinite goodness, and mercy in its definition of providence; Stennett likewise tied each of these individual attributes of God’s character to the doctrine of providence in his *Works*. With respect to wisdom and power, Stennett preached, “As the power and wisdom of God are very conspicuous in the work of creation and providence, so they easily and deeply impress the minds of those who but moderately attend to them.”¹⁶⁴ With respect to justice, Stennett unflinchingly insisted upon “the justice of the divine providence in the government of the world.”¹⁶⁵ With respect to the “goodness and mercy” of God, Stennett defended the “providential dispensations” of God, even when “good men are greatly afflicted in this world.”¹⁶⁶ Of course, Stennett articulated this conviction with respect to the circumstances of Job. Nevertheless, Stennett believed that God’s creatures had “abundant cause to admire the divine mercy,” even in the midst of providentially-appointed affliction.¹⁶⁷ Finally, Stennett believed that any “serious reflection on the sovereignty, justice, wisdom, and goodness of that God, whose

¹⁶²Stennett, “Reasonableness and Advantages of an Early Conversion: Sermon II,” in *Works*, 1:50, *passim*.

¹⁶³Stennett, “Reasonableness and Advantages of an Early Conversion: Sermon II,” in *Works*, 1:51.

¹⁶⁴Stennett, “Sermon on the Doctrine of Christ Crucified: Sermon I,” in *Works*, 2:128.

¹⁶⁵Stennett, “Sermon to Societies for the Reformation of Manners,” in *Works*, 2:65; see also Stennett, “Sermon to Societies for the Reformation of Manners,” in *Works*, 2:72.

¹⁶⁶Stennett, “Death to Good Men: A Desirable Release,” in *Works*, 3:403-4, *passim*.

¹⁶⁷Stennett, “Reasonableness of Bearing Afflictions: Sermon II,” in *Works*, 3:293.

providence governs the universe” should work in a man’s heart a deep and profound “submission” to God’s providential governance.¹⁶⁸ Thus, in concurrence with paragraph one of the *1689 Confession* on providence, the attributes of God’s wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and mercy were articulated by Stennett in apposition with the doctrine of divine providence.

The 1689 Confession: Paragraph 2 on providence. Paragraph two on providence in the *1689 Confession* reads as follows:

Although in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the first cause, all things come to pass immutably and infallibly; so that there is not anything that befalls any by chance, or without His providence, yet by the same providence He ordereth them to fall out according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently.¹⁶⁹

In paragraph two, the main focus of the *1689 Confession* regarding providence is on primary and secondary causality. The confession affirms that both primary and secondary causes fall under the sovereign and providential care of God. In other words, nothing happens by chance, not even free and contingent secondary causes.

Stennett likewise believed that all things derive their being from God as a first cause and as the “original author” of all things. Said Stennett, “No being, that has had a beginning, could give itself existence.”¹⁷⁰ “For how should that, which does neither necessarily exist nor could give itself a being, be capable of giving being to any thing else, when it whole depends on God for its own?”¹⁷¹ Moreover, “being” when “simply

¹⁶⁸Stennett, “Reasonableness and Advantages of an Early Conversion: Sermon II,” in *Works*, 1:76.

¹⁶⁹“Of Divine Providence,” in *1689 Confession*, 41.

¹⁷⁰Stennett, “Reasonableness and Advantages of an Early Conversion: Sermon I,” in *Works*, 1:18.

¹⁷¹Stennett, “Reasonableness and Advantages of an Early Conversion: Sermon I,” in *Works*, 1:18.

consider'd" is "the most universal effect, all creatures partaking of it in common, it must be owing to the most universal cause, which is no other than God himself."¹⁷²

"Therefore," Stennett concluded, "[God] only can create, or make that to be which was not before."¹⁷³ God alone is "the efficient cause of all generation."¹⁷⁴

Stennett also lumped secondary causality underneath the providential care of God, even in cases of suffering. Regarding creation, Stennett insisted that God may use "instrumental or occasional causes" in order to accomplish his purposes.¹⁷⁵ Thus, Stennett taught his congregation: "When a man finds himself in misery, is it not proper for him, as a rational creature, to say, 'From whence does this affliction come?' Not from second causes only, but from the providence of God."¹⁷⁶ Secondary causes were not denied by Stennett; rather, secondary causes were acknowledged and subordinated to the providence of God. Thus, Stennett's understanding of providence concurred with paragraph two on providence in the *1689 Confession*.

The 1689 Confession: Paragraph 3 on providence. The third paragraph on the doctrine of providence in the *1689 Confession* reads, "God, in his ordinary providence maketh use of means, yet is free to work without, above, and against them at

¹⁷²Stennett, "Reasonableness and Advantages of an Early Conversion: Sermon I," in *Works*, 1:18-19.

¹⁷³Stennett, "Reasonableness and Advantages of an Early Conversion: Sermon I," in *Works*, 1:19. In the following pages of this sermon, Stennett critiqued Aristotle's view that the world had no beginning, and he also critiqued the slightly more nuanced Epicurean view that the world is self-existent (Stennett, "Reasonableness and Advantages of an Early Conversion: Sermon I," in *Works*, 1:19-20).

¹⁷⁴Stennett, "Reasonableness and Advantages of an Early Conversion: Sermon I," in *Works*, 1:23.

¹⁷⁵Stennett, "Reasonableness and Advantages of an Early Conversion: Sermon I," in *Works*, 1:23.

¹⁷⁶Stennett, "Reasonableness of Bearing Afflictions," in *Works*, 3:285-86.

his pleasure.”¹⁷⁷ Here, the confession is affirming that God normally makes use of “means” in the course of his providential care of his creatures and creation; however, God is not bound by the ordinary means of providence. God can act supernaturally and miraculously within the realm of his created order.

In concurrence with the confession, Stennett believed that God governed the world by the rules of an ordinary providence. In one particular sermon, Stennett asserted “the justice of the divine providence in the government of the world.”¹⁷⁸ Stennett meant that God ordered the affairs of men and of nations according to a principle of godliness: “Tis the course and method of providence, to reward in this life those cities and nations which encourage and promote religion and virtue, and discourage vice and irreligion: to reward them, I say, with temporal blessings, with peace and plenty, health and long life, success and victory.” Yet, Stennett did not believe that God was limited to the ordinary methods of providence. Indeed, to Stennett’s mind, God could work “without, above, and against” the ordinary course of providence according to his own good pleasure. Thus, Stennett held, “God may be said to make a step out of the ordinary method of the dispensation of this grace, somewhat like that he makes, when he works a miracle in the sphere of nature.”¹⁷⁹ In other words, God may override the normal rules of providence and intervene in the lives of men or override the normal laws of nature.

Finally, Stennett maintained that God’s intervention in the world through Jesus was accomplished through “means”:

Nothing less than our creator’s own divine goodness could move him to restore deprav’d sinners, nothing less than his own divine wisdom could contrive the method of their restoration, and nothing less than his own divine power could put it

¹⁷⁷“Of Divine Providence,” in *1689 Confession*, 42.

¹⁷⁸Stennett, “Sermon to Societies for the Reformation of Manners,” in *Works*, 2:65; see also Stennett, “Sermon to Societies for the Reformation of Manners,” in *Works*, 2:72.

¹⁷⁹Stennett, “Reasonableness and Advantages of an Early Conversion: Sermon II,” in *Works*, 1:110.

in execution, and accomplish it. He contrived the scheme of this glorious work, he appointed and prepared the means, and he renders them effectual to the end design'd.¹⁸⁰

Thus, in keeping with the *1689 Confession*, Stennett maintained that God's care for his creatures and creation included primary and secondary causality, viz., both extraordinary acts of providential intervention and ordinary "means" of providence too.

The 1689 Confession: Paragraph 4 on providence. Paragraph four on the doctrine of providence in the *1689 Confession* reads:

The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God, so far manifest themselves in his providence, that his determinate counsel extendeth itself even to the first fall, and all other sinful actions both of angels and men; and that not by a bare permission, which also he most wisely and powerfully boundeth, and otherwise ordereth and governeth, in a manifold dispensation to his most holy ends; yet so, as the sinfulness of their acts proceedeth only from the creatures, and not from God, who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin.¹⁸¹

In this fourth paragraph on providence, the *1689 Confession* asserted that God's sovereign and "determinate counsel" encompassed the entire domain of sin, including Adam's sin. However, the confession rejected any notion that God was the "author or approver of sin." Thus, the confession underscored the breadth of God's providence—even over sin—while simultaneously maintaining God's holiness and righteousness with

¹⁸⁰Closely related to this issue of God's providence in the ordering of human affairs through primary and secondary causes, Stennett argued from this same line of reasoning with respect to the cross:

Nothing less than our creator's own divine goodness could move him to restore depriv'd sinners, nothing less than his own divine wisdom could contrive the method of their restoration, and nothing less than his own divine power could put it in execution, and accomplish it. He contriv'd the scheme of this glorious work, he appointed and prepared the means, and he renders them effectual to the end design'd. Who but our creator is able to restore us, and reform us from sin, seeing sin is a privation of sanctity, a nullity oppos'd to the being of holiness? Nay, a state of sin is a state of rebellion against God, a state of enmity and opposition to the author of our being (Stennett, "Reasonableness and Advantages of an Early Conversion: Sermon II," in *Works*, 1:28).

¹⁸¹"Of Divine Providence," in *1689 Confession*, 42.

respect to sin and evil.

First, with respect to the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man, Stennett's *Works* are clear. Stennett asserted, "The holiness, justice, goodness, mercy and truth of God, which are term'd his moral perfections, give us the most glorious idea of him." Moreover, Stennett believed that the "felicity of the saints in heaven" consisted chiefly in their inheritance of "moral perfection" wherein the image of God was restored to them.¹⁸² On earth, however, Stennett explained that sin had "defaced this glorious likeness" in man.¹⁸³ Consequently, sinful man could not see God and live.¹⁸⁴ Indeed, in man's sinful state, he could not endure the "whole holiness" of God. Stennett explained,

The beauty of whole holiness would constantly reproach them for the deformity of their sin, and the severity of whose justice would strike such terror on their guilty minds, as would soon convince them, they could no more subsist in his presence, than dry stubble can dwell with devouring fire.¹⁸⁵

Stennett elsewhere insisted that sin is "infinitely opposite to [God's] holy nature" and he "therefore hates [sin] with a perfect hatred."¹⁸⁶ Thus, in keeping with the confession, Stennett maintained a great distance between God's infinite holiness and man's sinfulness.

Second, with respect to God's absolute sovereignty, Stennett's *Works* are also clear. Stennett believed that God possessed "an uncontrollable power and authority," and

¹⁸²Joseph Stennett, "The Rest of the People of God," in *Works*, 1:409.

¹⁸³Stennett, "The Rest of the People of God," in *Works*, 1:409.

¹⁸⁴Stennett, "The Rest of the People of God," in *Works*, 1:409-10; cf. Stennett, "The Groans of a Saint, under the Burden of a Mortal Body," in *Works*, 1:161; cf. also Stennett, "Reasonableness and Advantages of an Early Conversion: Sermon II," in *Works*, 1:62.

¹⁸⁵Stennett, "The Rest of the People of God," in *Works*, 1:410.

¹⁸⁶Stennett, "Reasonableness and Advantages of an Early Conversion: Sermon II," in *Works*, 1:51.

he “governed the world by rules of wisdom and equity.”¹⁸⁷ Moreover, Stennett believed that God’s sovereignty was limitless, yet “tempered . . . with clemency and goodness.”¹⁸⁸ So Stennett believed that God’s authority and sovereignty were boundless, evil included.

Third, with respect to God’s complete authority over evil and misery, Stennett’s *Works* affirm that God is completely sovereign:

We are very prone, likewise, so to busy our thoughts upon second causes, as to forget that it is God who disposes of all persons and things, and of all events, as he sees good. We are ready to be angry with those instruments of our afflictions in this world; and to employ all our thoughts how we shall be delivered out of trouble, what means and measures we may use, humanly speaking, to get rid of the misery we are under; instead of adverting to the hand of providence, and considering that there is no *evil in a city*, no punishment, no affliction, but there is a hand of God in it. *Is there any evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?*¹⁸⁹

Stennett next pointed to the example of David in 2 Samuel 16 when he was cursed by Shimei. Said Stennett,

When one of [David’s] captains would have persuaded him to be reveng’d upon [Shimei]; instead of hearkening to his advice, *let him curse*, says he; *because the Lord hath said unto him curse David: who then shall say wherefore has thou done so?* There is a hand of God in it.¹⁹⁰

While Stennett does not address the fall of Adam directly, one may reasonably conclude from these statements in Stennett’s *Works* that Stennett would have affirmed that God’s “determinative counsel” extends into the realm of sinful action and evil, just as the confession carefully articulated.

¹⁸⁷Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708,” in *Works*, 1:365.

¹⁸⁸Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708,” in *Works*, 1:365.

¹⁸⁹Joseph Stennett, “Unreasonableness and Folly of an Indecent Behavior under Afflictions Considered: Sermon I,” in *Works*, 3:253; emphasis original.

¹⁹⁰Stennett, “Unreasonableness and Folly: Sermon I,” in *Works*, 3:254; emphasis original.

The 1689 Confession: Paragraph 5 on providence. Paragraph five on the doctrine of providence in the *1689 Confession* reads:

The most wise, righteous, and gracious God doth oftentimes leave for a season his own children to manifold temptations and the corruptions of their own hearts, to chastise them for their former sins, or to discover unto them the hidden strength of corruption and deceitfulness of their hearts, that they may be humbled; and to raise them to a more close and constant dependence for their support upon himself; and to make them more watchful against all future occasions of sin, and for other just and holy ends. So that whatsoever befalls any of his elect is by his appointment, for his glory, and their good.¹⁹¹

As regards God's providential chastisements, Stennett's *Works* completely concur with paragraph five on providence in the *1689 Confession*. Stennett's *Works* include two sermons that specifically address the theme of God's providence in the midst of chastisement. In both sermons, Stennett preached from Proverbs 3:11–12,¹⁹² and the thesis that drove both sermons was stated directly: "Such is the ignorance and weaknesses even of the best of men, that they find no small difficulty in improving those dispensations of God's providence, which are most adapted to their interests. Afflictions are designed of God for our profit."¹⁹³ Moreover, Stennett declared, "The greatest degree of *despising the chastening of the Lord* is when men, with an insolent contempt, deny the providence of God; and will take no notice of his chastenings, tho they are very severe and terrible."¹⁹⁴ Stennett explained that "it is not common for good men to murmur at the providence of God in those terms which the wicked do, who are ready to charge the

¹⁹¹"Of Divine Providence," in *1689 Confession*, 43.

¹⁹²"My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, neither be weary of his correction. For whom the Lord loveth, he correcteth, even as a father the son, in whom he delighteth" (Stennett, "The Unreasonableness and Folly: Sermon I," in *Works*, 3:235-65; Joseph Stennett, "The Unreasonableness and Folly of an Indecent Behavior under Afflictions Considered: Sermon II," in *Works*, 3:266-300).

¹⁹³Stennett, "Unreasonableness and Folly: Sermon I," in *Works*, 3:235.

¹⁹⁴Stennett, "Unreasonableness and Folly: Sermon I," in *Works*, 3:248; emphasis original.

Almighty with regardlessness, or injustice, or want of mercy, when they are severely afflicted.”¹⁹⁵ Stennett warned those who, in the midst of affliction, were “tempted to distrust his providence.”¹⁹⁶ Rather, Stennett urged those who are under affliction to consider, “no affliction rises out of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground.”¹⁹⁷ Rather, Stennett reminded his hearers that affliction “is an argument of [God’s] kindness and indulgence to mankind in general, when he is pleased to correct them by his providence, before they incur the severity of his vengeance.”¹⁹⁸ Again, Stennett insisted, “Happy is the man whom God corrected. Therefore, despise not the chastening of the Almighty.”¹⁹⁹ Stennett again told his hearers that, for God’s children, “Afflictions, which are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”²⁰⁰ The Corinthians “considered that these chastisements were to improve them, and to make them ripe for heaven.”²⁰¹ Likewise, Stennett argued:

If we will take our measures from the conduct of God’s providence towards the best of men that ever have been in the world, we shall find that he hath chastened them and corrected them severely; and yet this was so far from being an argument of his want of love to them, that it was a proof of it, and so they themselves reckoned, when they spake most seriously about it. So says the psalmist: *Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now I have learned to keep thy commandments. And, in very faithfulness thou hast afflicted me.*²⁰²

¹⁹⁵Stennett, “Unreasonableness and Folly: Sermon II,” in *Works*, 3:269.

¹⁹⁶Stennett, “Unreasonableness and Folly: Sermon II,” in *Works*, 3:269.

¹⁹⁷Stennett, “Unreasonableness and Folly: Sermon II,” in *Works*, 3:269; interestingly, Stennett is positively quoting the words of Eliphaz in Job 5:6.

¹⁹⁸Stennett, “Unreasonableness and Folly: Sermon II,” in *Works*, 3:271.

¹⁹⁹Stennett, “Unreasonableness and Folly: Sermon II,” in *Works*, 3:271.

²⁰⁰Stennett, “Unreasonableness and Folly: Sermon II,” in *Works*, 3:281.

²⁰¹Stennett, “Unreasonableness and Folly: Sermon II,” in *Works*, 3:281.

²⁰²Stennett, “Unreasonableness and Folly: Sermon II,” in *Works*, 3:281-82; emphasis original.

Finally, Stennett provided so many of the same reasons why God might inflict chastisements on those whom He loves:

We cannot say that God loves a man and delights in him, because *he is not in trouble like other men*, and that God hates a man, because he is under severe affliction and chastisement. But it is very often the contrary, those who are extremely afflicted, are under the tender regard of divine providence; and God sees it proper for them for the mortifying their sins, and advancing them in grace, to conform them to his own likeness in holiness, and to make them everlastingly happy.²⁰³

Numerous additional examples could be provided as this was a major theme in two of Stennett's extant sermons,²⁰⁴ however, the examples provided above sufficiently demonstrate that Stennett and the *1689 Confession* completely concur on this particular paragraph on providence.

The 1689 Confession: Paragraph 6 on providence. Paragraph six on the doctrine of providence in the *1689 Confession* reads:

As for those wicked and ungodly men whom God, as the righteous judge, for former sin doth blind and harden; from them he not only withholdeth his grace, whereby they might have been enlightened in their understanding, and wrought upon their hearts; but sometimes also withdraweth the gifts which they had, and exposeth them to such objects as their corruption makes occasion of sin; and withal, gives them over to their own lusts, the temptations of the world, and the power of Satan, whereby it comes to pass that they harden themselves, under those means which God useth for the softening of others.²⁰⁵

The aspect of providence uniquely emphasized in this paragraph of the confession is that God providentially withholds his grace from some sinners. In other words, the

²⁰³Stennett, "Unreasonableness and Folly: Sermon II," in *Works*, 3:295.

²⁰⁴For additional examples where explicit references to "providence" are tied to personal affliction and chastisement, see Stennett, "Unreasonableness and Folly of an Indecent Behavior under Afflictions Considered: Sermon I," in *Works*, 3:250, 251, 252, 253, 255, 257, 258, 261, 263, 264-65; see also, Stennett, "Unreasonableness and Folly of an Indecent Behavior under Afflictions Considered: Sermon II," in *Works*, 3:267, 268, 268, 269, 270, 271, 281, 283, 284, 286, 288, 290, 292, 294, 295, 296, 297, 299, and 300.

²⁰⁵"Of Divine Providence," in *1689 Confession*, 43-44.

confession depicted men as becoming increasingly alienated from God and hardened by sin, not merely because of their impenitency, but also because God's special providence and grace have been withheld. By contrast, the confession also emphasized God's providential grace that is used "for the softening of others."

Stennett believed that ordinary "means" or "methods" of grace were employed according to God's providence in the conversion of sinners, though not in the exact same manner as envisioned by the confession. Three of Stennett's most celebrated sermons employed the theme of providence with respect to an "early conversion to God" by the ordinary "means" or "methods" of God's providence.²⁰⁶ According to Stennett, the ordinary way that God "softened" sinners was by deeply impressing the horror of sin upon their minds. Thus, Stennett observed, "It is the ordinary course of the almighty, when he converts men, first to impress their minds with great horror from the sense of sin, as well to make 'em loath and consequently to forsake their vices."²⁰⁷ Consequently, sinners duly impressed by the "horror" of their sin will also "highly value" God's favor and "adore his pardoning grace."²⁰⁸ To Stennett's mind, it was through the ordinary course of providence that deep impressions of divine realities were stamped upon the "tender and ductile minds of youth":

There is a tenderness of spirit attending our first years, and not ordinarily to be found afterwards, which renders conversion more feasible. The heart is more malleable, and more easily receives impressions from the promises and threatenings recorded in the Word of God, and from the mercies and judgments distributed in the world by his *providence*. Therefore, we find few persons, whose education has given them any tolerable means of the knowledge of divine things, who do not

²⁰⁶All three of Stennett's sermons on the theme of God's providence in the course of an early conversion were entitled, "Reasonableness and Advantages of an Early Conversion to God Demonstrated."

²⁰⁷Stennett, "Reasonableness and Advantages of an Early Conversion: Sermon II," in *Works*, 1:86-87.

²⁰⁸Stennett, "Reasonableness and Advantages of an Early Conversion: Sermon II," in *Works*, 1:87.

remember themselves to have been much affected in their youth in attending to the word of God, or in observing some remarkable passages of his *providence*. If deep conviction is a step toward conversion, experience shews this is most easily wrought on one that is young: how often do we see such a one weep at a transient glance on death and judgment, in a sermon, or at a general reflection on the sufferings of Christ for sinners, while the seared consciences of those that have been long harden'd in sin, hold proof against the most pathetick and awakening discourses of the certainty of death, the dismal circumstances that attend a sinner at the approach of it, and the great consequences that depend on that amazing change, or against the most lively description of the most cruel and unexampled sufferings with which our blessed Saviour was tormented for our redemption?²⁰⁹

Conversely, Stennett believed that the souls of “old sinners” stood in much greater danger of eternal torment, because “old sinners” had grown hard and impenitent and “untractable and obstinate.”²¹⁰ In this sense, Stennett heartily concurred with the confession that God would release sinners entirely “to their own lusts, the temptations of the world, and the power of Satan.”²¹¹ Thus, “old sinners,” who harden themselves against God’s ordinary providence, were also described by Stennett as being hardened “in judgment” by God:

God sends [a] strong delusion, that they should believe a lye, and they all may be damned, who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness. And the word of God, instead of being the savour of life unto life, becomes the savour of death unto death to them. Thus, the righteous God *sets his face against* them that *stiffen their necks against* him, and *hardens their hearts* in judgment, who themselves have *harden'd them* against the offers of mercy.²¹²

To be clear, Stennett believed that salvation was completely a work of God at any age. Thus, Stennett clarified,

²⁰⁹Stennett, “Reasonableness and Advantages of an Early Conversion: Sermon II,” in *Works*, 1:70-71; emphasis added.

²¹⁰Stennett, “Reasonableness and Advantages of an Early Conversion: Sermon III,” in *Works*, 1:110.

²¹¹“Of Divine Providence,” in *1689 Confession*, 44.

²¹²Stennett, “Reasonableness and Advantages of an Early Conversion: Sermon III,” in *Works*, 1:107; emphasis added.

I would not be thought to make the work of conversion, consider'd as the act of God, who alone can turn a soul from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to himself, to be more difficult in one subject than another, for all things are equally possible to him; but I have hereby made an essay to shew that the heart of an old sinner is a subject much more untractable and obstinate in itself, than that of one, who, by reason of his youth, is yet but a novice in vice.²¹³

And again, Stennett acknowledged that “God can surmount all difficulties by proportionate effusions of his grace, and can fill such a soul, if he pleases, with unspeakable joy.”²¹⁴ Moreover, Stennett pointed to the thief on the cross as proof that God is certainly able to save hardened sinners, even in the last hour of life.²¹⁵ However, Stennett insisted that such a conversion was extraordinary:

Because the gracious God has given one example in his word, of a sinner converted at the last hour of his life, is it reasonable for every sinner to conclude, that he may expect the same extraordinary favour, and so may safely defer his repentance till he is ready to expire? No.²¹⁶

Indeed, Stennett did not believe that God normally operated by such a principle of “extraordinary” providence. Accordingly, Stennett asked his hearers to judge for themselves:

Is it likely that [God] should indulge those with the highest and most uncommon privileges, that hold out longest in rebellion against him? And may such reasonably expect that he will go out of his ordinary methods to meet them, who have all their life past gone astray from him?²¹⁷

²¹³Stennett, “Reasonableness and Advantages of an Early Conversion: Sermon II,” in *Works*, 1:73.

²¹⁴Stennett, “Reasonableness and Advantages of an Early Conversion: Sermon II,” in *Works*, 1:88.

²¹⁵Stennett, “Reasonableness and Advantages of an Early Conversion: Sermon III,” in *Works*, 1:133.

²¹⁶Stennett, “Reasonableness and Advantages of an Early Conversion: Sermon III,” in *Works*, 1:134.

²¹⁷Stennett, “Reasonableness and Advantages of an Early Conversion: Sermon II,” in *Works*, 1:88.

Stennett personally concluded, “It is a thing possible, because all things are [possible] to God, but very unlikely, and not to be often expected.”²¹⁸ Elsewhere, Stennett drew the same conclusion: “The aged sinner is so far from being likely to be a true penitent, that the long time he has been hardening himself in his wickedness, renders the change of his heart impossible, without a more than ordinary effort of grace, which God is seldom pleas’d to grant to them that are grown old in vice.”²¹⁹

Therefore, Stennett did not diminish the role of providence in the conversion of sinners; however, Stennett did believe that “old sinners” possessed hardened hearts and seared consciences that required a more unusual and extraordinary act of providence than the “young sinner” with a tender conscience. In this sense, Stennett affirmed that God sometimes “withholdeth his grace”—the same grace which God sometimes “useth for the softening of others.”²²⁰ In other words, God sometimes saves young sinners by the ordinary methods of providence, and God sometimes hardens young sinners through the ordinary methods of providence. Similarly, God sometimes saves “old sinners” by an extraordinary providence (i.e., thief on the cross), but according to Stennett, God more often withholds His extraordinary providence from “old sinners.” In this sense, Stennett’s *Works* concur with the sixth paragraph on providence in the *1689 Confession*.

The 1689 Confession: Paragraph 7 on providence. The confession’s seventh paragraph on the doctrine of providence states, “As the providence of God doth

²¹⁸Stennett, “Reasonableness and Advantages of an Early Conversion: Sermon II,” in *Works*, 1:110. Stennett expressed this same conviction concerning rich people—that their conversion is “not to be often expected” (Stennett, Reasonableness and Advantages of an Early Conversion: Sermon III,” in *Works*, 1:110). With respect to the rich, Stennett believed that God had to “step out of the ordinary method of the dispensation of his grace” to convert a rich man or an “old sinner” (Stennett, Reasonableness and Advantages of an Early Conversion: Sermon III,” in *Works*, 1:110).

²¹⁹Stennett, “Reasonableness and Advantages of an Early Conversion: Sermon III,” in *Works*, 1:133.

²²⁰“Of Divine Providence,” in *1689 Confession*, 43-44.

in general reach to all creatures, so after a more special manner it taketh care of his church, and disposeth of all things to the good thereof.”²²¹

Stennett fully believed that the hand of providence would care for the church “after a more special manner.” However, it should be noted that Stennett used the word “church” in a variety of ways. Sometimes Stennett referred to the children of Israel in the Old Testament as the “church,”²²² and sometimes Stennett referred specifically to the “Christian church” or the “gospel-church” as those who have believed in Jesus Christ and who have submitted to the teaching of the early Apostles.²²³ In either case, Stennett believed that God’s providence specially attended the “church” in both senses.

With respect to the Old Testament people of God, Stennett declared that the

²²¹“Of Divine Providence,” in *1689 Confession*, 44.

²²²Stennett preached,

The Jewish nation are allowed to have been a type of the Christian church, the deliverances and victories of the former may well be accounted so many pledges and patterns of the wonderful preservation and triumphs of the latter, especially in such ages of the world wherein the circumstances of the one should resemble those of the other. It will be found very difficult to explain many of the prophecies contained in the holy scripture, without such an accommodation as this. And the new testament frequently applies to Christians those promises which were originally made to the Jews in general, nay, sometimes to a particular member of the antient church. The promise made to Joshua, for instance, to encourage his invasion of Canaan, is by the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, applied to all true Christians, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee* (Stennett, “Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:277; emphasis original. See also Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704,” in *Works*, 1:233-34; Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708,” in *Works*, 1:371).

²²³Stennett, “The Least in the Kingdom of Heaven Greater than John,” in *Works*, 3:319, 324, 325. For other references to the church in this New Testament sense, see Stennett, “Reasonableness and Advantages of an Early Conversion: Sermon III,” in *Works*, 1:143; Stennett, “The Groans of a Saint, under the Burden of a Mortal Body,” in *Works*, 1:188-90; Stennett, “The Rest of the People of God,” in *Works*, 1:417; Stennett, “Sermon Preach’d before an Assembly of Ministers,” in *Works*, 2:4, 7, 13, 15, 22, 24, 29; Stennett, “Sermon at the Ordination of Mr. David Rees,” in *Works*, 2:75-127; Stennett, “Sermon on the Doctrine of Christ Crucified,” in *Works*, 2:168; Stennett, “Obedience the Proof of Love to God,” in *Works*, 3:86-87. Also, in a letter signed by Stennett and dispatched to an “honoured sir,” Stennett remarked on the “providence of God, in that most pure and shining age of the church, which was founded by Christ and the apostles” (Stennett, “Concerning the Abolition of the Law of Moses,” in *Works*, 4:313).

“divine hand” would always “effect in favour of the church.”²²⁴ Stennett believed that the enemies of God’s church would one day be destroyed: “Just as th[e] potent army of Canaanites has been routed and overthrown by the almighty hand, so let the rest of thy enemies, who oppress thy church, and seek the ruin of thy inheritance, be themselves defeated and destroyed.”²²⁵ Consequently, when her enemies are finally annihilated, “God will crown his church in the latter ages of the world, and of the compleat deliverance he will give her from the captivity of mystical Babylon.”²²⁶ Elsewhere, Stennett explained how God, by special providence, was “pleased” to provide special “deliverances” for his “church” in both the Old and New Testament:

Other deliverances were bestowed in various successive ages upon the church. After they had provoked God to give them into the hands of their enemies, he was pleased frequently to save them again, to turn back their captivity, and to raise them up *saviours*, who should fight their battles, rescue them from their enemies, and protect and govern them according to the divine will. In this historical part of the old testament, we have God thus celebrated as the savior of that people. And as they were a typical people, and represented the church of the new testament, in allusion to this, salvation is so frequently spoke of in the new: and our Lord Jesus Christ is called a savior, and a greater savior he was than any of those whom God raised up to his people in former ages of the world, who were but types of him.²²⁷

In this way, Stennett spoke of the special care that God for the Old Testament “church.”

Regarding Jesus Christ and the NT “church,” Stennett also affirmed:

[Jesus], who has expressed his love in the greatest instances of doing and suffering for us, will now certainly pursue his own conquest, and will not lose the price of his

²²⁴Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704,” in *Works*, 1:214.

²²⁵Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704,” in *Works*, 1:214.

²²⁶Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704,” in *Works*, 1:216.

²²⁷Stennett, “On the Intercession of Christ,” in *Works*, 2:205; emphasis original. Also, Stennett said, “How well were they guarded by the providence of God during their pilgrimage in the dessert, and when they took possession of the promis’d land!” (Stennett, “Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:279-87).

own blood. Seeing he has undergone the reproach of the cross, and is raised to a state of dignity and glory, at his Father's right hand; how can we think he'll lose his own labour? Can we imagine he will not perfect that work, the foundation of which was laid in his own blood? That he will not watch over his own church, when he has promised *the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*? Is it to be imagined he will not *save to the uttermost*? As the Apostle was confident that *he who had begun a good work* upon the primitive Christians, *would carry it on*; so may we confide in the divine grace and mercy, that he will not suffer those to become a prey to the temptations of Satan whom he has recovered from that bondage by the efficacy of his grace.²²⁸

In this way, Stennett believed that the individual work of Jesus' "intercession imports to the defence and preservation of his church."²²⁹ Even with respect to the church's "chastening," Stennett explained:

Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and correcteth every son in whom he delighteth; i.e. to whom he hath a tender regard. This is his method with them: and it hath been thus thro' the whole course of God's providence. This hath been declared thro' out the Old Testament, and the New. And as he hath all along taken this method, so the consequence of things hath plainly justified it, that he hath no design thereby, but for the advantage of his people; and that they may be conformable to him.²³⁰

Thus, along with the *1689 Confession*, Stennett affirmed that God's providence was specially directed towards the church for her good.

Summary of Stennett's understanding of providence. By the witness of his *Works*, Stennett's understanding of providence concurred with the sevenfold definition of providence provided by the *1689 Confession*.

Stennett's Use of Providence

Having summarized Stennett's understanding of the doctrine of providence in light of the *1689 Confession*, Stennett's usage of the doctrine of providence will now be

²²⁸Stennett, "On the Intercession of Christ," in *Works*, 2:221; emphasis original.

²²⁹Stennett, "On the Intercession of Christ," in *Works*, 2:264.

²³⁰Stennett, "Reasonableness of Bearing Afflictions: Sermon I," in *Works*, 3:264-65.

examined under two broad heads: Stennett's political use of the doctrine of providence and Stennett's pastoral use of the doctrine of providence.

Stennett's political use of providence. Stennett believed that the ordinary course of providence was to reward virtuous nations and to punish nations of vice. More specifically, Stennett believed that God specially favored the "righteous cause" of kings and nations who maintained the cause of "true religion." Most specifically, Stennett believed that God specially favored England because both William III and also Anne represented a corporate commitment to the "righteous cause" of "true religion" through their personal piety. Consequently, Stennett used the doctrine of providence to voice his wholehearted support for the post-Revolution Protestant English monarchy and state. Stennett's convictions concerning the operation of God's providence with respect to monarchs and nations are attested by Stennett's *Works* in five sermons,²³¹ two addresses,²³² and two poems.²³³

First, Stennett believed that God rewarded virtuous nations and brought judgments of punishment upon nations of vice. Stennett described this general rule as "the divine providence in the government of the world."²³⁴ Stennett elaborated on this

²³¹Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704," in *Works*, 1:213-58; Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706," in *Works*, 1:259-309; Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on the 1st of May, 1707," in *Works*, 1:310-40; Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708," in *Works*, 1:341-82; Stennett, "Sermon to Societies for the Reformation of Manners," in *Works*, 2:47-74.

²³²Stennett, "To the King's Most Excellent Majesty, The Humble Address of the Ministers of the Baptist Denomination in and about the City of London, in Behalf of Themselves and their Respective Congregations" (1696) in *Works*, 1:16-17, and Stennett, "To the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty, The Humble Address of the Protestant Dissenting Ministers of the Several Denominations, in and about the Cities of London and Westminster" (1706) in *Works*, 1:24-26.

²³³Stennett, "A Poem to the Memory of His Late Majesty William III," in *Works*, 4:199-219, and Stennett, "To the Illustrious Prince of Orange, on His Expedition into England, Anno 1688," in *Works*, 4:263-66.

²³⁴Stennett, "Sermon to Societies for the Reformation of Manners," in *Works*, 2:65.

ordinary “course and method of providence”:

For since communities of men, as such, are rewarded or punished only in this world, the future judgment being that of particular persons only; ‘tis the course and method of providence, to reward in this life those cities and nations which encourage and promote religion and virtue, and discourage vice and irreligion: to reward them, I say, with temporal blessings, with peace and plenty, health and long life, success and victory.²³⁵

In the same sermon, Stennett reinforced the point:

This, I say, seems to be the constant course of the divine providence towards nations and kingdoms; and tho particular persons sometimes prosper in a sinful course, this is no just reflection on the providence of God; because the judgement of particular persons is chiefly reserved to another world, to that day when *the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, and every man rewarded according to his works*. . . . But when cities or nations sin with a high hand, and refuse to be reform’d, especially after a long exercise of God’s patience, and the repeated threatenings or warnings he has used to reclaim them, he pours forth his wrath upon them in some extraordinary judgments.²³⁶

Stennett explained the reason for this “wise method” of providence:

This wise method, used by the supreme Governor of the world, gives some check to the fury and madness even of those sinners who look no farther than the present life. Those who are not to be moved by the representation of a future judgment, are touched with the near prospect of approaching misery in this life, and from the observation they may easily make of this usual method of providence to inflict national punishments for national sins, are under such apprehensions as curb their exorbitant vices, lest they should be deprived of all that is dear to them in this world, in which only they have hope.²³⁷

By contrast, Stennett believed the same “wise method” of providence taught that “virtue

²³⁵Stennett, “Sermon to Societies for the Reformation of Manners,” in *Works*, 2:65.

²³⁶Stennett, “Sermon to Societies for the Reformation of Manners,” in *Works*, 2:66, emphasis added. Stennett also believed that God would allow nations to repent “upon the warning of his providence.” By such repentance, nations could “avert the judgments impending” (Stennett, “Sermon to Societies for the Reformation of Manners,” in *Works*, 2:65-66; emphasis original).

²³⁷Stennett, “Sermon to Societies for the Reformation of Manners,” in *Works*, 2:67.

conduces so much to the happiness of a nation.”²³⁸ In this way, Stennett proved the Proverb: “Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.”²³⁹ Thus, Stennett believed that the ordinary course and method of providence was to reward virtuous nations and to punish nations of vice. Therefore, as Stennett enlarged on God’s providence towards nations, he called people to live righteous and religious lives as measured by the moral law:

As the practice of religion and virtue is the interest of every man, considered in his private capacity, so it tends to the happiness of communities, and recommends itself to human society by the great advantage it brings to those who entertain and cultivate it; whereas vice and profaneness not only bring misery on particular persons, but sooner or later subvert and ruin those nations and kingdoms wherein they are countenanced and indulged. This is what the wisest of men, and one of the greatest of princes, teaches us in the words of our text, which contains a fundamental maxim of state, worthy [of] the regard of the best politicians, and indeed of all who wish well to mankind.²⁴⁰

Second, and more specifically, Stennett believed that God’s providence specially attended the “righteous cause” of nations that maintained “true religion.” One way that God specially endorsed nations that possessed “true religion” was by giving victory in battle. To Stennett’s mind, every biblically literate person knew that God specially favored the cause of his own people by giving them “advantages” over their enemies:

Every one who is conversant in the holy Scriptures, knows that nothing has been more constantly attributed to God, than the advantages his people have obtained over their enemies, and that many psalms of praise have been composed on such occasions.²⁴¹

²³⁸Stennett, “Sermon to Societies for the Reformation of Manners,” in *Works*, 2:72.

²³⁹Prov 14:34 as cited by Stennett, “Sermon to Societies for the Reformation of Manners,” in *Works*, 2:47.

²⁴⁰Stennett, “Sermon to Societies for the Reformation of Manners,” in *Works*, 2:47-48.

²⁴¹Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704,” in *Works*, 1:237.

With respect to Israel, Stennett unreservedly articulated a direct relationship between “strict adherence to the true religion” and “victory” in battle:

Another condition to qualify [Israel] for victory, was their strict adherence to the true religion, and their observance of the commands of God, without which they had reason to expect that all their prayers would be rejected as mere formality and hypocrisy, and themselves severely chastised by the hands of those pagan nations whose idols they adopted and whose manners they imitated. Therefore Moses often foretells the many calamities which would befall them, whenever they should revolt from the true religion.²⁴²

Not surprisingly, Stennett articulated the same conviction about Abram and his “expeditions.”²⁴³ In the following quote, Stennett pushed the same point concerning “true religion” and “victory” in battle, except Stennett used the words “true worship of God” and broadened his application beyond the context of Israel. With respect to the text of Deuteronomy 33:29,²⁴⁴ Stennett said,

²⁴²Stennett, “Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:260. Similarly, “Moses often foretells the many calamities which would befall them, whenever they should revolt from the true religion” (Stennett, “Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:275).

²⁴³Stennett, “Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:260. Similarly, “Moses often foretells the many calamities which would befall them, whenever they should revolt from the true religion” (Stennett, “Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:275). In a similar way, Stennett believed that Abram, as the Father of the faithful, was vindicated by providence for the exact same reason: “the divine providence interposed to favour Abram with success, by giving him an opportunity of inclosing his enemies, so as to give them an intire defeat” (Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708,” in *Works*, 1:368). In the same sermon, we are told that “for the sake of the true religion, [Abram] *subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, and obtained promises*” (Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708,” in *Works*, 1:343; emphasis original). Moreover, after Abram had conquered his enemies, Stennett said that, “he endeavoured to diffuse the blessing of liberty among mankind, as far as he was capable, by his victorious arms, as well as that of the true religion by his exemplary faith and piety” (Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708,” in *Works*, 1:342).

²⁴⁴Stennett cited Deut 33:29 as follows: “Happy art thou, O England! Who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord! The shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency. And thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places” (Stennett, “Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:260).

The predictions in our text, and those of the like kind in other parts of the Holy Scripture, are not to be extended to the case of every good man, but to those of civil communities in which the true worship of God is maintained, and moral virtues countenanced and promoted. Some of the best of men have become victims of the fury of their enemies by an unjust persecution, and this is wisely permitted by the providence of God, both for their own improvement in grace and holiness, and for the advancement of religion in the minds of others by their example. But when any nation or large society of men, are engaged in a just quarrel, and with true humiliation for their sin and reformation of their lives, seek the favour of God, and depend on his assistance, 'tis the constant course of providence to espouse their cause, and render them victorious over the enemies of their liberty and religion.²⁴⁵

Thus, Stennett believed that those nations which maintained “true religion” or “true worship of God” would enjoy God’s special providence—specifically, victory in battle.

