

## BAPTISTS, FIFTH MONARCHISTS, AND THE REIGN OF KING JESUS

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**ABSTRACT.** This article outlines the rise of the Fifth Monarchists, a religiously inspired and politically motivated movement which came to prominence in the 1650s and believed the execution of Charles I cleared the way for King Jesus to return and reign with the saints from the throne of England. The imminent establishment of the Kingdom of Christ on earth was of great interest to Baptists, some of whom were initially drawn to the Fifth Monarchy cause because Fifth Monarchy theology provided a political route to a reformed society in England. While Baptists in the 1650s greatly desired to advance the cause of King Jesus the increasingly revolutionary methods employed by the Fifth Monarchists were at odds with their understanding of the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom, thus exposing differences in their respective eschatologies. Finally, observing the ambitious zeal of the Fifth Monarchist programme Baptists disavowed the anarchic revolutionary approach and distanced themselves from the movement. This breach, regarded as apostasy by the Fifth Monarchists, came at a fortunate time for the Baptist cause before the revolution was stamped out and the leaders arrested. The rise and fall of the Fifth Monarchists, however, helped Baptists to clarify the nature and methods of their approach to establishing the kingdom of Christ among the saints on earth, and is therefore worthy of consideration for those wishing to understand the beginning of the Baptists in England and the nature of apocalyptic during the interregnum.

**KEYWORDS:** Fifth Monarchy, William Kiffin, Henry Jessy, Baptists, Christopher Feake

### **Introduction**

Despite the insistence of early Baptist Confessions (see First London Confession, article XIX, in Lumpkin 1969: 161) that the kingdom of Christ on earth was a spiritual kingdom, and his rule a spiritual sovereignty, in England in the late 1640s and throughout the 1650s a political vision of Christ's reign became an option for radical members of Baptist congregations (See Brown 1912; Burrage 1910: 722-747). This vision was the hope held by the Fifth Monarchists who predicted the imminent advent of Christ's kingdom on earth, and the rule of the saints (Anon. 1648/9: 6) over the political kingdoms of the world. A number of Particular Baptists were initially drawn towards this politico-religious enterprise (See Capp 2008: 21) through the

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teaching of trusted men such as Henry Jessey (Jessey 1645: n.p. Useful background material is found in White 1973: 98-110) and Christopher Feake, but in the end drew back from the revolutionary implications of Fifth Monarchism to emphasise exclusively the spiritual reign of Christ over the saints.

### **Baptists and the Fifth Monarchy Movement**

The Fifth Monarchy movement flourished in the period 1649-1661 (a contemporary account of the beginnings of Fifth Monarchism is given by Feake 1659. Modern studies include Brown 1912; Capp, 1970; Capp 1972; Liu 1973) and constituted the most intense manifestation of Puritan millenarian radicalism (the rise of millenarianism in the seventeenth century is outlined in Toon 1970; June 2008; Capp 1972: 23-49; Hill 1993: chapter 13; and Liu 1973: chapter 1). Their ideology was based on Daniel chapters 2 and 7:23-28 and 11, which understood the four monarchies of Daniel's vision as the Assyrian, Persian, Greek and Roman empires, and regarded the Fifth Monarchy, 'shortly succeeding, and farr surpassing them all', being the reign of Christ and his Saints on the earth (Jessey 1645: 32; Cary 1651: 4). The Fifth Monarchy Manifesto of 1654 stated:

in this present Age, the Lord JEHOVAH is setting up the fifth Kingdom, which shall not be left to other people, but shall break in pieces all the four kingdoms, and remain for ever and ever; and that (at this time) when as the fourth Monarchy is partly broken in these Nations, that Christ may be the only Potentate, the King of kings, and of all Nations (*A Declaration of Several of the Churches of Christ* 1654: 16).

The emergence of the Fifth Monarchy movement coincided with the execution of the king, Charles I, when millenarian expectations in England were running high, and the immanent appearing of King Jesus was keenly anticipated (See Farrar 1911: 168; Hill 1972: 96; Capp 1972: 54). The regicide, Robert Tichborne wrote to Cromwell three weeks after the king's execution:

And truly his great and glorious workings in these our days doth seem to point out that time to be near at hand; when God himself doth shake the whole Earth and heavens... Now the World is so near an end, and to believe that glorious Reign of Christ at hand, will make much joy and settlement in the heart, though the present workings of God be to turn, and overturn things, yet all this serves to accomplish these glorious promises of his, in bringing forth this Righteous and peaceful Kingdome of Christ (Tichborne 1649: 1 & 133).