Likewise, Stennett asserted on another occasion:

When nations contend and have no judge on earth to whom they can agree to refer their cause, they, by taking up arms, make an appeal to God the sovereign judge of the universe, and refer their quarrel to the decision of his providence. And when the ruin of one or the other army must determine the controversy, nothing can be more evident, than that those who are engaged in a righteous cause may pray for their own success, which implies the defeat of their enemies, because this is now become necessary to their own preservation.²⁴⁶

On such occasions, the “enemies of the church” are also considered to be “the enemies of God” as these are “convertible terms” and “consequently those who love God’s honor and interest, may very safely pray that his enemies may be disappointed and subdued.”²⁴⁷

Thus, Stennett believed that God’s providence specially attended the “righteous cause” of nations that maintained “true religion.”²⁴⁸

²⁴⁵Stennett, “Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:278.

²⁴⁶Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704,” in *Works*, 1:230-31.

²⁴⁷Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704,” in *Works*, 1:231.

²⁴⁸Stennett believed that God’s providence would attend the righteous cause of a nation by giving victory in war in a variety of ways. Of course, Stennett (as a staunch supporter and believer in the Revolution) believed that God would directly order the winds and waves: “How remarkably did the providence of that God, whom winds and waves obey, interpose by a storm to retard the French fleet” (Stennett, “Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June,

Third, and most specifically, Stennett believed that God specifically favored William III because he represented a corporate commitment to the “righteous cause” of true religion.²⁴⁹ To Stennett’s mind, William’s person represented both Protestant England and the larger Protestant interest. Thus, as Stennett specifically considered his own English situation, he believed that God had providentially favored the English because of the exemplary piety of William III (and Queen Anne). Consequently, God would use the English to play a global role in expanding the Protestant interest (i.e., “true religion”).

That Stennett believed William was blessed by God on account of his character is beyond dispute, for Stennett lauded William as a “pious King Josiah.”²⁵⁰ Moreover, Stennett said of William in a poem that “true religion governs such a prince” and “Religion blest th’ assertor of her cause.”²⁵¹ Thus, William perfectly fit Stennett’s criteria of a king who was personally governed by true religion and who was personally committed to the “righteous cause” of Protestantism (i.e., “true religion”). Consequently, Stennett embraced William as a providential deliverer specially favored by God.

As William III (and Queen Anne) were specially favored by God, Stennett believed that “all good men” stood under obligation “of making grateful

1706,” in *Works*, 1:295). However, regarding secondary causes, Stennett also stressed the hand of God: “God gives princes, statesmen, generals, presence of mind, or confounds their thoughts; he directs them to take right methods, or infatuates them, he renders their projects prosperous, or disconcerts and breaks their measures, he gives courage to their armies, or dispirits them; he sometimes augments the resolution and valour of those whom he designs to render victorious, so that on that account they vastly surpass their enemies, and even exceed themselves, and are made to accomplish that which on other occasions themselves would think imprudent to attempt” (Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704,” in *Works*, 1:236).

²⁴⁹Again, Stennett believed the same about God’s providence with respect to Queen Anne and Protestant Britain in the early eighteenth century.

²⁵⁰Stennett, “A Poem to the Memory of K. William III,” in *Works*, 4:204.

²⁵¹Stennett, “A Poem to the Memory of K. William III,” in *Works*, 4:208, 211; respectively.

acknowledgement to the person whom the providence of God has employed for their defence or deliverance.”²⁵² Thus, as Stennett addressed William in 1696, he celebrated “the signal favour wherewith his providence has blessed your Majesty, these your kingdoms, and the whole Protestant interest abroad.”²⁵³ Elsewhere, Stennett said of William and the Revolution:

Without mentioning the many deliverances and victories wherewith God has honoured this nation, since reformed from the Romish religion, our own memory can furnish us with an account of the revolution under the conduct of the late king William, whose name will always appear bright in our English history, as long as the love of liberty and religion shall obtain among us, that liberty which he so gloriously restored, and that religion which he so happily secured by the favourable providence of God, and which the same divine hand has preserved to us by many remarkable successes.²⁵⁴

With respect to Queen Anne, Stennett articulated the same criteria of piety and personal commitment to “true religion” as the means of securing God’s favorable providence for the British nation. In other words, Stennett believed that Anne was governed by true religion and committed to the righteous cause of Protestantism; in turn, God continued to give special providential favor to the British:

The pious method her majesty has taken to open each campaign with publick prayers, has received a signal approbation from heaven by the many wonderful successes, which have given us so joyful opportunities as this to celebrate the divine praises. And the appointment of a national thanksgiving for such eminent blessings, is no less an argument of the queen’s piety, and has met with an uncommon reward, as an encouragement both to her majesty and her people constantly to recommend

²⁵²Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704,” in *Works*, 1:237.

²⁵³Stennett, “To the King’s Most Excellent Majesty,” in *Works*, 1:16.

²⁵⁴Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:293. In this same sermon, Stennett referred once again to “the late king William of glorious memory” as one “who engaged in battle for us in the same cause of liberty, which is now so vigorously asserted by the allies, and so happily favoured by the providence of God” (Stennett, “Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:299)

the just cause wherein they are engaged to the conduct of that righteous and merciful God to whom victory belongs.²⁵⁵

Accordingly, Stennett preached in 1706, and Stennett celebrated an English victory in Flanders and Spain: “God has been pleased to maintain the righteous cause in which we are engaged . . . by making them [i.e., “our enemies”] fall before us in the field . . . and hereby [God] has secured her majesty’s throne and the protestant succession.”²⁵⁶ Of course, Stennett did not hesitate on this occasion to give credit to the “many wonderful turns of providence” and the “many signal instances of the divine favour” for Britain’s victory in battle.²⁵⁷

Moreover, in his personal address to Anne in 1706, Stennett spoke these words:

The signal answer it has pleased God to return to those devout prayers, which your Majesty, and our people by your direction, addressed to heaven, inspires us with a joy, equal to the mortification it gives your enemies. And while your Majesty ascribes your many victories to the arm of the Almighty, and repeats your royal commands to your people, to offer him solemn thanksgiving; we cannot but look on your Majesty’s piety as an hopeful pledge of the like future success.²⁵⁸

Stennett expressed similar convictions on at least two other occasions.²⁵⁹ However, these

²⁵⁵Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:300-1.

²⁵⁶Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:304-5.

²⁵⁷Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:305.

²⁵⁸Stennett, “To the Queen’s Most Excellent Majesty,” in *Works*, 1:25.

²⁵⁹“By the swift and wonderful progress of her majesty’s arms abroad, and the speedy accomplishment of this union at home, the providence of God seems to indicate, that there is a harvest of glory still behind, and yet greater deeds are to adorn her reign, as the reward of her piety and moderation” (Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on the 1st of May, 1707,” in *Works*, 1:336); On another occasion, Stennett urged his hearers,

Since God has blessed her majesty’s reign with the accomplishment of that important union of England and Scotland, as well as with a long train of surprising victories and success, since he has rewarded her piety and moderation, in giving her so many triumphs over her enemies, and so great an esteem and affection in the hearts of her people, as appears by the

quotes demonstrate that Stennett viewed Anne as a monarch who was personally governed by true religion and who was committed to the “righteous cause” of true religion. In this sense, Queen Anne was admired by Stennett as William III was admired. Therefore, according to Stennett, Queen Anne and her confederate army and government were uniquely favored by God’s special providence—just as William had been specially favored. Accordingly, Stennett boasted of Anne, even after William’s death:

See Britain’s clouds begin to scatter too,
And scenes of coming glory are in view.
Anna the British scepter mildly sways,
And gives vast hopes of yet auspicious days.
Anna, whom parents frowns could never move
From her religion, and her country’s love.
O tyrants! Boast no more that William’s dead,
Since Anna’s reign shall give you equal dread!²⁶⁰

And with a closing touch of “English Israel” flourish, Stennett prayed for Anna, “May she a Deb’rah to our Israel prove.”²⁶¹

Thus, as William III and Queen Anne personally and piously maintained the Protestant interest, Stennett believed God’s providence would specially favor the monarch and the nation. Therefore, politically, Stennett used the doctrine of providence

unanimity and zeal of their representatives for the support of her government, she may well be congratulated on this happy occasion as Abram was by Melchizedek, *Blessed be Queen Anne of the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be the most high God, who has delivered her enemies into her hand.* (Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708,” in *Works*, 1:380-81)

²⁶⁰Stennett, “A Poem to the Memory of K. William III,” in *Works*, 4:218.

²⁶¹Stennett, “A Poem to the Memory of K. William III,” in *Works*, 4:219. Six years later, Stennett expressed a similar prayer for Anne:

As the queen has often paid homage to the Almighty, and as frequently call’d on her people to join with her in the same devout exercises, so God has, on many occasions, granter her her heart’s desire, and not withholden the request of her lips. May the same good providence, which has given her the chief honour of breaking the chains of Europe, give her also the satisfaction of seeing its liberty intirely secured, and its peace restored, and the same divine hand, that has succeeded her in united her protestant subjects at home, make her the glorious instrument of re-establishing the reform’d religion abroad. (Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on the 1st of May, 1707,” in *Works*, 1:338)

to voice his wholehearted support for the post-Revolution Protestant English monarchy.²⁶² Moreover, as England (Britain) prospered in the revolutionary government first under William III and later under Queen Anne, Stennett continued to preach providence.

Stennett's pastoral use of providence. Pastorally, Stennett used of the doctrine of providence in many disparate ways. For example, Stennett used the doctrine of providence to comfort a widow upon the death of her saintly husband;²⁶³ Stennett used the doctrine to urge ministers not to fixate on earthly "riches" or livelihood;²⁶⁴ Stennett

²⁶²Without doubt, Stennett was setting an example for his congregants and hearers to follow, which is evidenced in several of Stennett's political sermons: "Let us know that the divine providence sometimes accomplishes its ends by the most unthought of means" (Stennett, "Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706," in *Works*, 1:285); "Let us always depend on his almighty power, and the wise conduct of his providence" (Stennett, "Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706," in *Works*, 1:307); "Let us shew ourselves grateful to God, in giving all due honour to those illustrious person whom he has chiefly employed to mortify the pride and insolence of our enemies, and to secure us from their power" (Stennett, "Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706," in *Works*, 1:308); "Let us bless God for the great favour he has show us, in placing her majesty on the throne of these kingdoms. . . . Let the eminent reward of her virtues, by the victories that God has given her, incite us to the imitation of her royal example. Let us continually pray for the happiness and prosperity of her person and government, and contribute all we can to support her throne" (Stennett, "Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706," in *Works*, 1:308; see also Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704," in *Works*, 1:249-51; Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on the 1st of May, 1707," in *Works*, 1:339; and Stennett, "A Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 17th of February, 1708," in *Works*, 1:381-82).

²⁶³At the funeral of Mr. John Belcher, Stennett sympathized with the grieving congregation: sometimes the "voice of God's providence . . . speaks so loudly" in our affliction and sorrow (Stennett, "The Funeral Sermon on the Death of Mr. John Piggott," in *Works*, 1:441). Then, turning to Belcher's wife, Stennett urged "let not [the] sorrowful soul utterly refuse to be comforted, since it ought to be accounted a favour of divine providence, to have been related to so valuable a person" (Stennett, "The Funeral Sermon on the Death of Mr. John Piggott," in *Works*, 1:443).

²⁶⁴For example, Stennett preached, "If you will seek God's interest and honour, your own affairs will not run back, your own interests will not be unprovided for. It is much better to have our affairs under the special and peculiar care and protection of God's providence; much better for us to intail a blessing upon our families, by doing what is suitable to the divine requirements, than if we could leave them the greatest sums. We shall *lay up treasures in heaven*, if we employ our temporal riches to the honor of God and the interest of religion. We shall hereby secure our

used it to dismiss Old Testament Levitical codes of worship,²⁶⁵ Stennett employed providence to insist upon a “reformation of manners” in English society;²⁶⁶ Stennett referred to God’s providential care to comfort his own congregation during times of war;²⁶⁷ Stennett used this teaching to explain freakish death, like the death of Sisera in the Old Testament;²⁶⁸ Stennett again used it with respect to the ordination of ministers;²⁶⁹ Stennett employed providence to urge his own congregation to “buy truth”;²⁷⁰ and on at least five different occasions, Stennett used the doctrine in connection with Christian “commandment-keeping.”²⁷¹

riches. (Stennett, “Sermon Preach’d Before An Assembly of Ministers,” in *Works*, 2:40-41; emphasis original)

²⁶⁵Accordingly, Stennett preached, For tho God did at first indulge the Jews who were newly converted, in their opinion for the observation of the Levitical law, and that in some things, even by his own practice, as a tender father humours a peevish child, that is recovering out of a fit of sickness: yet he fails not in other instances to declaim against the opinion of having that law continued, as, I think appears above. God was, by his providence, then demolishing that form of worship, which if it were to have continued, would, in probability, have been intirely restor’d and ratify’d by the providence of God, in that most pure and shining age of the church. (Stennett, “Concerning the Abolition of the Law of Moses,” in *Works*, 4:312-13)

²⁶⁶Stennett, “Sermon to Societies for the Reformation of Manners,” in *Works*, 2:65-67.

²⁶⁷“Let us always depend upon His almighty power, and the wise conduce of his providence. While *some trust in chariots, and some in horses*, let us still remember the name of the Lord our God” (Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:307; emphasis original).

²⁶⁸“As Sisera, the general of king Jabin’s troops, ingloriously fled from the sword of one woman, the divine providence so ordered it that he should fall into the hands of another, and instead of dying in the bed of honour, he fell by no other weapon than a nail driven thro’ his temples with a hammer” (Stennett, “A Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 7th of September, 1704,” in *Works*, 1:226).

²⁶⁹Stennett, “Sermon at the Ordination of Mr. David Rees,” in *Works*, 2:77.

²⁷⁰“Let every one be jealous of himself, and examine his own heart; and whenever the providence of God furnished him with the means of conviction, let him *buy the truth, and sell it not*” (Stennett, “The Importance of Truth,” in *Works*, 2:394; emphasis original).

²⁷¹Stennett’s “spirituality” was closely tied to obeying the moral law. To Stennett’s mind, the moral law was codified in the Ten Commandments and typified by Jesus Christ. Thus,

Yet, over against these various applications of the doctrine of providence, a more dominant usage is found in Stennett's *Works*. Far and away, Stennett used the doctrine of providence mostly in connection with the afflictions, sufferings, and chastisements of believers.²⁷² Indeed, Stennett thought deeply about why "severe strokes of providence" would so often befall believers, whom he described as "the favourites of heaven."²⁷³ Consequently, in his *Works*, Stennett directly cited "providence" in connection to the afflictions, sufferings, and chastisements of believers at least fifty-four times.²⁷⁴

Stennett's notion of being a Christian followed the same pattern; moreover, Stennett's use of providence only reinforced this emphasis on *obedience*. Thus, Stennett declared,

To believe the Gospel, is an act of obedience; for this is the will of God, and *this his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son*. So that to believe in Jesus Christ as the Messiah, as the Mediator, is not only to believe the truths which are revealed in his sacred word . . . but to resign up ourselves to his conduct, to be his disciples, his followers, to imitate his example, and to conform ourselves to his precepts, to be like him, . . . to own him as our Lord and king, and subject ourselves to his conduct and government, to be willing to do what he requires to be done by us, and to suffer whatsoever his providence shall expose us to, for the sake of truth and righteousness. (Stennett, "Sermon on the Doctrine of Christ Crucified," in *Works*, 2:162)

In another sermon, Stennett said,

He who has a true love for God . . . loves to survey the works of God, and to inquire into the effects of his power and providence; because they bear the character of their great author. And thus also he who loves God, and admires his perfections, will see the glory of them shine in the perfection of his holy law after such a manner, that he cannot choose but have a delight in those commands, and, to be sure, he will then make it his business to observe them. (Stennett, "Obedience the Proof of Love to God," in *Works*, 3:100)

Other references to law-keeping with respect to providence include the following: Stennett, "Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706," in *Works*, 1:274; Stennett, "Sermon Preach'd Before an Assembly of Ministers," in *Works*, 2:40; Stennett, "Sermon to Societies for the Reformation of Manners," in *Works*, 2:65-67, 70.

²⁷²The majority of Stennett's pastoral references to the doctrine of providence fit the description of providence provided in paragraph five on providence in the *1689 Confession*.

²⁷³Stennett, "Reasonableness of Bearing Afflictions: Sermon II," in *Works*, 3:299.

²⁷⁴Stennett, "The Groans of a Saint, under the Burden of a Mortal Body," in *Works*, 1:177; Stennett, "Sermon Preach'd on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706," in *Works*, 1:278; Stennett, "The Rest of the People of God," in *Works*, 430, 441; Stennett, "Sermon to Societies for the Reformation of Manners," in *Works*, 2:65; Stennett, "Sermon on the Doctrine of Christ Crucified," in *Works*, 2:162; Stennett, "Reasonableness of Bearing Afflictions: Sermon I," in *Works*, 3:248, 250, 251, 253, 255, 257, 258, 261, 263, 265, 267, 268, 269; Stennett, "Reasonableness of Bearing Afflictions: Sermon II," in *Works*, 3:270, 271, 281, 283, 284, 286,

Stennett admonished believers never to “complain indecently” or “murmur at the divine providence” when “bearing afflictions.”²⁷⁵ Similarly, Stennett urged believers not to “distrust” the “cross providences” of God in their lives.²⁷⁶ Stennett cautioned, “How indecent and unjust a thing is it to murmur at the providence of God, and complain against his proceedings? This is very contrary to that meek temper which is recommended to us by the psalmist, in Psalm 39.”²⁷⁷ Rather than murmuring against God’s providence, Stennett pressed his hearers to “resign [them]selves to the conduct of his providence” and neither “faint under the strokes of divine providence” nor “distrust the providence of God, because they cannot see an end of their affliction or because they are distressed so with the acuteness of their pain.”²⁷⁸

Stennett also sought to comfort afflicted believers in several ways. First, Stennett explained that God would never give believers as much affliction as they deserve:

[God] does not inflict upon us so much as our iniquities have deserved, for then he would destroy us. Therefore, we may be thankful to his providence that he chastens us here, *that we may not be condemned with the world*. And from hence we may observe the divine love in the method of his afflicting providences. If we would consider our sins, and compare them with our afflictions, this would silent all our repinings, and make us submit ourselves intirely to the divine chastisement.²⁷⁹

288, 290, 292, 294, 295, 296, 297, 299, 300; Stennett, “Death to Good Men a Desirable Release,” in *Works*, 3:372, 379, 388, 393, 394, 398, and 405.

²⁷⁵Stennett, “Reasonableness of Bearing Afflictions: Sermon I,” in *Works*, 3:258.

²⁷⁶Stennett, “Reasonableness of Bearing Afflictions: Sermon II,” in *Works*, 3:284.

²⁷⁷Stennett, “Reasonableness of Bearing Afflictions: Sermon I,” in *Works*, 3:257. Stennett cited Ps 39: “I was dumb with silence; I held my peace . . . I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it. Remove thy stroke away from me: I am consumed by the blow of thine hand.”

²⁷⁸Stennett, “Reasonableness of Bearing Afflictions: Sermon I,” in *Works*, 3:261.

²⁷⁹Stennett, “Reasonableness of Bearing Afflictions: Sermon I,” in *Works*, 3:265, *passim*.

Second, Stennett explained that “it seems good to the all-wise and gracious God sometime to hedge up our way with thorns by his providence, to prevent our straying from him.”²⁸⁰ In other words, God sometimes “chastises” believers to keep them from denying the faith by turning to “carnal delights.”²⁸¹ Third, Stennett explained that, “thro’ the whole course of God’s providence,” God “hath no design thereby, but for the advantage of his people, and that they may be conformable to him.”²⁸² Thus, to Stennett’s mind, even the “severe strokes of providence” were calculated by God only for the good of believers.²⁸³ Consequently, Stennett taught,

It is worth our while . . . to consult the providence of God continually, to yield ourselves to the chastisements he inflicts, having our eyes upon the peace and happiness that is before us. We are children; that is our happiness. But we are minors, we cannot conduct ourselves: therefore God will not leave us to ourselves: he takes us under his immediate care and conduct, and we shall ere long be brought to a perfect state of happiness. Therefore let us not, on the one hand, *despise the chastisements of God*, nor, on the other hand, *faint when we are rebuked of him*.²⁸⁴

Thus, Stennett used the doctrine of providence pastorally to assure believers that their afflictions were not as bad as their sins deserved, that their afflictions were ordained by God to prevent them from straying from him, and that their afflictions were used by God always “for the advantage of his people, and that they may be conformable to him.”²⁸⁵ For this reason, Stennett concluded,

We are therefore to be thoughtful and considerate, to watch the motions of our heavenly father, and so advert to the conduct of his providence, upon all accounts,

²⁸⁰Stennett, “Sermon at the Funeral of Mr. John Belcher,” in *Works*, 1:177.

²⁸¹Stennett, “Sermon at the Funeral of Mr. John Belcher,” in *Works*, 1:177.

²⁸²Stennett, “Reasonableness of Bearing Afflictions: Sermon I,” in *Works*, 3:265.

²⁸³Stennett, “Reasonableness of Bearing Afflictions: Sermon I,” in *Works*, 3:288.

²⁸⁴Stennett, “Reasonableness of Bearing Afflictions: Sermon I,” in *Works*, 3:300; emphasis original.

²⁸⁵Stennett, “Reasonableness of Bearing Afflictions: Sermon I,” in *Works*, 3:265.

as to observe the favour that he bestows upon us, that we may be thankful to him; and so to observe his hand in afflicting us, as to submit ourselves to his will, and humble ourselves after a becoming manner before him.²⁸⁶

Summary of Stennett's use of providence. Research reveals that Stennett did not apply the doctrine of providence to nations and to individual persons in a uniform manner. That is, Stennett did not believe that God governed both nations and persons by the same method of providence. With respect to nations, Stennett believed that the normal method of providence was to favor the cause of righteous nations with temporal blessings. In other words, Stennett believed that it was “the constant course of the divine providence” to bless virtuous nations and to punish nations of vice.²⁸⁷ Because nations are not eternal, Stennett believed that divine providence “rewarded or punished [nations] only in this world.”²⁸⁸ Thus, Stennett did not believe in a “future judgment” for “communities of men.”²⁸⁹ Stennett praised “this useful method of providence” as a means of “curb[ing] exorbitant vices”: “This wise method, used by the supreme Governor of the world, gives some check to the fury and madness even of those sinners who look no farther than the present life.”²⁹⁰ Without such a “wise method” of providence, “the wicked would grow so numerous and so formidable” that “it would be impossible for the righteous to subsist among them, nay, all civil societies would fall into the utmost confusion and disorder, and the wicked themselves would destroy one another.”²⁹¹

By contrast, Stennett believed in the eternity of the human soul; therefore,

²⁸⁶Stennett, “Unreasonableness and Folly,” in *Works*, 3:254-55.

²⁸⁷Stennett, “Sermon to Societies for the Reformation of Manners,” in *Works*, 2:66.

²⁸⁸Stennett, “Sermon to Societies for the Reformation of Manners,” in *Works*, 2:65.

²⁸⁹Stennett, “Sermon to Societies for the Reformation of Manners,” in *Works*, 2:65.

²⁹⁰Stennett, “Sermon to Societies for the Reformation of Manners,” in *Works*, 2:65.

²⁹¹Stennett, “Sermon to Societies for the Reformation of Manners,” in *Works*, 2:67.

God could justly defer rewards and punishment to a “future judgment” for individual persons.²⁹² Such a distinction between God’s normal method of providence towards nations is here contrasted with the “special regard to the methods of God in dealing with his own peculiar people.”²⁹³ Thus, when temporal punishments befell a nation, God was expressing his wrath and displeasure with that nation in a temporal manner. By contrast, individual persons who experienced temporal “chastisements” are said to be “blessed”: “they are blessed indeed, whom God corrects after such a manner, as thereby to express to them his peculiar love; the persons whom he delights in, he therefore corrects, to signify his love to them.”²⁹⁴ For Stennett, only “the favourites of heaven” experience such “severe strokes of providence,” yet they are spared eternal judgment.²⁹⁵

Such distinction clarifies Stennett’s use of providence. Politically, such distinction clarifies why Stennett predominately used the doctrine of providence in the political arena to insist upon moral virtue and corporate righteousness. Stennett also used the doctrine of providence in the political arena to celebrate the ascendancy of the Protestant religion through the reign of King William (until 1702) and Queen Anne (until 1713). Accordingly, Stennett articulated full support for the Protestant English monarchy. Pastorally, such distinction also clarifies why Stennett predominately used the doctrine of providence to help believers in the midst of their afflictions. Remarkably, throughout his varied applications and uses of the doctrine of providence, Stennett remained unwaveringly faithful to his self-professed Baptist convictions.

²⁹²Stennett, “Sermon to Societies for the Reformation of Manners,” in *Works*, 2:65.

²⁹³Stennett, “Reasonableness of Bearing Afflictions: Sermon I,” in *Works*, 3:265.

²⁹⁴Stennett, “Reasonableness of Bearing Afflictions: Sermon II,” in *Works*, 3:272.

²⁹⁵Stennett, “Reasonableness of Bearing Afflictions: Sermon II,” in *Works*, 3:299.

CHAPTER 4

THE LANGUAGE OF PROVIDENCE ABUSED: GILBERT BURNET'S REVOLUTION RHETORIC, 1665–1688

Introduction

Gilbert Burnet remains a most controversial figure of the Glorious Revolution. On the one hand, Burnet was an eloquent preacher, an able statesman, a voluminous writer, a renowned historian, and a major political influence on the English church and court. On the other hand, Burnet was despised, even by his political allies, as a man devoid of principles and integrity. Before examining his political doctrine and his use of providence, Burnet will be briefly introduced under the following three heads: Overview of Burnet's Life and Ministry, Burnet as Pastor-Politician, and Burnet's Controverted Legacy.

Overview of Burnet's Life and Ministry

That Burnet was uniquely gifted is beyond dispute. He began pastoring his first church in 1665,¹ published his first major political work by 1669,² and became Professor of Divinity at Glasgow University by 1669. By 1674, Burnet fell out of favor with the English-ruled, Scottish court. Consequently, Burnet felt compelled by King Charles II, the Duke of York (James II), and the Duke of Lauderdale (John Maitland) to resign his professorship in Glasgow and relocate to London. Burnet quickly made a

¹The East Lothian Parish in Saltoun, Scotland. Burnet pastored in Saltoun until 1669, at which time he accepted the professorship in Glasgow.

²*A Modest and Free Conference between a Conformist and a Non-conformist about the Present Distempers in Scotland, in Six Dialogues, by a Lover of Peace* (Glasgow, 1669).

name for himself in London as an engaging preacher. Soon after arriving in London in 1674, Burnet was invited to become the pastor of Rolls Chapel where he labored diligently for ten years. In 1684, Burnet again fell out of favor with James II and the English court and became a “dispossessed preacher” and a “disgraced divine.”³ In 1685 and 1686, Burnet travelled abroad to Paris, Lyons, Geneva, Lausanne, Zurich, Milan, Venice, Florence, Naples, Rome before finally settling at The Hague in May of 1686 with Prince William of Orange and Princess Mary, daughter of James II. While at The Hague, Burnet secured the confidence of Prince William and Princess Mary, even while being accused of high treason by King James II. In 1687 Burnet served as a political advisor and a key ecclesiastical spokesman for the Court of Orange. In 1688 Burnet sailed with the Dutch forces of Prince William in open resistance against King James II of England. Finally, in 1689, after preaching at the joint coronation of William III and Mary II, Burnet was appointed by William and Mary to the Bishopric of Salisbury, a position of great honor and influence that Burnet maintained until his death in 1715.

Burnet as Pastor-Politician

Burnet’s political and ecclesiastical careers are impossible to separate. Burnet’s political works were theologically informed, and his most famous sermon was preached for undeniably political ends in the heat of England’s Glorious Revolution. On at least two important occasions prior to 1688, Burnet denounced public life and public office; however, on each occasion Burnet reengaged the realm of English politics in greater capacity and with renewed vigor.⁴ In spite of his personal resolve to retire from

³T. E. S. Clarke and H. C. Foxcroft, *The Life of Gilbert Burnet: Bishop of Salisbury* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907), 205.

⁴In 1683, Burnet wrote, “I am . . . positively resolved never to have anything to do more with men of business, particularly with any in opposition to the Court, but will divide the rest of my life between my function and a very few friends, and my laboratory” (Gilbert Burnet, “Memorandum to Mr. Brisbane,” in Mark Napier, *Montrose and The Covenanters, Their Characters and Conduct* [London, 1838], 1:15). Again, in 1686, Burnet “resolved to retire into

public life, Burnet would later become William of Orange's "chief propagandist"⁵ and would ultimately wield the language of providence to justify William III as the rightful King of England.

Burnet's Controverted Legacy

In introducing Burnet, a word must be inserted about his reputation as a writer of contemporary events—particularly Burnet's *History of My Own Time*. "Posterity sets most value on Burnet as the narrator of contemporary history," wrote Professor Firth; "he began as a professional historian" and "his own age rated him highest in that capacity."⁶ Yet, as Macaulay noted, "the fame of Burnet has been attacked with singular malice and pertinacity."⁷ Indeed, "probably no historian of Burnet's rank and importance has ever been so vigorously or continuously challenged on the ground of prejudice and inaccuracy."⁸ Firth explained that "what discredited Burnet was his lack of discrimination: truth and legend were mixed together, and the better metal was alloyed

some private place and to spend my life in a course of stricter piety." (Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 3:122)

⁵Tony Claydon, *William III and The Godly Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 71.

⁶C. H. Firth, introduction to Clark and Foxcroft, *Life of Gilbert Burnet*, xi. In praise of C. H. Firth, Osmund Airy noted, "That any one who attempts to deal seriously with the history of this portion of the seventeenth century should be under deep obligations to Dr. S. R. Gardiner and Mr. C. H. Firth will be taken as a matter of course." Osmund Airy, preface to Gilbert Burnet, *The History of My Own Time*, ed. Osmund Airy (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1900), ix.

⁷Thomas Babington Macaulay, *History of England From the Accession of James II*, (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1906), 2:11. Macaulay additionally described Burnet thus: "His high animal spirits, his boastfulness, his undissembled vanity, his propensity to blunder, his provoking indiscretion, his unabashed audacity, afforded inexhaustible subjects of ridicule" (Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:11). Macaulay also had good things to say about Burnet too; see Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:11-12.

⁸Airy, "Preface," in Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, v.

with too much dross.”⁹ Samuel Johnson gave a similar view of Burnet, the historian: “I do not believe that Burnet intentionally lied; but he was so much prejudiced that he took no pains to find out the truth. He was like a man who resolves to regulate his time by a certain watch; but will not enquire whether the watch is right or wrong.”¹⁰ Less sympathetic views of Burnet’s *History* are too numerous to cite exhaustively;¹¹ however, these more sympathetic reviews of Burnet’s person and work are important to note as Burnet’s *History* is cited extensively in the present chapter.

⁹Firth, introduction to Clark and Foxcroft, *Life of Gilbert Burnet*, xxxv.

¹⁰James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, ed. John Wilson Croker (New York: George Dearborn, 1833), 1:305.

¹¹One less sympathetic review of Burnet’s *History* is provided by Charles Leslie, an Anglican nonjuror and one of the “ablest theological controversialists of the day” (Kenyon, *Revolution Principles*, 21). Leslie expressed his complete disgust for Burnet’s secret history; Leslie also expressed his disgust for Burnet’s person too. Leslie viewed Burnet’s history as “unjust” and “grossly misrepresent[ative]” of the times—indeed, according to Leslie, Burnet’s secret history contained none of the “impartiality” of Burnet’s final boast (Charles Leslie, *Cassandra* [London, 1704], 23-24; Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 6:171). Moreover, regarding Burnet’s person, Leslie wrote of the “character” of Burnet’s “enthusiasm” in the following terms: He “puts out the eye of reason” and “destroys the sobriety of religion” and “leaves a man no principle or rule, but that of imagination and impulses” (Leslie, *Cassandra*, 39). According to Leslie, such “enthusiasm” drove Burnet to the belief that he was “in the exaltation of charity while he [was] in the very gall of bitterness, and delighting himself in the sin of Ham” (Charles Leslie, *Cassandra*, 39). Leslie continued,

[His enthusiasm] can sanctifie schism and rebellion in his Eyes! And in short, he can do no Evil because he thinks Every thing that he do[e]s to be Good; for he has an impulse for it! He imitates nothing of the apostles, but their Miracles! Turns religion into romance, and will do nothing ordinary! He keeps himself in a sphere above other mortals; whence he looks down upon them with disdain, which he calls pity! His own infirmities, if he sees any in Himself, he calls Human frailties; but all others offend of malicious wickedness! He is of all men the most impatient[t] of contradiction or any reflection upon his reputation; and yet he seeketh not honour of men! And thinks himself an holy and humble man of heart! He is all made up of contradictions! Proud in his humility! Meek in his rage! Charitable in railing! Zealous in lying! Patient in revenge! For unity in schism! And royal in his rebellion! He knows nothing truly! And himself least of all! An hypocrite to himself! He is everything but what he is! He is proof against reason! There is no Method with him, but excorcism! And now I think it is time to have done with him. (Leslie, *Cassandra*, 39-40)

Burnet on Providence and Passive Obedience

Central to the thesis of this dissertation is that Burnet used the doctrine of providence expediently and not consistently; however, Burnet's use of providence can only be adequately understood in light of his changing convictions concerning the doctrine of passive obedience. The great challenge is that Burnet "concealed the radical nature of the difference between his earlier and later views on the question of passive obedience."¹² Nevertheless, meaningful judgments can be established on the evidence of primary sources. Burnet's early convictions concerning both passive obedience and providence have been preserved in various sermons, treatises, and in the original version of his memoirs. Later modifications to Burnet's memoirs, particularly on the point of passive obedience, appear in the post-1688 publication of Burnet's *History of My Own Time*.¹³ However, Helen Foxcroft has provided an excellent supplement to the available material on Burnet entitled, *A Supplement to Burnet's History of My Own Time*. Foxcroft's *Supplement* provides hundreds of pages of material from Burnet's original memoirs that did not appear in the post-1688 publication of Burnet's *History of My Own Time*. Yet, enough evidence presently exists to establish a convincing chronology with respect to Burnet's documented convictions regarding passive obedience. Indeed, sufficient evidence exists to confirm that Burnet was a firm advocate of absolute obedience and total nonresistance at least until 1683, and probably as late as 1686—even

¹²Firth, introduction to Clark and Foxcroft, *Life of Gilbert Burnet*, xxviii.

¹³H. C. Foxcroft, *A Supplement to Burnet's History of My Own Time; Derived from His Original Memoirs, His Autobiography, His Letters to Admiral Herbert, and His Private Meditations, All Hitherto Unpublished* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1902), 515. Remarkably, Burnet's early writings on the doctrine of passive obedience were never destroyed. Thus, H. C. Foxcroft notes with astonishment that Burnet's "remarkable passage" on passive obedience "constitutes one of the most curious episodes in Burnet's original Memoirs." Foxcroft explains: "It is not surprising that [Burnet's writings on passive obedience] should have been so ruthlessly recast after the Revolution"; however, "it appears somewhat strange that it should not have been expunged from the original memoirs when Burnet, on the eve of the Revolution, made conditional arrangements for their posthumous publication" (Foxcroft, *Supplement to Burnet's History of My Own Time*, 32-39).

though Burnet's later sermons and revisions to his memoirs seek to nuance his absolutist views.¹⁴

Research also confirms that the doctrine of providence was used by Burnet as part of a “blunderbuss technique” during and after 1688 to serve the revolution, but not in a manner consistent with his pre-1688 convictions.¹⁵ Accordingly, Burnet's application of the doctrine of providence changed along with his understanding of passive obedience. Thus, from 1669 to 1686, Burnet articulated an absolutist understanding of passive obedience; accordingly, from 1669 to 1686, Burnet used the doctrine of providence to subserve the doctrine of passive obedience. More specifically, Burnet taught from 1669 to 1686 that the English king's subjects were never to defy their sovereign; rather, loyal subjects and dutiful Christians were to entrust themselves to the providence of God while rendering full obedience and submission to their earthly sovereign. However, beginning in 1687, research reveals that Burnet began to alter his understanding of passive obedience. Also, in 1687 and prior to November 5, 1688, the doctrine of providence was not prominent in Burnet's discourse in a demonstrable way. However, by November 5, 1688, the doctrine of providence figured prominently in Burnet's thinking, and he employed providence as one of many justifications for William's revolution. Finally, during the years spanning 1689 to 1713, Burnet defended himself against criticisms concerning his altered convictions regarding passive obedience and his ignoble use of providence. Burnet defended himself against public criticism in two ways: (1) Burnet insisted that his perspective on passive obedience remained unchanged throughout his

¹⁴Even Macaulay suggested that the “servile doctrine” of passive obedience was characteristic only of Burnet's “early youth,” though Burnet insisted otherwise (Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:13).

¹⁵Kenyon, *Revolution Principles*, 22. “Prominent advocates of the Revolution employed a blunderbuss technique, throwing in every argument they thought would serve” (Kenyon, *Revolution Principles*, 22). Both Burnet and the doctrine of providence are directly cited by Kenyon in connection this “blunderbuss technique.”

life, and (2) Burnet argued (from 1688 onward) that God had providentially supplied a monarch to rule England in accordance with the constitution and religion of England.

Because the primary literature on Burnet is so abundant, research will be organized chronologically (beginning with Burnet's first publication in 1669) and presented under the following seven heads: Burnet in Scotland under Charles II (1669–1673), Burnet in London under Charles II (1674–1684), Burnet in Voluntary Exile (1685–1687), Burnet on the Eve of Revolution (1688), Burnet in the Revolution (1688), Burnet after the Revolution (1689–1702), and Burnet at the End (1709–1713). Chapter 4 will focus upon Burnet's convictions concerning passive obedient and providence up to the eve of the Glorious Revolution in 1688. Chapter 5 will continue to explore Burnet's convictions regarding passive obedience and providence from the time of the Glorious Revolution to the end of Burnet's life. All in all, research will survey the various stages of Burnet's documented beliefs and practices with respect to the doctrines of passive obedience and providence from 1669 to 1713.

Burnet in Scotland under Charles II (1669–1673)

Burnet wrote two major political works while in Scotland. The first was published in 1669 under the title, *A Modest And Free Conference Betwixt A Conformist and a Non-Conformist*.¹⁶ While Burnet's *Modest and Free Conference* addressed the doctrine of passive obedience extensively, it only lightly touched on the doctrine of providence. Burnet's second major political work was published in 1673 when Burnet was thirty years old; the second work was entitled, *A Vindication of the Authority*,

¹⁶Gilbert Burnet, *A Modest and Free Conference between a Conformist and a Non-Conformist about the Present Distempers in Scotland, in Six Dialogues, by a Lover of Peace* (Glasgow, 1669). This work was published in 1669—the same year that Burnet became Professor of Divinity at Glasgow University.

Constitution, and Laws of the Church and State of Scotland.¹⁷ *Vindication* was published shortly before Burnet resigned his professorship from the University of Glasgow and moved to England. Moreover, *Vindication* explicitly addressed the doctrines of passive obedience and providence. Both will be surveyed for references to the doctrines of passive obedience and providence.

Burnet's *Modest and Free Conference* (1669). In his *Modest and Free Conference*, Burnet staged a conversation between two characters: Conformist and Nonconformist. Through these two characters, Burnet addressed the Christian duty of submission and nonresistance to political authorities (i.e., "passive obedience"). Nonconformist asked Conformist a question concerning rebellion: "Call you fighting for God and his cause, rebellion?" Conformist, representing Burnet's position, responded:

Suppose it were, shew me one place in either Testament, that warrants Subjects fighting for Religion? You know I can bring many against it; yea, though the old dispensation was a more carnal and fiery one, than the new one is; yet, when the Kings of Iudah and Israel made Apostacy from the living God, into [h]eathenish Idolatry, some of the Kings of Iudah polluting the Temple of Ierusalem, as did Ahaz and Mannasseh, so that God could not be worshipped there, without Idolatry, yet where do we find the people resisting them, or falling to popular Reformations? Neither do the Prophets that were sent by God, ever provoke them to any such courses. And you know the whole strain of the New Testament runs upon suffering.¹⁸

Nonconformist immediately replied with another question: "The law of nature teacheth us to defend ourselves, and so there is no need of Scripture for it?"¹⁹ And Conformist responded:

¹⁷Gilbert Burnet, *A Vindication of the Authority, Constitution, and Laws of the Church and State of Scotland in Four Conferences, wherein the Answer to the Dialogues betwixt the Conformist and Non-conformist is Examined* (London, 1673).

¹⁸Burnet, *Modest and Free Conference*, 6.

¹⁹Burnet, *Modest and Free Conference*, 6.

This is a marvelous dealing. In other things you alwayes flee from reason, as a carnal principle, to Scripture; but here you quit Scripture and appeal to it: but it seems you are yet a stranger to the very design of Religion, which is to tame and mortifie nature: and is not a natural thing, but supernatural. Therefore the rules of defending and advancing it, must not be borrowed from nature, but grace: The Scriptures are also strangely contrived, since they ever tell us of suffering under persecution: without giving your exception, that we resist when we are in a capacity. And I appeal to your conscience, whether it be a likelier way to advance Religion, fighting or suffering? since a carnal man can do one, but not the other.²⁰

Next, Nonconformist asked, “How can we neglect the interests of Christ, and let them ruine, when we are in a capacity to defend them?”²¹ Burnet’s response, through the words of “Conformist,” touched lightly on the notion of providence:

If there were not a God who governs the World, your reasoning might have force: but do you think that God cannot maintain his own right, but the wrath of man must work his righteousness? nay, we see the contrary, for from the beginning, till this day, God hath made the sufferings of his people, the chief mean of propagating Religion; whereas fighting hath been ever fatal to it. And Christ did begin the Gospel with his suffering, though he could have commanded Legions of Angels for his defence.²²

Burnet even addressed the “resistance” of the Protestant Reformation through a question posed by Nonconformist:

You alwayes run to the primitive Christians; but far fowles have fair feathers, and if you examine the practice of the Reformers, they universally resisted the Magistrate, and carried on the Reformation by Arms; and how then dare you charge the doctrine of resistance with rebellion, since you thereby stain that glorious work?²³

And Conformist, again representing Burnet’s position, responded:

I assure you, I have a great veneration for the Reformers, and look on them as persons sent of God, to rescue his Church from the grosse superstition and idolatry

²⁰Burnet, *Modest and Free Conference*, 6-7.

²¹Burnet, *Modest and Free Conference*, 7.

²²Burnet, *Modest and Free Conference*, 6-7.

²³Burnet, *Modest and Free Conference*, 15.

[that] had overspread it; but for all that, you must pardon me still to prefer the primitive Christians to them.²⁴

In sum, Burnet's *Modest and Free Conference* articulated a blanket and universal rejection of resistance, even at the expense of personal suffering. Moreover, by God's governing of the world, He would "maintain his own right" by making "the sufferings of his people, the chief mean of propagating Religion."²⁵ Also, according to Conformist, Christ has set the example for all Christians to follow: to suffer and entrust the Christian cause to God's methods of preservation and propagation.²⁶

In later publications, Burnet's articulation of passive obedience and nonresistance would become more nuanced; however, at this point, one discerns a clear division between conformist and nonconformist principles of resistance. The doctrine of providence was not explicitly presented in Burnet's *Modest and Free Conference*, but the

²⁴Burnet, *Modest and Free Conference*, 15. Elsewhere, Conformist asserted, "I acknowledge there was force used in our Reformation; but so much the worse for that: And you know the enemy sows his tares, even in that field, wherein the Wheat is sown. But never alledge to me the president of men, against the expresse Word of God" (Burnet, *Modest and Free Conference*, 8). Also, Burnet's continued in his answer here by proffering random facts from history that insinuates "resistance" to be a papish principle:

As for casting reproaches on [the Reformers], it shall quickly appear whither of us be the more guilty in it. I will therefore from undeniable evidence of History convince you of the falshood of that vulgar error, that the Reformation was carried on by resistance; and shall begin with the *Waldenses*, who resisted not the King of *France*, as is clear in the History, notwithstanding of their unparalleled persecutions, when they were destroyed by thousands: *Belle forrest* tells, that 60000 were killed in one town of *Beziers*; It is true there were Wars betwixt the Count of *Monfort* and the Count of *Tholouse*; but the Count of *Tholouse* was a Peer of *France*; And the Peers, by the Constitution of *Hugo Capit*, were rather vassals then subjects to the King: besides, he only sought against *Monfort*. So *Petrus Vallisarnensis*, *Hist. Albig.* And in the Counc. of *Monpellier*, the Dominions of *Tholouse* were given to *Simon Monfort*, but not by the King, neither was the Legate well pleased, that the Kings Son came and took the crosse, lest he might thereby pretend some right in these Dominions, which the Pope pretended were his: *Simon Monfort* therefore was a bloody Emissary of the Popes, and not authorized by *Philip August*, then King of *France*, who gave no other concurrence to the War, save that he permitted his Subjects to Arm in it: so, here was no resistance of Subjects against their Sovereign. (Burnet, *Modest and Free Conference*, 15-16; emphasis original)

²⁵Burnet, *Modest and Free Conference*, 7.

²⁶Burnet, *Modest and Free Conference*, 7.

raw elements were represented. In Burnet's next major publication (i.e. *Vindication*), one will observe a more direct connection between Burnet's summons to nonresistance undergirded by the Christian duty to trust the providence of God.

Burnet's vindication of Scotland (1673). In 1673, Burnet published a treatise in Glasgow entitled, *A Vindication of the Authority, Constitution, and Laws of the Church and State of Scotland*. Burnet's *Vindication* was also structured in a dialogue form; however, *Vindication* staged a conversation among six "collocuters": "Eudaimon, A Moderate man; Philarchaeus. An Episcopal man; Isotimus, A Presbyterian; Basilius. An Asserter of the King's Authority; Criticus, One Well-Studied in Scripture; Polyhistor, An Historian."²⁷ In this treatise, Burnet wrote against two particular books: *Jus Populi* by Sir James Stewart and *True Nonconformist* by Robert McWard.²⁸ "In both works the right of subjects to resist the king when he interfered with civil or religious liberty was plainly maintained."²⁹ In response to Stewart and McWard, Burnet defended the doctrine of passive obedience with both vigor and nuance.

Because of its structure, the bulk of *Vindication* reads spasmodically, and Burnet's personal views are not as clearly determined through the lips of his collocuters; however, Burnet unmistakably asserted his personal convictions concerning the doctrines of passive obedience and providence in his prefatory remarks entitled, "To the reader":

Another great rule by which the peace and order of all human societies is maintained and advanced, is obedience to the Laws, and submission to the Authority of these whom God hath set over us, to govern and defend us; to whose commands if *absolute obedience* be not payed, ever till they contradict the laws of God, there can be neither peace nor order among men, as long as every one prefers his own humour or inclination to the laws of the society in which he lives. Now it cannot be denied to be one of the sins of the age we live in, that small regard is had to that

²⁷Burnet, *Vindication*, 1.

²⁸McWard was an exiled Presbyterian minister.

²⁹Clark and Foxcroft, *Life of Gilbert Burnet*, 109.

authority God hath committed to his vicegerents on earth: the evidence whereof is palpable, since the bending or slackening of the execution of laws is made the measure of most mens obedience, and not the conscience of that duty we owe the commands of our rulers: for what is more servile and unbecoming a man, not to stay a Christian, than to yield obedience when overawed by force; and to leap from it when allured by gentler methods? If generosity were our principle, we should be sooner vanquished by the one, than cudgelled by the other: Or if conscience acted us, the obligation of the law would equally bind, whether backed with a strict execution, or slackened into more impunity. Hence it appears how few there are who judge themselves bound to pay that reverence to the persons, and that obedience to the commands of these God hath vested with his Authority, which the laws of nature and religion do exact. And the root of all this disobedience and contempt, can be no other, but unruly and ungoverned pride, which disdains to submit to others, and exalts it self above these who are called Gods. The humble are tractable and obedient; but the self willed are stubborn and rebellious. Yet the height of many mens pride rests not in a bare disobedience, but designs the subverting of thrones, and the shaking of kingdoms, unless governed by their own measures. Among all the heresies this age hath spawned, there is not one more contrary to the whole design of religion and more destructive of mankind, than is that bloody opinion of defending religion by arms, and of forcible resistance upon the colour of preserving religion. The wisdom of that policy is [earthly] sensual and devilish, favoring of a carnal unmortified and impatient mind, that cannot bear the cross, nor trusts to the providence of God: and yet with how much zeal is this doctrine maintained and propagated, as if on it hung both the law and the prophets?³⁰

Thus, in 1673, Burnet denounced “forcible resistance” as “heresy”—particularly “forcible resistance” in the interest of religion. Moreover, Burnet insisted that the “wisdom” of resistance doctrine is “[earthly] sensual and devilish.” According to Burnet, such a frame of mind was “carnal, unmortified, and impatient” and could neither “bear the cross” nor trust “the providence of God.” Again, Burnet was opposing the notion that subjects possessed the right to resist the king when civil and religious liberty was threatened. Burnet excoriated such a notion of resistance. Even in the case of a

³⁰Burnet, “To The Reader,” in *Vindication*, A7-A8; emphasis added. The words “earthly” and “sensual” are not preserved in the original text of Burnet’s preface, but these same words are cited directly in another document by George Hickes in 1695 (George Hickes, *Some Discourses Upon Dr. Burnet and Dr. Tillotson*, [London, 1695], 7); therefore, I have supplied the four missing letters in the word “earthly,” and two missing letters in the word “sensual” in the quotation above.

nonhereditary conquering king,³¹ Burnet urged a principle of submission upon the threat of damnation:

A greater authority is St. Paul's, Rom. 13.1. who saith, *That the powers that were then, were ordained of God*: which on the way saith strongly, for asserting the right of a Conquerour, after some prescription, since if either we consider the power of the Roman Empire over the world, or of their Emperours over them, both will be found to have no better title than Conquest, and yet they were ordained of God, and not to be resisted, but submitted to, under the hazard of resisting the Ordinance of God, and receiving of damnation.³²

Thus, Burnet's views in 1673 were unmistakable. Burnet affirmed his unyielding commitment to the doctrine of passive obedience. Burnet believed that Christians should submit themselves in "absolute obedience" to the king's authority and entrust themselves to the providence of God, even at the expense of personal suffering. To Burnet's mind, this duty of "absolute obedience" carried with it the very threat of damnation if "resisted."

Burnet in London under Charles II (1674–1684)

In the following year (1674), Burnet's name became known to the English Court, though not favorably. Burnet was disgraced in the court of King Charles II by a powerful Scot named John Maitland (1616–1682), who was appointed His Majesty's High Commissioner for Scotland. Previously, in 1669, Maitland (also known as the Duke of Lauderdale) had boasted to Charles II that he held Scotland in his power,³³ so

³¹The notion of rendering submission to a nonhereditary conquering king was believed by some to confer a *de facto* right of allegiance. Oddly, the *de facto* argument was advanced by Burnet after 1688 to argue in favor of passive obedience and submission to William III. See Gilbert Burnet, *A Pastoral Letter Writ by the Right Reverend father in God, Gilbert, Lord Bishop of Sarum, to the Clergy of the Diocess, Concerning the Oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy to K. William and Q. Mary* (London, 1689); cf. Kenyon, *Revolution Principles*, 22.

³²Burnet, *Vindication*, 12; emphasis original.

³³Maitland was appointed as Secretary of the State in 1660, and by 1669, Maitland would boast of his success: "the king is now master here [in Scotland] in all causes and over all persons" (Philip Chesney York, "Lauderdale, John Maitland," in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 11th

Charles II looked upon Lauderdale as a powerful and useful ally to the English Crown. But by 1674, the Scottish Presbyterian clergy was dissatisfied with Lauderdale's leadership and called for a national synod to settle the affairs of English Episcopacy in Scotland. Lauderdale was infuriated at the Scottish Presbyterians for causing political trouble, and he accused Burnet as the "chief spring" and "incendiary" of this "presbyterie business."³⁴ Fearing for his safety, Burnet promptly left Scotland and appeared before Charles II to clear his name and to assure the king of his quiet loyalty to the crown and to the Anglican episcopacy. Unknown to Burnet, however, Maitland had already secured the King's displeasure against Burnet. Burnet gravely described his first interview with Charles II: "the King was highly offended" and spoke "many hard things" and "allowed himself a very free scope in talking of me."³⁵ Moreover, Burnet recorded,

The king said, he was afraid I had been too busy; and wished me to go home to Scotland and be more quiet. The duke [i.e., James II] upon this told me, that, if I went home without reconciling my self to duke Lauderdale, I should be certainly shut up in a close prison, where I might perhaps lie too long. This I looked on as a very high obligation: so I resigned my employment, and resolved to stay in England.³⁶

No formal action was taken against Burnet's person by Charles II, but the young Scottish professor was effectively disgraced and discredited before the English court. Moreover, Burnet feared that Lauderdale might shut him up in prison indefinitely. So Burnet promptly resigned his post from Glasgow and fled Scotland for England.

ed. [Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1911], 16:279). Burnet also noted that Maitland had "raised his credit at court by the opinion of his having all Scotland in his hand, and in a dependence on him: so a discovery of this want of credit with us he saw must sink him there" (Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 2:34). Maitland began his career in Scottish politics as a professed friend of the Presbyterian cause, but he would ultimately only strengthen the episcopacy in Scotland in order to subject the Scottish church to the English monarch.

³⁴Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 2:34, 50, *passim*.

³⁵Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 2:35.

³⁶Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 2:50.

Having resettled in England, Burnet started preaching in churches throughout London:

I preached in many of the churches of London; and was so well received, that it was probable I might be accepted of in any that was to be disposed of by a popular election. So a church falling to be given in that way, the electors had a mind to choose me: but yet they were not willing to offend the court.³⁷

Burnet was particularly esteemed by the congregation at the Rolls Chapel in London. In short time, Burnet was invited to become the permanent preacher at the Rolls Chapel, much to the chagrin of the English Court. Burnet wrote, “The Court thought me a man of that consequence that they sent first a Bishop and then a Secretary of State to prevail with [Harbottle Grimston, who was Master of the Rolls] to dismiss me but he was not to be moved.”³⁸ Thus, Burnet was at odds with the English court at this time. Though Burnet had been disgraced by Charles II at Lauderdale’s behest, he was now preaching regularly at the Rolls Chapel in London with both the Court’s knowledge and displeasure.

Eager to make amends with the offended court of King Charles II, Burnet decided to preach two sermons calculated to gain the approval of king and court. On December 6, 1674, Burnet preached his famous “The Dutiful Subject” sermon, and on January 30, 1675, Burnet preached a sequel entitled, “The Royal Martyr.” Both sermons were subsequently published at Burnet’s behest and distributed throughout London, and both sermons provided remarkable insight into Burnet’s convictions regarding passive obedience and providence in 1674 and 1675.

The Dutiful Subject (1674). *The Dutiful Subject* was first preached under a different title: *Subjection for Conscience-sake Asserted: In a Sermon Preached at Covent-Garden-Church, December the Sixth, 1674.* Burnet’s text was Romans 13:5:

³⁷Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 2:50.

³⁸Burnet, “I Preached Long at the Rolls,” in Foxcroft, *Supplement*, 484.

“Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for Wrath, but for Conscience-sake.”³⁹

Burnet’s stated purpose was to assert the unique Christian duty of obedience and submission which subjects owe to sovereigns on the basis of conscience:

For the security of Order and Government, what means are like those our Religion offers? This is even confessed by its declared Enemies, who charge it as the contrivance of designing men for securing their Power and Authority; and indeed all the Arts of Statesmen, the Cunning of Policy, the Closeness of Councils, the Exactness of Intelligence, the strength of Armies or Navies, the strictness of Guards, regular Fortifications, great Treasures and vast Magazines, are but Ineffectual Means, compared to this which Religion offers for the security of a State, by setting up Conscience as a Sentinel to watch in every man's Breast, that shall not let pass through it one thought contrary to the Peace of the Society. Wise Statesmen hold it for a Maxim, That the chief security of a Sovereign is in his being Master of the Hearts and Affections of his Subjects, which will draw with them their Hands and Purses as need shall require. But Mankind being so subject to a variety of Passions, which by an unruly vicissitude possess the Minds, especially of the giddy multitude, there can be no assurance in this, unless somewhat that is more fixed and better grounded, tie subjects to the Duty they owe the Sovereign Power. And therefore those who have attempted God and designed to discharge Men of the sense of a Deity, or the apprehensions of another Life, are the greatest Enemies to Authority: Their Blood and Extraction may perhaps entitle them to Honour and a high Quality, but their Maxims destroy all Honour, and would quickly bring on a levelling of all Qualities. He were, by the confession of all, highly criminal, who would question the King's Title to the Crown, or offer to void his Right.⁴⁰

In this manner, Burnet pressed for a principle of submission on the basis of religion.

Without religion, Burnet insisted that “Sacred and Royal Reputation of Sovereign Power, which Princes derive from [God], who is the Original of it, by whom Kings Reign, is out of doors,” and consequently, the prince and the subject are “levelled” and “the Usurper” possesses “as good a Title as the lawful Sovereign can claim.”⁴¹

Moreover, Burnet considered the doctrine of providence as a doctrine that

³⁹Gilbert Burnet, *Subjection for Conscience-sake Asserted: In A Sermon Preached at Covent-Garden-Church, December the Sixth, 1674* (London, 1675). This sermon was printed in tandem with *The Royal Martyr Lamented, in a Sermon Preached at the Savoy, On King Charles the Martyr’s Day, 1674/5* (London, 1675). These two sermons were packaged together and sold by the “Bookseller to his most Sacred Majesty” as *The Royal Martyr, and The Dutiful Subject* (London, 1675).

⁴⁰Burnet, *Subjection for Conscience-sake Asserted*, 2-3.

⁴¹Burnet, *Subjection for Conscience-sake Asserted*, 3-4.

“obligeth to Subjection” and reinforced a principle of submission:

Another consideration that obligeth to Subjection, which Religion offers, is the steady and firm belief of the Government of the World, by that Unerring Providence that wisely maintains that great Fabrick and vast Frame of Beings, which it self raised out of nothing. We are apt upon the first appearances of things to judge rashly, even before we have seen all the sides and secrets of humane Counsels, which would often alter our thoughts very much from our over-forward Judgments: But the secrets of the Divine Counsels lie hid from all the living, and yet the long experience which the Oeconomy of the World offers us, may justly convince us, that we are not to pass sentence hastily, and that often those things which did look most cloudy, and threatned some dismal Consequences, did by the secret Governings of that Supreme Mind, produce Effects very different from those that not without great probabilities were feared: This therefore must clear the Melancholy of our discouraged and dejected minds, and dissipate those thick mists of fears and jealousies which might otherwise damp and dishearten us. He that gave the Laws to Day and Night, and can reverse these when he will; that taught the whole Frame of Nature those Motions they observe, and yet can force the Sun both to stop and to give ground when he will; and can make the Sea to rise up in hills, is able to extricate the darkest and most involved Raveings of Second Causes. We are therefore secure, knowing, That all things work together for good to them that love God, believing that his Providence watcheth over his Church, and all that trust in him, so that not a hair of their head falls to the ground without his care, and that he hath given his Angels charge to encamp about and Minister to the heirs of Salvation; and this may well supersede our fears, and throw off the anxieties of all perplexing thoughts, and compose our minds to an humble Subjection to those God hath brought us under. I know some may think I plead here the stupidity of Fate, which must needs dishearten and slacken all good Intentions and Designs; but we are to consider the Order God hath fixed in the Government of the World, and the particular station wherein he hath placed and posted us, out of which we are not to stir on the pretence of heroical excitations; which, when examined, will be found the heats of a warm Fancy, or the swellings of an elevated Mind that distrust the Providence of God, as if he were not able to compass his designs, and therefore he must stretch out his hands to help him, labouring under too great a load; which is indeed the language of all those who pretending zeal for his Service, do step out of their station, and meddle with matters that are too high for them. The fate of Uzzah should have taught us both more Wisdom and Religion.⁴²

Thus, Burnet used the doctrine of “unerring providence” to reinforce a principle of “humble Subjection to those God hath brought us under.” Those who “step out of their station” under “the heats of a warm Fancy” are considered as those who “distrust the Providence of God.”

Burnet pressed the point of “absolute subjection to the high powers” by pointing to the example of Jesus and to the “glorious cloud of witnesses” who have

⁴²Burnet, *Subjection for Conscience-sake Asserted*, 20-22.

followed Jesus' example:

Conscience doth with the greatest evidence of Reason and Authority, bind us to an absolute Subjection to the Higher Powers; and have observed what was the Path our blessed Saviour himself followed, the Traces whereof are to be known by those steps he hath left behind him for our Example and Instruction. We have also seen a glorious Cloud of Witnesses following him in the same way he both opened up and consecrated to them.⁴³

Next, Burnet excoriated those who claim to be Christians but who disavow the doctrine of passive obedience, who refuse to submit to “temporal kings and princes,” and who hold to a “Doctrine of Resisting the Supreme Authority.” With rhetorical force, Burnet charged such unchristian “heresy” against the Roman See:

But after all this, it may be perhaps objected, That all Christians, at least all pretenders to it, have not followed the same Rule, and that some Divisions of Christendom, which in all other things run very wide from one another, yet meet in this Doctrine of resisting the Supreme Authority, and not only so, but they vouch Religion for their Warrant and their Quarrel both, and pretend a Zeal for God, his Church, and his Cause in all they do. . . . It is true, about the end of the Eleventh Century this pestiferous Doctrine took its Rise, and was first broached and vented by Pope Gregory the Seventh, commonly called Hildebrand. . . . Other Popes did afterwards set the same pretensions on foot, both in France, England, and in many other places, is well enough known to all that are acquainted with History; and for two or three Ages the Tyranny of this was so heavy, that any Insolent Church-man was able to disturb Government, by carrying Complaints to Rome of some pretended Incroachments on the Ecclesiastical Immunity; upon which Monitory Breves and Bulls were dispatched from Rome, and every Prince was either to obey these, how much soever they might prejudice his Government, or to look for the Thunders of Excommunication, Deposition, absolving his Subjects from their Oaths of Fidelity, and the transferring his Dominions on some other more zealous Votary of that See. And any that will read the Decretals, Bulls and Breves of many of the aspiring Popes, will find that these were not only ambitious and disclaimed practises, the guilt of which being personal, died with themselves; but they founded them on the Rights of the See of Rome, and in the stile of an Universsal Pastor imposed the belief of that on the World. Now I would presume to ask any of that Communion, if they believe these Popes were Infallible in those Decisions and Instructions they imposed on the World, or not? If any say they were Infallible in them, they are without more ceremony of words, Traitors, who subject our Sovereign's Rights, which he derives from God only, to a foreign Superior Power: If they were not Infallible in these Decisions, then what is become of the Pope's Infallibility?⁴⁴

⁴³Burnet, *Subjection for Conscience-sake Asserted*, 31-32.

⁴⁴Burnet, *Subjection for Conscience-sake Asserted*, 32-34.

Moreover, Burnet denounced the Roman Council that first sanctioned civil disobedience:

For the Council of Lateran, which in the Roman Church is held General and Oecumenical, that first decreed Transubstantiation, did also by the Third of its Canons decree, That all temporal Princes should exterminate (I shall not critically examine that word which must amount to banishment at least) all Hereticks; adding, That if any Temporal Lord, being admonished by the Church, did neglect to purge his Lands, he should be first excommunicated, and if he continued in his contempt and contumacy, a years notice was to be given of it to the Pope, who thenceforth should declare his Vassals absolved from the Fidelity they owed him, and expose his Lands to be Invaded by Catholicks, who might possess it without any contradiction, having exterminated the Hereticks out of it, and preserve it in the Purity of the Faith.⁴⁵

After describing resistance as a “Judas-like” betrayal of Jesus, Burnet declared:

Blessed be God, our Church hates and condemns this Doctrine [of Resistance] from what hand soever it come, and hath established the Rights and Authority of Princes on sure and unalterable Foundations, enjoying an entire Obedience to all the lawful Commands of Authority, and an absolute Submission to that Supreme Power God hath put in our Sovereign's hands. This Doctrine we justly glory in, and if any that had their Baptism and Education in our Church have turned Renegades from this, they proved no less enemies to the Church herself, than to the Civil Authority. So that their Apostasie leaves no blame on our Church, which glories in nothing more than in a well-tempered Reformation from the later Corruptions which the dark Ages brought in, to the pure and Primitive Doctrines which our Saviour and his Apostles taught, and the first Christians retained and practised for many Ages.⁴⁶

And finally, Burnet summarized with a flourish:

To Resume all then: Let us adorn our holy Profession with a Life suitable to it, and let us shew to the World, that we take not up, nor maintain our Religion upon Interest, but found it on sure and unmoveable Foundations, which, being the same always, will ever oblige us to the same Duties and Practises. Let us study to empty ourselves of all big self-conceiting Thoughts, of all hot and inflamed Passions and Appetites, of all unruly and unbounded Desires, of all Levity and unstayedness of mind; that with humble Hearts, calm Minds, contented Spirits, and steady Thoughts, every one may follow the Duties of his Station, and contain himself within it as becomes a Christian, paying inwardly in our very thoughts that reverence we owe the Higher Powers, and offering up to God the constant Tribute of our Prayers for them; considering they are God's Vicegerents, and by his own warrant are called Gods: And if the Conduct of Affairs do not suit our wishes or desires, yet for all that we are *to trust to and depend on God's Providence*, not daring once to think of attempting against the Lord's anointed, nor to engage in courses that may bring on so much mischief and confusion, but let us ever set before our eyes our blessed Saviour, Who endured the Cross and despised the shame; who when he was reviled,

⁴⁵Burnet, *Subjection for Conscience-sake Asserted*, 35.

⁴⁶Burnet, *Subjection for Conscience-sake Asserted*, 36-37.

reviled not again, and when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: And let us also consider that Cloud of Witnesses that followed him; That so we may run with patience the race that is set before us, and not look to or imitate the later practises of some distempered and degenerated Christians. And then we shall be an honour to our Profession, and give a credit to that Church wherein we were Born, Baptised and Instructed; when we shew that we are subject, not only for Wrath, but for Conscience-sake.⁴⁷

The Royal Martyr (1675). The Royal Martyr was preached on January 30, 1675 to commemorate “King Charles The Martyr’s Day.”⁴⁸ Burnet preached from 2 Samuel 2:12, “And they mourned and wept, and fasted until even for Saul and for Jonathan his Son, and for the people of the Lord, and for the house of Israel, because they were fallen by the sword.”⁴⁹ In this sermon, Burnet called his hearers to mourn and to pray for pardon for the guilt of Charles I’s death:

One is to mourn before God for the guilt of this atrocious Sin, that if any of us have been involved in the guilt, we may wash off the stain of this Sin, which is of so deep a dye, and if we our selves be on all accounts clear of it, at least we are to pray for Pardon to those who were guilty, that God may open their eyes, so as to confess and mourn for their sins; and in this we follow the example of our Royal Martyr, who looking to Jesus the Author and Finisher of his Salvation, who endured the Cross, despising the shame, and prayed for his Enemies, did with Patience run the Race set before him.⁵⁰

In like manner, Burnet urged his hearers into a “sincerity of mourning” and “to pray God to deliver the whole Land from this guilt, lest when God shall come and make inquisition for this Innocent Blood, we be involved in the common Judgments.”⁵¹ Burnet additionally explained how a “sincerity of mourning” may be evidenced:

⁴⁷Burnet, *Subjection for Conscience-sake Asserted*, 37-38; emphasis added.

⁴⁸Gilbert Burnet, *The Royal Martyr Lamented, in a Sermon Preached at the Savoy, on King Charles the Martyr’s Day, 1674/5* (London, 1675).

⁴⁹Burnet, *The Royal Martyr*, 1.

⁵⁰Burnet, *The Royal Martyr*, 41.

⁵¹Burnet, *The Royal Martyr*, 42.

The only evidence of the Sincerity of our Mourning is, our departing from these sinful courses which may provoke Gods wrath, and from all seditious Inclinations which may be fewel for new or worse calamities.⁵²

Similarly, a true “sincerity of mourning” must include a renewed submission and obedience to the reigning monarch, King Charles II:

Let us express our horrour of this Fact [i.e., the regicide of Charles I] by a constant, humble and dutiful Obedience and Loyalty to his Majesty who new Reigns, and study to abstain from not only all these disloyal and unchristian courses, which ended so tragically, but even from the first beginnings of these Disorders, which as sparks of fire blown on by some seditious Incendiaries, did set us all in a flame; and a serious Review of the late Times, will demonstrate, that the wicked Designs of those Enemies to Monarchy could never have become so strong, if they had not wrought on the more innocent, the inconsiderate zeal of some (who afterwards proved both good Subjects and faithful Patriots), who complaining over severely of some Errors of Government, did give both strength and credit to a Faction which did soon scornfully disdain them.⁵³

Summary of *The Dutiful Subject* and *The Royal Martyr*. As evidenced by the publication of *The Royal Martyr*, and *The Dutiful Subject*, Burnet’s view of passive obedience remained in full strength at the end of 1674 and the beginning of 1675. Accordingly, Burnet called the English to an “entire obedience” and “absolute submission” to the “supreme power God hath put in our Sovereign's hands.”⁵⁴ Even “if the Conduct of Affairs do not suit our wishes or desires, yet for all that we are to trust and depend on God's Providence, not daring once to think of attempting against the Lord's anointed.”⁵⁵ Burnet also denounced the doctrine of resistance as a horror and a heresy, and he insisted that only “wonderful Providence” could possibly remedy such “rebellion against the Father, or the recalling of the Son.”⁵⁶ More pointedly, Burnet charged those

⁵²Burnet, *The Royal Martyr*, 43-44.

⁵³Burnet, *The Royal Martyr*, 44-45.

⁵⁴Burnet, *Subjection for Conscience-sake Asserted*, 36.

⁵⁵Burnet, *Subjection for Conscience-sake Asserted*, 38.

⁵⁶Burnet, *The Royal Martyr*, 37.

who would refuse to render absolute submission to their sovereign as civil rebels and spiritual apostates who “step out of their station,” “meddle with matters that are too high for them,” suffer from “the heats of a Warm fancy or the swelling of an elevated mind,” and “distrust the Providence of God.”⁵⁷ Likewise, Burnet charged those who would establish a principle of submission on grounds other than the Christian rule of faith as “pestiferous spawn of that infernal Leviathan” who would “destroy both religion and government,” remove “all the Sacredness of Authority,” and leave “the Prince” with “nothing but Force to maintain his right.”⁵⁸ Conversely, Burnet described the way of nonresistance as “the pure and primitive doctrines which our Saviour and his Apostles taught, and the first Christians retained and practised for many ages.”⁵⁹

The Royal Martyr and The Dutiful Subject “failed to mollify” Charles II.⁶⁰ Burnet continued to minister in the midst of great political uncertainty and under the perils of His Majesty’s displeasure until matters finally worsened for Burnet during the time of William Russell’s execution in 1683.

The execution of William Russell. William Russell, later titled Baron Russell, was a Member of Parliament and a close friend of Gilbert Burnet. On June 12, 1683, a plot to murder King Charles II was discovered, and William Russell was implicated as a conspirator in this assassination plot (later known as the “Rye House Plot” or “Protestant Plot”). Burnet was thoroughly convinced of Russell’s innocence,⁶¹ and on account of

⁵⁷Burnet, *Subjection for Conscience-sake Asserted*, 22.

⁵⁸Burnet, *Subjection for Conscience-sake Asserted*, 16.

⁵⁹Burnet, *Subjection for Conscience-sake Asserted*, 37.

⁶⁰Clark and Foxcroft, *Life of Gilbert Burnet*, 135. Nevertheless, *The Royal Martyr and The Dutiful Subject* did “secure the approbation of the Duke of York,” who was the Heir Presumptive and the future King James II (Clark and Foxcroft, *Life of Gilbert Burnet*, 135).

⁶¹Regarding William Russell’s “treasonous consultations,” Burnet wrote, Since in trials for words witnesses must swear either to some determined words, or words to such effect for a man’s being present in a company does not prove that he hears all that is

their friendship,⁶² Burnet eagerly sought to serve William and “Lady Russell” during their time of travail.⁶³ The circumstances of Russell’s trial and execution remain convoluted and controversial,⁶⁴ but the bottom line is that Russell was ultimately condemned on charges of high treason on July 13, 1683.

The effect of Russell’s conviction had an “absolutely shattering” effect on Gilbert Burnet.⁶⁵ Burnet feared that he, too, was in harm’s way, so he drafted a desperate letter to his “Court friend, Mr. Brisbane” for one stated reason: “in case my lord Russell sends for me, the King may not be provoked against me by that.”⁶⁶ In this letter to

said in the conversation. I have been often myself so engaged in the pursuit of one thought that has been started, that for some time I have not known what was said about me; though I have seemed to make general answers of smiles and half words; and silent men such as Russell was, are more apt to run out into such thoughtfulness. (Burnet, “Lord Russell’s Trial,” in Foxcroft, *Supplement*, 126)

⁶²“When that unhappy matter of the E[arl] of Essex and the L[ord] Russell broke out, those who knew in what friendship I had lived with them did all expect to see me clapt up” (Burnet, “I Sought No Preferment,” in Foxcroft, *Supplement*, 488).

⁶³“As soon as Russell was put in the Tower, I went to his lady and offered my service to her; for as I loved her lord much, so I was particularly obliged by him” (Burnet, “Fate of Others Implicated,” in Foxcroft, *Supplement*, 116).

⁶⁴Russell has been called a “Whig martyr” and a “victim of late-Stuart tyranny” by constitutionalists and advocates of religious liberty (Lois Schwoerer, “William, Lord Russell: The Making of a Martyr, 1683-1983,” *Journal of British Studies* 24, no. 1 (January 1985), 41. The evidence against Russell has been described as “singularly meagre” by his friends; Accordingly, Burnet wrote,

Within three days the plot broke out and was the whole discourse of the town: there were many examinations taken; but people had become so much accustomed to discourses of sham plots and false witnesses that there was no great regard had to it. Some came to me and assured me there was a reality in it. Col. Fitzpatrick and Mr. Brisbane told me the evidence was clear and undeniable. (Burnet, “Discourse on the Subject,” in Foxcroft, *Supplement*, 110)

Whatever the case, the circumstances surrounding Lord Russell’s trial and execution are relevant to the present study insofar as they relate to Burnet’s understanding of passive obedience and nonresistance.

⁶⁵Clark and Foxcroft, *Life of Gilbert Burnet*, 191.

⁶⁶The entirety of Burnet’s letter to Brisbane is available at Burnet, “Memorandum to Mr. Brisbane,” in Napier, *Montrose and The Covenanters*, 1:14-18. Foxcroft has also reproduced

Brisbane, Burnet penned an “unmanly” supplication in order to “bribe . . . the royal vanity.”⁶⁷ The following is from Burnet’s letter upon this occasion:

I never was in my whole life under so terrible a surprise and so deep a melancholy as the dismal things these last two or three days has brought forth spreads over my mind: for God knows I never so much as suspected any such thing; all I feared was only some rising if the king should happen to die. . . . I am upon this occasion positively resolved never to have anything to do more with men of business, particularly with any in opposition to the Court, but will divide the rest of my life between my function and a very few friends, and my laboratory; and upon this I pass my word and faith to you, and that being given under my hand to you, I do not doubt but you will make the like engagements in my name to the king. . . . I ask nor expect nothing but only to stand clear in the king’s thoughts. For preferment, I am resolved against it though I could obtain it; but I beg not to be more under hard thoughts. . . . I am now so overcharged with melancholy that I can scarce endure any company, and for two night have not been able to sleep an hour. One thing you may, as you think fit, tell the king, that though I am too inconsiderable to think I can ever serve him while I am alive, yet I hope I shall be able to do it to some purpose after I am dead; this you understand and I will do it with zeal. So my dear friend, pity your poor melancholy friend, who was never in his whole life under so deep an affliction; for I think I shall never enjoy myself after it; and God knows death would be now very welcome to me.⁶⁸

Such a “groveling appeal” to the king’s good graces is described by one of Burnet’s most sympathetic biographers as nothing less than a complete “moral collapse.”⁶⁹

Remarkably, Burnet snapped out of his melancholy almost as quickly as he plunged into it. The day after he penned his letter to Brisbane, Burnet found himself “face to face with Russell in the condemned man’s cell.”⁷⁰ The two talked for hours, and

the entirety of Burnet’s letter to Mr. Brisbane in Clark and Foxcroft, *Life of Gilbert Burnet*, 191-93.

⁶⁷Clark and Foxcroft, *Life of Gilbert Burnet*, 193.

⁶⁸Burnet, “Memorandum to Mr. Brisbane,” in Napier, *Montrose and The Covenanters*, 1:14-18, *passim*.

⁶⁹Clark and Foxcroft, *Life of Gilbert Burnet*, 193. Foxcroft admits some allowances in Burnet’s defense for writing this letter: “We can allow for the shock inflicted upon an excitable nature by the awful scenes of the week. He had seen one friend precipitate himself, by his own act to what Burnet thought an irrevocable perdition; another doomed to the fate which, above others, appalls humanity—a public ignominious death” (Clark and Foxcroft, *Life of Gilbert Burnet*, 193).

⁷⁰Clark and Foxcroft, *Life of Gilbert Burnet*, 194.

the effect of this conversation upon Burnet was “magical.”⁷¹ Burnet recorded and later published his conversation with Lord Russell under the title, *An Account of all that Passed Between the Late Lord Russell and Me Concerning His Last Speech and Paper*.⁷² When this paper was finally published, it was “indorsed in the Lady Russell’s hand.”⁷³ In the transcript of their conversation, Burnet recorded, “We had also great discourse about the unlawfulness of resistance; and I thought that by the ground I gained at first, it would be easy to persuade him, that it was absolutely unlawful.”⁷⁴ Then, “on Tuesday,” Burnet wrote, “I again went over the point of the unlawfulness of resistance, and laid it fully open to him.”⁷⁵ Remarkably, Burnet included Russell’s position on resistance:

In his paper he writ these words relating to the matter of resistance: For my part I cannot deny, but that I have been of opinion, that a free nation like this might defend their Religion and Liberties, when invaded, and taken from them, though under pretence and colour of law. But some eminent and worthy Divines, who have had the charity to be often with me, and whom I value and esteem to a very great degree, have offered me weighty reasons to persuade me, that Faith and Patience are the proper ways for the preservation of Religion, and the method of the Gospel is to suffer persecution rather than to use resistance. But if I have sinned in this, I hope God will not lay it to my charge, since he knows it was only a sin of ignorance.⁷⁶

Burnet then wrote, “In this, [Russell] thought not fit to come up to a positive renunciation of that opinion.”⁷⁷ Burnet was later urged by John Tillotson⁷⁸ to “press my Lord

⁷¹Clark and Foxcroft, *Life of Gilbert Burnet*, 194.

⁷²Gilbert Burnet, “An Account of all that Passed Between the Late Lord Russell and Me Concerning His Last Speech and Paper,” in *A General Dictionary, Historical and Critical* (London, 1739), 9:821.

⁷³Burnet, “Lord Russell’s . . . Last Speech and Paper,” 821.

⁷⁴Burnet, “Lord Russell’s . . . Last Speech and Paper,” 821.

⁷⁵Burnet, “Lord Russell’s . . . Last Speech and Paper,” 821.

⁷⁶Burnet, “Lord Russell’s . . . Last Speech and Paper,” 821.

⁷⁷Burnet, “Lord Russell’s . . . Last Speech and Paper,” 821.

⁷⁸John Tillotson (1630–1694) would later succeed William Sancroft as the Archbishop of Canterbury under the government of King William III.

[Russell] home in the thing [i.e., the matter of resistance], which I assured him I had done, and would again reinforce it, though I did not think it likely he would go much further.”⁷⁹

Later, in his own journal, Burnet wrote, “Both Tillotson and I took much pains on [Russell] to persuade him of the unlawfulness of taking arms against the king *in any case*.”⁸⁰ Thus, during Russell’s final hours, Burnet sought to persuade the condemned man of the “unlawfulness of taking arms against the king *in any case*.” Russell was not persuaded by Burnet and Tillotson; Russell made no formal, comprehensive recantation of the doctrine of resistance. Rather, on July 21, 1683, Russell delivered a final speech, offered a final prayer to the Lord, “undressed himself, and laid his head on the block, without the least change of countenance.”⁸¹ After two strokes from the executioner, Russell’s head was removed from his shoulders.

Shortly after Russell’s execution, a “speech” which had been composed during Russell’s final hours was published and was “selling about the streets an hour after his death: upon which the court was highly inflamed.”⁸² Many “ascribed” Russell’s final speech “to Burnet’s ready pen.”⁸³ For this and many other reasons, Burnet was quickly summoned before the King’s Council and interrogated at length. Burnet’s audience “disgusted the King, who definitely set him down as the author of [Russell’s] speech and as an unprincipled jack-of-both-sides.”⁸⁴ After this interview, Burnet would never again

⁷⁹Burnet, “Lord Russell’s . . . Last Speech and Paper,” 821.

⁸⁰Burnet, “The Last Days of Lord Russell,” in Foxcroft, *Supplement*, 130; emphasis added.

⁸¹Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 2:377-78.

⁸²Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 2:378.

⁸³Clark and Foxcroft, *Life of Gilbert Burnet*, 196.

⁸⁴Clark and Foxcroft, *Life of Gilbert Burnet*, 197.

stand in front of Charles II. Their last encounter ended with mutual disgust.⁸⁵

A month after the shock of Lord Russell's trial and execution, Burnet inserted "A Digression Concerning Government" into his memoirs, which contained a remarkable passage about the doctrine of passive obedience and nonresistance; remarkably, Burnet's digression was not included in the final draft of *History of My Own Time*.

Burnet wrote,

If I am able to search any one thing to the bottom, I have done it in this matter; and indeed my aversion to the ill conduct of affairs, and somewhat of natural heat and carelessness in my temper, has given me the bias rather in favour of resistance than against it; so that nothing but the force or reason and conscience has determined me against it.⁸⁶

This passage is remarkable, because Burnet conceded that the "ill conduct of affairs" and his own "natural heat and carelessness" had created in him a bias in favor of resistance. Despite his distaste for the "ill conduct of affairs," Burnet affirmed nonresistance by "force of reason and conscience." Thus, in 1683, even after the execution of Lord Russell and all the disgrace and displeasure that Burnet experienced from Charles II, Burnet maintained his conviction concerning passive obedience. Ironically, Burnet writes that he was simultaneously accused as a "favourer of rebellion" during this time:

I have so openly and frequently declared both in books, in sermons, and in familiar discourses, that if I had not seen too much of the injustice and baseness of the world to wonder at anything, I should wonder much to find myself aspersed as a favourer of rebellion; whereas I think there is no man living whose principles determine him more steadily against it.⁸⁷

⁸⁵Burnet would later write concerning Charles II: "He said once to D[uke] Hamilton then E[arl] of Aran after the L[ord] Russell's death, he beleaved I would be content to be hanged to have the pleasure to make a speech on the scaffold, but he would order drums so that I should not be heard. I answered when it came to that I should put my speech in such hands that the world should see it if they could no hear it" (Burnet, "I Sought no Preferment," in Foxcroft, *Supplement*, 488). Greater evidence of Burnet's disgust for Charles II is represented in Burnet's "The King's Character," which was published long after the death of King Charles and cast Charles in a terrible light (Burnet, "The King's Character," in Foxcroft, *Supplement*, 48-50).

⁸⁶Burnet, "A Digression Concerning Government," in Foxcroft, *Supplement*, 35.

⁸⁷Burnet, "A Digression Concerning Government," in Foxcroft, *Supplement*, 39.

Yet, as Burnet rearticulated his convictions concerning passive obedience and nonresistance in his memoirs in 1683, he distinguished between nonresistance according to the Bible and nonresistance according to English law. With respect to the unlawfulness of resistance according to the Bible, Burnet wrote:

We have the declaration of our Saviour that his kingdom was not of this world (for otherwise his servants would have fought for him), and his practice likewise in reproving St. Peter when he drew his sword in his defence, so it is also plain (both from St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans and St. Peter's first Epistle) that the Apostles condemned all resistance; for indeed words can scarce be found out that are more express and plain than theirs are upon the subject. The nature of the Christian religion proves this yet more fully than any particular text can do; it is a doctrine of faith, patience, humility, self-denial, contempt of the world, and resignation to the will of God; we are called in it to bear crosses, to suffer persecution, and to be ready to offer up our lives with joy for it; so that I much less wonder to find men that are very serious Christians to be against all wars whatsoever than to see them led into opinions about the lawfulness of resistance on that account.⁸⁸

With respect to the unlawfulness of resistance according to English law, Burnet wrote:

This becomes a question of law: Whether the king is the head of the government or is only trusted with it as the chief minister in it. *In our case this seemed to me to be out of doubt*; for a king among us has his full power before he is crowned, so that, whatever coronations might have been anciently, they are now only the pompous declarations of his power and not the investitures by which he receives it; and therefore his oath is only an obligation on himself to God. And since by plain and express laws all the powers of the militia is vested singly in the king (*with as positive exclusions of the subjects using force against him as can be contrived in words*) all this falls to the ground; and whatever power of self-preservation may be supposed to be in men before such laws were made, yet, these being once made, all that ceases and the liberty of the subject is in so far given up. This has always been my opinion on the matter.⁸⁹

Thus, Burnet asserted the unlawfulness of resistance in 1683 on both biblical and juridical grounds. According to Burnet, the English king was invested with supreme authority by God; consequently, the king's subjects were bound "by plain and express laws" to be submissive to their temporal sovereign. Therefore, "the liberty of the subject

⁸⁸Burnet, "Opinions Concerning Civil Governments," in Foxcroft, *Supplement*, 33-34.

⁸⁹Burnet, "A Digression Concerning Government," in Foxcroft, *Supplement*, 34-35; emphasis added.

is insofar given up.”⁹⁰

Burnet’s sermon at Rolls Chapel (November 5, 1684). In view of his shaky standing with the English Court after Russell’s execution, Burnet recorded these words in his memoirs:

I preached a lecture at St. Clement’s on the Thursdays: but after the lord Russell’s death the king sent an order to Dr. Hascard, then rector of the parish [at St. Clement’s], to discharge me from it. I continued at the Rolls, avoiding very cautiously every thing that related to the public: for I abhorred, the making the pulpit a stage for venting of passion or for the serving of interests.”⁹¹

Matters only worsened for Burnet on November 5, 1684, when he preached against popery at the Rolls Chapel. Burnet’s November 5 sermon against popery “was immediately carried to the court” and “raised more anger” from Charles II and the Duke of York.⁹² To this point, Burnet suffered only the regular displeasure of King Charles. However, after preaching his November 5 sermon in 1684, Burnet irrevocably secured the Duke of York’s displeasure also, which led to Burnet’s being wholly “disaffected to His Majesties Government.”⁹³

Burnet’s sermon on November 5, 1684, touched on the familiar themes of loyalty and obedience. An exact record of Burnet’s original sermon is no longer extant, but Burnet subsequently reproduced the November 5 sermon for publication. Burnet added the following prefatory remarks to his published manuscript:

I am sure the last part of [the sermon], that presses Loyalty and Obedience, is not at all enlarged beyond what I not only preached in that Sermon, but on many other occasions, in which I appeal to all my Hearers. But I leave the Sermon to speak for

⁹⁰Burnet, “A Digression Concerning Government,” in Foxcroft, *Supplement*, 34-35.

⁹¹Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 2:435-36.

⁹²Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 2:439.

⁹³Prior to this point, Burnet enjoyed a measure of favor from the Duke of York, who was the future King James II (Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 2:49-52). However, after his sermon against popery on November 5, 1684, Burnet would never again enjoy the favorable countenance of the future King James II.

itself, and me both; and will refer it to every mans conscience that reads it, to judg[e] whether or not I can be concluded from it to be a person disaffected to his Majesties Government.⁹⁴

Burnet was considered “disaffected” to the Duke of York primarily because of the anti-Popery views expressed in the November 5 sermon: “While we have a zeal against Popery, as a bloody, a rebellious, and a cruel Religion; we must do nothing to shew that we are acted by the Spirit of Popery.”⁹⁵ Burnet concluded with a gentle summons to passive obedience:

When we go out of the way of Patience and Submission, of Obedience, and of bearing the Cross; when we give scope to Passion and Rage, to Jealousy and Mistrust, and upon this Fermentation in our Minds we break out into Wars and Rebellion; we forget that the God whom we serve is Almighty, and can save us either from a devouring Fire, or a Lion's Mouth. . . . But on the other hand; If we will live so suitably to our Religion . . . and if our melancholy apprehensions make us pray more earnestly to the Great Author of it, then we may lie down in quiet; for God will either make us to dwell in safety, and deliver us from the Lion's Mouth; or if he gives us up as a Prey, yet at least we shall even in Death overcome, and obtain the Crown of Life.⁹⁶

Nevertheless, the English Court was not pleased the Burnet. For a short while, Charles II was diverted from taking immediate action against Burnet, “and so that matter slept till the end of the term.”⁹⁷ However, when the time of renewal came, the king sent word to

⁹⁴Gilbert Burnet, *A Sermon Preached at the Chappel of the Rolls, on the Fifth of November, 1684, Being Gun-Powder-Treason-Day* (London, 1684), v.

⁹⁵Burnet, *A Sermon Preached . . . on the Fifth of November, 1684*, 25-26. In his memoirs, Burnet recalled,

I chose for my text these words: *Save me from the lion's mouth thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns*. I made no reflection in my thoughts on the lion and unicorn, as being the two supporters of the king's scutcheon: (for I ever hated all points of that sort, as a profanation of Scriptures) but I shewed how well popery might be compared to the lion's mouth, then open to devour us: and I compared our former deliverance from the extremities of danger to the being on the horn of a rhinoceros. And this leading me to the subject of the day, I mentioned that wish of king James the first against any of his posterity that should endeavor to bring that religion in among us. (Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 2:438-39)

⁹⁶Burnet, *A Sermon Preached . . . on the Fifth of November, 1684*, 28-30.

⁹⁷Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 2:439.

the Master of the Rolls that Burnet should be dismissed from all clerical duties. Burnet recorded the occasion:

The King considered the Chapel of the Rolls as one of his own chapels: and, since he looked on me as a person disaffected from His government, and had for that reason dismissed me from his own service, he therefore required [the Master of the Rolls] not to suffer me to serve any longer in that chapel.⁹⁸

“And thus,” Burnet writes, “all my service in the church was now stopped. For upon such a public declaration made against me, it was not fit for any clergyman to make use of my assistance any more. . . . These disgraces from the court were the occasion of my going out of England.”⁹⁹ Thus, Burnet finished the year 1684 as a “disgraced divine,” yet he remained committed to the doctrine of passive obedience and nonresistance. On February 6, 1685, King Charles II unexpectedly died from apoplexy.

Burnet in Voluntary Exile (1685–1687)

Since Charles II had no legitimate children, the crown passed immediately and peaceably to his brother, James II. Shortly after James’ accession, George Savile (1633–1695), the Marquess of Halifax, asked if Burnet could be “presented” to King James II. Burnet tells the story:

Halifax desired leave to present me to the king [James II], that I might kiss his hand, which all people did. The king not only refused it, but spake sharply of me. Upon which I desired Halifax to ask the king’s leave for me to go beyond sea; which the king said he agreed to with all his heart.¹⁰⁰

Within two months, Burnet left England and stayed abroad for the duration of James II’s reign. Elsewhere, Burnet explained his reason for leaving:

Since I was at that time in no sort of employment, not so much as allowed to preach any where, I resolved to go abroad. I saw we were like to fall into great confusion

⁹⁸Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 2:439; the Master of the Rolls was Harbottle Grimston.

⁹⁹Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 2:439.

¹⁰⁰Burnet, “Burnet Goes Abroad,” in Foxcroft, *Supplement*, 151.

[in England]; and were either to be rescued, in a way that I could not approve of, by the duke of Monmouth's means, or to be delivered up by a meeting that had the face and name of a parliament. I thought the best thing for me was to go out of the way. The king approved of this, and consented to my going: but still refused to see me. So I was to go beyond sea, as to a voluntary exile.¹⁰¹

After leaving London, Burnet travelled Europe for approximately one year before finally settling at The Hague in May 1686. When Burnet reached Utrecht, he was formally invited to the Court of Orange. Burnet remembered the invitation:

I found letters write to me by some of the prince of Orange's court, desiring me to come first to The Hague and wait on the prince and princess, before I should settle any where. Upon my coming to The Hague I was admitted to wait on them. I found they had received such characters of me from England, that they resolved to treat me with great confidence: for at my first being with them they entered into much free discourse with me concerning the affairs of England. The prince, though naturally cold and reserved, yet laid aside a great deal of that with me.¹⁰²

Meanwhile, James II wrote letters to his daughter Mary, Princess of Orange, "expostulating" her not to give "countenance" to a disgraced man like Burnet.¹⁰³ Mary did not heed her father's advice, and Burnet was warmly received by the Prince and Princess of Orange. Though Burnet was warmly received at The Hague by Prince William and Princess Mary, Burnet was still resolved against the doctrine of resistance, which was evidenced by a letter he wrote to "Dr. Fall":

I am resolved that my soul shall never enter into their secrets; and I do assure you I am so entirely possessed with the doctrine of the Cross that I am further than ever from all things that lead to the drawing the sword against those in whose hands God hath put it. So that you may depend upon it that I will never be directly nor indirectly so much as in the knowledge of things of that nature.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 3:21.

¹⁰²Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 3:123.

¹⁰³Clark and Foxcroft, *Life of Gilbert Burnet*, 221.

¹⁰⁴Dr. James Fall was a friend of Gilbert Burnet, and he was also the Principal of Glasgow University in 1686. Foxcroft provides the complete contents of Burnet's letter from The Hague dated Sept. 26, 1686, to Dr. Fall in Clark and Foxcroft, *Life of Gilbert Burnet*, 219-21. Moreover, Foxcroft locates the original copy of Burnet's letter to Dr. Fall at the Bodleian Library: Bodl. Add. MSS. D. 23, f. I (Foxcroft, *Supplement*, 515).

Burnet dispatched this letter from The Hague to Dr. Fall in September of 1686. Very soon after this letter was dispatched, Burnet's convictions regarding passive obedience would change.

Burnet's reflections on James II's toleration (1687). Meanwhile, in England, the political and ecclesial situation only worsened under James II, because the king, according to Burnet, was abusing his royal prerogative in order to establish popery.¹⁰⁵ On February 12, 1687, James published a Scottish Declaration of Toleration that betrayed his full absolutist agenda—an agenda that incensed both Scottish and English Protestants. James II published the following declaration:

Being resolved, as much as in us lies, to unite the hearts and affections of our subjects, to God in religion, to Us in loyalty, and to their neighbours in Christian love and charity, have therefore thought fit to grant, and by our sovereign authority, prerogative royal, and absolute power, which all our subjects are to obey without reserve, do hereby give and grant our royal toleration.¹⁰⁶

Many Protestants suspected that James' "toleration" was merely a cover to promote the Catholic interest in England. Two months later, on April 4, 1687, a similar Declaration of Indulgence was published in England using these words:

We cannot but heartily wish, as it will easily be believed, that all the people of our dominions were members of the Catholic Church. . . . We do likewise declare, that it is our royal will and pleasure, that from henceforth the execution of all and all manner of penal laws in matters ecclesiastical, for not coming to church, or not receiving the Sacrament, or for any other nonconformity to the religion established, or for or by reason of the exercise of religion in any manner whatsoever, be

¹⁰⁵Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 3:174.

¹⁰⁶The full text of James II's Scottish Declaration of Toleration in 1687 can be found in *State Tracts: Being a Farther Collection of Several Choice Treatises Relating to the Government: from the Year 1660 to 1689: Now Published in a Body, to Shew the Necessity, and Clear the Legality of the Late Revolution, and Our Present Happy Settlement, Under the Auspicious Reign of Their Majesties, King William and Queen Mary*, ed. Richard Baldwin (London, 1692), 285-87.

immediately suspended; and the further execution of the said penal laws and every of them is hereby suspended.¹⁰⁷

Moreover, James required England's "judges, justices, and other officers, to take notice of and obey our royal will and pleasure herein before declared."¹⁰⁸ With this Declaration of Indulgence, the ban against Catholics was officially lifted.

Burnet wrote against James and his grant of toleration in several papers, including the following three¹⁰⁹: "Reasons Against the Repealing the Acts of Parliament,"¹¹⁰ "Some Reflections on His Majesties Proclamation of the Twelfth of February, 1687, for a Toleration in Scotland,"¹¹¹ and "A Letter Containing Some Reflections on His Majesties Declaration for Liberty of Conscience."¹¹² In each, Burnet

¹⁰⁷The full text of James' 1687 declaration can be found in "Declaration of Indulgence, 1687," in *English Historical Documents, 1660–1714*, ed. Andrew Browning (London: Routledge., 1996), 386-87. See also Richard E. Boyer, *English Declarations of Indulgence, 1687 and 1688* (The Hague: Mouton and Co., 1968). James issued this Declaration of Indulgence "by virtue of our royal prerogative."

¹⁰⁸"Declaration of Indulgence, 1687," in *English Historical Documents*, 387.

¹⁰⁹While these papers were bound and published in 1689, Foxcroft noted that they were penned in 1687 (Clark and Foxcroft, *Life of Gilbert Burnet*, 231).

¹¹⁰Gilbert Burnet, "Reasons Against the Repealing the Acts of Parliament Concerning the Test: Humbly Offered to the Consideration of the Members of Both Houses, as their next Meeting, on the Twenty-Eighth of April, 1687," in *A Collection of Eighteen Papers, Relating to the Affairs of Church & State, During the Reign of King James the Second* (London, 1689): 1-9.

¹¹¹Gilbert Burnet, "Some Reflections on His Majesties Proclamation of the Twelfth of February, 1687, for a Toleration in Scotland" in *A Collection of Eighteen Papers, Relating to the Affairs of Church & State, During the Reign of King James the Second* (London, 1689): 10-24. With respect to Burnet's "Reflections on His Majesties Declaration for Liberty of Conscience," Foxcroft noted, "In reading this, we seem to look upon a human soul, tossed by the struggle between old dogmas and new convictions. Burnet has indeed moved far from the pure doctrines of passive obedience; yet strives to persuade himself that he holds their essence still. In fact, he hesitated for some little time ere he entrusted (even anonymously) such language to the press" (Clark and Foxcroft, *Life of Gilbert Burnet*, 232).

¹¹²Gilbert Burnet, "A Letter Containing Some Reflections on His Majesties Declaration for Liberty of Conscience, Dated the Fourth of April, 1687," in *A Collection of Eighteen Papers, Relating to the Affairs of Church & State, During the Reign of King James the Second* (London, 1689): 25-37.

opposed James II and his absolutist, Catholic agenda.

Burnet's first paper was entitled "Reasons against the Repealing the Acts of Parliament," and he warned that "His Majesty is so possessed with his Religion, that this cannot suffer us to think, that there is at present no danger from Popery."¹¹³ Fearful of the advance of "popery," Burnet strongly opposed the repealing of the "Test Act," which was enacted under Charles II in 1673 and essentially disqualified Catholics and nonconformists from holding public office.¹¹⁴ In his paper to Parliament, Burnet admitted that the Test Act of 1673 suggested a certain "malignity against his Majesty" (i.e., King James II who was Duke of York at that time); nonetheless, Burnet reminded that the Test Act of 1673 was enacted by the Loyal Parliament, which theoretically settled "both the Prerogative of the Crown and the Rites of the Church," even at the cost of a great allowance for Charles II at that time.¹¹⁵

Second, after James issued his Declaration of Indulgence in Scotland on February 12, 1687, Burnet wrote "Reflections on His Majesties Proclamation of the Twelfth of February, 1687 for a Toleration in Scotland" and decried James' absolutist inclination:

There is a new designation of his *Majesties Authority* here set forth of his *Absolute Power*, which is so often repeated, that it deserves to be a little searched into. *Prerogative Royal* and *Sovereign Authority*, are Terms already received and known; but for this *Absolute Power*, as it is a new Term, so those who have coined it, may make it signifie what they will. The Roman Law speaks of *Princeps Legibus solutus*, and *Absolute* in its natural signification, importing the being without all Ties and Restraints; then the true meaning of this seems to be, that there is an *Inherent*

¹¹³Burnet, "Reasons Against the Repealing the Acts of Parliament," in *A Collection of Eighteen Papers*, 2.

¹¹⁴More specifically, the Test Act of 1673 disqualified from public office anyone who refused to receive communion within the Church of England.

¹¹⁵Burnet, "Reasons Against the Repealing the Acts of Parliament," in *A Collection of Eighteen Papers*, 7.

*Power in the King, which can neither be restrained by Laws, Promises, nor Oaths; for nothing less than the being free from all these, renders a Power Absolute.*¹¹⁶

Burnet feared that James' absolutist tendency would lead to "an Abolition of the Protestant Religion"; therefore, Burnet rejected what he described as a "Power to be in the King, to Command what he will, and an Obligation in the Subjects, to Obey whatsoever he shall Command."¹¹⁷ Moreover, Burnet feared that "another dash of a Pen, founded on this Absolute Power, may declare us all Hereticks; and then . . . we must be told, that we are either to Obey without Reserve or to be burnt without Reserve."¹¹⁸ Thus, Burnet warned,

Here is not only a repealing of a great many Laws, and established Oaths and Tests, but by the Exercise of the Absolute Power, a new Oath is imposed, which was never pretended to by the Crown in any former time, and as the Oath is created by this Absolute Power, so it seems the Absolute Power must be supported by this Oath.¹¹⁹

More examples could be provided, but these are sufficient to demonstrate Burnet's change in perspective regarding passive obedience and nonresistance in 1687. No longer was Burnet a zealous supporter of absolute obedience. Rather, in both tone and content, Burnet's "reflections" differed in 1687 from his earlier writings concerning obedience, which formerly were unmistakably absolutist in character.¹²⁰

After James issued his Declaration of Indulgence in England on April 14,

¹¹⁶Burnet, "Some Reflections on His Majesties Proclamation of the Twelfth of February, 1687," in *A Collection of Eighteen Papers*, 10; emphasis original.

¹¹⁷Burnet, "Some Reflections on His Majesties Proclamation of the Twelfth of February, 1687," in *A Collection of Eighteen Papers*, 11.

¹¹⁸Burnet, "Some Reflections on His Majesties Proclamation of the Twelfth of February, 1687," in *A Collection of Eighteen Papers*, 11.

¹¹⁹Burnet, "Some Reflections on His Majesties Proclamation of the Twelfth of February, 1687," in *A Collection of Eighteen Papers*, 16.

¹²⁰See, for example, Burnet, "To The Reader," in *Vindication*, A7-A8; Burnet, *Subjection for Conscience-Sake Asserted*, 31-35; Burnet, *The Royal Martyr*, 22, 36.

1687, Burnet distributed, “A Letter Containing Some Reflections on His Majesties Declaration for Liberty of Conscience.” Burnet first expressed his astonishment that the English declaration omitted the language of absolute obedience: “I expected to have seen the Imperial Language of *Absolute Power, to which all the Subjects are to Obey without reserve,*” but Burnet conceded, “those dreadful words are not to be found here.”¹²¹ Yet Burnet did express a new and more subtle conviction regarding the king’s authority over his subjects. Thus, Burnet wrote,

I will take the boldness to add one thing, that the Kings Suspending of laws strikes at the root of this whole Government, and subverts it quite: for if there is any thing certain with relation to English Government, it is this, that the Executive Power of the Law is entirely in the King; and the Law to fortifie him in the Management of it has cloathed him with a vast Prerogative and made it unlawful on any pretence . . . to resist him: whereas on the other hand, the Legislative Power is not so entirely in the King, but that the Lords and Commons have such a share in it, that no Law can be either made, repealed, or which is all one suspended, but by their consent: [so] that the placing this Legislative Power singly in the King, is a subversion of this whole Government.¹²²

Such a seemingly small distinction between the executive and legislative power of the king actually represented a major revision of Burnet’s understanding of passive obedience. Formerly, Burnet had believed all resistance to be unlawful, but now Burnet only considered resistance against the “Executive Power of the Law” to be unlawful. Such resistance against the “Executive Power of the Law,” Burnet maintained in 1687, remained “unlawful on any pretence.” Nevertheless, the quondam prophet of passive obedience and “absolute submission” was now cleverly imposing a Whiggish limitation on the king’s authority: “the Legislative Power is not so entirely in the King, but that the Lords and Commons have such a share in it.” For Burnet, this careful distinction between the executive power of the king versus the legislative power of the king opened

¹²¹Burnet, “Reflections on His Majesties Declaration for Liberty of Conscience,” in *A Collection of Eighteen Papers*, 25; emphasis original.

¹²²Burnet, “Reflections on His Majesties Declaration for Liberty of Conscience,” in *A Collection of Eighteen Papers*, 30.

the possibility of lawful resistance.

Since the Essence of all Governments consists in the Subjects of the Legislative Authority, Acts of Violence or Injustice, committed in the Executive part, are such things that all Princes being subject to them, the peace of mankind were very ill secured if it were not unlawful to resist upon any pretence taken from any ill Administrations, in which as the Law may be doubtful, so the Facts may be uncertain, and at worst the publick Peace must always be more valued than any private Oppressions or Injuries whatsoever. But the total Subversion of a Government, being so contrary to the Trust that is given to the Prince who ought to execute it, will put men upon uneasie and dangerous Inquiries: which will turn little to the Advantage of those who are driving matters to such a doubtful and desperate Issue.¹²³

Building upon such nuance, Burnet's thinking would soon develop into a full justification for armed resistance against the lawful king of England.¹²⁴

High treason in 1687. Though Burnet's "reflections" were distributed anonymously in 1687, the author was soon discovered. Burnet remembered the occasion,

Some papers appeared against the abolishing the test and upon the declarations for liberty of conscience both in England and Scotland. These took so much with the nation, that the king believed they crossed his designs; he suspected me to be the author, as I was indeed, though he could never find proofs of it. This sharpened a displeasure which was already quick enough; but he understanding that I was like to have one of the best matches in the Hague, he thought to have broke this by accusing me of high treason.¹²⁵

Elsewhere, Burnet admitted that he wrote these influential and anonymous letters with the "chief design . . . to expose both popery and tyranny."¹²⁶ For this reason, James

¹²³Burnet, "Reflections on His Majesties Declaration for Liberty of Conscience," in *A Collection of Eighteen Papers*, 30-31.

¹²⁴Foxcroft describes Burnet in these reflections as "a human soul tossed by the struggle between old dogmas and new convictions. Burnet has indeed moved far from the pure doctrine of passive obedience; yet strives to persuade himself that he holds their essence still" (Clark and Foxcroft, *Life of Gilbert Burnet*, 232).

¹²⁵Burnet, "Reception at The Hague," in Foxcroft, *Supplement*, 251. Note: all three of the papers cited above were subsequently published in 1689 and attributed to Burnet without contest. For dating purposes, please note that Gilbert Burnet married a wealthy heiress of Scotch descent, Mary Scott, on May 25, 1687 ("Burnet's Meditation on His Second Marriage," in Foxcroft, *Supplement*, 520-21).

¹²⁶Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 3:194.

trumped up charges of high treason against Burnet in hopes of silencing Burnet and sabotaging his “intended marriage,” which entailed a “considerable fortune.”¹²⁷

In response to charges of high treason, Burnet quickly petitioned to be “naturalized” in Holland so that he could fall “legally under the protection of the States of Holland.”¹²⁸ Accordingly, Burnet dispatched letters to England informing James that his “allegiance was . . . transferred from his majesty.” According to Burnet,

I said, that, being now naturalized in Holland, my allegiance was, during my stay in these parts, transferred from his majesty to the States. I also said in another letter, that, if upon my nonappearance a sentence should pass against me, I might be perhaps forced to justify myself, and to give an account of the share that I had in affairs these twenty years past: in which I might be led to mention some things, that I was afraid would displease the king: and therefore I should be sorry, if I were driven to it.¹²⁹

Upon receiving Burnet’s letters, the old charges of high treason were dropped, only to be replaced with two new charges of high treason, which were (1) writing that his “allegiance was now transferred” and (2) threatening to write “a history of the transactions passed these last twenty years”—the latter being described as a “high indignity to the king.”¹³⁰ At this point, Burnet’s life was truly endangered. Holland was pressed to hand over Burnet to England. Threats were made that, if Holland should refuse to comply, then “instruments” such as the “brutal Irish” might “seize” Burnet and

¹²⁷Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 3:194-95. According to Macaulay, after Burnet fled to the Hague and wrote his “reflection,” James II descended into mad rage:

The rage of James flamed high. He had always been more than sufficiently prone to the angry passions. But none of his enemies, not even those who had attempted by perjury to load him with the guilt of treason and assassination, had ever been regarded by him with such animosity as he now felt for Burnet. His Majesty railed daily at the Doctor in unkingly language, and meditated plans of unlawful revenge. Even blood would not slake that frantic hatred. The insolent divine must be tortured before he was permitted to die. (Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:62)

¹²⁸Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 3:194-95.

¹²⁹Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 3:195.

¹³⁰Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 3:195.

“carry [him] away forcibly.”¹³¹ On August 29, 1687, after Holland refused to comply with England’s extradition demands, a sentence of condemnation was pronounced against Burnet. Shortly thereafter, Burnet recorded,

I hear now sentence is passed; and whether upon this any of the brutal Irish that are here in the service will endeavor to merit at the king’s hands by destroying me, I do not know, nor am I much concerned; for I am weary of life and of the world.¹³²

Burnet continued,

But for this and all that relates to myself, I resign myself entirely to that Providence that has hitherto watched over me with such an indulgent care, that what my enemies have designed against men, as the greatest mischief they could do me by driving me out of England, has produced the happiest alteration in the course of my life that could have befallen me.¹³³

Thus, Burnet finished the year 1687 as an English outlaw in openly hostility towards James II, yet as one declaring his quiet confidence in the providence of God.¹³⁴

Burnet on The Eve of Revolution (1688)

In 1688, Burnet continued to affirm the doctrine of passive obedience in his writings. In reality, Burnet’s advocacy of the “pure doctrines” of passive obedience and nonresistance, which he had so unambiguously championed in former days, was now far gone. But again, even in the year of armed resistance against King James II, Burnet affirmed his commitment to nonresistance. Four publications provide insight into Burnet’s revised notion of passive obedience just prior to the Revolution of 1688:

“Reflections on a Pamphlet Entitled, *Parliamentum Pacificum*,” *Dr. Burnet’s Vindication*

¹³¹Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 3:196.

¹³²Burnet, “At the Hague,” in Foxcroft, *Supplement*, 253.

¹³³Burnet, “At the Hague,” in Foxcroft, *Supplement*, 253.

¹³⁴James II declared Holland’s refusal to extradite Burnet as a “just grounds for war”; “Louis XIV . . . wrote to his Ambassador in London” and “promised facilities to anyone, who having kidnapped Burnet, should wish to convey him into England by way of France”; Burnet even received an “anonymous hint that an unsigned order for £3000 to the person who should abduct him had been seen lying in the Secretary’s office at Whitehall” (Clark and Foxcroft, *Life of Gilbert Burnet*, 235-36, *passim*).

of Himself from the Calumnies with which He is Aspersed, An Enquiry into the Measures of Submission, and The Declaration of His Highness William Henry, Prince of Orange.

***Parliamentum Pacificum* (1688).** In April of 1688, Burnet published a short paper entitled, “Reflections on a Pamphlet Entitled, *Parliamentum Pacificum*.”¹³⁵ In this paper, Burnet sharply critiqued James II for attempting to establish popery under the false pretense of toleration.¹³⁶ Burnet also addressed some perceived threats of “dispossession” levied against Princess Mary.¹³⁷ However, most striking was Burnet’s positive perspective on the Dutch Constitution with respect to resistance—a perspective particularly offensive to the Jacobite court of 1688.¹³⁸ Specifically, Burnet wrote approvingly of “an express Proviso in the Constitution of their Government, that if their Prince broke such and such Limits, they were no more bound to obey him, but might resist him.”¹³⁹ Admittedly, Burnet could legally justify resistance against the English crown on the grounds that his allegiance had transferred from James II to the States of Holland. Nevertheless, Burnet was intentionally emphasizing a constitution-oriented interpretation of passive obedience and not a strict absolutist interpretation of passive obedience. Thus, the one-time advocate of “entire obedience” and “absolute submission” is found here citing a proviso on resistance in the Dutch constitution against one’s Prince

¹³⁵Gilbert Burnet, “Reflections on a Pamphlet Entitled, *Parliamentum Pacificum*, Licensed by the Earl of Sunderland, and Printed at London, in March, 1688,” in *A Collection of Eighteen Papers, Relating to the Affairs of Church & State, During the Reign of King James the Second* (London, 1689): 65-82.

¹³⁶Burnet, “*Parliamentum Pacificum*,” 65-68.

¹³⁷Burnet, “*Parliamentum Pacificum*,” 80-82.

¹³⁸Burnet wrote that the English understood the Dutch commonwealth to be “only the result of an absolute rebellion revolt, and defection from their prince” (Burnet, “*Parliamentum Pacificum*,” in *A Collection of Eighteen Papers*, 74). Again, Burnet wrote, “Here in England we are always upbraided with the Revolt of the Dutch, as a scandalous Imputation on the Protestant Religion” (Burnet, “*Parliamentum Pacificum*,” in *A Collection of Eighteen Papers*, 75).

¹³⁹Burnet, “*Parliamentum Pacificum*,” in *A Collection of Eighteen Papers*, 77.

in an approving manner.¹⁴⁰

Burnet's *Reflections* were denounced by King James II as the "most seditious" work he had yet written.¹⁴¹ Moreover, the English divine John Northleigh (1657–1705) wrote a response to Burnet out of a sense of "duty I owe to the best of Princes libell'd and defam'd."¹⁴² Of course, Northleigh was writing in defense of James II, and Northleigh identified Burnet as a "vow'd Enemy to the Perswasion of his Prince."¹⁴³ Northleigh labeled Burnet's doctrine of passive obedience as "peculiar,"¹⁴⁴ "dark,"¹⁴⁵ "misterious,"¹⁴⁶ and a "disgust"¹⁴⁷ to the Church of England. He reminded Burnet of his "high treason"—particularly the "crimes" of "sedition," "libel," and his "great insolency" against his own "Sovereign Authority."¹⁴⁸ He accused Burnet of changing opinions;¹⁴⁹ he accused Burnet of being well-instructed in the art of "Aequivocations,"¹⁵⁰ and he censured Burnet for making "the most odious comparison[s] of the King."¹⁵¹ Northleigh's charges, though acerbic, were not groundless.

¹⁴⁰Burnet, *Subjection for Conscience-sake Asserted*, 36-37.

¹⁴¹Clark and Foxcroft, *Life of Gilbert Burnet*, 239.

¹⁴²John Northleigh, *Dr. Burnett's Reflections upon a Book Entituled "Parliamentum Pacificum"* (London 1688), 1.

¹⁴³Northleigh, *Dr. Burnett's Reflections*, 2.

¹⁴⁴Northleigh, *Dr. Burnett's Reflections*, 117.

¹⁴⁵Northleigh, *Dr. Burnett's Reflections*, 139.

¹⁴⁶Northleigh, *Dr. Burnett's Reflections*, 139.

¹⁴⁷Northleigh, *Dr. Burnett's Reflections*, 117.

¹⁴⁸Northleigh, *Dr. Burnett's Reflections*, 2, 15, 17, 75, 112, *passim*.

¹⁴⁹Northleigh, *Dr. Burnett's Reflections*, 4, 9.

¹⁵⁰Northleigh, *Dr. Burnett's Reflections*, 16.

¹⁵¹Northleigh, *Dr. Burnett's Reflections*, 74.

Burnet's vindication of himself (1688). Burnet replied to Northleigh's charges in a paper entitled, "Dr. Burnet's Vindication of Himself from the Calumnies with which He is Aspersed, in a Pamphlet Entitled, Parliamentum Pacificum."¹⁵² Burnet's stated goal was to answer the many "libels" in which his "name ha[d] been so much tossed."¹⁵³ Burnet's seventeen-page self-vindication is interesting for several reasons. First, Burnet included the verbiage of James' charge of high treason in his self-vindication.¹⁵⁴ Second, Burnet defended his Dutch "naturalization,"¹⁵⁵ which stipulated a shift in allegiance from King James II to Prince William. Third, as a consequence of his transfer of allegiance, Burnet dutifully refused to comply with England's court-summons, even as he enjoyed new legal protections afforded by Holland. Fourth, Burnet acknowledged God's providence in the unfolding of all these events.

I would not withdraw [from Holland] of my own accord from my own house which I thought would have been a forsaking the Rights of the Countrey, a mistrusting the

¹⁵²Gilbert Burnet, "Dr. Burnet's Vindication of Himself from the Calumnies with which He is Aspersed, in a Pamphlet Entitled, Parliamentum Pacificum. Licensed by the Earl of Sunderland, and Printed at London in March, 1688," in *A Collection of Eighteen Papers, Relating to the Affairs of Church & State, During the Reign of King James the Second* (London, 1689): 172-87.

¹⁵³Burnet, "Dr. Burnet's Vindication of Himself," in *A Collection of Eighteen Papers*, 172.

¹⁵⁴"James by the Grace of God King of Great Britain, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith" called upon "Sir John Dalrymple" as,
Our Advocat for our Interest Upon Doctor Gilbert Burnet that where by the Common Law by the Acts of Parliament and the municipall Lawes of this Kingdom, the declining or impugning our Sovereign Authority or putting Treasonable Limitations upon the Prerogatives of our Crown upon the native Allegiance due by any of our Subjects born Scots men, whether residing within our Dominions or not, are declared to be High Treason, and punishable by the Pains due and determined in the Law for Treason. (Burnet, "Dr. Burnet's Vindication of Himself," in *A Collection of Eighteen Papers*, 173-74)

¹⁵⁵Burnet, "Dr. Burnet's Vindication of Himself," in *A Collection of Eighteen Papers*, 175.

Protection of my Sovereigns, as well as my own innocence and an abandoning of the post in which God by his Providence has placed me.¹⁵⁶

Thus, Burnet remained in Holland, even as he insisted upon his own innocence with respect to the English Crown. Burnet asserted that he was “free also even from faults of Omission” with respect to his public duty to King James.¹⁵⁷ Burnet then followed his plea of innocence with these preposterous words regarding passive obedience and nonresistance:

I have ever gone by the Principles in which I was bred up at first, under a Father that from first to last, adhered to the King’s Cause, without so much as one stumble, or making even an Address of Civility to his Enemies: but was as much an Enemy to Arbitrary Power as he was Rebellion and thought it was as base and unwarrantable a thing, for Subjects to give up their just and legal Rights, as it was for them to fly out upon every pretended violation of them. In these Principles I have fortified my self, by study and observation; and I may Love them, for they have stood me very Dear. I went no further than to assert an Obedience and Submission according to law, when I was employed to assert the laws of Scotland against those who studied to overturn them.¹⁵⁸

At this point, one must acknowledge Burnet’s delusion. His early views of passive obedience and nonresistance, which were documented in his *Vindication* (1673), left no room for resistance against one’s Sovereign even upon grounds of a legislative subversion. On the contrary, Burnet called his fellow Scots to an “absolute obedience” and an “absolute submission” to their Sovereign.¹⁵⁹ Moreover, in this same document in 1673, Burnet referred to “forcible resistance upon the colour of preserving religion” as a heresy which was “contrary to the whole design of religion” and “destructive of

¹⁵⁶Burnet, “Dr. Burnet’s Vindication of Himself,” in *A Collection of Eighteen Papers*, 181-82.

¹⁵⁷Burnet, “Dr. Burnet’s Vindication of Himself,” in *A Collection of Eighteen Papers*, 183.

¹⁵⁸Burnet, “Dr. Burnet’s Vindication of Himself,” in *A Collection of Eighteen Papers*, 184.

¹⁵⁹Burnet, “To The Reader,” in *Vindication*, A7, 35, 42, and 156.

mankind.”¹⁶⁰ Burnet claimed that those who refused to render absolute submission to their temporal Sovereign were men and women who “cannot bear the Cross, nor trust to the Providence of God.”¹⁶¹ Burnet formally claimed that, even if the king abused his privilege “such that it tends to a total Subversion” of government, then the king could be presumed to be under a “phrensie.”¹⁶² But in such an extreme circumstance, Burnet still argued against forcible resistance; in such extreme circumstances, Burnet suggested that a provisional government or regency should be appointed and that these “administrators of the power” would only rule “till [the king] recover himself.”¹⁶³ Thus, Burnet’s insistence in 1688 that his convictions concerning passive obedience and nonresistance had remained unaltered since the 1669 publication of *Vindication* was disingenuous.¹⁶⁴

Burnet’s enquiry into the measures of submission (1688). In 1688, Burnet’s *Enquiry into the measures of Submission to the Supream Authority* was published and distributed throughout London.¹⁶⁵ Interesting nuances to Burnet’s quickly-eroding principles of nonresistance were documented in this publication. First, Burnet adopted a principle of self-preservation, which he described as a “duty” and a fundamental “Law of Nature.”¹⁶⁶ Burnet believed that government existed to secure and

¹⁶⁰Burnet, “To The Reader,” in *Vindication*, A7.

¹⁶¹Burnet, “To The Reader,” in *Vindication*, A7-A8.

¹⁶²Burnet, *Vindication*, 17.

¹⁶³“In case the Magistrate be furious, or desert his right, or expose his Kingdoms to the fury of others, the Laws and Sense of all Nations agree, that the States of the Land are to be the Administrators of the power, till he recover himself” (Burnet, *Vindication*, 16).

¹⁶⁴Cf. also Clark and Foxcroft, *Life of Gilbert Burnet*, 242.

¹⁶⁵Gilbert Burnet, *An Enquiry into the Measures of Submission to the Supream [sic] Authority and of the Grounds Upon which it may be Lawful or Necessary for Subjects to Defend their Religion* (London, 1688).

¹⁶⁶Burnet, *Enquiry into the Measures of Submission*, 1.

regulate the natural law of self-preservation.¹⁶⁷ Second, Burnet now argued that God did not authorize any one particular form of government; God merely “oblige[d] all Men not to subvert Constitutions, nor disturb the peace of Mankind, nor invade those Rights with which the Law may have vested some Persons.”¹⁶⁸ As such, Burnet explained that the “the considerations of Religion” would only “bring Subjects under stricter Obligation, to pay all due allegiance and Submission to their Princes; but they do not at all extend that Allegiance further than the Law carries it.”¹⁶⁹ Thus, Burnet continued to relocate the burden of submission and nonresistance from king to constitution. Again, Burnet reasoned, “The Measures of Power, and by consequence of Obedience, must be taken from the express Laws of any State, or Body of Men, from the Oaths that they swear, or from Immemorial prescription, and a long possession.”¹⁷⁰ In the event that “Divine Providence” mandated suffering at the hands of governmental abuse, Burnet argued, “we may indeed retire and fly out of any such Country if we can.”¹⁷¹

Next, Burnet applied his altered conviction of submission directly to the English situation. “We are then at last brought to the Constitution of our English Government,”¹⁷² Burnet wrote. “It is then certain, that with Relation to the Executive part of the Government, the Law has lodged that singly in the King; So that the whole administration of it is in him: but the Legislative Power is Lodged between the King and the two Houses of Parliament.”¹⁷³ For this reason, Burnet concluded that the king had no

¹⁶⁷Burnet, *Enquiry into the Measures of Submission*, 2.

¹⁶⁸Burnet, *Enquiry into the Measures of Submission*, 2.

¹⁶⁹Burnet, *Enquiry into the Measures of Submission*, 2.

¹⁷⁰Burnet, *Enquiry into the Measures of Submission*, 3.

¹⁷¹Burnet, *Enquiry into the Measures of Submission*, 5.

¹⁷²Burnet, *Enquiry into the Measures of Submission*, 6.

¹⁷³Burnet, *Enquiry into the Measures of Submission*, 6.

sanctioned authority for the making or repealing of laws without the express concurrence of both houses of Parliament. Moreover, the English people, according to Burnet, were not bound to submit to the unrestrained whimsies of the King; rather, the English people were only bound to a principle of submission and obedience to the Law, as jointly determined by King and Parliament. Next, Burnet addressed “the main and great difficulty” with any kind of armed resistance within the kingdom of England: “there are many express Laws made, that lodge the Militia singly in the King, that make it plainly unlawfull upon any pretence whatsoever to take Arms against the King, or any commissioned by him.”¹⁷⁴ Burnet continued,

Since it is a Maxim of our Law, that the *King can do no wrong*, these cannot be carried so far as to justifie our taking Arms against him, be the transgressions of Law ever so many and so manifest: And since this has been the constant *Doctrine of the Church of England*, it will be a very heavy Imputation on us, if it appears, that tho we held these opinions, as long as the Court and the Crown have favoured us, yet as soon as the Court turns against us, we change our Principles.¹⁷⁵

Thus, Burnet conceded the illegality of opposing the English king and his militia. And yet, Burnet insisted that constitutional nonresistance stood as a necessary “contradiction” to true public liberty:

When there seems to be a Contradiction between two Articles in the constitution, we ought to examine which of the two is the most evident, and the most Important and so we ought to fix upon it, and then we must give such an accommodating sense to that which seems to contradict it, that so we may reconcile those together. Here then are two seeming contradictions in our constitution: The one is the Publick Liberty of the Nation; the other is the renouncing of all resistance, in case that were Invaded. It is plain, that our Liberty is only a thing that we enjoy at the Kings discretion, and during his pleasure; if the other against all Resistance is to be understood according to the outmost Extent of the words. Therefore, since the chief Design of Our whole Law, and all the several Rules of our Constitution, is to secure and maintain Our Liberty, we ought to lay that down for a conclusion, that it is both the most plain and the most important of the two: And therefore the other Article against Resistance ought to be so softned as that it doe[s] not destroy this.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴Burnet, *Enquiry into the Measures of Submission*, 7.

¹⁷⁵Burnet, *Enquiry into the Measures of Submission*, 7; emphasis original.

¹⁷⁶Burnet, *Enquiry into the Measures of Submission*, 8.

And again, Burnet wrote,

Since it is by a Law that Resistance is condemned, we ought to understand it in such a sense, as that it does not destroy all other Laws: And therefore the intent of this Law must only relate to the *Executive Power*, which is in the King, and not to the *Legislative*, in which we cannot suppose that our *Legislators*, who made that Law, intended to give up that, which we plainly see they resolved still to preserve intire, according to the Ancient Constitution.¹⁷⁷

Finally, Burnet argued that King James had, in fact, “struck” at the “foundations” of the English government through his abuse of the “dispensing power” and by his refusal to convene lawful parliaments before making and repealing laws.¹⁷⁸ Thus, the legislative branch of the English government was, to Burnet’s mind, subverted by James. Moreover, according to Burnet, even the executive branch of the English government (i.e., the “Regal Dignity”) was “prostituted” because of a “base imposture”: “a young child [was] put in the reversion of it, and pretended to be the Prince of Wales.”¹⁷⁹ In other words, Burnet believed that James had recognized an illegitimate son as the future King of England. Thus, James II had subverted the legislative branch of the government and prostituted the executive branch of the government. Therefore, Burnet concluded, “if all these matters are true in Fact, then I suppose no Man will doubt, that the whole Foundations of this Government, and all the most sacred parts of it are overturned.”¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷Burnet, *Enquiry into the Measures of Submission*, 8; emphasis original.

¹⁷⁸Thus, Burnet insisted, The Power of making and Repealing Laws, is not singly in the King, but only so far as the two Houses concur with him. It is also clear, that the King has such a determined extent of Prerogative, beyond which he has no Authority: As for instance, if he Levies Money of his People, without a Law empowering him to it, he goes beyond the limits of his Power, and asks that to which he has no Right. So that there lyes no obligation on the Subject to grant it. (Burnet, *Enquiry into the Measures of Submission*, 9)

¹⁷⁹Burnet, *Enquiry into the Measures of Submission*, 13.

¹⁸⁰Burnet, *Enquiry into the Measures of Submission*, 13.

William of Orange's Declaration (1688). About the same time that Burnet printed his *Enquiry into the Measures of Submission* in 1688, Burnet also finished translating and editing the English version of William of Orange's famous *Declaration*—a carefully worded document of resistance.¹⁸¹ The central concern of William's *Declaration* was the “preserving the Protestant religion” and the “restoring the laws and liberties of England, Scotland, and Ireland.”¹⁸² While William's *Declaration* was careful not to accuse James II of personally subverting the English government and Protestant religion, the *Declaration* certainly charged James' “evil counsellors” with a complete subversion of both the English government and the Protestant faith:

We cannot any longer forbear to declare that, to our great regret, we see that those counsellors, who have now the chief credit with the King, have overturned the religion, laws, and liberties of these Realms, and subjected them in all things relating to their consciences, liberties, and properties to arbitrary government. Those evil counsellors, for the advancing and colouring this with some plausible pretexts, did invent and set on foot the King's dispensing power, by virtue of which they pretend that, according to law, he can suspend and dispense with the execution of laws, that have been enacted by the authority of the King and Parliament for the security and happiness of the subjects, and so have rendered those laws of no effect; though there is nothing more certain than that as no laws can be made, but by the joint concurrence of King and Parliament, so likewise laws, so enacted, which secure the public peace and safety of the nation, and the lives and liberties of every subject in it, cannot be repealed or suspended but by the same authority.¹⁸³

¹⁸¹Burnet's *Enquiry into the Measures of Submission* was certainly finalized sometime after June 10 (1688), because June 10 was the date that James II's heir was announced, and Burnet made mention of this “imposture” in his published *Enquiry*. Moreover, William's *Declaration* was finalized and published by October 10 (1688). These two documents were written in close proximity to one another. The extent of Burnet's revision to William's *Declaration* is not clear; however, Burnet writes about his role in translating and editing William's *Declaration*:

The declaration that the prince was to publish came to be considered. A great many draughts were sent from England by different hands. All these were put in the pensioner Fagel's hands, who upon that made a long and heavy draught, founded on the grounds of the civil law and of the law of nations. That was brought to me to be put in English. I saw he was fond of his own draught: and the prince left that matter wholly with him, yet I got it to be much shortened. (Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 3:286)

¹⁸²William III, *The Declaration of His Highness*, in *A Kingdom without a King*, 125.

¹⁸³William III, *The Declaration of His Highness*, in *A Kingdom without a King*, 125-

Moreover, William's *Declaration* charged James II's "evil counsellors" of manipulating judges in order to secure the King's absolute power:

Those evil counsellors, in order to the giving some credit to this execrable maxim, have so conducted the matter, that they have obtained sentence from the judges, declaring that this dispensing power is a right belonging to the Crown, as if it were in the power of the twelve judges to offer up the laws, rights, and liberties of the whole nation to the King, to be disposed of by him arbitrarily and at his pleasure, and expressly contrary to laws enacted for the security of the subjects.¹⁸⁴

In light of these and many other "evil practices" and "oppressions," William declared his intention: "Therefore it is, that we have thought fit to go over into England, and to carry over with us a force sufficient, by the blessing of God, to defend us from the violence of these evil counsellors."¹⁸⁵

In the name of religion and liberty, Burnet was also compelled to join William's armed resistance against James and his "evil counsellors." Burnet later wrote, "The prince desired me to go along with him as his chaplain, to which I very readily agreed."¹⁸⁶ Burnet continued, "For [I was] fully satisfied in my conscience that the undertaking was lawful and just and [I] had a considerable hand in advising the whole progress of it."¹⁸⁷ Elsewhere, in a "meditation on the impending expedition of 1688," Burnet wrote that he "heartily approved of the Prince's Declaration which was put in English by me."¹⁸⁸ Thus, on October 29, 1688, England's most outspoken advocate of passive obedience set sail with the Dutch in opposition to the government of King James II.

¹⁸⁴William III, *The Declaration of His Highness*, in *A Kingdom without a King*, 126.

¹⁸⁵William III, *The Declaration of His Highness*, in *A Kingdom without a King*, 148.

¹⁸⁶Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 3:288.

¹⁸⁷Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 3:288.

¹⁸⁸Burnet, "A Meditation on My Voyage for England," in Foxcroft, *Supplement*, 522.

CHAPTER 5

THE LANGUAGE OF PROVIDENCE ABUSED: GILBERT BURNET'S REVOLUTION RHETORIC, 1688–1715

Burnet on Providence and Passive Obedience

Prior to the Glorious Revolution, Burnet championed the doctrine of passive obedience. After William and the Dutch fleet landed in England, Burnet became the champion of the central doctrine of the Glorious Revolution—the doctrine of providence.

Burnet in the Revolution (1688)

As Burnet set sail with William of Orange's expeditionary force, an extraordinary puff of wind guided the Dutch armada safely to the shores of Torbay on November 5, 1688. In the years that followed 1688, this "Protestant Wind" would be interpreted by English Protestants as God's positive approval of William's cause. "The weather had indeed served the Protestant cause," Macaulay would later write with an historian's reserve.¹ But "some men of more piety than judgment fully believed the ordinary laws of nature to have been suspended for the preservation of the liberty and religion of England."² Regardless of one's interpretation of the winds (pietistic or otherwise), the extraordinary had certainly happened.

The wind had blown strong from the east while the Prince wished to sail down the Channel, had turned to the south when he wished to enter Torbay, had sunk to a

¹Thomas Babington Macaulay, *History of England From the Accession of James II* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1906), 2:243.

²Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:243-44.

calm during the disembarkation, and, as soon as disembarkation was complete, had risen to a storm, and had met the pursuers in the face.³

After the Dutch fleet landed in Torbay, Burnet immediately sought the Prince:

As soon as I landed, I made what haste I could to the place where the prince was; who took me heartily by the hand, and asked me, if I would not now believe predestination. I told him, I would never forget that providence of God, which had appeared so signally on this occasion.”⁴

Indeed, the “Protestant Wind” of 1688 profoundly altered Burnet’s theological mood:

I never found a disposition to superstition in my temper: I was rather inclined to be philosophical upon all occasions. Yet I must confess, that this strange ordering of the winds and season, just to change as our affairs required it could not but make deep impressions on me as well as on all that observed it. Those famous verses of Claudian seemed to be more applicable to the prince [i.e., William] than to him they were made on: *Heaven’s favourite, for whom the skies do fight, And all the winds conspire to guide thee right!*⁵

From this point forward, Burnet’s doctrine of passive obedience would be displaced by the revolutionary doctrine of providence.

By November 8, the Dutch had marched twenty miles north from Torbay to Exeter. In Exeter, Burnet was responsible to secure the support of the English clergy, for “much depended on the course which, at this great crisis, the clergy of the Church of England might take” and “the members of the Chapter of Exeter were the first who were

³Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:244; see also Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 3:309-13. Burnet also recorded a personal conversation with William of Orange from 1686: The States [of Holland] desired the prince [William] to suffer himself to be constantly attended on by a guard when he went abroad; with which he was not without some difficulty brought to comply. I fancied his belief of predestination made him more adventurous than was necessary. But he said as to that, he firmly believed a providence: for if he should let that go, all his religion would be much shaken: and he did not see, how providence could be certain, if all things did not arise out of the absolute will of God. I found those who had the charge of his education had taken more care to possess him with the Calvinistical notions of absolute decrees, than to guard him against the ill effects of those opinions in practice. (Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 3:124)

⁴Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 3:311.

⁵Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 3:312-13; emphasis added.

called upon to declare their sentiments.”⁶ Burnet requisitioned the Exeter cathedral and used it to rally support for William. By Burnet’s command, no one was permitted to pray for the newborn Prince of Wales; rather, “a solemn service” was “performed in honour of the safe arrival of the Prince [i.e., William].”⁷ William himself “repaired in military state to the Cathedral” and sat in the Bishop’s seat—“a stately throne rich with the carving of the fifteenth century.”⁸ Burnet stood below William and, in proper turn, stoked the fires of revolutionary fervor:

Burnet stood below [William]; and a great crowd of warriors and nobles appeared on the right hand and on the left. The singers, robed in white, sang the Te Deum. When the chaunt was over, Burnet read the Prince’s Declaration. . . . At the close Burnet cried in a loud voice, “God save the Prince of Orange!” and many fervent voices answered, “Amen.” On Sunday, the eleventh of November, Burnet preached before the Prince in the Cathedral, and dilated on the signal mercy vouchsafed by God to the English Church and nation.⁹

Burnet’s next public gesticulation against James occurred three weeks later at the Salisbury Cathedral. As public prayers were offered on James II’s behalf, Burnet purportedly “rose from his knees, sate down in his stall, and uttered some contemptuous noises which disturbed the devotions of the congregation.”¹⁰

In the weeks following Burnet’s public sneer, “new and unthought of characters of a favourable providence” continued to “watch over” William and his troop.¹¹ English deserters welcomed the Dutch invaders at such an alarming rate that

⁶Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:248.

⁷Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:248-49.

⁸Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:248-49.

⁹Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:248-49. The *London Gazette* from November 15, 1688, recorded, “Dr. Burnet read on Friday last the Prince of Orange’s Declaration in the Cathedral and Preached there also yesterday.”

¹⁰Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:283.

¹¹Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 3:312.

James II felt compelled for the sake of his own safety to flee England for France. Meanwhile, Burnet joined William and the Dutch troop as they marched virtually uncontested into London on December 18.

Once in London, the intrigues of the English Court required careful maneuvering—not only for William but also for Burnet. Burnet, for his part, maneuvered the political upheaval in London by employing his fluent pen in service of the Revolution. Burnet published so persistently during this time because he believed that the printed word wielded a unique power to persuade the English masses.¹² Thus, Burnet wrote countless tracts, sermons, private letters, and anonymous “reflections” from November of 1688 until William and Mary’s coronation on April 1689. Five of Burnet’s most influential contributions to Revolution literature during this time include the following (ordered chronologically): (1) *A Sermon Preached in the Chappel of St. James’s Before His Highness the Prince of Orange, The 23^d of December, 1688*, (2) *An Enquiry into the Present State of Affairs*, (3) *A Sermon Preached before the House of Commons, on the 31st of January, 1688 [sic], being the Thanksgiving-Day for the Deliverance of this Kingdom from Popery and Arbitrary Power*, (4) *A Sermon Preached at the Coronation of William III and Mary II King and Queen of England*, and 5) *A Pastoral Letter Writ by The Right Reverend Father in God Gilbert, Lord Bishop of Sarum, to The Clergy of his Diocess, Concerning The Paths of Allegiance and Supremacy to K. William and Q. Mary*. Each of these works will be examined with respect to the doctrines of passive obedience and providence.

Burnet’s revolution sermon (1688). Five days after arriving in London on December 18, 1688, Burnet was called upon to preach. Burnet seized upon the doctrine

¹²In a letter to Admiral Herbert, Burnet wrote, “The world is so made that it believes nothing but what it sees in print.” T. E. S. Clarke and H. C. Foxcroft, *The Life of Gilbert Burnet: Bishop of Salisbury* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907), 253.

of providence in order to immortalize William's revolution. "It is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes," Burnet declared from Psalm 118:23. Then he addressed those assembled in a tone of triumph,

Things do sometimes speak, and times call aloud; and as all men are before-hand with me, in the choice of this text, at least in applying it to the present, so that the amazing concurrence of Providences, which have conspired to hatch and bring forth, and perfect this extraordinary revolution, would lead one very naturally to use these words, even tho we had no such verse in Scripture; for we have before us a work, that seems to ourselves a dream, and that will appear to posterity as a fiction: a work about which providence has watched in so peculiar a manner, that a mind must be far gone into atheism, that can resist so full a conviction as this offers us in favour of that truth.¹³

Again, Burnet declared, "We can hardly forbear to look on a chain of unlookt for and unaccountable Providences, without a most sensible Joy."¹⁴ Among these "signal providences" were the "the Winds and Weather," which "seemed design'd only to make us apprehend the hand of Heaven."¹⁵ Burnet emphasized that the wind "executed its commission" in pushing the Dutch into Torbay, but then "changed immediately" into a "softness" that enabled the Dutch to disembark safely.¹⁶ Only at the appointed time did the winds turn back against the Royal Navy. These changing winds, according to Burnet's sermon, were "things so remarkable, that we are extream insensible if they make not deep Impressions on us."¹⁷

Burnet next considered "the application of Providence in the turning and bending the minds of Men."¹⁸ This "bending the minds of men," Burnet urged, was a

¹³Gilbert Burnet, *A Sermon Preached in the Chappel of St. James's Before His Highness the Prince of Orange, The 23^d of December, 1688*, 2nd ed. (London, 1689), 1.

¹⁴Burnet, *A Sermon Preached in the Chappel of St. James*, 10.

¹⁵Burnet, *A Sermon Preached in the Chappel of St. James*, 10.

¹⁶Burnet, *A Sermon Preached in the Chappel of St. James*, 11.

¹⁷Burnet, *A Sermon Preached in the Chappel of St. James*, 11.

¹⁸Burnet, *A Sermon Preached in the Chappel of St. James*, 11.

greater providence than even the winds; indeed, this was "a most immediate work of Heaven."¹⁹ But even the "bending the minds of men," as Burnet explained, was accomplished through secondary causes: "the precipitation and folly of our Persecutors in opening their ill designs so early, the Impudent breach of Faith, and the unrelenting Cruelty" which resulted in "many thousands of Witnesses" turning against James and his "bloody Religion" and his illegal "Repeal of Laws." All these, Burnet contended, occasioned a "chain of errors and violences" against English Law and against the Protestant religion.²⁰ Consequently, God gave over James and his evil counselors to "a Spirit of delusion" and placed a "cup of trembling and astonishment in their hands."²¹ This gift of "delusion" that was inflicted upon the enemies of true religion was, according to Burnet, a providence that led to "the alarming and awakening of the whole Nation, for the uniting of all that were so unhappily broken asunder before, and for ingaging all to center in what is now brought about."²² Again, Burnet pressed,

Why went they so fast and so barefac'd? Why grasp'd they at so much all at once? Why was the Hook so ill covered when the Bait was thrown out? Why was it that few were either so weak or so corrupt, but they have been so successful that they at last have set them right? In a word, all this blasting of Counsels, and defeating of their designs by their own means, was of God, and must be owned to be his doing.²³

According to Burnet, the self-destruction of James and his Court was the greater providence—the "Eminent Character of a hand of God in the whole matter."²⁴ "How

¹⁹Burnet, *A Sermon Preached in the Chappel of St. James*, 11.

²⁰Burnet, *A Sermon Preached in the Chappel of St. James*, 11-12.

²¹Burnet, *A Sermon Preached in the Chappel of St. James*, 12.

²²Burnet, *A Sermon Preached in the Chappel of St. James*, 12.

²³Burnet, *A Sermon Preached in the Chappel of St. James*, 13.

²⁴Burnet, *A Sermon Preached in the Chappel of St. James*, 13; emphasis original.

strangely did all this vanish?” Burnet asked, referring to James’ designs.²⁵ All of the evil plans of James and his evil counselors “vanished” by the Providence of God. By Burnet’s reckoning, “When all this is laid together, we are tempted not only to cry out, that this is the *Lord’s doing*, but that it is such a doing of his as is beyond any thing that is in all the Records of past Times; and is a Scene all of Wonder.”²⁶

At this point in the sermon, Burnet martialed his twofold argument from Providence and from Psalm 107 to insist upon several points of practical application. First, Burnet insisted that “the Lord’s doing” is “marvelous in itself.”²⁷ Moreover, because the Lord’s doing is marvelous in itself, Burnet reasoned, “it ought to be so *in our eyes*.”²⁸ Therefore, Burnet pressed his hearers to consider the present revolution as “marvelous” and return praise to God accordingly,

We ought to make such pauses in thinking on it, as may lead us up to adore and admire the great Author of it, in this his doing. We ought in a most profound prostration, to magnify the goodness of God to us in it: to him belongs the Glory of it, for his hand has wrought this Salvation for us. Some may mention their Chariots, and some their Horses, but we ought only to mention the name of the Lord our God. . . . Let us therefore ponder all these Providences of God so as to admire them, not only in a lazy and silent wonder, but in those true acts of Praise and Adoration.²⁹

Second, Burnet insisted that the true admirers of God’s “signal providences” in the present revolution should not impede the progress of the revolution whatsoever: “If this Work of God does possess us with that veneration which is due to it, we ought not to stop the course of it, till it has had its full effect.”³⁰ Third, Burnet pressed his hearers not to “conspire to defeat the ends of Providence” by “filthy” living and “wickedness without

²⁵Burnet, *A Sermon Preached in the Chappel of St. James*, 14.

²⁶Burnet, *A Sermon Preached in the Chappel of St. James*, 15; emphasis original.

²⁷Burnet, *A Sermon Preached in the Chappel of St. James*, 18.

²⁸Burnet, *A Sermon Preached in the Chappel of St. James*, 18; emphasis original.

²⁹Burnet, *A Sermon Preached in the Chappel of St. James*, 18, 20.

³⁰Burnet, *A Sermon Preached in the Chappel of St. James*, 20.

restraint.”³¹ In this vein, Burnet specifically mentioned rioting, drunkenness, and the neglect of true religion. Fourth, Burnet urged, “Let us resolve to be Christians” by a spirit of unity, by showing charity and compassion to one’s enemies, by not acting in an unruly and vindictive manner.³² And finally, Burnet concluded with a careful appeal for public support for William:

Upon the whole matter then, since God has wrought so extraordinary a deliverance for us, let us adore him, who is the true Author of it; and under him let us pay all the returns possible of Respect and Gratitude to that Blessed Instrument on whom he has laid so much Glory.³³

Burnet’s “enquiry” in 1689. After James fled to France, a Convention Parliament was summoned by William on December 29, 1688, and officially convened on January 22, 1689. The purpose of the Convention Parliament was to settle the Crown.³⁴ On January 21, 1689, Burnet distributed a paper entitled, *An Enquiry into the Present State of Affairs, and in particular, whether we owe Allegiance to the King in these Circumstances? and whether we are bound to treat with him, and to call him back*

³¹Burnet, *A Sermon Preached in the Chappel of St. James*, 23-24.

³²Burnet, *A Sermon Preached in the Chappel of St. James*, 27-31.

³³Burnet, *A Sermon Preached in the Chappel of St. James*, 32.

³⁴As James fled for France, he purportedly flung the Great Seal of England—that great “talismán” of government—into the Thames. Without the Great Seal, James hoped to throw all of England into a frenzy so that the Crown could not be settled, nor justice be administered (Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:275). History assures us, however, that the Great Seal was soon recovered from the bottom of the Thames by a local fisherman; thus, good English order was maintained. Whatever the case, Jacobites have since argued that the Convention Parliament after the Revolution was not properly authorized by the King of England; therefore, Jacobites have concluded that the proceedings of the Convention Parliament were illegal. Conversely, Williamites have insisted that the Convention Parliament was lawfully summoned by William, who acted as a Regent by the appointment of the House of Lords, which was a necessary consequence of James II’s abdication.

again, or not?³⁵ In this “enquiry,” Burnet concluded that the doctrine of nonresistance did not apply to the case of James II. Burnet argued that government, “which is founded on the Law of Nature,” is akin to “the Authority of a Father over his Children”:

If after a long course of rough and barbarous usage, a Father goes about to destroy his Children, they owe him no other regard, but that of a due care of his Person; for since their being was conveyed to them through him, they are for ever bound to preserve that Life which gave beginning to theirs; but as to their Service and Obedience, they are without doubt absolved, when a Father ceases to be a Father by becoming an Enemy. This is much more true with relation to every Form of Political Government, in which there is a mutual tye of Protection and Obedience.³⁶

At this point, Burnet cited Romans 13:1–7 before concluding,

A King’s deserting his People, and withdrawing both his Person and his Seals, by which the Peace, Justice and Order of the Nation are preserved, does certainly warrant them to look to their own safety and preservation; and when they are obliged to do this by ways and methods that are inconsistent with His Authority.³⁷

Burnet’s meaning in this passage was clearly understood: James II had deserted the English throne, had tossed the Great Seal of government into the Thames, and had forfeited his right to be obeyed. Therefore, Burnet concluded, “It seems plain, that our Allegiance being our tye to the King, according to the constitution of this Government, is . . . entirely dissolved.”³⁸ Moreover, Burnet now refused to countenance a mere Regency during James’ absence, since James had fully abdicated the throne.³⁹ As regarded the Oaths of Allegiance, Burnet maintained that all those who swore allegiance to James were absolved of their duty, for “if the King ceases to be King, by subverting our

³⁵Gilbert Burnet, *An Enquiry into the Present State of Affairs, and in particular, whether we Owe Allegiance to the King in these Circumstances? and whether we are bound to treat with him, and to call him back again, or not?* (London, 1689).

³⁶Burnet, *An Enquiry into the Present State of Affairs*, 3.

³⁷Burnet, *An Enquiry into the Present State of Affairs*, 5.

³⁸Burnet, *An Enquiry into the Present State of Affairs*, 6.

³⁹Burnet, *An Enquiry into the Present State of Affairs*, 7.

Constitution first, and deserting us next, then all our Oaths fall to the ground.”⁴⁰ Burnet decried the maxim “the king can do no wrong” because it was a “perverted” and unconstitutional maxim under the current circumstances.⁴¹ Next, Burnet moved to dismiss “all Enquiries into the Birth of the pretended Prince of Wales”; this maneuver was calculated to defeat any hereditary claim by James II’s “pretended” son and future heir to the English throne.⁴² Finally, Burnet seized the opportunity to remind the Convention Parliament of their threefold duty to dispense “with the narrow Notions of an unbounded Loyalty” to King James II, “to declare the Throne void; and that the King has fallen from all Right to it,” and “to state this Nation as a Protestant Kingdom, that is incompatible with Popery or a Popish King.”⁴³ With these and other such words, Burnet counselled the Convention Parliament towards open and decisive resistance against James II. Foxcroft suggests that Burnet’s influence was not lost on the Convention Parliament.

[Burnet’s] suggestive hints were not lost on the Convention, which met January 22. For on January 29 the majority in the Lower House submitted to the Peers its two famous Resolutions: I. That King James II has abdicated the Government, and that the throne is vacant. II. That a Popish King is found by experience incompatible with a Protestant Government.⁴⁴

Burnet’s sermon before the House of Commons (1689). After the House of the Commons presented their two-fold resolution, a “Thanksgiving-day for the Deliverance of this Kingdom from Popery and Arbitrary Power” was appointed. Burnet

⁴⁰Burnet, *An Enquiry into the Present State of Affairs*, 10. Moreover, Burnet insisted that the true “end and design of those Oaths was to secure us against the danger of Popery” (Burnet, *An Enquiry into the Present State of Affairs*, 9-10).

⁴¹Burnet, *An Enquiry into the Present State of Affairs*, 11.

⁴²Burnet, *An Enquiry into the Present State of Affairs*, 12.

⁴³Burnet, *An Enquiry into the Present State of Affairs*, 14, 16.

⁴⁴Clark and Foxcroft, *Life of Gilbert Burnet*, 262.

was asked to preach before the House of Commons. Burnet accepted the Commons' invitation to preach and selected Psalm 144:14 for the occasion: "Happy is that People that is in such a case: yea happy is that People whose God is the Lord."⁴⁵ Tailored to the occasion, Burnet's sermon celebrated the happy state of affairs in England, which could be duly attributed to the providence of God alone:

Who, I say, can look on all this without raising in himself all the just Expectations of every thing that is Great or Good? Or who can look back on those black Clouds that were hanging over our Heads, and that seemed charged with Storms and Thunders, and observe the present Calm, and consider the Steps of Providence, I had almost said the Prodigies and Miracles of Providence, that have attended our Deliverance, without letting his Heart run out into all the joyful expectations possible? You feel a great deal, and promise your selves a great deal more; and you are now in the right way to it, when you come with the Solemnities of Thanksgiving, to offer up your Acknowledgments to that Fountain of Life, to whom you owe this new Lease which he has granted you of your own.⁴⁶

With respect to William III, Burnet celebrated,

[God] can raise up an Instrument, even the man whom he has made strong for himself; and so animate, direct and conduct him, that he, with a small Force in opposition to a great and powerful Army, should yet find no Enemy, but overturn a mighty Empire, and that with so little confusion and disorder, not to say so little blood and destruction, that instead of Scenes of horror, all was Welcome and Acclamation; and this God has carried on so far, that we are now upon the point of seeing all end in an entire Settlement.⁴⁷

Burnet again attributed the happy state of affairs in England to God's "watch[ing] over them with so distinguishing a Providence."⁴⁸ Similar to the famous revolution sermon of December 23, 1688, Burnet concluded with an admonition to his fellow countrymen not only to acknowledge God's providential "deliverance," but also to acknowledge "the

⁴⁵Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the House of Commons, on the 31st of January, 1688, being the Thanksgiving-Day for the Deliverance of this Kingdom from Popery and Arbitrary Power, by His Highness the Prince of Orange's Means* (London, 1689), 1. This sermon title was wrongly dated 1688 by the publisher; Burnet preached this sermon in 1689.

⁴⁶Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the House of Commons*, 3-4.

⁴⁷Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the House of Commons*, 18-19.

⁴⁸Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the House of Commons*, 18.

happy instrument” of England’s “great salvation,”

In the last place, You ought to put such Marks of acknowledgment for this great Deliverance, both with relation to that God who has wrought it, and to the happy Instrument by whom he has wrought it, that there may be a frequent return of the full discharges of our gratitude. . . . Let us meditate a little on this great Salvation that he has wrought for us, and let us carry it on to those Glorious ends of settling our Religion, and delivering our Nation, not only from all Oppression and Injustice at present, but from the danger of falling under it for the future. And then let us celebrate with the highest Acknowledgments and the justest and gratefulest Returns possible, Him through whose means we enjoy our quiet, and you the liberty of this free and August Assembly.⁴⁹

Burnet’s sermon at the coronation of William and Mary (1689). Burnet was honored to preach the coronation of William III and Mary II at the Abbey-Church of Westminster on April 11, 1689. In this sermon, Burnet, of course, emphasized the role of providence in both abasing and establishing the “Greatest and Loftiest Monarchs.”⁵⁰ While providence figured into Burnet’s coronation homily, he mainly emphasized the great characters of the King and Queen. Burnet’s sermon was well-received and “greatly applauded.”⁵¹ Shortly thereafter, on Easter of 1689, Burnet was consecrated Bishop of Salisbury, and Burnet recorded the occasion of King William’s motion: “A few days after he was set on the throne, [King William] of his own motion named me to that see [of Salisbury]: and he did it in terms more obliging than usually fell from him.”⁵²

Burnet’s pastoral letter concerning allegiance (1689). Shortly after William and Mary’s coronation, major issues surrounding the new oaths of allegiance quickly became problematic, particularly for Anglican clergy who previously swore fealty to

⁴⁹Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the House of Commons*, 22-23.

⁵⁰Burnet, *A Sermon Preached at the Coronation of William III. and Mary II. King and Queen of England,—France, and Ireland, Defenders of the Faith; in the Abby-Church of Westminster, April 11. 1689* (London, 1689).

⁵¹Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:470. Macaulay also notes that Burnet’s coronation sermon “drew forth the loudest hums of the Commons” (Macaulay, *History of England*, 2:470).

⁵²Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 4:13.

James II. Some conscientious Anglican divines maintained scruples about swearing loyalty to William and Mary, especially with James II alive and deprived of the English throne. Burnet was, for many reasons, eager to see the clergy swear new oaths of allegiance to William and Mary. Burnet wanted the clergy of his diocese to serve the Williamite cause, and he also wanted the clergy of his diocese to set a good example of submission so that the parishioners of his diocese would also support the Williamite revolution. Thus, Burnet wrote a “pastoral letter” to the clergy of his diocese to address the issue of swearing allegiance to William III and Mary II.⁵³ In this letter, Burnet warned that the religious and political affairs in England were such that, if William’s cause was not established, then “Popish tyranny, an Irish conquest and massacre, and French barbarity and cruelty” would ensue.⁵⁴

Regarding the clergy’s scruples concerning the new oaths, Burnet unfurled a bundle of arguments in order “to justify the present settlement, as a thing right and lawful in itself” and in order to persuade “the clergy of his diocess” to swear allegiance to William and Mary.⁵⁵ Burnet wrote first that William and Mary were currently “in Possession of the Throne” and that “they protect us, and that we by living under their Protection, and enjoying the benefit of it, are therefore bound to make some Returns to them for it.”⁵⁶ Burnet next argued that it is “lawful” to swear oaths of allegiance: “A man may lawfully promise to do every thing which he may lawfully do; so that if it is lawful

⁵³Gilbert Burnet, *A Pastoral Letter Writ by The Right Reverend Father in God Gilbert, Lord Bishop of Sarum, to The Clergy of his Diocess, Concerning The Paths of Allegiance and Supremacy to K. William and Q. Mary* (London, 1689), 2. This publication was officially licensed on May 16, 1689.

⁵⁴Burnet, *A Pastoral Letter*, 4.

⁵⁵Burnet, *A Pastoral Letter*, 19.

⁵⁶Burnet, *A Pastoral Letter*, 5.

to obey the king, it is also lawful to promise to do it.”⁵⁷ Burnet next argued from a principle of conquest, and he urged that, even in Old Testament conquests, “People acquiesced always in the Possession; and the Prophets that were among them, never charged them with this, nor required them to return back to those Princes . . . which they had shaken off.”⁵⁸ Similarly, Burnet argued that the Apostle Paul insisted only upon a principle of submission to the powers that presently exist: “It is upon the same reason that St. Paul, writing to the Romans, declares in favour of *the Powers that were*; a form of speech not unlike ours, *of the King for the time being*, whom he calls the Ordinance of God, and he requires all Men to be subject to them.”⁵⁹ Burnet argued similarly for submission to present authorities from the precedent of church history:

It is clear from the whole history of the church, that the primitive Christians understood this to be the doctrine of Christ: for notwithstanding all the revolutions of the empire, that were often sealed with the blood of the Dethroned Emperour, they adhered still to possession.⁶⁰

Burnet advanced several other points of argumentation in support of swearing new oaths of allegiance to William and Mary before finally asserting,

Subjects are not only warranted, but required to enter into Associations and Oaths for that Effect. This is an Evidence, that by the Ancient Constitution of England, there was no such irresistible Authority in our Kings, as some have been inclin'd to imagine. But after all, if there be any who are so possess with their preconceived Opinions, that they either cannot lay them down, or will not confess that they have been mistaken in their Notions of Politicks, these ought to be very sure that they are

⁵⁷Burnet, *A Pastoral Letter*, 5.

⁵⁸Burnet, *A Pastoral Letter*, 7-8. This perspective is known as *de facto* theory as opposed to *de jure* theory. William and Mary were recognized (not universally and not without controversy) as *de facto* rulers. They were rulers by conquest—the Glorious Revolution being a *fait accompli*. This terminology is not used by Burnet; however, this terminology is used extensively by later historians of the period. See, for example, J. P. Kenyon, “The Measures of Submission: The Triumph of *de facto* Theory,” in *Revolution Principles*: 21-34.

⁵⁹Burnet, *A Pastoral Letter*, 11; emphasis original.

⁶⁰Burnet, *A Pastoral Letter*, 13.

in the Right, before they will adventure, as far as in them lies, to undermine and shake the present Constitution.⁶¹

In the end, Burnet's pastoral letter "actually satisfied, in a greater or less degree, the majority of scrupulous consciences" in his diocese.⁶²

Burnet after the Revolution (1689–1702)

After the Revolution, praise for Burnet quickly turned to criticism from all major parties, including the Jacobites, the Tories, the Whigs, the Trimmers,⁶³ and even the English Crown. To the Jacobites, Burnet was a "time-serving hypocrite" who was most assuredly going to hell for his treachery.⁶⁴ To the Tories, Burnet was "a voluntary renegade from the principle of Passive obedience."⁶⁵ Accordingly, Burnet commented on his inability to "gain" with the Tories after the Revolution:

I find the high sort of churchmen cannot be gained; till the toleration is broke and a persecution of dissenters is set on foot, they will still conclude that the church of England is persecuted or at best neglected: and they cannot with any patience bear a man that has declared himself so openly against those things as I have done; and yet by the pains I take to gain upon that party, I have fallen under the displeasure of the other party.⁶⁶

Eminent among the Tories was the pious William Sancroft, Archbishop of Canterbury,

⁶¹Burnet, *A Pastoral Letter*, 28.

⁶²Clark and Foxcroft, *Life of Gilbert Burnet*, 273.

⁶³The Trimmer party boasted a bipartisan approach to English politics; they "trimmed" Whig and Tory extremes.

⁶⁴See, for example, "Bishop Burnet's Descent into Hell," in James Hogg, *The Jacobite Relics of Scotland; being the Songs, Airs, and Legends, of the House of Stuart* (Edinburgh, 1819): 72-73. For "time-serving hypocrite," see Hogg, *The Jacobite Relics of Scotland*, 254. Cf. also Charles Leslie, *Tempora mutantur, or, The great change from 73 to 93 in the travels of a professor of theology at Glasgow, from the primitive and Episcopal loyalty, through Italy, Geneva, &c. to the deposing doctrine, under papistico-phanatico-prelatice colours at Salisbury* (London, 1694). Leslie was an Anglican divine who refused to swear allegiance to William III; Leslie believes that Burnet was a traitor to his own convictions.

⁶⁵Clark and Foxcroft, *Life of Gilbert Burnet*, 270.

⁶⁶Burnet, "Burnet's Own Experience," in Foxcroft, *Supplement*, 387.

who refused to endorse Burnet's consecration. Finally, upon threat of prebend, Sancroft reluctantly allowed Burnet to be consecrated to the bishopric by one of his subordinates. Among the Whigs, Burnet acknowledged that he was "hated" because he "went not into their notions and passions" and was a late-comer to "resistance principles."⁶⁷ George Savile was the chief spokesman for the Trimmers in the aftermath of the Revolution. But even Savile, who was the Marquis of Halifax, regularly criticized Burnet. "Burnett himself was the favourite butt of the Marquis," Foxcroft observed.⁶⁸ But Savile's most severe criticism of Burnet, expressed on the heels of the Revolution, was pointed not at Burnet's politics but at Burnet's character:

If you Clergymen minded nothing but to lead good lives yourselves, and to preach good lives to others your power would be so great by being grounded on virtue, that you could easily prevent misadministration in Kingdoms, you would be a terror to ill princes, and the support of good ones; But your meddling with politicks and changing opinions to serve your turn, brings a scandal upon your profession and Religion itself is a sufferer by it.⁶⁹

Even William III regarded Burnet as a "dangerous man" who lacked "principles."

Humorously, in a moment of frustration, William once referred to Burnet as "een rechte

⁶⁷Burnet later wrote,

[It is] somewhat extraordinary that I, who perhaps was the greatest assertor of public liberty, from my first setting out of any writer in the age, should be so severely treated as an enemy to it. But the truth was the Tories never like me, and the Whigs hated me because I went not into their notions and passions; but even this and worse things that may happen to me shall not, I hope, be able to make me depart from moderate principles and the just asserting the liberty of mankind. (Foxcroft, *Supplement*, 387)

⁶⁸H. C. Foxcroft, *The Life and Letters of Sir George Savile, Bart.* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1898), 110. Additionally, Lord Dartmouth noted, "It is notoriously known, that the marquis, after he sat with [Burnet] in the house of lords, made it his constant diversion to turn him and all he said into ridicule; and his son, the last marquis, told me, in his private conversation he always spoke of [Burnet] with the utmost contempt" (Thomas Burnet, "The Life of the Author," in Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 6:322). Foxcroft wrote of one incident where Savile ridiculed Burnet in a "cruel elaboration that convulsed even William with laughter" (Clark and Foxcroft, *Life of Gilbert Burnet*, 317). Elsewhere, Foxcroft noted that it was "Burnet's apparent change of front on the non-resistance question" that had "inspired Lord Halifax with distrust" (Clark and Foxcroft, *Life of Gilbert Burnet*, 271).

⁶⁹Foxcroft, *Life and Letters of Sir George Savile*, 198.

Tartuffe,” which has been loosely translated as “a regular Pecksniff.”⁷⁰

In spite of such criticism, Burnet remained a seminal figure of both political and ecclesiastical importance in William’s resettled court. Burnet would continue to write sermons, letters, and “reflections” during William’s reign—many of which addressed the doctrines of passive obedience and providence.⁷¹ Of the accessible publications that addressed the doctrines of passive obedience and providence in the years following the Revolution,⁷² the most important are these: (1) *A Sermon Preached before the House of Peers in the Abbey of Westminster, on the 5th of November, 1689*, (2) *A Sermon Preached before the King & Queen, At White-Hall, On Christmas-Day, 1689*, (3) *A Sermon Preached before the King and Queen, at White-Hall, On the 19th Day of October, 1690*, (4) *A Sermon Preached at White-Hall, Before the King and Queen, On the 29th of April, 1691, Being The Fast-Day*, (5) *A Sermon Preached at White-Hall, on the 26thh of Novemb., 1691*, (6) *A Sermon Preached before the Queen at White-Hall, On the 29th. of May, 1694, being the Anniversary of King Charles II, His Birth and Restauration*, (7) *A Sermon Preached at the Funeral of the Most Reverend Father in God John by the Divine Providence, Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, Primate and Metropolitan of all England*, (8) *Some Discourses upon Dr. Burnet and Dr. Tillotson; Occasions by the Late Funeral Sermon of the Former upon the Later*,⁷³ (9) *Reflections upon a Pamphlet Entitled, Some Discourses upon Dr. Burnet and Dr. Tillotson*,

⁷⁰Foxcroft, *Life and Letters of Sir George Savile*, 222.

⁷¹William III reigned from 1689–1702; Mary II died in 1694.

⁷²I have not been able to access the anonymously published work attributed to Burnet entitled, *The Revolution Vindicated*. Though published anonymously, Foxcroft believes that *The Revolution Vindicated* was written by Burnet. Moreover, Foxcroft notes that this work was “only published in *State Tracts*, 1705, as an addendum, 3:694-728” (Clark and Foxcroft, *Life of Gilbert Burnet*, 545). If Burnet’s authorship could be reasonably established, then *The Revolution Vindicated* would be valuable to this research project.

⁷³This treatise is actually a fiery invective against Gilbert Burnet written by Charles Hickee.

Occasioned by the Late Funeral Sermon of the Former upon the Later, (10) A Sermon Preached before the King, At Whitehall, On the Second of December, 1697, Being the Day of Thanksgiving for the Peace, and (11) The First Sermon Preached before the Queen, upon her Accession to the Throne, at St James's Chappel in Lent, on the 15th Day of March, 1701–2. More works could be adduced, but these are sufficient to confirm Burnet's understanding and use of the doctrines of passive obedience and providence during this time.

Burnet's sermon at Westminster Abbey (1689). On November 5, 1689—the anniversary of the Dutch Expedition—Burnet preached a thanksgiving sermon in the Abbey of Westminster from Micah 6:5, “O my People, remember now what Balak King of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the Son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal, that ye may know the Righteousness of the Lord.”⁷⁴ In this sermon, Burnet calls upon the House of Peers to “reflect on what is past” and consider “not only the visible Blessings of God” but also “the secret methods, as well as the hidden designs of Providence.”⁷⁵ In this thanksgiving sermon, Burnet provided insight into the reason for God's special providence towards the English:

It may be affirmed without any arrogant preferring our own Nation to others, or any partiality for our selves, in imagining that we are God's favourite People; that within this last Age (or, if we will carry up the matter to so blessed a Period as the Reformation, that ever since that time) we have had as many of the distinguishing Characters of the Iewish Nation upon us.⁷⁶

In contrast to England's Protestant religion and government, Burnet enlarged on the situation in France as popish and tyrannical:

⁷⁴Gilbert Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the House of Peers in the Abbey of Westminster, on the 5th of November, 1689* (London, 1689).

⁷⁵ Burnet, *Sermon Preached before the House of Peers*, 2.

⁷⁶Burnet, *Sermon Preached before the House of Peers*, 2.

And when I have named *France*, I have said all that is necessary to give you a Compleat Idea of the Blackest Tyranny over Men's Consciences, Persons, and Estates, that can possibly be imagined, where every Thing that the Subject possesses is at the Mercy of a boundless Power, and of a Severity that has no mixtures either of Truth or Goodness to govern or allay it; and by which Subjects are treated with as much Cruelty, as Enemies are with Barbarity. This is a short view of that from which we are now a second time delivered. I need not enlarge on the particular Characters of the Hand of God in our Deliverance.⁷⁷

England's deliverance from popery and tyranny, according to Burnet, could only be attributed to "the Hand of God," which Burnet described as God's "watchful providence."⁷⁸ Finally, Burnet summoned his peers to be at peace with God and to stand in unity with one another:

For if we are at peace with God, and united at Home, we may assure our selves, that the course of Blessings which has hitherto followed Him, whom God in his Providence has set over us, shall not be interrupted but by a glorious Progress of Triumphs it shall be carried on, till both the Balak that is now set on our Destruction, shall fall before him, and those Balaams that divine for her, and that prophesy falsly, be put to confusion: Which God of his great Mercy grant, for the glory of his great Name, through Jesus Christ. Amen.⁷⁹

Burnet's sermon on Christmas day (1689). Burnet's enthusiasm for the Revolution continued to run high through the end of 1689. Burnet was scheduled to preach before King William and Queen Mary at Whitehall on Christmas Day.⁸⁰ Not surprisingly, Burnet celebrated the Revolution using the language of providence. Burnet rejoiced in the "Methods of God's Providence," which issued forth in a "deliverance" that would "prove a double blessing" to England and to Europe.⁸¹ By "deliverance," of

⁷⁷Burnet, *Sermon Preached before the House of Peers*, 29; emphasis original.

⁷⁸Burnet, *Sermon Preached before the House of Peers*, 29.

⁷⁹Burnet, *Sermon Preached before the House of Peers*, 31-32.

⁸⁰Gilbert Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the King & Queen, At White-Hall, on Christmas-Day, 1689* (London, 1690).

⁸¹Burnet, *Sermon Preached before the King & Queen . . . Christmas-Day, 1689*, 29.

course, Burnet was referring to the revolution and the deliverance from a popish tyranny by the grace of God. Yet, Burnet's optimism ran even higher: Burnet declared that "the Eyes of all the World are upon us" and that "all Europe expects from hence, a Deliverance from a Tyranny" in "Matters of Religion."⁸² The best way to commend the late Revolution in the eyes of England and all of Europe, according to Burnet, was through a personal religious reformation in the lives of individual Englishmen. Thus, he urges "in conclusion" that "the effects of so great a Revolution, should have been a visible Reformation among all Ranks and Conditions of People" so that individual Englishmen and Englishwomen would not be "as bad as ever in all respects" and that "vices of all sorts" would not "have their free course among us."⁸³ Thus, on Christmas Day of 1689, Burnet leveraged the providence of God to celebrate the Glorious Revolution and to urge a reformation of manners in England.

Burnet's sermon at Whitehall (1690). On October 19, 1690 Burnet preached a "thanksgiving" sermon before King William and Queen Mary in honor of "His Majesties preservation and success in Ireland."⁸⁴ In this sermon, Burnet celebrated several instances of providence, especially those instances of providence that involved "revolutions of states and empires" when "the Winds and Seasons, and the tempers of mens minds" are so unanimously directed "by the finger of God"—themes reminiscent of Burnet's January 23 sermon from 1688.⁸⁵ Burnet declared in 1690:

⁸²Burnet, *Sermon Preached before the King & Queen . . . Christmas-Day, 1689*, 34.

⁸³Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the King & Queen . . . Christmas-Day, 1689*, 34.

⁸⁴Gilbert Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the King and Queen, at White-Hall, On the 19th Day of October, 1690. Being The Day of Thanksgiving, for His Majesties Preservation and Success in Ireland* (London, 1690).

⁸⁵Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the King and Queen . . . On the 19th Day of October, 1690*, 8-9.

There are . . . solemn Occasions, in which some second causes are raised above their own pitch, and are animated beyond the ordinary rate; and others are at the same time as far depressed below themselves, the Spirits of the One abating, as much as those of the Other are elevated. This has never appeared with more eminent Characters than in the Revolutions of States and Empires, in which both the course of Natural Agents, the Winds and Seasons, and the tempers of mens minds, seem to have been managed by such a direction, that not only every thing, but every circumstance has co-operated to carry on Great Designs in such a Conjunction, that those who observe them with due attention, are forced on many occasions to cry out, *This is the finger of God! This is the Lord's doing!* And we may the more certainly conclude, that such a Systeme of things is the effect of a special and directing Providence, when the tendency of it is to advance some Design in which the Honour of God is more particularly concerned.⁸⁶

Next, Burnet tied such instances of providence to the reign of William:

We have seen a Prince, born indeed to have a rank among Sovereigns. . . . We have seen [him] raised from a Plant that seemed to rise out of a dry ground, to be a Great Tree, under whose Shade all the Beasts of the Field come for shelter, and in whose Boughs all the Fowls of the Air come now to lodge. It is this very day two full years since he first set to Sea, to calm our Storms. The beginning was rough and inauspicious; yet even that seemed to be intended only to those about Him a Lesson which He had long before well learnt, of observing Providence, and depending upon it. Since that time, fair Winds, good Seasons, prosperous Undertakings, happy Discoveries, Success and Victory, seem to have been chained to Him, and bound to follow Him; and now He has not only the Necks of His Enemies, but the Hearts of all His People, as well as the Hopes of all Europe fastned on him.⁸⁷

Referring to William III as “the David of the Day,” Burnet again enlarged on the theme of providence:

So much of the David in my Text, which leads me to say somewhat of the David of the Day. Is it nothing to you all, that see and hear the signal steps of Providence, that have so gloriously watched over, and conducted this our David? I reckon not among the greatest of these, his being raised up to a Throne of such high Dignity among the Kingdoms of the Earth, by a Title, that, let ungrateful men say what they will, has more both from God and man in it, than any the World has seen for many Ages. But Kingdoms and Crowns are so distributed in the World according to the secret Designs of Providence, that this singly is but an ordinary Blessing, and given in common to him with other Crowned Heads. To be a Deliverer of Mankind, a Preserver of Religion, a Fence against Tyranny and Cruelty; to have for his first Essay saved his own Countrey from utter ruine, when it seemed to be in its last Agonies; and to have not only resisted, but beat back a mighty Torrent that swept every thing before it; to have stopt the blackest Designs that were formed against

⁸⁶Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the King and Queen . . . On the 19th Day of October, 1690*, 6-9; emphasis original.

⁸⁷Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the King and Queen . . . On the 19th Day of October, 1690*, 16-17.

Religion and Liberty both there and here; for the preserving the United Provinces, and their Religion and Government, was at that time likewise the saving this Church and Nation; so soon did he begin to be a Deliverer to us: this, perhaps, was not then known to every one; but we do now all know, that we were to have been the second Sacrifice; All this, I say, one should think was Greatness and Glory enough to have fallen to any one mans share. But that a reserve of Blessings should yet be kept in store for the same Person, is a peculiar Favour of Heaven; and shews us, That this is the man whom God delights to honour, and whom he has made strong for himself.⁸⁸

Finally, Burnet declared that “providence” had acted so decisively on William III’s behalf that “posterity” would be tempted to disbelieve the historical record as the mere “contrivances” of a “happy imagination”:

The Winds and Seasons, the Courage and Fidelity of all about him, the feeble Counsels and Conduct of the Enemy, conspired of his side; but above all, *the Watchfulness of Providence shewed itself in Instances that Posterity will be tempted to think the Contrivances of a happy Imagination to beautify our History.* But Invention could hardly be so bold or so fruitful, as to represent a Prince just in the Eve of a Day, upon which not only the Security of his Throne, but that which to a Mind like his is much more valuable, the Preservation and Happiness of his People depended.⁸⁹

Thus, Burnet continued to use the doctrine of providence to celebrate and support William III in 1690.

Burnet’s sermon at Whitehall (April, 1691). Burnet preached twice before King William and Queen Mary in 1691. On the first occasion (April 29, 1691), Burnet preached at Whitehall on a “Fast-Day.”⁹⁰ In this sermon, Burnet addressed the doctrine of providence, and he urged that “A Godly man is he that does so firmly believe, that God by his Providence watches over all things.”⁹¹ Moreover, Burnet urged that the godly man “does in all his ways resign himself up to his Will, and submits to every thing that

⁸⁸Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the King and Queen . . . On the 19th Day of October, 1690*, 18-20.

⁸⁹Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the King and Queen . . . On the 19th Day of October, 1690*, 21-22; emphasis added.

⁹⁰Gilbert Burnet, *A Sermon Preached at White-Hall, Before the King and Queen, On the 29th of April, 1691* (London, 1691).

⁹¹Burnet, *A Sermon Preached at White-Hall . . . On the 29th of April, 1691*, 6.

comes to him from that hand.”⁹² For application, Burnet pressed his hearers with this question: “Do we acknowledge his Providence, depend upon it, and in all things submit to it?”⁹³ Burnet’s main theme in this sermon was the promotion of “vertue” at the “expençe of vice.”⁹⁴ Burnet spoke of the constitution of England as being “fortified by religion,” and only briefly did Burnet connect the themes of “vertue” to William’s revolution and William’s ongoing war efforts. Virtue, according to Burnet, was the duty of those who remained at home during wartime. Thus, Burnet pressed, “Can we be indifferent, when no less than the Destruction of our Country, the Loss of our Religion, and the Ruin of the whole Reformed Side all Europe over, is the Judgment which threatens us?”⁹⁵ Thus, the doctrine of providence was wielded in a unique, but no less political, manner in this sermon. Admittedly, Burnet’s use of providence in order to promote virtue represents one of Burnet’s more noble use of the doctrine in the aftermath of the Revolution of 1688.

Burnet’s sermon at Whitehall (November, 1691). Burnet next preached before King William and Queen Mary on November 26, 1691, on a “Thanksgiving Day” for the “preservation” of King William’s life and the “reduction” of Ireland.⁹⁶ In this sermon, Burnet’s primary goal was “to celebrate an entire deliverance from all [England’s] Enemies; a Peace abroad as well as we have it now at home.”⁹⁷ Burnet also

⁹²Burnet, *A Sermon Preached at White-Hall . . . On the 29th of April, 1691*, 7.

⁹³Burnet, *A Sermon Preached at White-Hall . . . On the 29th of April, 1691*, 16.

⁹⁴Burnet, *A Sermon Preached at White-Hall . . . On the 29th of April, 1691*, 21.

⁹⁵Burnet, *A Sermon Preached at White-Hall . . . On the 29th of April, 1691*, 28.

⁹⁶Gilbert Burnet, *A Sermon Preached at White-Hall, On the 26th of Novemb., 1691, being the Thanksgiving-Day for The Preservation of the King, and The Reduction of Ireland* (London, 1691).

⁹⁷Burnet, *A Sermon Preached at White-Hall, On the 26th of Novemb., 1691*, 7.

used this sermon to continue his efforts at moral reform in England, and he leveraged both the doctrine of providence and the recent victories in Ireland to urge moral reform.

Accordingly, Burnet opened with these words:

There is no properer nor usefuller way of praising God for the repeated Blessings with which he Crowns every Year, and by which he is establishing and perfecting that great Deliverance which he wrought for us Three Years ago, than to observe the dependance of these blessings upon the following of those Rules which he himself has prescribed: By this, we are preserved from the false opinion of a partiality of the Divine Providence towards our selves or others; or the supposing that it will still favour us, let us be or do what we please. And by this we are taught, that we ought not to expect the continuance of Gods Favour to us, any longer than we continue true to those Laws and Rules that he has given us.⁹⁸

William's personal involvement in the war in Ireland, as well as the many Jacobite threats against the King's person, exposed him to constant danger. Despite regular these dangers, Burnet considered how God's "watchful providence" had secured William III's life:

We have had many Instances, in every season, and in both Elements, how watchful Providence has been about that Life, that secures all ours, and renders them comfortable and happy to us: had it not been for this, the second Gunpowder Plot had proved as fatal as the first was intended to be. In defeating first the good nature of the discoverer, and the sagacity of the Prince had their share, but here Providence interposed without an Instrument: The train was fired and had its first effect, but the invisible direction appeared in that Critical Minute next to a Miracle, the dismal Treachery was defeated, and the Traytors were discovered.⁹⁹

Finally, Burnet closed:

May Religion and Vertue prevail and flourish, and the Church be established under them! May they ever *preserve Mercy and Truth*, that so they may be ever *preserved*, and *their Throne always upheld by them!* May Justice and Righteousness ever flow from them, and such an Abundance of Peace, as may make us both safe and rich, great and happy under their Protection: so that both we and all round about us, when we reflect on the 88 of this Age, may almost forget the 88 of the former, and that our second *5th of November* may wear out the Remembrance of the *1st*. And to conclude all, for I can rise no higher; May

⁹⁸Burnet, *A Sermon Preached at White-Hall, On the 26th of Novemb., 1691*, 1.

⁹⁹Burnet, *A Sermon Preached at White-Hall, On the 26th of Novemb., 1691*, 7-8.

the *Happy and Glorious Days of Queen Elizabeth* be darkened and eclipsed by the more *Happy and more Glorious Reign of KING WILLIAM and QUEEN MARY*.¹⁰⁰

Burnet's sermon at Whitehall (1694). On May 29, 1694, Burnet preached before Queen Mary at Whitehall to commemorate the memory and “martyrdom” of King Charles II.¹⁰¹ Burnet opened by stating the goal of his commemoration sermon:

The chief design of the Anniversaries, as well as of the Rituals instituted by Moses, was to oblige the Jewish Nation frequently to reflect upon the wonderful Characters of God's love and care of them, and the Signal Miracles wrought for their Preservation and Deliverance.¹⁰²

Having opened with these general terms, Burnet next enlarged on the theme of providence:

In the words of my Text, we have, in short, the chief Duty of those and all other Festivities: They tend to raise our Minds towards God, to acknowledge and adore his Providence, Remember his Marvellous Works that he hath done his Wonders: Some have thought that one of these works belongs to the Miracles that were wrought for that People, and that the other belongs to those Happy Providences that watched over them, and conducted them.¹⁰³

Thus, Burnet explained that “the right end, and true use of Anniversaries” was “to have the Impressions of Gods governing the World infix'd deeply upon us; by considering the more eminent steps of his Providence” and the “Methods of Providence” and the “watchful providence” of God and the “extraordinary steps of providence” and the “more signal providences” that orders the lives of everyone in this world.¹⁰⁴

Remarkably, in this sermon, Burnet critiqued those who refuse to believe in

¹⁰⁰Burnet, *A Sermon Preached at White-Hall, On the 26th of Novemb., 1691*, 34-35; emphasis original.

¹⁰¹Gilbert Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the Queen at White-Hall, On the 29th. of May, 1694, being the Anniversary of King Charles II, His Birth and Restauration* (London, 1694).

¹⁰²Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the Queen . . . On the 29th. of May, 1694*, 1.

¹⁰³Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the Queen . . . On the 29th. of May, 1694*, 3.

¹⁰⁴Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the Queen . . . On the 29th. of May, 1694*, 4-5, *passim*.

providence as having no religion: “I will not enter here upon that deep, but mysterious, and often abused Argument of Providence. I suppose you do all believe it; for indeed if you believe it not, you believe nothing in Religion, to any purpose.”¹⁰⁵ To this, Burnet added, “A man that does not believe [in] Providence has no support from a better prospect in his ill circumstances.”¹⁰⁶

Burnet proceeded from general reflections on providence to speak directly of the English Civil War and the ill-fated regicide of Charles I. Burnet believed that, on that “black and fatal 30th of January,” London spilled “sacred and royal blood” and set up an “Idol King” in Charles’ stead.¹⁰⁷ Yet, by an “over-ruling providence,” God reestablished the royal family to power.¹⁰⁸ Accordingly, England could boast the “stamp of the goodness and mercy of Providence” because she was no longer suffering from “the extreams of lawless Tyranny on the one hand, and of wild and Enthusiastical Frenies, on the other.”¹⁰⁹ Rather, according to Burnet, England was “restored” to a “Government that is much the happiest of any now in the World, and is so particularly fitted for us, that nothing else could make us either safe or happy.”¹¹⁰ Finally, and true to form, Burnet concluded with the following politico-religious plea:

Let us conclude all with our most earnest praises to God for those who do now fill the *Throne*, with so peculiar a grace. May they live and prosper: may their Reign be long and Glorious, that we may still have more and more reason to *remember the marvellous works that God has wrought for us, by their means: his wonders in*

¹⁰⁵Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the Queen . . . On the 29th. of May, 1694*, 7-9, *passim*.

¹⁰⁶Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the Queen . . . On the 29th. of May, 1694*, 7.

¹⁰⁷Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the Queen . . . On the 29th. of May, 1694*, 15, 19, *passim*.

¹⁰⁸Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the Queen . . . On the 29th. of May, 1694*, 19.

¹⁰⁹Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the Queen . . . On the 29th. of May, 1694*, 20.

¹¹⁰Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the Queen . . . On the 29th. of May, 1694*, 20; emphasis original.

them, *and the judgments of his mouth*, secured to us by them. May we live so worthy of them, that we may long, long enjoy them, with all the accessions of Plenty and Peace. *Amen, Amen.*¹¹¹

Burnet's sermon at Archbishop Tillotson's funeral (1694). Controversy exploded in 1694 as Burnet preached John Tillotson's funeral on November 30, 1694, from 2 Timothy 4:7, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the Faith."¹¹² As Burnet preached, he "was overcome by so many tender recollections that, in the midst of his discourse, he paused and burst into tears, while a loud moan of sorrow rose from the whole auditory."¹¹³ With the loss of Tillotson, Burnet contended that "both Church and State have lost the Patern."¹¹⁴ Burnet enlarged on the example that the Apostle Paul set for the early church, and Burnet suggested that Tillotson had likewise set the great example for England through his teachings and piety.¹¹⁵ Burnet also expressed and affirmed Tillotson's view of the late Revolution:

I must now give you the last Scene of the Struglings thro' which this holy Man past, but out of which he is now escaped. He did truly rejoyce in the happy Deliverance of these Nations: he could not but observe those amasing Steps of Providence that accompanied it, and hoped it was a beginning to great Blessings that were to follow it.¹¹⁶

Burnet next extolled the "great judgment" of the King and Queen for appointing Tillotson as the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Burnet affirmed that Tillotson was "the fittest

¹¹¹Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the Queen . . . On the 29th. of May, 1694*, 28.

¹¹²Gilbert Burnet, *A Sermon Preached at the Funeral of the Most Reverend Father in God John by the Divine Providence, Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, Primate and Metropolitan of all England* (London, 1694).

¹¹³Macaulay, *History of England*, 4:111.

¹¹⁴Burnet, *A Sermon Preached at the Funeral of the Most Reverend Father in God*, 1.

¹¹⁵Burnet, *A Sermon Preached at the Funeral of the Most Reverend Father in God*, 2-20.

¹¹⁶Burnet, *A Sermon Preached at the Funeral of the Most Reverend Father in God*, 21.

person to steer this Church.”¹¹⁷ Burnet also detailed the manner in which Tillotson served the Church of England, even while suffering the “calumnies” and “censures” of so many enemies.¹¹⁸ Despite all such difficulties, Burnet declared,

[Tillotson] fought the good fight. He finished his course; he ran the race that was set before him with patience, as he finished it with joy. He was a Pattern in all respects both in what he did, and in what he suffered; in his Personal Department as a Christian, and in his Labours as an Apostle.¹¹⁹

Moreover, since Tillotson had “finished his course,” Burnet assured his hearers, “He has received that Crown of Righteousness” from “the hands of the Righteous Judge” who “knew the sincerity of his Heart, and the Integrity of his Life,”¹²⁰ and “he is now at rest, got beyond the strife of Tongues and the Pride of Man, into those Regions of Peace and Blessedness.”¹²¹ Finally, Burnet appealed to his hearers, “May we all who stay behind, learn so much from what we saw in him, and heard from him.”

Charles Hickeys’ discourse against Burnet (1695). Burnet’s funeral sermon in honor of Tillotson sparked outrage among several enemies of the Revolution, including George Hickeys, an English divine who responded to Burnet’s funeral sermon with a treatise entitled, *Some Discourses upon Dr. Burnet and Dr. Tillotson; Occasions by the Late Funeral Sermon of the Former upon the Later*. Hickeys was the Dean of Worcester under James II, and he refused to take the Oath of Allegiance to William III and Mary II. Hickeys was also a staunch advocate of the doctrine of passive obedience. Hickeys, perceiving that Burnet had compromised his convictions regarding passive obedience by

¹¹⁷Burnet, *A Sermon Preached at the Funeral of the Most Reverend Father in God*, 23.

¹¹⁸Burnet, *A Sermon Preached at the Funeral of the Most Reverend Father in God*, 23.

¹¹⁹Burnet, *A Sermon Preached at the Funeral of the Most Reverend Father in God*, 8.

¹²⁰Burnet, *A Sermon Preached at the Funeral of the Most Reverend Father in God*, 36.

¹²¹Burnet, *A Sermon Preached at the Funeral of the Most Reverend Father in God*, 36.

joining the resistance against James II, severely derided Burnet in print. In fact, Hickes' stated goal for writing *Some Discourse* was to denounce Burnet as a prevaricator "because he hath so contradicted himself" in "the most serious parts of his own writings."¹²² Hickes wrote,

[He] is so apt to write his own fancys and inventions for truth, and to write with biass and partiality to serve a turn; to prevaricate and play tricks with his own and other mens work; to let himself be transported with passion, which hinders him from writing in cool blood.¹²³

One of the challenges that Hickes raised against Burnet's integrity was related to the doctrine of passive obedience or "nonresistance."¹²⁴ Through careful research, Hickes discovered a discrepancy in a biography that Burnet wrote back in 1685 entitled, *The Life of William Bedell*. Burnet admired Bedell and wrote favorably of him. However, Bedell wrote sympathetically about the doctrine of resistance. In 1685, Burnet was in tenuous standing with the English Court of Charles II, and he wanted to distance himself from Bedell's personal views of resistance, so Burnet included a marginal note in his *Life of William Bedell*, which read: "This *Passage* above, is to be considered as a *Relation*, not as the Authors Opinion: But yet for fear of taking it by the wrong Handle, the Reader is desired to take notice; That a Subject's resisting his Prince in any cause whatsoever, is Unlawful, and Impious."¹²⁵ Subsequent editions of *The Life of William*

¹²²Charles Hickes, *Some Discourses upon Dr. Burnet and Dr. Tillotson; Occasions by the Late Funeral Sermon of the Former upon the Later* (London, 1695), 4.

¹²³Hickes, *Some Discourses upon Dr. Burnet*, 4.

¹²⁴In a widely read publication from 1683, Hickes explained that the "Gospell requires Passive Obedience, [which] is but another name for Non-resistance" (George Hickes, *Jovian, or, An answer to Julian the Apostate by a minister of London* [London, 1683], 203). Hickes also explained that passive obedience was fundamental to the "common laws of sovereignty." Said Hickes, "These laws are in eternal force against the subject in defence of the sovereign, be he good or evil, just or unjust, Christian or pagan; be he what he will, no subject or number of subjects can lift up his hand against his sovereign, and be guiltless of these laws" (Hickes, *Jovian*, 203).

¹²⁵Gilbert Burnet, *The Life of William Bedell* (London, 1685), 446.

Bedell were printed after the Revolution and contained a revised marginal note: “This passage above is to be considered as a Relation, and not as the Author’s Opinion, lest it should mislead the Reader into a dangerous Mistake.”¹²⁶ Hickes explained Burnet’s subsequent revision *The Life of William Bedell* as a case of moral capitulation.¹²⁷

By comparing Burnet’s pre-Revolution writings with his post-Revolution, Hickes was able to unearth many other examples of inconsistency concerning the doctrine of passive obedience. Hickes quoted Burnet’s denunciation of “forcible resistance upon the colour of preserving religion” from Burnet’s *Vindication*,¹²⁸ and then he wrote, “These passages of his forecited book, which now stare him in the face, are very many, and very emphatical; and there is scarce a page in it which is not a record against him.”¹²⁹ Likewise, Hickes reminded his readership that Burnet held convictions against “placing the deposing power in the people.”¹³⁰ And yet, when Burnet’s *Enquiry into the Measures of Submission and Obedience* was published after the Revolution, Burnet “exhorts the people to resist the king, as having fallen from his authority”¹³¹ In the end, Hickes provided no less than eighty pages worth of grievances against Burnet

¹²⁶Gilbert Burnet, *The Life of William Bedell* (London, 1692), 446.

¹²⁷See Hickes, *Some Discourses Upon Dr. Burnet*, 8. Gilbert Burnet, *Reflections upon a pamphlet entituled, Some discourses upon Dr. Burnet and Dr. Tillotson, occasioned by the late funeral-sermon of the former upon the later by the Right Reverend Father in God, Gilbert Lord Bishop of Sarum* (London, 1696), 70-71. Burnet wrote,

[Hickes] reproaches me for adding a Marginal Note to a part of Bishop Bedell's Book, in which he treats of *Subjects resisting their Princes*. There seems to be a fate on our Author, in publishing things of such a Nature, as must oblige me to discover Matters that will be little to the service of that Cause which he has espoused. (Burnet, *Reflections Upon a Pamphlet*, 68; emphasis original)

¹²⁸Hickes, *Some Discourses upon Dr. Burnet*, 5-6; cf. Burnet, “To The Reader,” in *Vindication*, A7-A8.

¹²⁹Hickes, *Some Discourses upon Dr. Burnet*, 7.

¹³⁰Hickes, *Some Discourses upon Dr. Burnet*, 8.

¹³¹Hickes, *Some Discourses upon Dr. Burnet*, 8.

and Tillotson.

Finally, Hickes forcefully challenged Burnet's presumptuous use of the doctrine of providence. Hickes quoted a passage from Burnet's funeral sermon in honor of John Tillotson: "He tells that *he rejoiced in our happy Deliverance and observed the amazing Steps of Providence in it.*"¹³² Then Hickes scorned, "So did his Uncle Cromwel [sic] too; and will you hear him speak upon this Subject of Providence in his Declaration?"¹³³ Hickes then cited a passage from Cromwell's own declaration of conquest, in which he paid homage to the "various Dispensations through which Divine Providence has led us, or the witness the Lord hath born, and the many signal Testimonies of Acceptance which He hath given to the sincere Endeavors of his most unworthy Servants."¹³⁴ Hickes again quoted Cromwell's Declaration to drive the point:

Cromwell insisted that "as we have been led by Necessity and Providence to act as we have done, even beyond and above our own thoughts and desires; so we shall, and do, in that of this great Work which is behind, put ourselves wholly upon the Lord for a Blessing—That all Men, as they would not provoke the Lord to their own Destruction, would wait for such an Issue as He shall bring forth—and to know that the late great and glorious Dispensations, wherein the Lord hath so wonderfully appeared in bringing forth these Things, but the Travel and Blood of his Children, ought to oblige them."¹³⁵

Hickes continued in this same strain of sarcasm:

¹³²Hickes, *Some Discourses upon Dr. Burnet*, 60; cf. Burnet, *A Sermon Preached at the Funeral of the Most Reverend Father in God*, 21; emphasis original.

¹³³Hickes, *Some Discourses upon Dr. Burnet*, 60.

¹³⁴Hickes, *Some Discourses upon Dr. Burnet*, 61. The comparison between Cromwell's rebellion and William of Orange's revolution was quite common in the aftermath of the revolution. Even William Sancroft, who presided over the provisional government of 1688 which invited William of Orange to enter London and maintain public order, famously quipped that there was "'no difference' between Lord Protector Cromwell and the Prince of Orange, 'but that the one's name was Oliver, and the other William'" (Beddard, *Kingdom without a King: A Journal of the Provisional Government in the Revolution of 1688*, 7).

¹³⁵Hickes, *Some Discourses upon Dr. Burnet*, 61.

We see by this Extract out of Cromwell's Declaration, how great and stupendous Steps of Providence went along with him in all his Enterprises; and what a Series of Successes attended him in his most execrable Undertakings.¹³⁶

Again, Hickes hammered the argument from providence:

Therefore, I hope we shall hear no more of the amazing Steps of Providence, which were observable in the late Revolutions, since that Usurper faith, he was led by Providence to act beyond and above his Thoughts and Desires. And all this shews, that as Divines say we must try Miracles by Doctrines, as well as Doctrines by Miracles; so if we would not be led into fatal Mistakes, we must consider the Justice of any Cause as well as the miraculous Providence that attend it: Since God, for our Tryal, suffers Providences and Successes equally stupendous to attend Causes, Good and Bad, as he makes the Sun to shine upon the Just and Unjust.¹³⁷

Burnet's Response to Charles Hickes (1696). Hickes' fiery invective

prompted a 166-page response from Burnet, which was published in 1696.¹³⁸ Part of Burnet's response was dismissive: "I pass over a great deal of his Stuff, as things that can

¹³⁶Hickes, *Some Discourses upon Dr. Burnet*, 61.

¹³⁷Hickes, *Some Discourses upon Dr. Burnet*, 61. Edmund Ludlow, the Lieutenant-General of the Horse Army of the Commonwealth of England, noted that the doctrine of providence was regularly invoked by Cromwell and his vigilante army: "[They] kept themselves in the clouds and would not declare their judgments either for a monarchical, aristocratic, or democratic governments; maintaining that any of them might be good in themselves, or for us, according as Providence should direct us" (*The Memoirs of Edmund Ludlow: Lieutenant-General of the Horse Army of the Commonwealth of England 1625–1672*, ed. C. H. Firth [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894], 1:184). Charles Firth has written the authoritative biography on Oliver Cromwell's life, and Firth noted Cromwell's use of providence: "In the war, and in the events which has led to the overthrow of the monarchy, there was 'an evident print of providence,' and now the task of government had come to 'by way of necessity, by the way of the wise providence of God'" (Charles Firth, *Oliver Cromwell and the Rule of the Puritans in England* [London: The Knickerbocker Press, 1908], 330; Firth is quoting from one of Cromwell's speeches before Parliament on July 4, 1653; the transcript of this speech is available at Oliver Cromwell, "Speech First," in *Cromwell's Letters and Speeches with Elucidations*, ed. Thomas Carlyle, 4 vols. [London: Chapman and Hall, 1902], 3:46. For another example of Cromwell's martial use of providence, see "Speech IV," in *Cromwell's Letters and Speeches with Elucidations*, ed. Thomas Carlyle, 4 vols. [London: Chapman and Hall, 1902], 3:166-95).

¹³⁸Gilbert Burnet, *Reflections upon a Pamphlet Entitled, Some Discourses upon Dr. Burnet and Dr. Tillotson, Occasioned by the Late Funeral-Sermon of the Former upon the Later by the Right Reverend Father in God* (London, 1696).

make no Impression, and deserve no Answer.”¹³⁹ However, Burnet’s response to Hickee with respect to the doctrines of resistance and providence are telling. First, with respect to resistance, Burnet summarized Hickee’s accusation:

[Hickee] cites some passages out of a Book that I wrote Four and twenty Years ago when I was in Scotland, in which I asserted, The Unlawfulness of Subjects resisting their Kings upon the pretence of Religion. To this he adds several other passages collected out of some of my Sermons and Letters; and upon all this he concludes, that I have Apostatized from a Doctrine that I had long professed; and in setting this out he is not wanting in the Figures of that Eloquence, in which he allows himself so free a scope.¹⁴⁰

Then, Burnet wrote falsely in defense of his present views of resistance:

When I was engaged to write in Defence of the Government of Scotland, against some Seditious Books that were then published; I, even in that Work, avowed a Principle that I had been bred to, and from which I had never departed. That in the case of a total subversion of a Constitution the Prince might be resisted.¹⁴¹

Again, Burnet wrote with respect to resistance, “my Opinion was the same then, that it is now.”¹⁴² Nevertheless, Burnet admitted, “I will not say that all the arguments that I used are good.”¹⁴³ Burnet did not, however, specify to Hickee which of his arguments were good and which were not.

Burnet next attempted to “conceal” the “radical nature of the difference between his earlier and later views on the question of passive obedience” by articulating a distinction between the executive office of government and the legislative office of

¹³⁹Burnet, *Reflections upon . . . Some Discourses upon Dr. Burnet and Dr. Tillotson*, 112.

¹⁴⁰Burnet, *Reflections upon . . . Some Discourses upon Dr. Burnet and Dr. Tillotson*, 30.

¹⁴¹Burnet, *Reflections upon . . . Some Discourses upon Dr. Burnet and Dr. Tillotson*, 31-32.

¹⁴²Burnet, *Reflections upon . . . Some Discourses upon Dr. Burnet and Dr. Tillotson*, 33.

¹⁴³Burnet, *Reflections upon . . . Some Discourses upon Dr. Burnet and Dr. Tillotson*, 33.

government.¹⁴⁴ Burnet defended his later convictions on the question of passive obedience by insisting that a king could be resisted in a case of “total subversion”—that is, when the legislative branch of the government, as defined by the constitution, was subverted by the king.¹⁴⁵ Said Burnet:

To all this [i.e., Burnet’s *Vindication*] I adhered so firmly of late, that when many in *England* sent over Messages to *Holland* . . . moving His Present Majesty, then Prince of *Orange*, to think of preserving this Church and State; and when it was affirmed, that many Divines thought it lawful; I did still oppose it zealously. I have one Witness in Heaven, and another upon Earth, who is beyond exception; besides several others, to whom I always delivered myself, thus: These were Illegal and Tyrannical Acts I did not deny: But what tendency soever they might have, by their natural Consequences, to a *total subversion* of our Constitution, yet they were not a *total subversion* of it: And therefore, if upon those grounds a Breach had followed, I declared to them, whom I afterwards served, That I could not have gone into it, nor have served in it. For I ever thought, and do still think, that Acts of Tyranny, and the remote Consequences of them, did not justify the resisting of Princes. I said, When a *total subversion* of our Constitution should be plainly apparent, then, and not till then, I thought the Late King’s *Authority* would come under such a *Suspension*, that he might be resisted: And that if he would not return to a Just Government, but would forsake his People, then his *Authority* was determined by an Act of his own. I was still so firm in my Loyalty, that till I was Naturalized a Subject of the States, I did not so much as know of any Designs to use Force: And when I thought it was lawful for me to know and conceal them, I still adhered to the Principle to which my Father had bred me, whom I may, without vanity, name upon this occasion; since it is well known in Scotland, that he was the most eminently distinguished of any man in that Kingdom for his constant adhering to the Interest and Service of the Crown: He was thought no ordinary Man in his Profession, which was the Law. This Principle he infused into me early. And in this I had, without one single deviation, continued all along; That till a total Subversion was set about, we were still Subjects, and bound to submit.¹⁴⁶

In truth, Burnet did not argue such a distinction between the executive and legislative

¹⁴⁴Firth, “Introduction,” in Clark and Foxcroft, *Life of Gilbert Burnet*, xxviii.

¹⁴⁵Burnet, *Reflections upon . . . Some Discourses upon Dr. Burnet and Dr. Tillotson*, 32-91; emphasis original.

¹⁴⁶Burnet, *Reflections upon . . . Some Discourses upon Dr. Burnet and Dr. Tillotson*, 34-36.

branches of government until 1687 while writing in “voluntary exile.”¹⁴⁷ Quite the contrary, Burnet argued that, even in the case of a “phrensie,” a provisional regency should be appointed “till [the king] recover himself.”¹⁴⁸ After 1687, Burnet revised his notion of passive obedience to include resistance if the legislative branch of government should be subverted through the exercise of the reigning monarch’s royal prerogative.

With respect to Hickes’ criticism about Burnet’s “enthusiastic” use of the doctrine of providence to establish the Williamite cause, Burnet merely wrote:

If any man had argued only from Providence, [Hickes] might have run out upon it as long as he had pleased: But when a Foundation is once laid, and a Cause is proved to be just in itself, then the Steps of Providence that watch over it will be observed by all men that are not Atheistical and Irreligious.¹⁴⁹

Remarkably, this dismissive statement was all that Burnet provided with respect to his personal use of the doctrine of providence. Despite Hickes’ criticism, Burnet continued to employ a providentialist rhetoric to support and justify the Revolution.

The Assassination Plot of 1696. The Assassination Plot of 1696 was the “last and most serious” of a string of Jacobite conspiracies to kill William III and restore James II to the English throne.¹⁵⁰ The discovery of this 1696 assassination plot, which was directly commissioned by James II according to Burnet’s *History*,¹⁵¹ was owing to a

¹⁴⁷The first published evidences of Burnet’s altered convictions concerning nonresistance, particularly based upon a distinction between executive and legislative powers residing in the Sovereign can be found in a paper written by Burnet in 1687 entitled, “Reflections on His Majesties Declaration for Liberty of Conscience,” in *A Collection of Eighteen Papers*, 30. The reference to “voluntary exile” is from Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 3:21.

¹⁴⁸“In case the Magistrate be furious, or desert his right, or expose his Kingdoms to the fury of others, the Laws and Sense of all Nations agree, that the States of the Land are to be the Administrators of the power, till he recover himself” (Burnet, *Vindication*, 16).

¹⁴⁹Burnet, *Reflections upon . . . Some Discourses upon Dr. Burnet and Dr. Tillotson*, 112.

¹⁵⁰Garrett, *Triumphs of Providence*, 3.

¹⁵¹Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 4:291. Burnet included a correspondence from James II to one of his conspirators that includes the following: “Our will and pleasure is, and we

set of extraordinary instances of providence. The details are many; however, by Burnet's telling of the story, William's deliverance included great fleets of ships unexpectedly remaining in the English port rather than sailing, a random Frenchmen providing nonspecific reports of an assassination plot, and "one Pendergrass, an Irish officer" who finally brought a report to the King.¹⁵² Burnet recorded, "The king was not easily brought to give credit to this till a variety of circumstances, in which the discoveries did agree, convinced him of the truth of the whole design."¹⁵³ Thus, while the English were initially perplexed by fluctuating winds patterns and a homebound cargo fleet early in 1696, Burnet later attributed William's deliverance from Jacobite assassination to the "signal providence of God":

A great fleet was ordered to go thither [from London]; it was ready to have sailed in December [1695], but was kept in our ports by contrary winds till February [1696]; this was then thought a great unhappiness; but we found afterwards that our preservation was chiefly owing to it; and it was so extraordinary a thing, to see the wind fixed at south-west during the whole winter that few could resist the observing a signal providence of God in it.¹⁵⁴

Thus, according to Burnet, the providence of God was once again to be credited with thwarting a popish conspiracy against the life of William. "By a happy providence," Burnet wrote, God had again used the "wind" and "seasons" as a means of protecting William's life, preserving the English throne from a Jacobite assassination plot, and thwarting a "popish" invasion from France.¹⁵⁵ The net result of the Jacobite

do hereby fully authorize, strictly require, and expressly command our loving subjects to rise in arms and make war upon the prince of Orange, the usurper of our throne" (Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 4:291).

¹⁵²Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 4:290, 298.

¹⁵³Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 4:291.

¹⁵⁴Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 4:289.

¹⁵⁵Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 4:289, 296, *passim*. Burnet's account of the Assassination Plot of 1696, along with the preemptive "signals" of providence in late 1695, are recorded in Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 4:289-304.

Assassination Plot of 1696 was that James II was completely discredited in the popular mind as new fears of popery and tyranny poured out of the English press.¹⁵⁶ By contrast, William III's popular approval ratings soared in 1696 and 1697.

Burnet's sermon at Whitehall (1697). On December 2, 1697, Burnet preached a sermon before King William at Whitehall.¹⁵⁷ The Treaty of Ryswick had just been signed on September 20, 1697, and “the wisdom, the courage, and the virtue” of King William had been extolled throughout England.¹⁵⁸ “The second of December was appointed to be the day of thanksgiving for the peace,” and Burnet was granted the task of commemorating the peace by preaching a thanksgiving sermon.¹⁵⁹ One attendee later

¹⁵⁶For more on Whig “propaganda” following the Jacobite Assassination Plot of 1696, see Garrett, *The Triumphs of Providence*. Garrett has republished a broadside from 1696 that circulated throughout England entitled, “The Triumphs of Providence over Hell, France & Rome, In the Defeating & Discovering of the Late Hellish and Barbarous Plott, for Assassinating His Royall Majesty King William III” on the front panel of Garrett, *The Triumphs of Providence*. Garrett explains the individual panel pictures of the broadside as follows: “The top centre panel shows an imaginary papal procession for the success of the ploy. The pope is borne on men’s shoulders, with the devil whispering in his ear. The centre panel, surmounted by LIMP—Louis, Iacobus [James], Mary and the Prince of Wales—shows Louis VIX vomiting up the spoils of war, with a physician in attendance. In the background are James, his family and advisers. Inset above an ape administers a clyster. At the sides are a four-headed Jesuit and a triple-headed courtier. The lower centre panel depicts the scene of the intended murder. The would-be assassins wait for their victim, while William sits in his coach safely protected by the ‘Eye of Providence [which] sees All.’ The side panels show real and imaginary scenes of the intended invasion and conspirators’ progress towards Tyburn” (Garrett, *The Triumphs of Providence*, viii). Garrett further explained that the English people “were in general antagonistic towards King James” because he represented “popery and tyranny”; these were “old, deep-rooted fear[s]” that “Whig propaganda played upon so successfully” (Garrett, *The Triumphs of Providence*, 47). The failure of the conspiracy marked the end of [James’] attempts to regain his crown. The rumour, reinforced by Whig propaganda, that he had condoned if not sanctioned so vile a crime as the assassination of his supplanter lost him many a sympathizer and did much harm to his cause. James, however, had by this time accepted that it was not the will of God that he should regain his throne” (Garrett, *The Triumphs of Providence*, 262).

¹⁵⁷Gilbert Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the King, At Whitehall, On the Second of December, 1697. Being the Day of Thanksgiving for the Peace* (London, 1698).

¹⁵⁸Macaulay, *History of England*, 4:322.

¹⁵⁹Macaulay, *History of England*, 4:322.

described Burnet's sermon as a "florid panegyric,"¹⁶⁰ but Macaulay more moderately described Burnet's sermon on this occasion as "somewhat too eulogistic."¹⁶¹ At any rate, Burnet's sermon was drawn from 2 Chronicles 9:8:

Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on his throne to be King for the Lord thy God: because thy God loved Israel, to establish them forever, therefore made he thee King over them, to do judgment and justice.

From this text, Burnet suggested that William III was a greater Solomon:

If then the Queen of Sheba was so struck with seeing Solomon in all his glory, with how much louder Accents ought we to carry on the Hallelujahs of This Day, who see a Prince Raised and Conducted by such a special train of Amazing Providences, without any of those Supports, that every Step he has made, carries in it Characters of a particular Direction from Heaven!¹⁶²

In other words, while Solomon became king by the appointment of hereditary succession, William's appointment came by the "immediate Care and Work of Heaven."¹⁶³

Burnet next celebrated those acts of providence that "signalize" God's mercy and care not only to England, but also to Europe and the world.¹⁶⁴ Those signal acts of providence specifically included William's divine deliverance from the Jacobite Assassination Plot of 1696 as well as the "favourable winds" of "God's care" that aided William's expeditionary force in 1688.¹⁶⁵

Regarding the Jacobite Assassination Plot, Burnet insisted that "Angels kept Guard about him on all Honourable Occasions."¹⁶⁶ Those same angels "were no less

¹⁶⁰John Evelyn, *Memoirs, Illustrative of the Life and Writings of John Evelyn, Esq.* (London, 1819), 2:58.

¹⁶¹Macaulay, *History of England*, 4:322.

¹⁶²Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the King At Whitehall*, 4.

¹⁶³Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the King At Whitehall*, 6.

¹⁶⁴Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the King At Whitehall*, 6.

¹⁶⁵Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the King At Whitehall*, 6.

¹⁶⁶Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the King At Whitehall*, 8.

watchful in discovering and disappointing Blacker Methods, and Baser Designs.”¹⁶⁷

Burnet was referring to those “Designs of Assassination [which] were pursued with such unrelenting Eagerness, that as soon as one failed, another was set on foot.”¹⁶⁸ For Burnet, William’s deliverance was no mere human deliverance; rather, as Burnet emphasized,

Discoveries were made by a Particular Hand of Heaven: Men who were thought capable of executing the worst Designs, could not bear the Horror that This gave them. Those who were appointed to be the Instruments of Ruin, proved the Means of our Preservation: I say, Our Preservation, because we owe it to the Influence of that Sacred Life.¹⁶⁹

Regarding the winds of providence, Burnet reminded his hearers of God’s gracious “interposition” in 1688 through the “unusual reversing of Seasons” when “the Wind . . . broke the designs of sending a great part of our Naval Strength from us.”¹⁷⁰

Burnet continued:

The Characters of God's Care of his Affairs have been no less Signal, than those relating to his Person. Good Seasons and favourable Winds have attended constantly upon him. The critical Turns of those Winds that brought him first hither, were so amazing, that those who observed them, can never reflect on it without a constant freshness of Admiration. All the many Passages that he and his Forces have since that time made on the Seas, have been not only successful, but smooth and quick.¹⁷¹

Burnet unabashedly declared, “the kind Direction of Heaven made the Seasons wait on us, and as it were conspire to break their own Laws, rather than suffer a Breach to be made upon us.”¹⁷²

Burnet next observed some “other favourable circumstances” that “shewed us

¹⁶⁷Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the King At Whitehall*, 8.

¹⁶⁸Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the King At Whitehall*, 8.

¹⁶⁹Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the King At Whitehall*, 8-9.

¹⁷⁰Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the King At Whitehall*, 10.

¹⁷¹Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the King At Whitehall*, 9.

¹⁷²Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the King At Whitehall*, 10.

also how God delighted to maintain him on the Throne.”¹⁷³ Burnet alluded once again to the “Interpositions of Providence” that aided William’s expedition in 1688, including additional references to the winds of providence. At first sail, Burnet remembered, “A long Course of cross Winds and rough Weather in the beginning, looked like the Frowning of Heaven.”¹⁷⁴ Referring to William, Burnet boasted, “This would have shaken any Mind less firm than that which animated the whole Undertaking.”¹⁷⁵ But William possessed a greater constancy:

A Constancy was then observed so steady and inflexible, that not so much as an Inequality of Temper could be discovered. The Unsuccessfulness of the first Step would have damped a Mind that was either feeble or superstitious; . . . But after the Roughness of the Season had continu'd long enough, to teach us all to depend a little more on Providence, and to apply our selves more earnestly to him that rules the Seas, and the Winds at his pleasure, and after there was a full and visible Experiment made of the Steadiness of him, on whose Mind Seas nor Storms could make no Impression, then God commanded the Winds, and rebuked the Seas, and after that first Rub, all our Affairs were so conducted, that everything succeeded, beyond our Hopes, I had almost said, beyond our Wishes.¹⁷⁶

All these reflections on the “distinctions of providence” led Burnet to conclude with much praise for William. Burnet described William as a Prince “who hears the Petitions of the oppressed, and hearkens to the Suggestions of the wise and good,” “who has the Just and Noble Ambition of meriting Fame and Glory, without the troublesome Vanity of shewing it,” “who deserves all the Returns of Duty and Gratitude from his People, without being fond of hearing or seeing it express'd,” who “will still be owned as one of the best Gifts of Heaven.”¹⁷⁷ Moreover, Burnet insisted that all such adulation for

¹⁷³Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the King At Whitehall*, 10.

¹⁷⁴Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the King At Whitehall*, 16.

¹⁷⁵Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the King At Whitehall*, 16.

¹⁷⁶Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the King At Whitehall*, 16-17.

¹⁷⁷Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the King At Whitehall*, 20.

William was not “forced rhetoric” or “hired Panegyrics” or flattery.¹⁷⁸ By way of conclusion, Burnet called his hearers to “make all the humblest returns of Duty and Gratitude, of Fidelity and Zeal, to our Great Deliverer. Let us continue our most earnest Prayers, as well as our highest Thanksgiving to God for him.”¹⁷⁹

Many more obsequious statements could be cited from Burnet’s sermon on December 2, 1697, but these sufficiently demonstrate the manner in which Burnet interpreted God’s providence in 1697 and leveraged the doctrine of providence to garner thanksgiving to God and loyalty to William.

Burnet’s sermon at St. James’ Chapel (1702). On March 15, 1702, Burnet preached before Queen Anne, and he made two important references to the doctrine of providence specifically with respect to William III and Anne:

We have seen a person raised up and long supported by very signal Providences, in a Course of Thirty Years, to be the great Fence both of Liberty and Religion, against a Deluge of Conquest and Destruction that was breaking in and carrying all before it, till he Young and Unexperienc’d as he was, stood in its way and stopp’d its Fury. He rescu’d his Country then when it was almost quite swallow’d up, and from that Time, he seem’d to be the Man whom God had made strong for himself. One singularity of Providence, with respect to him, is very astonishing; That, whereas he was often Unsuccessful in many Steps he made, he was yet Successful in the whole; an unshaken Firmness remain’d in himself. . . . After he had recover’d and settled his own Country, he was called on to save us. I hope those two great Years of 72 and 88, are not and cannot be forgotten: We were at first deliver’d, and have been now for thirteen years preserv’d by him, in so unaccountable a manner. . . . His long practice in Affairs, his Judgment was so Exact, and of such Penetration, the great Reputation he had gain’d all the World over, and the great Figure the Nation made in his Hands all others Centring in him, or depending on him, were too visible to need any Enlargement.¹⁸⁰

After eulogizing King William in such a manner, Burnet expressed his confidence that Providence had established Anne as William’s successor:

¹⁷⁸Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the King At Whitehall*, 20.

¹⁷⁹Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the King At Whitehall*, 31.

¹⁸⁰Gilbert Burnet, “The First Sermon Preached before the Queen, upon her Accession to the Throne, at St James’s Chappel in Lent, on the 15th Day of March, 1701–2,” in *Some Sermons Preached on Several Occasions* (London, 1713), 88-89.

If there was anything wanting [in William], we may justly hope that the Soft and Affectionate, the Tender and Healing Part is reserv'd to Her, whom Providence has now raised up to be our *Nursing Mother*. The Care of the Nursing Father may be more Active and Bustling, and have more of Labour and Difficulty in it; he provides for, and defends the House. But in the Figure, the Nursing Mother's Part is much more Important, as well as more immediately Apply'd.¹⁸¹

Burnet continued with like elaborations until concluding with a groveling benediction:

Blessed be the Lord God who has given us such a Person to sit upon the Throne:
And blessed be Thou of the Lord; God make Thy Name better than the Names of all
who have gone before Thee, and Thy Throne greater than of all Thy Ancestors.¹⁸²

Burnet in Controversy to the End (1709–1715)

The final years of Burnet's life were plagued with controversy over his role in the 1688 Revolution. On November 5, 1709, the resistance debate resurfaced when a young preacher named Henry Sacheverell delivered a firebrand sermon at St. Paul's Cathedral that excited the nation. Sacheverell did not preach the prescribed November 5 sermon that celebrated the providence of God in establishing the Protestant religion in England¹⁸³; rather, Sacheverell preached nonresistance doctrines. Although Sacheverell rejoiced that the Gunpowder Treason Plot of 1605 had been thwarted, he did not celebrate the Glorious Revolution of 1688. Rather, Sacheverell compared the Gunpowder Treason Plot of 1605 to the regicide of Charles I on January 30, 1649. Taking these two events together, Sacheverell forcibly denounced both the Catholic

¹⁸¹Burnet, "The First Sermon Preached before the Queen," in *Some Sermons Preached on Several Occasions*, 89; emphasis added.

¹⁸²Burnet, "The First Sermon Preached before the Queen," in *Some Sermons Preached on Several Occasions*, 105.

¹⁸³November 5 was a day of double importance on the English calendar because it commemorated both the failure of Guy Fawkes' Gunpowder Treason Plot and also the landing of William of Orange on English soil in 1688. On both occasions, England was delivered from "popish designs" by the special providence of God. Thus, November 5th became a special "Thanksgiving Day" on the English calendar when the providence of God and the Protestant religion was celebrated by special thanksgiving day sermons. Naturally, Anglican preachers were expected to deliver thanksgiving sermons that acknowledged God's special care in establishing the Protestant interest in England.

conspiracy of 1605 and also the Protestant rebellion of 1649. Both November 5 and January 30, Sacheverell contended, should be marked on the “English Kalendar” as “Indelible Monuments of the Irreconcilable Rage, and Blood-thirstiness of both the Popish, and Fanatick Enemies of Our Church and Government!”¹⁸⁴ Both Catholic and Protestant advocates of resistance were, according to Sacheverell, “equally such Treacherous False Brethren, from whom we must always expect utmost Perils, and against whom we can never sufficiently Arm Ourselves.”¹⁸⁵

Moreover, Sacheverell thundered against the late Revolution’s failure to observe a principle of passive obedience:

What is almost Incredible, presume to make their Court to their Prince by maintaining such Anti-monarchical Schemes. But, God be thanked! Neither the Constitution of our Church or State, is so far Alter’d, but that by the Laws of Both (still in force and which I hope for ever will be) these damnable position, let ‘em come either from Rome, or Geneva, from the Pulpit, or the Press, are condemn’d for Rebellion, and High Treason. Our Adversaries think they effectually stop our Mouths and have us Sure and Unanswerable on this Point when they urge the Revolution of this Day in their Defence.¹⁸⁶

Resistance, according to Sacheverell, was supremely a popish heresy, and those who “defend the Resistance of the Supream Power, under a New-fangl’d notion of Self-Defence” only “shew of shame” and ought to call “rebellion by it’s proper name.”¹⁸⁷ Only by “silly pretences” and “weak excuses” do subjects “justify all the rebellions that ever were” and “judge and dethrone their Sovereigns; for any cause they think fit.”¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁴Henry Sacheverell, *The Perils of False Brethren, Both in Church, and State: Set Forth in a Sermon Preach’d before the Right Honourable, The Lord-Mayor, Alderman, and Citizens of London, at the Cathedral-Church of St. Paul, on the 5th of November, 1709* (London, 1709), 3.

¹⁸⁵Sacheverell, *The Perils of False Brethren*, 3.

¹⁸⁶Sacheverell, *The Perils of False Brethren*, 20; parenthesis original.

¹⁸⁷Sacheverell, *The Perils of False Brethren*, 22.

¹⁸⁸Sacheverell, *The Perils of False Brethren*, 22.

Remarkably, Sacheverell next named “the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Sarum” (i.e., Gilbert Burnet) as a man “whose Aversion to Popery . . . is not doubted” but who has “determin[ed], even on the Papist’s side in this case.”¹⁸⁹ Thus, Sacheverell implicated Burnet for his role in the Revolution for holding a “papist” view of resistance, even though Burnet later disguised himself in Republican (Whig) and Protestant dress.¹⁹⁰

With this sermon, the English Tories of Parliament and Anglican High Churchmen were generally satisfied, but the Whigs and the Protestant nonconformists were incensed. Furthermore, Sacheverell’s sermon was distributed to an unprecedented readership in England and beyond. “By the most narrowly conservative estimate,” Sacheverell’s sermon was read “by at least a quarter of a million men and women.”¹⁹¹ Such a wide readership “had no equal in the early eighteenth century.”¹⁹² Naturally, Sacheverell achieved instant celebrity throughout the realm because he had forcibly

¹⁸⁹Sacheverell, *The Perils of False Brethren*, 23. In a footnote to the published version of Sacheverell’s sermon, a direct citation from Burnet regarding the doctrine of resistance is included,

Maxims, that put the Power of Judging and Controlling the Magistrate in the People’s Hands, which opens a Door to Endless Confusions, and indeed, sets every Private Person upon the Throne and Introduceth an Anarchy, which will never admit of Order and Remedy whereas Those who have but One PRETENDER over Them, could more easily deal with Him and more Vigourously RESIST Him. (Sacheverell, *The Perils of False Brethren*, 23; Sacheverell cited from Burnet, *Vindication*, 68-69; capitalization original)

¹⁹⁰With respect to republicanism, Sacheverell thundered, Falsehood always implies treachery; and whether that is a qualification for any one to be trusted, especially with the guardianship of our church, or Crown, let our governors consider. And certainly nothing but the most Scottish infatuation, can so far blind both our eyes, and our judgments, as to make sue believe, that the same causes should not produce the same effects, and that he same Latitudinarians, and Republican notions should not bring forth the same rebellions, and pernicious consequences. (Sacheverell, *The Perils of False Brethren*, 33)

¹⁹¹Geoffrey Holmes, *The Trial of Doctor Sacheverell* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1973), 75.

¹⁹²Holmes, *The Trial of Doctor Sacheverell*, 75.

“preached against the Revolution.”¹⁹³

Burnet at the trial of Henry Sacheverell (1709). Consequently, Sacheverell was summoned to a trial before the House of Commons on charges of defamation and seditious libel.¹⁹⁴ The entire trial, however, was merely a cover for exploiting pre-revolutionary tensions that now polarized Whigs and Tories: the “revolution principle” of resistance versus the doctrine of passive obedience.¹⁹⁵

In the end, Sacheverell was only lightly punished with a three-year preaching suspension; however, during the proceedings, Burnet delivered a rambling speech before the House of Lords that addressed the Revolution principle of resistance over against the Anglican doctrine of nonresistance. Burnet opened:

The Council for the Prisoner did so plainly and fully yield all that any Loyal Subject has ever pretended to that in Cases of extream Necessity Self-defence and Resistance were Lawful and that this was the Case at the Revolution. . . . And since it is grown to be a vulgar Opinion that by the Doctrine of the Church of England, all

¹⁹³Holmes, *The Trial of Doctor Sacheverell*, 81.

¹⁹⁴Four articles were attached to Sacheverell’s charges:

Wicked, Malicious, and Seditious Intention to Undermine and Subvert Her Majesty’s Government and the Protestant Succession as by Law Establish’d to defame Her Majesty’s Administration; to Asperse the Memory of his late Majesty, to Traduce and Condemn the late Happy Revolution, to Contradict and Arraign the Resolutions of both Houses of Parliament, to create Jealousies and Divisions amongst Her Majesty’s Subjects, and to incite them to Sedition and Rebellio. *The Tryal of Dr. Henry Sacheverell, before the House of Peers, for High Crimes and Misdemeanors; upon an Impeachment by the Knights, Citizens and Burgesses in Parliament Assembled, in the Name of themselves, and of all the Commons of Great Britain: Begun in Westminster-Hall the 27th Day of February, 1709-10, and from thence continued by several Adjournments until the 23d Day of March following* (London, 1710), 8.

This journal of the proceedings of the Sacheverell Trial was “Published by the Order of the House of Peers,” and the four articles outlining Sacheverell’s seditious libel are recorded in the same journal: *The Tryal of Dr. Henry Sacheverell*, 8-10. Noteworthy is the fact that Burnet’s *Vindication* is cited in the Sacheverell proceedings; Burnet’s, *Subjection for Conscience-Sake Asserted* is also cited in the Sacheverell proceedings too.

¹⁹⁵Holmes, *The Trial of Doctor Sacheverell*, 142. Thus, Robert Walpole opened the case against Sacheverell with these words: “It cannot now be necessary to prove resistance at the Revolution; I should as well expect that your lordships would desire me to prove, for form’s sake, the sun shines at noon day” (Kenyon, *Revolution Principles*, 5; Kenyon cited *State Trials*, 15:91).

Resistance in any Case whatsoever without Exception is Condemn'd; I think it is incumbent on me, who have Examin'd this Matter long and carefully, to give you such a clear Account of this Point, as may as fully satisfie you as it did my self.¹⁹⁶

Burnet continued by admitting his full involvement in the late Revolution:

I served in the Revolution and promoted it all I could. I served as Chaplain to the Late King: I had no Command, and carried no Arms but I was so far engag'd in it that if I could see that I had gone out of the Way in that . . . I should hold myself unworthy to appear longer either in this Habit or in this Great Assembly: But should think my self bound to pass away the rest of my Life in Retirement or Sorrow. There is nothing more certain in Religion than that we ought to repent of every Sin we have committed.¹⁹⁷

Burnet next argued from a brief "History of our Church" in favor of a constitutional basis for resistance. Burnet asserted that primitive Christianity submitted to tyrannical authority only when persecution and tyrannical authority was established "according to the Laws of the Empire."¹⁹⁸ However, Burnet explained that the primitive Christians made use of legal provisions and protections when legal provisions and protections existed: "When [the primitive Christians] came afterward to have the Protection of Laws, they claim'd the Benefit of them, not without great Violence, when they thought an Infraction was made on those Laws."¹⁹⁹

Remarkably, Burnet next made use of the apocryphal "Books of the Maccabees" to defend a doctrine of resistance by the example of Mattathias.²⁰⁰ The Jewish law, Burnet argued, was being threatened by the kings of Syria when "Mattathias

¹⁹⁶Gilbert Burnet, *The Bishop of Salisbury, His Speech in the House of Lords, on the First Article of the Impeachment of Dr. Henry Sacheverell* (London, 1710), 2.

¹⁹⁷Burnet, *The Bishop of Salisbury . . . [at] the Impeachment of Dr. Henry Sacheverell*, 2.

¹⁹⁸Burnet, *The Bishop of Salisbury . . . [at] the Impeachment of Dr. Henry Sacheverell*, 3.

¹⁹⁹Burnet, *The Bishop of Salisbury . . . [at] the Impeachment of Dr. Henry Sacheverell*, 3.

²⁰⁰Burnet, *The Bishop of Salisbury . . . [at] the Impeachment of Dr. Henry Sacheverell*, 4.

a private priest began the Resistance.”²⁰¹ Using Mattathias as a noble example, Burnet argued that resistance against one’s Prince could only be called rebellion if the Prince actually maintained the laws of the land. However, Burnet affirmed that Mattathias’ Resistance was “foretold by Daniel, in Terms of high Commendation, and is also mention’d in the Epistle to the Hebrews, as the Work and Effect of their Faith.”²⁰²

Burnet then asserted,

If then all Resistance to illegal and barbarous Persecution, is unlawful; these Books contain nothing but a History of A Rebellion, and all the Devotion that runs through them, is but a Cant, and instead of reading them as *Examples of Life*, and *Instruction of Manners*, we ought to tear them out of our Bibles with Detestation.²⁰³

Burnet next cited examples from England’s own history regarding cases of resistance before finally asserting that “resisting the Prince” should not be called rebellion if the prince is guilty of a “total subversion” of the law.²⁰⁴ Burnet insisted,

I have now made it out, beyond I hope the possibility of Contradiction, that for 70 Years together, from 1558, to 1628, the Lawfulness of Self-defence in the Case of Illegal and Violent Cruelty, was the Publick and Constant Doctrine of this Church. These were the best and happiest times of our Church: . . . From these we ought to take the Standard of our Doctrine.²⁰⁵

Burnet next insisted that, from the years 1628–1640, England suffered from an “unhappy Misunderstanding between the King and that Parliament,” which led to the

²⁰¹Burnet, *The Bishop of Salisbury . . . [at] the Impeachment of Dr. Henry Sacheverell*, 4.

²⁰²Burnet, *The Bishop of Salisbury . . . [at] the Impeachment of Dr. Henry Sacheverell*, 4.

²⁰³Burnet, *The Bishop of Salisbury . . . [at] the Impeachment of Dr. Henry Sacheverell*, 4.

²⁰⁴Burnet, *The Bishop of Salisbury . . . [at] the Impeachment of Dr. Henry Sacheverell*, 9.

²⁰⁵Burnet, *The Bishop of Salisbury . . . [at] the Impeachment of Dr. Henry Sacheverell*, 9-10. In less than nine pages of writing, Burnet cited examples of resistance under the reigns of King Henry IV, King Henry VIII, King Edward VI, Queen Elizabeth I, King James I. Burnet also contrasted such unlawful popish rebellion against the current lawful resistance waged against James II.

extravagances and excesses that begat both civil war and regicide.²⁰⁶ In the aftermath of the English Civil War, the Anglican divines pressed the doctrine of nonresistance upon pains of damnation.²⁰⁷ Also because of the English Civil War, Burnet said that the Anglican divines pressed the doctrine of passive obedience too far without properly voicing their “exceptions”:

It was no wonder, if after such a War, the Doctrine of Non-Resistance was preach'd and press'd with more than ordinary Warmth, and without any Exceptions; yet some still kept these [exceptions] in view; so did both Dr. Falkner and myself; and I know many others had them always in their Thoughts, tho' they did not think it necessary to mention them.²⁰⁸

Burnet next reflected upon a personal conversation with King James II, who was, Burnet assured the House of Lords, “pleas'd to admit me to much free Conversation with him”:

I told him, it was impossible for him to Reign in quiet in this nation, being of that Religion [i.e., Catholicism]; he answer'd me quick, Does not the Church of England maintain the Doctrines of Non-Resistance and Passive Obedience? I begg'd of him not to depend on that; for there was distinction in that matter that would be found out when Men thought they needed it. I now come to tell your Lordships, how right I judged.²⁰⁹

Burnet then pointed to the second publication of James' Declaration of Indulgence (1687) as the pivotal point when “many Laws were dispensed at pleasure; and Persons who were

²⁰⁶Burnet, *The Bishop of Salisbury . . . [at] the Impeachment of Dr. Henry Sacheverell*, 10-11. Burnet 's own words: “The great Concussion that the War gave the Nation and the barbarous effusion of so much Blood especially of the Royal Blood of that Blessed King” (Burnet, *The Bishop of Salisbury . . . on the First Article of the Impeachment of Dr. Henry Sacheverell*, 11).

²⁰⁷Burnet, *The Bishop of Salisbury . . . [at] the Impeachment of Dr. Henry Sacheverell*, 12.

²⁰⁸Burnet, *The Bishop of Salisbury . . . [at] the Impeachment of Dr. Henry Sacheverell*, 12.

²⁰⁹Burnet, *The Bishop of Salisbury . . . [at] the Impeachment of Dr. Henry Sacheverell*, 12.

under legal Disabilities, were made Judges, Sheriffs and Magistrates.”²¹⁰ “Then,” Burnet clarified, “I thought here was a total Subversion of our Constitution; which from a Legal one, was made precarious, subject to mere Will and Pleasure. So I was ready to serve in the Revolution.”²¹¹ Burnet concluded with these words:

I have, I am afraid, wearied your Lordships; but I thought it was necessary, once for all, to enlarge copiously on this Argument. . . . Whatever general expressions might very well have been used, in setting for the Passive Obedience and Non-Resistance before the Revolutions because odious Cases ought not to be supposed and therefore are not to be named; yet since Resistance was used in the Revolution, and that the King invited all the Subjects to join with him, which was in them certainly Resistance; and since the Lawfulness of the Revolution is so much controverted, the condemning all Resistance in such crude and general Terms, is certainly a Condemning the Revolution. And this is further aggravated from those Limitations on our Obedience in an Act past soon after the Revolution, by which, in Case our Princes turn *Papists*, or marry Papists, the Subjects are in express Words discharged from their Allegiance to them. Certainly this puts an End to the Notion of Non-Resistance in any Case or on any Pretense whatsoever. For these Reasons, I think the first Article of this Impeachment is both well grounded, and fully made out. Finis.²¹²

Thus, Burnet was given the opportunity to address the House of Lords at the Trial of Henry Sacheverell, and he used the opportunity to settle the issue of passive obedience with respect to the Revolution. At the very close of his speech, Burnet provided a brief motion in support of Sacheverell’s impeachment.

Burnet’s last defense of the Glorious Revolution (1713). At the age of seventy, Burnet published an anthology of sermons entitled, *Some Sermons Preached on Several Occasions*, which included some prefatory remarks concerning “the lawfulness

²¹⁰Burnet, *The Bishop of Salisbury . . . [at] the Impeachment of Dr. Henry Sacheverell*, 12.

²¹¹Burnet, *The Bishop of Salisbury . . . [at] the Impeachment of Dr. Henry Sacheverell*, 12-13.

²¹²Burnet, *The Bishop of Salisbury . . . [at] the Impeachment of Dr. Henry Sacheverell*, 16; emphasis original.

of the revolution.”²¹³ Burnet wrote, “After more than Four and Twenty years, the Lawfulness of the Revolution is not only brought under Debate, but is openly Arraigned by some and feebly Justified by others, while many are plainly Endeavoring to Undermine and Overturn it.”²¹⁴

Burnet admitted that the “King’s Bench” had determined that “all the Laws were the King’s Laws; and that the Execution of the Law was only in the King, who was not Accountable to any Person.”²¹⁵ However, once James II had openly “suspended” the Test Acts of 1673 and granted his Declaration of Indulgence in 1687 and again in 1688, Burnet concluded, “the Declaration, when twice repeated . . . seem’d to me to strike at all, and to alter our whole Constitution.”²¹⁶ Furthermore, Burnet concluded,

Thus a Subversion of Law, is the destroying that on which the King’s Authority is Founded, and by which it is maintain’d: So the Turning a legal Government into an Arbitrary one, did put the Subjects to such Straits, that they saw they must either be Slaves, or try how their Liberty could be preserved.²¹⁷

Burnet personally decided to join the Prince of Orange and fight for liberty:

Upon these Reasons I thought it was Lawful for the Prince of Orange to come over and Protect and secure us, and to maintain our Laws; he being earnestly called on by Men of all Ranks and Sorts who saw our Laws trod on and our Constitution subverted; and looked on him as the only Person that could save us.”²¹⁸

²¹³Gilbert Burnet, “Preface,” in *Some Sermons Preached on Several Occasions* (London, 1713): iii–xxv. Foxcroft underscores one of the “curiosities” of Burnet’s writings: “Burnet’s later prefaces rank with the curiosities of literature. They are in fact semi-political manifestoes; in which religious exhortation and political appeals jostle one another with truly amusing vehemence” (Clark and Foxcroft, *Life of Gilbert Burnet*, 457). Burnet’s “Preface” to *Some Sermons Preached on Several Occasions* fits Foxcroft’s category of a “militant preface,” which was intended as “a historical defense of the Revolution” (Clark and Foxcroft, *Life of Gilbert Burnet*, 458).

²¹⁴Burnet, “Preface,” in *Some Sermons Preached on Several Occasions*, iii.

²¹⁵Burnet, “Preface,” in *Some Sermons Preached on Several Occasions*, v.

²¹⁶Burnet, “Preface,” in *Some Sermons Preached on Several Occasions*, viii.

²¹⁷Burnet, “Preface,” in *Some Sermons Preached on Several Occasions*, viii.

²¹⁸Burnet, “Preface,” in *Some Sermons Preached on Several Occasions*, ix.

Burnet next argued that Providence established the Orange cause:

Having thus shew'd what Reason this Nation had to conclude, that the Court had resolv'd on, and had begun a total Subversion of our Constitution and Legislation; upon which they call'd on the Prince of Orange as nearly concern'd both in the immediate Right of his Princess, and in his own more remote one to come and preserve our Constitution . . . but before I go further in this Relation, I will mention the Extraordinary Providences of God that appear'd in our Passage to England.²¹⁹

At this point, Burnet relayed once again the providence of God that attend the Dutch voyage across the English Channel. While the voyage seemed, at first, endangered by an erratic “strong East Wind” and “a strong Gale,” yet, “in the minute in which we saw this Danger, the wind turn'd to the South, and with a soft Gale carried us into Torbay.”²²⁰ A well-timed “west wind” continued to aid the Dutch disembarkation, even while “Lord Dartmouth, who was following us with the King’s fleet” was “so stopped by these Westerly Winds, that in Conclusion he was shattered by them.”²²¹ Burnet acknowledged, “These signal Turns of the Wind in the Critical Minutes as we wanted them, made a great Impression on all who observ'd them.”²²² Indeed, the winds were received as “happy Providences” and “Evidences of God’s Favour” and “special Blessings from Heaven.”²²³

Burnet spent little time talking about William’s advance into London, and he chose next to defend the Revolution on the basis of James’ double desertion. Indeed, after “desertion upon desertion,” Burnet wrote, “the nation was either to continue in an unsettled State, or to call him back, and throw all up to him, and be at Mercy. Or they were to consider how to arrive at a Settlement as near the Constitution as was

²¹⁹Burnet, “Preface,” in *Some Sermons Preached on Several Occasions*, xii.

²²⁰Burnet, “Preface,” in *Some Sermons Preached on Several Occasions*, xiii.

²²¹Burnet, “Preface,” in *Some Sermons Preached on Several Occasions*, xiii.

²²²Burnet, “Preface,” in *Some Sermons Preached on Several Occasions*, xiv.

²²³Burnet, “Preface,” in *Some Sermons Preached on Several Occasions*, xiv, *passim*.

possible.”²²⁴ Some discussion was made of a regency for William, but a Williamite regency could not secure the loyalty of the English people by law. Accordingly, Burnet wrote:

If the Oath of Allegiance was still continu’d, by which all his Power and Authority was to be maintain’d, as well as a Titular Dignity; here was an open Mockery, not without an impious Profanation, to Swear to a Prince who was to be divested of his Authority; and if any Person should be brought to suffer for Acting against the Regent, tho’ done by the King’s Warrant, and on design to serve him, yet he was to be Tried for Compassing the Death of the King; of which, no Conscientious Jury, could find such Persons Guilty: So it was plain whosoever should be Regent, must be in a perpetual Struggle with the King, with whom the legal Authority was still to remain. This being such an insecure and illegal Frame; it seem’d a much more natural Way of settling the Nation, to shew that the King by his Proceedings, had violated the Constitution [and] had abdicated the Government, and left the Throne Vacant: Upon which it was both just and necessary for the nation to secure itself, and yet to depart as little as was possible from the Constitution.²²⁵

After these reflections on the viability of a regency, Burnet then gave a dismissive wave of the hand to the claims that James II’s male heir should one day possess the crown: “the whole Nation, as well as the next Heirs of the Crown” had “conceived great and reasonable jealousies of an imposture” in the “strange management of that Affair.”²²⁶ In other words, Burnet referred to the “supposed birth” of James II’s son in June of 1688 on the eve of Revolution as a mere “pretender” to the throne.²²⁷

Moreover, Burnet pleaded:

Besides, if a subversion of the Constitution and a Desertion . . . gave the Nation a Right to Preserve itself, that must give likewise a Power to secure it from the Desperate After-game of Relapsing into the like state . . . even if there had been the greatest Evidence possible of an uncontested Birth.²²⁸

Having dismissed James II’s son as a pretender to the English Crown, Burnet summarily

²²⁴Burnet, “Preface,” in *Some Sermons Preached on Several Occasions*, xviii.

²²⁵Burnet, “Preface,” in *Some Sermons Preached on Several Occasions*, xix–xx.

²²⁶Burnet, “Preface,” in *Some Sermons Preached on Several Occasions*, xx.

²²⁷Burnet, “Preface,” in *Some Sermons Preached on Several Occasions*, xx.

²²⁸Burnet, “Preface,” in *Some Sermons Preached on Several Occasions*, xx–xxi.

asserted: “Thus was the Revolution brought about, and these are the Revolution Principles, against which some take liberties to Declame so zealously.”²²⁹ Then, Burnet offered a remarkable concession:

Revolution principles can not justify Resistance, but when the Provocations given by the Government are such as were then given by King James. I shall dwell no longer on this Subject, into which I would not have engaged so far, if the unaccountable Indolence of some, and the unconquerable Perverseness of others, had not made it seem necessary to me to State this Matter once more.²³⁰

Burnet’s death (1715). In March of 1715, at the age of seventy-two, Gilbert Burnet “was taken ill of a violent cold, which soon turned to a pleuritic fever.”²³¹ Burnet “died on the seventeenth day of that month.”²³²

Summary of Burnet’s Understanding and Use of Providence

Having chronicled Burnet’s understanding of passive obedience, his understanding and use of the doctrine of providence will now be examined.

Summary of Burnet’s Understanding of Providence

In *An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England*,²³³ Burnet surveyed two major views of the divine decrees, including the function of providence according to each view: the “supralapsarian” view (i.e., “St. Austin’s”

²²⁹Burnet, “Preface,” in *Some Sermons Preached on Several Occasions*, xxi.

²³⁰Burnet, “Preface,” in *Some Sermons Preached on Several Occasions*, xxi. With this remarkable concession, Burnet finally rested his case with respect to the doctrine of resistance in light of the Revolution.

²³¹Thomas Burnet, “The Life of the Author,” in Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 319.

²³²Thomas Burnet, “The Life of the Author,” in Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 319.

²³³Gilbert Burnet, *An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England* (Dublin, 1724).

view²³⁴) and the “Remonstrant” view.²³⁵ Burnet maintained a fair and moderate tone in his *Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles*, particularly with respect to divine decrees and providence; however, Burnet indicated his doctrinal position in the preface of this exposition:

There is no part of this whole work, in which I have laboured with more care, and have writ in a more uncommon method, than concerning predestination. For, as my small reading had carried me further in that controversy than in any other whatsoever, both with relation to ancients and moderns, and to the most esteemed books in all the different parties; so I weighed the Article with that impartial care that I thought became me; and have taken a method, which is, for ought I know, new, of stating the arguments of all sides with so much fairness, that those, who knew my own opinion in this point, have owned to me, that they could not discover it by any thing that I had written. They were inclined to think that I was of another mind than they took me to be, when they read my arguings of that side. I have not, in the explanation of that Article, told what my own opinion was; yet here I think it may be fitting to own, that I follow the doctrine of the Greek church, from which St. Austin departed, and formed a new system. After this declaration, I may now appeal both to St. Austin’s disciples, and to the Calvinists, whether I have not stated both their opinions and arguments, not only with truth and candour, but with all possible advantages.²³⁶

²³⁴By “St. Austin,” Burnet was referring to St. Augustine of Hippo (Burnet, *An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles*, 201, 203). Burnet’s overview of St. Austin’s notion of the eternal decrees, predestination, and providence can be found in Burnet, *An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles*, 204-11.

²³⁵For Burnet’s survey of “the Remonstrants Arguments,” see Burnet, *An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles*, 214-23. Burnet also briefly addressed the “sublapsarian” view, but he spent less than one page covering this perspective.

²³⁶Burnet, “Preface,” in *An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles*, xi–xii. Context makes clear that “St. Austin” is a reference to St. Augustine of Hippo in Burnet’s writing (Burnet, *An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles*, 201 and 203). Note also that Burnet admitted that the framers of the Thirty-Nine Articles followed Augustine’s view, particularly with respect to the eternal decrees; thus, Burnet wrote,

The Article [#17] does also seem to assert the Efficacy of Grace: That in which the knot of the whole Difficulty lies, is not Defined; that is, Whether God’s Eternal Purpose or Decree was made according to what he foresaw his Creatures would do, or purely upon an Absolute Will, in order to his own Glory. It is very probably, that those who Penned it meant that the Decree was Absolute; but yet since they have not said it, those who subscribe the Article do not seem to be bound to any thing that is not expressed in them: And therefore, since the *Remonstrants* do not deny but that God having foreseen what all Mankind would, according to all the different Circumstances in which they should be put, do or not do, he upon that did by a firm and Eterna Decree lay that whole Design in all its Branches, which he Executes in time; they may subscribe this article without renouncing their Opinion to this

Though Burnet did not personally identify with Augustine's view of providence, some statements appear to endorse an Augustinian view of providence:

Which way soever God governs the world, and what influence soever he had over men's minds, we are sure that the governing and preserving his own workmanship is so plainly a perfection, that it must belong to a Being infinitely perfect: and there is such a chain in things, those of the greatest consequence arising often from small and inconsiderable ones, that we cannot imagine a Providence, unless we believe every thing to be within its care and view.²³⁷

Despite such assertions, Burnet believed that providence was attached only to the "permissive or directing" will of God; by contrast, Burnet did not believe that the providence of God was attached to "eternal decrees" in a way that could be described as "antecedent" or "causal." Said Burnet, "Things that happen under a permissive and directing Providence, may be also by a largeness of expression ascribed to the Will and Counsel of God; for a permissive or directing Will is really a Will, though it be not antecedent nor causal."²³⁸

While Burnet rejected Augustine's view of providence, he nevertheless recognized the "difficulty" that the doctrine of providence presented:

If it is believed that God governs the World, and that the Wills of Men are free; then it is natural to enquire which of these is subject to the other, or how they can be

matter. On the other hand, the *Calvinists* have less occasion for Scruple; since the Article does seem more plainly to favour them. (Burnet, *An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles*, 228)

Part of the rub with the doctrine of divine decrees—particularly predestination—was expressed by Burnet in these terms: "The natural Consequence of an Absolute Decree, is either presumption or despair; since a Man upon that bottom reckons, That which was soever the Decree is made, it must certainly be accomplished" (Burnet, *An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles*, 228). Finally, Foxcroft deemed Burnet as an Arminian with a "doubly strengthened" bias against the Calvinists (Clark and Foxcroft, *Life of Gilbert Burnet*, 225).

²³⁷Burnet, *An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles*, 40.

²³⁸Burnet, *An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles*, 220. Burnet cited, as an example of God's permitting and directing will, the "hardning" of Pharaoh's heart: "The hardning Pharaoh's heart, may be ascribed to God, though it is said that his heart hardned it-self; because he took the occasions from the stops God put in those Plagues that he sent upon him and his People, to encourage himself, when he saw there was a new Respite granted him" (Burnet, *An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles*, 220).

maintained: Whether God determines the Will? Or if his Providence follows the motions of the will? Therefore all those that believed a Providence have been aware of this difficulty.²³⁹

Burnet offered the following counsel in order to reconcile party differences:

When all parties acknowledge that God is the Sovereign Lord of the Universe; that he governs it by a Providence from which nothing is hid, and to which nothing can resist; and that he is likewise Holy and Just, True and Faithful, Merciful and Gracious in all his ways; those who agree about all this, should not differ though they cannot fall into the same Methods of reconciling these together. And if they do all agree to bless God for all the good that the either do, or receive, and to accuse themselves for all the ill that they do or suffer: if they agree that they ought to be humble, and to mistrust their own strength, to pray earnest to God for assistance, and to depend on him, to trust him, and likewise to employ their own faculties with all possible care and diligence, in the cleansing their Hearts, and governing their Words and Actions; here the great Truths of both Sides are safe; every thing that has an Influence on practice is agreed on; though neither side can meet in the same ways of joining all these together.²⁴⁰

Burnet also used the labels of “Calvinist” and “Arminian” in order to correct party distempers:

Both sides have their peculiar temptations as well as their advantages: the Calvinist is tempted to a false security, and sloth: and the Arminian may be tempted to trust too much to himself, and too little to God: so equally may a man of a calm temper, and of moderate thoughts, balance this matter between both the sides, and so unreasonable it is to give way to a positive and dictating temper in this point. If the Arminian is zealous to assert liberty, it is because he cannot see how there can be good or evil in the world without it: he thinks it is the work of God, that he had made for great ends; and therefore he can allow of nothing that he thinks destroys it. If on the other hand a Calvinist seems to break in upon liberty, it is because he cannot reconcile it with the sovereignty of God, and the freedom of his grace: and he grows to think that it is an act of devotion to offer up the one to save the other. The common fault of both sides is to charge one another with the consequences of their opinions, as if they were truly their tenets . . . each side thinks the consequences of the other are both worse.²⁴¹

Burnet believed that such “differences” among various Protestant groups with respect to divine decrees could create real “mischief” that could lead to significant “breaches”—perhaps even war.²⁴² For this reason, Burnet suggested that both theological positions

²³⁹Burnet, *An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles*, 197.

²⁴⁰Burnet, *An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles*, xiv.

²⁴¹Burnet, *An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles*, 224-25.

²⁴²Burnet, *An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles*, xviii.

possessed “a great deal of weight”; therefore, “there is no reason for either of them to despise the other”:

There is a great deal of weight in what has been said of both Sides: So much, that it is no wonder if Education, the constant attending more to the Difficulties of the one side than of the other, and a Temper some way proportioned to it, does fix Men very steddily to either the one or the other Persuasion. Both Sides have their Difficulties, so it will be natural to chuse that Side where the Difficulties are least felt: But it is plain there is no reason for either . . . to despise the other, since the Arguments of both are far from contemptible.²⁴³

Burnet was personally content to acknowledge God’s providence, but he also allowed for great latitude with respect to the way that providence might be interpreted. Burnet believed that the working of providence—along with God’s knowledge and decrees—was “one with His essence.”²⁴⁴ Moreover, because Burnet believed that God’s providence linked all “causes” to the doctrine of God’s “essence,” Burnet determined that “causes” were ultimately unknowable: “To conceive how this is in God, is far above our capacity.”²⁴⁵ Therefore, Burnet concluded, “It is true, we do not so easily conceive how Free Minds are under this Providence.”²⁴⁶

Finally, as Burnet concluded his treatment of divine decrees, of predestination, and of the doctrine of providence, he wrote,

Since the Church [of England] has not been peremptory, but that a Latitude has been left to different Opinions, I thought it became me to make this Explanation of the Article such: And therefore I have not endeavored to possess the Reader with that which is my own sense in this matter, but have laid the Force of the Arguments, as well as the Weight of the Difficulties of both Sides, before him, with all the Advantages that I had found in the Books either of the one or of the other Persuasion. And I leave the Choice as free to my Reader, as the Church has done.²⁴⁷

Therefore, Burnet did not attach the doctrine of providence to the doctrine of eternal

²⁴³Burnet, *An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles*, 223.

²⁴⁴Burnet, *An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles*, 32-33.

²⁴⁵Burnet, *An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles*, 32-33.

²⁴⁶Burnet, *An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles*, 40.

²⁴⁷Burnet, *An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles*, 230.

decrees in any kind of “causal” sense, as Augustine did. Rather, Burnet believed in “a permissive and directing Providence,” which he “ascribed to the Will and Counsel of God” by “a largeness of expression.”²⁴⁸ For Burnet, the relationship between God’s providence and the “free minds” of remained ultimately unknowable.²⁴⁹

Summary of Burnet’s Use of Providence

Burnet’s post-1688 use of the doctrine of providence to support William III and the Glorious Revolution did not square with his pre-1688 use of the doctrine of providence with respect to passive obedience.

Burnet’s pre-1688 use of providence. In 1673, Burnet denounced “forcible resistance” as a “heresy,” and Burnet insisted that those who resist their earthly Sovereign do so upon a wisdom that is “sensual and devilish.”²⁵⁰ Moreover, Burnet described resistance doctrine as the result of a “carnal, unmortified, and impatient” frame of mind that is altogether inconsistent with a Christian disposition that quietly trusts the

²⁴⁸Burnet, *An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles*, 220. Burnet cited, as an example of God’s permitting and directing will, the “hardening” of Pharaoh’s heart: “The hardning Pharaoh’s heart, may be ascribed to God, though it is said tat his heard hardned it-self; because he took the occasions from the stops God put in those Plagues that he sent upon him and his People, to encourage himself, when he saw there was a new Respise granted him” (Burnet, *An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles*, 220).

²⁴⁹Burnet, *An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles*, 40. Burnet evidently achieved a confusing effect in his preaching on these points. Alexander Cunningham described Burnet’s preaching this way: “He blended together many of the opposite doctrines of Dr. James Arminius and Mr. John Calvin, with great eloquence and reputation, to the no small admiration of the vulgar” (Alexander Cunningham, *The History of Great Britain: From the Revolution of 1688, to the Accession of George the First* [London, 1787], 1:30). Cunningham continued,

He preached much, and in pompous strains, concerning the contagion of original sin, and the strict preservation of virginity and widowhood, after the example of St. Jerome. In the mean time, he himself married a lady of the noble family of Kennedy, and thereupon fled into England; where, having no estate, no hopes, no certain settlement, he cast himself upon God’s providence, and, through the patronage of the duke of Lauderdale, acquired some reputation at court, by occasionally celebrating the praises of the king, and exalting beyond bounds the royal prerogative. (Cunningham, *The History of Great Britain*, 1:30)

²⁵⁰Burnet, “To The Reader,” in *Vindication*, A7-A8.

providence of God:

Among all the heresies this age hath spawned, there is not one more contrary to the whole design of religion and more destructive of mankind, than is that bloody opinion of defending religion by arms, and of forcible resistance upon the colour of preserving religion. The wisdom of that policy is [earthly]ly sensual and devillish, favoring of a carnal unmortified and impatient mind, that cannot bear the cross, nor trusts to the providence of God: and yet with how much zeal is this doctrine maintained and propagated, as if on it hung both the law and the prophets?²⁵¹

In 1674, Burnet used the doctrine of an “unerring providence” to reinforce a principle of “humble Subjection to those God hath brought us under.”²⁵² Burnet unambiguously declared,

Consider the Order God hath fixed in the Government of the World, and the particular station wherein he hath placed and posted us, out of which we are not to stir on the pretence of heroical excitations; which, when examined, will be found the heats of a warm Fancy, or the swellings of an elevated Mind that distrust the Providence of God, as if he were not able to compass his designs, and therefore he must stretch out his hands to help him, labouring under too great a load; which is indeed the language of all those who pretending zeal for his Service, do step out of their station, and meddle with matters that are too high for them. The fate of Uzzah should have taught us both more Wisdom and Religion.²⁵³

Accordingly, Burnet used the doctrine of providence prior to 1688 to call his hearers to “an entire obedience” and to “an absolute Submission to that Supreme Power God hath put in our Sovereign's hands.”²⁵⁴ Moreover, prior to 1688, Burnet’s doctrine of “absolute submission” (i.e., passive obedience) did not include a proviso that distinguished between executive authority and legislative authority. Finally, even if circumstances did not “suit our wishes or desires,” Burnet exhorted,

²⁵¹Burnet, “To The Reader,” in *Vindication*, A7-A8. The words “earthly” and “sensual” are not preserved in the original text of Burnet’s sermon, but these same words are cited directly in another document by George Hickes in 1695 (George Hickes, *Some Discourses Upon Dr. Burnet and Dr. Tillotson*, [London, 1695], 7); therefore, I have supplied the four missing letters in the word “earthly,” and six missing letters in the word “sensual” in the quotation above.

²⁵²Burnet, *Subjection for Conscience-sake Asserted*, 20-22.

²⁵³Burnet, *Subjection for Conscience-sake Asserted*, 20-22.

²⁵⁴Burnet, *Subjection for Conscience-sake Asserted*, 36-37.

If the Conduct of Affairs do not suit our wishes or desires, yet for all that we are to trust to and depend on God's Providence, not daring once to think of attempting against the Lord's anointed, nor to engage in courses that may bring on so much mischief and confusion, but let us ever set before our eyes our blessed Saviour, Who endured the Cross and despised the shame; who when he was reviled, reviled not again, and when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.²⁵⁵

Therefore, prior to 1688, Burnet used the doctrine of providence to reinforce passive obedience and political nonresistance. In other words, prior to 1688, Burnet used the doctrine of providence as an important buttress to the doctrine of passive obedience, which effectively served to support to the reigning English monarch.²⁵⁶

Burnet's post-1688 use of providence. By December 23, 1688, Burnet no longer used the doctrine of providence to reinforce passive obedience in support of King James II—the reigning English monarch by the divine right of hereditary succession. Rather, from December 23 onward, Burnet used the doctrine of providence to support William III and to defend the legitimacy of the Glorious Revolution. For example, reflecting back upon the Glorious Revolution on January 31, 1689, Burnet declared,

Who, I say, can look on all this without raising in himself all the just Expectations of every thing that is Great or Good? Or who can look back on those black Clouds that were hanging over our Heads, and that seemed charged with Storms and Thunders, and observe the present Calm, and consider the Steps of Providence, I had almost said the Prodigies and Miracles of Providence, that have attended our Deliverance, without letting his Heart run out into all the joyful expectations possible? You feel a great deal, and promise your selves a great deal more; and you are now in the right way to it, when you come with the Solemnities of Thanksgiving, to offer up your Acknowledgments to that Fountain of Life, to whom you owe this new Lease which he has granted you.²⁵⁷

Burnet also repeatedly identified William of Orange as God's "instrument" of

²⁵⁵Burnet, *Subjection for Conscience-sake Asserted*, 37-38.

²⁵⁶Burnet used the doctrine of passive obedience to support Charles II until his death on February 6, 1685; afterwards, the doctrine of passive obedience would have served James II.

²⁵⁷Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the House of Commons*, 3-4.

providence;²⁵⁸ accordingly, Burnet insisted to the English House of Commons that William of Orange should be “owned as one of the best Gifts of Heaven” and that he deserved “all the Returns of Duty and Gratitude from his People.”²⁵⁹ In this way, Burnet repeatedly used the doctrine of providence to garner support for William III and the Glorious Revolution until the end of his life.

Only in 1713, at the age of seventy, did Burnet offer a vague concession: “Revolution principles can not justify Resistance, but when the Provocations given by the Government are such as were then given by King James”²⁶⁰ The precise meaning of this confession is unclear. However, what is perspicuous is that Burnet violated his self-professed convictions concerning the doctrine of passive obedience by actively resisting James II and supporting William III. Such abuse of the doctrine of providence has been “christened” by later historians of the Glorious Revolution as the “divine right of Providence.”²⁶¹

²⁵⁸Burnet, *A Sermon Preached in the Chappel of St. James*, 32; Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the House of Commons*, 22.

²⁵⁹Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the King At Whitehall*, 20.

²⁶⁰Burnet, “Preface,” in *Some Sermons Preached on Several Occasions*, xxi.

²⁶¹Kenyon, *Revolution Principles*, 24. See also, Overton, *Nonjurors*, 3-4; Straka, “Divine Right and the Defense of Royal Supremacy after 1688,” in *Anglican Reaction to the Revolution of 1688*, 80.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUDING COMPARISON OF STENNETT AND BURNET

Introduction

The primary purpose of this chapter is to compare our two preachers of providence: Joseph Stennett and Gilbert Burnet. Joseph Stennett's use of the doctrine of providence will be presented as exemplary, while Gilbert Burnet's use of the doctrine of providence will be presented as specious.

Comparing Two Preachers of Providence

Joseph Stennett and Gilbert Burnet both used the doctrine of providence to support William III and the Glorious Revolution. However, Stennett used the doctrine of providence consistently and convictionally while Gilbert Burnet did not use the doctrine of providence in keeping with his self-professed Anglican convictions, particularly passive obedience. Therefore, the major distinction between these two preachers of providence is not in the actual words that they used, *per se*, but in the character and doctrinal commitments that each represented. I will briefly summarize the similarities between Stennett and Burnet before accentuating the convictional differences between these two preachers of providence.

The most obvious point of commonality between Stennett and Burnet is that they both supported William III and the Glorious Revolution by using the doctrine of providence. Accordingly, in 1706, Stennett celebrated William's revolutionary exploits with these words:

Without mentioning the many deliverances and victories wherewith God has honoured this nation, since reformed from the Romish religion, our own memory

can furnish us with an account of the revolution under the conduct of the late king William, whose name will always appear bright in our English history, as long as the love of liberty and religion shall obtain among us, that liberty which he so gloriously restored, and that religion which he so happily secured by the favourable providence of God, and which the same divine hand has preserved to us by many remarkable successes.¹

Burnet also supported William III and the Glorious Revolution using lofty language. In his sermon on December 23, 1688, Burnet urged:

Things do sometimes speak, and times call aloud; and as all men are before-hand with me, in the choice of this text, at least in applying it to the present, so that the amazing concurrence of Providences, which have conspired to hatch and bring forth, and perfect this extraordinary revolution, would lead one very naturally to use these words, even tho we had no such verse in Scripture; for we have before us a work, that seems to ourselves a dream, and that will appear to posterity as a fiction: a work about which providence has watched in so peculiar a manner, that a mind must be far gone into atheism, that can resist so full a conviction as this offers us in favour of that truth.²

With respect to William III, Burnet described the Prince of Orange as “that Blessed Instrument on whom [God] has laid so much Glory.”³ Consequently, Stennett and Burnet appeared to be politically aligned with respect to King William, the Glorious Revolution, and the wider Protestant interest.

Second, with respect to personal suffering and hardship, Stennett and Burnet both urged their parishioners to “obey God” and to entrust their well-being to the care of God’s providence—even in the midst of difficult circumstances. Stennett urged his people:

¹Stennett, “Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:293. In this same sermon, Stennett referred once again to “the late king William of glorious memory” as one “who engaged in battle for us in the same cause of liberty, which is now against so vigorously asserted by the allies, and so happily favoured by the providence of God” (Stennett, “Sermon Preach’d on Thursday the 27th of June, 1706,” in *Works*, 1:299).

²Burnet, *Sermon Preached in the Chappel of St. James*, 1.

³Burnet, *Sermon Preached in the Chappel of St. James*, 32. Other sermons that refer to William III as the “instrument” of God’s providence include Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the House of Commons*, 18-19, 22-23; Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the King At Whitehall*, 8-9.

Can anything be more reasonable and just, than that we should serve the God who made us, and resign ourselves to the providence of him who is infinitely wise, gracious and merciful? Is there anything more reasonable than that we should rather expose ourselves to suffering than to sin, and *obey God rather than men*?⁴

Stennett believed, “there is nothing more reasonable.”⁵ To Stennett’s mind, obeying God and entrusting oneself to his providential care represented much of the core of the Christian life. Moreover, Stennett cautioned his hearers never to “distrust the providence of God” during times of fear or suffering or affliction.⁶

Astonishingly, in an important political sermon, Burnet also pressed his readers to trust the providential care of God. Said Burnet,

We are secure, knowing, that all things work together for good to them that love God, believing that his Providence watcheth over his Church, and all that trust in him, so that not a hair of their head falls to the ground without his care, and that he hath given his Angels charge to encamp about and Minister to the heirs of Salvation; and this may well supersede our fears, and throw off the anxieties of all perplexing thoughts.⁷

Again, Burnet urged:

Let us adorn our holy Profession with a Life suitable to it, and let us shew to the World, that we take not up, nor maintain our Religion upon Interest, but found it on sure and unmoveable Foundations, which, being the same always, will ever oblige us to the same Duties and Practises. Let us study to empty ourselves of all big self-conceiting Thoughts, of all hot and inflamed Passions and Appetites, of all unruly and unbounded Desires, of all Levity and unstayedness of mind; that with humble Hearts, calm Minds, contented Spirits, and steady Thoughts, every one may follow the Duties of his Station, and contain himself within it as becomes a Christian, paying inwardly in our very thoughts that reverence we owe the Higher Powers, and offering up to God the constant Tribute of our Prayers for them; considering they are God's Vicegerents, and by his own warrant are called Gods: And if the Conduct of

⁴Stennett, “Obedience the Proof of Love to God,” in *Works*, 3:113; emphases original.

⁵Stennett, “Obedience the Proof of Love to God,” in *Works*, 3:113.

⁶Stennett, “Reasonableness of Bearing Afflictions: Sermon I,” in *Works*, 3:261.

⁷Burnet, *Subjection for Conscience-sake Asserted*, 20-22.

Affairs do not suit our wishes or desires, yet for all that we are to trust to and depend on God's Providence.⁸

Thus, in both cases, Stennett and Burnet enjoined their hearers to perform a duty of obedience to God.⁹ Moreover, by way of motivation, Stennett and Burnet both appealed to the providence of God for the sake of comfort in the face of affliction. Consequently, Stennett and Burnet appear as theological allies with respect to the doctrine of providence and the personal suffering of Christians. These examples represent a *prima facie* consistency between Joseph Stennett's and Gilbert Burnet's use of the doctrine of providence.

Despite the *prima facie* similarities between Stennett's and Burnet's use of the doctrine of providence, important and profound dissimilarities remain. First, Stennett was a convictional nonconformist Baptist, and Burnet was an Anglican. Accordingly, Stennett never swore loyalty to James II, while Burnet took an Oath of Allegiance to James II. Also, Stennett never affirmed the doctrine of passive obedience, while Burnet was the most recognized and outspoken advocate of passive obedience of his generation (prior to 1688). Stennett affirmed that the doctrine of providence was directly attached to God's eternal decrees,¹⁰ while Burnet rejected the notion that providence was attached to God's eternal decrees in an "antecedent" or "causal" way.¹¹ Consequently, Stennett used

⁸Burnet, *Subjection for Conscience-sake Asserted*, 37-38.

⁹Burnet's nuance on this point is important. As Burnet stressed obedience to the civil magistrate, he urged his readers "to obey them for the Lord's sake" and also "to be subject to them for Conscience-sake" (Burnet, *Subjection for Conscience-sake Asserted*, 20).

¹⁰See paragraph three of "Of Divine Providence," in *1689 Confession*, 41; Stennett also composed a hymn with respect to God's decrees and His "tracks of providence," in Stennett, "Hymn 25," in *Works*, 4:116. Stennett was primarily celebrating the love of God through "the decrees divine" and His "tracks of providence."

¹¹Burnet, *An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles*, 220. Burnet acknowledged that the framers of the Thirty-Nine Articles probably followed St. Augustine's view of providence and the eternal decrees; nevertheless, Burnet personally disclaimed St. Augustine's view of providence and the eternal decrees (Burnet, "Preface," in *An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles*, xi-xii; cf. also Burnet, *An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles*, 228).

the doctrine of providence to attribute the affairs of contemporary history directly to the hand of God; by contrast, Burnet used the doctrine of providence with respect to contemporary history only by “a largeness of expression.”¹² Thus, Stennett’s use of the doctrine of providence in support William of Orange and the Glorious Revolution did not violate his personal convictions. By contrast, Burnet’s use of the doctrine of providence prior to 1688 subserved the preeminent Anglican doctrine of passive obedience; however, during and after the events of 1688, Burnet’s use of the doctrine of providence directly served the William of Orange and the Glorious Revolution directly. As such, Burnet’s use of the doctrine of providence to support William of Orange and the Glorious Revolution directly violated his documented, pre-1688 Anglican convictions regarding passive obedience.

Therefore, the major distinction between these two preachers of providence is found not strictly in the words they used to affirm William III and the Glorious Revolution, *per se*, but in the consistency with which they maintained their respective doctrinal views. Joseph Stennett articulated the doctrine of providence in a manner consistent with his own Baptist convictions, but Gilbert Burnet was not true to his Anglican convictions, particularly the doctrine of passive obedience. Stennett was “very steady to the principles he professed,”¹³ while Burnet failed to “adorn [his] holy Profession with a Life suitable to it.”¹⁴

¹²Burnet, *An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles*, 220. Burnet cited, as an example of God’s permitting and directing will, the “hardening” of Pharaoh’s heart: “The hardning Pharaoh’s heart, may be ascribed to God, though it is said that his heart hardned it-self; because he took the occasions from the stops God put in those Plagues that he sent upon him and his People, to encourage himself, when he saw there was a new Respite granted him” (Burnet, *An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles*, 220).

¹³“Some Account of His Life,” in *Works*, 1:24.

¹⁴Burnet, *Subjection for Conscience-sake Asserted*, 37-38.

Gilbert Burnet: An Imaginative Propagandist

Helen Foxcroft concluded her extraordinary biography on Gilbert Burnet by asking the question, “What of the man himself?”¹⁵ Foxcroft conceded, “We must admit the plausibility of a sinister interpretation.”¹⁶ Foxcroft explained, “From a bald outline of his career has been deduced the hypocritical adventurer, his principles swayed by his passions, his changes of opinion coincident with the turns of his fortune.”¹⁷ Yet, for Foxcroft, an earnest man existed behind all the outward prejudice and contradiction that afflicted Burnet’s public life.

While acknowledging Foxcroft’s judgement to be charitable, this project concludes with a view of Burnet that aligns with Claydon’s judgment. Foxcroft noted that Burnet’s “changes of opinion” were disgracefully “coincident with the turns of his fortune.”¹⁸ Prior to the Revolution, Burnet categorically championed the Anglican doctrine of passive obedience, especially in his 1673 publication of *Vindication of the Authority, Constitution, and Laws of the Church and State of Scotland*—a publication that initially ingratiated Burnet with James II, then Duke of York.¹⁹ Moreover, in the name of providence, Burnet enjoined his fellow countrymen, including the dying Lord Russell, to disclaim all resistance.²⁰ Burnet even contended that submission to God’s

¹⁵T. E. S. Clarke and H. C. Foxcroft, *The Life of Gilbert Burnet: Bishop of Salisbury* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907), 476.

¹⁶Clark and Foxcroft, *Life of Gilbert Burnet*, 476.

¹⁷Clark and Foxcroft, *Life of Gilbert Burnet*, 476.

¹⁸Clark and Foxcroft, *Life of Gilbert Burnet*, 476.

¹⁹On Burnet’s good standing with James II (i.e., Duke of York), see Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 1:87; see also Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 2:35, 50. Consequently, Burnet’s *History* records several instances where James II pulled Burnet into private conversation—prior to 1687, of course (Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, 1:298, 452, 469, 528, 531).

²⁰See Burnet, “To The Reader,” in *Vindication*, A7-A8. With respect to Lord Russell, See Burnet, “An Account of all that Passed Between the Late Lord Russell and Me Concerning

providence was the one true “way of the Cross.”²¹ Yet, at precisely the point when the doctrine of passive obedience proved to be personally inexpedient, Burnet fled England, pledged himself to the Orange cause, and championed a doctrine of providence that perfectly accommodated a Willimite Revolution. Moreover, rather than admitting to a drastic change of opinion regarding passive obedience, Burnet publicly denied any substantive change of conviction for the rest of his life.²² Only in 1713, at the age of seventy, did Burnet obliquely admit that “Revolution principles cannot justify resistance.”²³ However, in full context, Burnet actually only excused himself: “Revolution principles cannot justify resistance , but when the provocations given by the Government are such as were then given by King James.”²⁴

Without doubt, Burnet’s documented convictions concerning passive obedience were revised in 1688 to make room for a providential deliverer in William III. Therefore, in light of Burnet’s capitulation on passive obedience, this dissertation acknowledges the legitimacy of Tony Claydon’s negative interpretation of Burnet as a “propagandist” of the Revolution. In *William III and the Godly Revolution*, Claydon charged,

His Last Speech and Paper,” in *A General Dictionary, Historical and Critical* (London, 1739), 821.

²¹Burnet, “To The Reader,” in *Vindication*, A7-A8.

²²Burnet, Burnet, *The Bishop of Salisbury . . . [at] the Impeachment of Dr. Henry Sacheverell*, 2; Cf. also Burnet, “Dr. Burnet’s Vindication of Himself,” in *A Collection of Eighteen Papers*, 184. If Burnet had fully owned his change of conviction regarding passive obedience, then subsequent scholarship could have plausibly concluded that Burnet’s theological and political convictions simply developed a legitimate constitutional orientation in time. However, because Burnet insisted that his convictions regarding passive obedience remained unchanged throughout his life, the stronger judgments of hypocrisy and prejudice remain warranted.

²³Burnet, “Preface,” in *Some Sermons Preached on Several Occasions*, xxi.

²⁴Burnet, “Preface,” in *Some Sermons Preached on Several Occasions*, xxi.

The regime of William III did not rely upon legal or constitutional rhetoric as it attempted to legitimate itself after the Glorious Revolution, but rather used a protestant, providential, and biblically based language of ‘courtly reformation.’ This language presented the king as a divinely protected godly magistrate who could both defend the true church against its popish enemies, and restore the original piety and virtue of the elect English nation.²⁵

Claydon also explained the source of his thesis:

Concentrating upon a range of hitherto understudied sources—especially sermons and public prayers—the book demonstrates the vigor with which the ideal of courtly reformation was broadcast by an *imaginative* group of *propagandists* under Bishop Gilbert Burnet.²⁶

Claydon is certainly correct that Burnet “used a protestant, providential, and biblically based language” to establish William III on the English throne.²⁷ Claydon’s emphasis on “language” represents the key distinction. As research has demonstrated, Burnet’s use of providence was not theologically or convictionally based. Rather, Burnet was only able to use the doctrine of providence to affirm William III as England’s providential savior “by a largeness of expression.”²⁸ Upon close review, Burnet’s doctrinal convictions concerning passive obedience were circumvented by a revolutionary providentialist rhetoric that defied James II and served William III. Burnet’s doctrinal inconsistency was not lost to his own generation; on the contrary, Burnet was forced to answer scathing public criticism for his inconsistency at least until 1713.²⁹

²⁵Tony Claydon, *William III and The Godly Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), i.

²⁶Claydon, *William III and The Godly Revolution*, i; emphasis added.

²⁷Claydon, *William III and The Godly Revolution*, i.

²⁸Burnet, *An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles*, 220. Kenyon argues that Burnet’s use of providence represented one small part of a larger “blunderbuss technique” to establish William III on the English throne (Kenyon, *Revolution Principles*, 22).

²⁹Gilbert Burnet, “Preface,” in *Some Sermons Preached on Several Occasions* (London, 1713): iii–xxv.

Joseph Stennett: A Pattern in Preaching and Behavior

Nathanael Hodges sought to preserve Joseph Stennett as an enduring model of Christian faith and practice for subsequent generations of Protestant Christians. “Tho he is dead, he yet speaks, and will speak by his excellent works, so long as Protestant knowledg [sic] and Protestant liberty endure in these kingdoms,” said Hodges. “His piety towards God was very great and very exemplary.”³⁰ Hodges concluded his funeral sermon in honor of Stennett’s life by saying, “Let us all follow the faith of this great man.”³¹

Stennett aspired to set an example or “pattern” for others to follow. On one particular occasion, Stennett preached to a group of pastors at the ordination service of one Mr. David Rees, and he exhorted the gathered assembly, “You are to be *a pattern to the flock*, that they may learn from your behavior, as well as preaching, how they ought to practise the duties of the Christian religion.”³² By remaining true to his “principles,” Stennett set a worthy pattern in his preaching of providence and in his submission to the hand of providence (i.e., “behavior”).³³

As research has demonstrated, Stennett made considerable use of the doctrine of providence in his political addresses and sermons. But for Stennett, the doctrine of

³⁰Nathanael Hodges, *The Christian’s Gain by Death. A Funeral Sermon Occasion’d by the Death of the Reverent Mr. Joseph Stennett. Preach’d August the 22d. 1713*, 2nd ed. (London, 1713), 29 and 30, respectively; letters that were originally capitalized are designated in italics in this quotation.

³¹Hodges, *The Christian’s Gain by Death*, 36; letters that were originally capitalized are designated in italics in this quotation.

³²Stennett, “A Sermon at the Ordination of Mr. David Rees,” in *Works*, 2:123; emphasis original. Stennett even warned against the day of regret: “We may, perhaps, have cause to look back with sorrow, that we have served Christ no better, and no more *adorned the doctrine of our blessed Saviour*; that we have preached, and no more recommended the word we preach, by a suitable pattern to the flock” (Stennett, “A Sermon at the Ordination of Mr. David Rees,” in *Works*, 2:125; emphasis original).

³³“Some Account of His Life,” in *Works*, 1:24; Stennett’s language of “behavior” is found in Stennett, “A Sermon at the Ordination of Mr. David Rees,” in *Works*, 2:123.

providence was no mere political tincture. For Stennett, providence encompassed all of the activities of God within his created order. Consequently, for Stennett, submitting to God's providence was at the core of what it meant to be a Christian.

Stennett believed that Protestant Christians were “the favourites of heaven” and that the hand of providence specially attended God's “favourites.”³⁴ For this reason, Stennett taught his congregation never to “deny the providence of God” nor to “repine at the divine providence” nor to “murmur at the providence of God” nor to “distrust the providence of God.”³⁵ Rather, Stennett urged his congregation to “advert to the conduct of his providence, upon all accounts” and to “resign [them]selves to the conduct of his providence.”³⁶ The reason, of course, was that Stennett believed that God's providence always worked for the good of His “favourites.” Stennett explained: “thro' the whole course of God's providence,” God “hath no design thereby, but for the advantage of his people.”³⁷ Even when God's favorites were afflicted by a “cross providence,” Stennett taught them “to look after that which is better than we can enjoy in this imperfect state.”³⁸ Even when a loved one died, Stennett urged a consideration of providence:

This method of providence naturally puts us upon a proper consideration of things, and leads us to look after that which is better than we can enjoy in this imperfect

³⁴Stennett, “Reasonableness of Bearing Afflictions: Sermon I,” in *Works*, 3:299.

³⁵Stennett, “Reasonableness of Bearing Afflictions: Sermon I,” in *Works*, 3:248, 252, 258, and 261; respectively.

³⁶Stennett, “Reasonableness of Bearing Afflictions: Sermon I,” in *Works*, 3:255 and 261; respectively.

³⁷Stennett, “Reasonableness of Bearing Afflictions: Sermon I,” in *Works*, 3:265. Even with respect to affliction, Stennett taught,

We cannot but acknowledge that God hath in love and mercy afflicted us; and he hath dealt with us as with children, and not as with slaves, that he hath chastened us for our profit, not that he took pleasure in our miseries and sorrows, but because he thought it necessary for us, for our good and advantage, that we should be afflicted (Stennett, “Reasonableness of Bearing Afflictions: Sermon I,” in *Works*, 3:292).

³⁸Stennett, “Reasonableness of Bearing Afflictions: Sermon II,” in *Works*, 3:284.

state . . . When we lose our friends and acquaintance, does not this make us consider that *all men walk here in a vain shew*, and that for us to be happy for ever, is to have an intimate acquaintance with God, and communion with him? When we are under any trouble or affliction in this world, it should put us upon considering that our true happiness is not to be obtained here, but that we are to seek for a sublime happiness in the heavenly state.³⁹

So Stennett preached; so did he live. Indeed, with regard to personal affliction, Stennett's "behavior" matched his "preaching."⁴⁰ In other words, Stennett "resigned" himself completely to God's providence, even God's "cross providence." Admittedly, not all of the afflictions that Stennett suffered are known, but some afflictions are discernible from his *Works*.⁴¹ For example, Stennett's *Works* mention that his eldest daughter died at the age of twelve and his son, Benjamin, died in infancy.⁴² Stennett's anguish on the occasion of Benjamin's death was expressed in a poem entitled, "On the Death of My Little Benjamin, an Infant." Stennett poured out his grief in verse:

While softer nature prompted me to weep,
O'er a sweet babe that death had lull'd asleep;
Set each internal spring to work, that moves

³⁹Stennett, "Reasonableness of Bearing Afflictions: Sermon II," in *Works*, 3:284; emphasis original.

⁴⁰"You are to be a pattern to the flock, that they may learn from your *behavior*, as well as preaching, how they ought to practice the duties of the Christian religion" (Stennett, "A Sermon at the Ordination of Mr. David Rees," in *Works*, 2:123).

⁴¹Also, in his funeral sermon, Nathanael Hodges conveyed that Stennett may have "struggl'd" financially. Stennett's *Works* indicate that Stennett received "great offers" of a divinity post within the Established Church. Stennett never accepted such offers. Thus, Hodges said of Stennett,

Very great offers indeed had been made him, which he might have enjoy'd too, and yet have retain'd the liberty of professing his sentiments; but he generously refus'd the Emoluments, since he could not comply with the work of them. This must have been a prodigious temptation to one, who was so tender of his family, so ambitious of doing justice as well as good; and to one too, who continually struggl'd under such strait circumstances, as this eminent servant of Christ did. (Hodges, *The Christian's Gain by Death*, 30-31)

⁴²Stennett, "Some Account of His Life," in *Works*, 1:19. Stennett's biographer writes that the death of his "own eldest daughter" was "so severe an affliction to Mr. Stennett, as had like to have proved fatal to him" (Stennett, "Some Account of His Life," in *Works*, 1:19). Little more is said concerning his eldest daughter.

A parent's bowels to the child he loves,
And taught me, by experimental smart,
What 'tis to have a tender father's heart;
Severe reason, striving to control
The strong emotions of my troubled soul; . . .
My sorrow bore me down, till faith stept in,
And told me truths dim reason ne'er had seen.⁴³

When sorrow bore Stennett down, "faith stept in" and triumphed in the midst of this severe stroke of providence. Just as he had taught others to do, Stennett looked beyond the grave:

Extend beyond the grave thy piercing view,
To that bright day when 't shall be form'd anew.⁴⁴

Perhaps it was Benjamin's death that Nathanael Hodges had in mind when he spoke of the "melancholy providences" that afflicted Stennett's life: "His patience under his very severe and afflictive circumstances was wonderful: as he had too much piety ever to repine against his God, under the most melancholy providences."⁴⁵ Stennett did not "repine" against the cross providence of God, just as he had taught.⁴⁶

As Stennett drew near to his own death, he called his surviving children together to give his "dying advice." In that tender moment, Stennett entrusted his children to the care of God's providence:

When [Stennett] drew near his dissolution, he called his children about him . . . and he pressed them in a special manner to a proper concern for their souls, declaring to them with the greatest assurance, and a pleasant smile in his countenance, "That if they were found walking in the ways of true religion, his God would be their God, to whose providence he could in faith commit them."⁴⁷

Thus, Stennett set a pattern of submission to the providence of God both in his preaching

⁴³Stennett, "On the Death of My Little Benjamin," in *Works*, 4:244-45.

⁴⁴Stennett, "On the Death of My Little Benjamin," in *Works*, 4:245.

⁴⁵Hodges, *The Christian's Gain by Death*, 34.

⁴⁶Stennett, "Reasonableness of Bearing Afflictions: Sermon I," in *Works*, 3:251.

⁴⁷"Some Account of His Life," in *Works*, 1:35.

and in his “behavior.”⁴⁸ How appropriate for Hodges to quote Stennett on providence at his funeral:

The serenity of his departing soul appear'd in the smiles of his face, and he breath'd forth his Spirit into the arms of his redeemer with a victorious joy. It will be well to use his own Words: “[May] the grief occasion'd by this decease become a godly sorrow, by a just application of our thoughts to the voice of God's providence, which speaks so loudly to us in this severe affliction.”⁴⁹

Because of the pattern set by Stennett, this dissertation acknowledges and appreciates Linda Colley's academically disinterested yet fair-minded judgment concerning the British Protestant worldview of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. Colley regarded the providentialist language in Britain during this time as rhetoric born out of a larger nationalistic “conceit”: that Britain was a new Israel specially protected by God. Said Colley,

Protestant Britons believed they were under God's special care. They knew that they were bound to be regularly tested by periods of extreme sin and suffering, and they took it for granted that struggle – especially struggle with those who were not Protestants – was their birthright. But they also believed that under Providence they would secure deliverance and achieve distinction. In short, they believe, many of them, that their land was nothing less than another and a better Israel.⁵⁰

Nevertheless, Colley insisted that this British conceit should be “recognized and taken seriously,” because it was not just “ignorant insularity, though some of it certainly was. It was bound up with a Protestant world-view” which “helped men and women make sense of their lives.”⁵¹ Thus, Colley unsympathetically yet correctly interpreted the conviction of men like Joseph Stennett regarding divine providence: “a Protestant deity

⁴⁸Stennett, “A Sermon at the Ordination of Mr. David Rees,” in *Works*, 2:123.

⁴⁹Hodges, *The Christian's Gain by Death*, 36.

⁵⁰Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging The Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 29-30.

⁵¹Colley, *Britons*, 43, *passim*.

was watching over his chosen people.”⁵² Though lacking in theological sensitivity, Colley’s judgment represents the core of Joseph Stennett’s political and pastoral use of the doctrine of providence.

In conclusion, by the evidence of his surviving *Works*, Stennett remained true to his documented convictions regarding divine providence throughout the entirety of his political, pastoral and ministerial life. In the words of his biographer, Stennett remained “very steady to the principles he professed.”⁵³ As Hodges preached Stennett’s funeral service, he emphasized Stennett’s “constancy and fidelity to the principles of his conscience,” which “justly reproaches those who, from a meanness of spirit, sneak from the profession of their principles.”⁵⁴ In keeping with Hodges’ judgment, this dissertation concludes that Joseph Stennett articulated the doctrine of providence with “constancy and fidelity to the principles of his conscience.”⁵⁵ In this respect, “let us all follow the faith of this great man.”⁵⁶

⁵²Colley, *Britons*, 48.

⁵³“Some Account of His Life,” in *Works*, 1:24.

⁵⁴Hodges, *The Christian’s Gain by Death*, 30.

⁵⁵Hodges, *The Christian’s Gain by Death*, 30.

⁵⁶Hodges, *The Christian’s Gain by Death*, 36.

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ABSTRACT

THE LANGUAGE OF PROVIDENCE IN THE LIVES OF JOSEPH STENNETT AND GILBERT BURNET

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This dissertation presents Joseph Stennett and Gilbert Burnet as two preachers of providence during and after the Glorious Revolution, arguing that Joseph Stennett used the doctrine of providence in manner consistent with his self-professed Baptist convictions while Gilbert Burnet did not use of the doctrine of providence in a manner consistent with his self-professed, pre-1688 Anglican convictions—particularly the doctrine of passive obedience. Chapter 2 frames the whole of the dissertation by surveying the prevalence of providentialist language among English Protestants in the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution. Chapter 3 examines Stennett’s consistent understanding and use of providentialist language by the witness of his extant works. Chapters 4 and 5 examine Burnet’s inconsistent use of providentialist rhetoric in light of his published convictions concerning passive obedience. Chapter 6 provides a brief concluding comparison of Stennett and Burnet’s use of providentialist language, and chapter 6 presents Stennett as a model worthy of emulation.

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