The Baptist, James Toppe, viewed the regicide as the final preparation for the 'monarchical and personal reign' of King Jesus over all the kingdoms of

the world (in a letter to Mark Leonard Busher, see Whitley 1947: 252). The leaders of the Fifth Monarchists, Christopher Feake wrote, 'The *power* and *spirit* of our *cause* was *great* and *high* after the *King's Death*, more than at any time before' (Feake 1659: 36).

When Christ did not appear as anticipated in 1650, an eclipse of the sun on 'Black Monday' 29 March 1652 (Capp 1984: 176) prompted some to deduce there would now be a 'glorious rising of the Fifth Monarch' (see Whitley 1947: 252). When Christ once more tarried, hopes began to fade of an imminent return of King Jesus to inaugurate the reign of the saints on earth, and a revolutionary faction grew impatient with waiting passively for the millennial reign of Christ, and conceived plans 'to hew out with the sword a road for the saints to the government' (Farrer 1911: 168). Mary Cary, prophesied in *The Little Horns Doom & Downfall* that, Kings, and Nobles, and mighty men, would be subjected to his saints, that they [the saints] shall have a two-edged sword in their hands, to execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people, and that the saints should possess riches, and reign with Christ on earth (Cary 1651: 62). Notwithstanding the observation of Murray Tolmie that apocalyptic imagery could be used by millenarians in non-literal ways, many Fifth Monarchists were ready and willing to receive such words in literal terms (Tolmie 1977: 87).

Following the death of the king, millenarian saints were at first confident that the Rump Parliament would take measures to advance Christ's Kingdom in the land. The Independent divine Thomas Brookes urged the Rump to recognise their role in history:

God is now about a glorious design to exalt his son... Oh Right Honourable, the doing of great things is most worthy of great men; the Lord stir up your hearts, that you may further that glorious work; whereby those that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death may be enlightened, and Christ revealed, and his Kingdome exalted in this Kingdome (Brookes 1649: 39).

Many in Cromwell's army who believed they were fighting for a righteous cause also envisioned the times to be moving towards a climactic moment. Christopher Feake later recorded:

The *sectaries* did verily believe, upon prayer, conference, and consideration, that it was their *present work and Duty*, to be stirring up the *General* and his *great Commanders*, to press forward in promoting that *glorious Cause*, everywhere, and every way; to quicken the Parliament before they went off the *public stage* (Feake 1659: 39. See Liu 1973: 61-2).

According to Feake, Cromwell, was initially encouraging to the millenarian cause, but 'others about him, who had his ear, did instil and insinuate into

his spirit *some principles and other matters* of a tendency very different from our proposals' (Feake 1659: 40).

Disappointment with Cromwell did not deter the Fifth Monarchists, who now regarded God as the last hope of the millenarian cause. Believing providence to be on their side, in December 1651 Feake and 'divers Officers and Members of several Churches' began regular prayer meetings at Allhallows the Great, Thames Street, London, and at the close of the first gathering drew up '*Six General Heads of Prayer*', effectively a manifesto, the first of which provided the schema for the rest:

that the *Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ* may be exalted speedily in these Nations, and also in all the earth; and that whatsoever stood in the way of it, might be utterly pulled down, and brought to nothing (Feake 1659: 41ff, emphasis as per original).

The second further illustrates the revolutionary nature of their intentions:

That all *corrupt, wicked, and ungodly Magistrates* might be removed, and put out of place and power; and that a righteous generation of Rulers might be set up in their stead (Ibid).

Other issues on the prayer agenda included reform of parish ministry, unity among the Lord's people, the stirring of Parliament, the Army, and the churches to further reform, and finally, a plea to Parliament that Anglo-Dutch negotiations be non-prejudicial to the cause of Christ. (Feake 1659: 42. Capp outlines several reasons Fifth Monarchists advocated war with the Dutch. Capp 1972: 152) The Fifth Monarchists sensed that divine Providence was moving too slowly to establish the earthly Kingdom of Christ and needed a push.

The reaction to the forming of the Fifth Monarchist group was one of general unease in established institutions. According to Feake, 'the new thing in the Nation, gave an Alarm to Parliament, Army, and those Churches and Officers which had very far forsaken the Cause contended for, and had loved this present world'. (Feake 1659: 43. This was a thinly disguised reference to John Owen who had become a favourite of Cromwell and recently been appointed dean of Christ Church and in September 1652 was nominated vice-chancellor of Oxford. See Watts 1978: 138.) After giving an account of their intentions to Independent churchmen at a gathering at Somerset House they were attacked by John Owen (Owen 1652: 13-14. Owen attacked those who had swapped a spiritual vision of Christ's rule for a carnal, temporal glory.), Thomas Goodwin, Philip Nye and Sidrach Simpson (Feake 1659: 43; Brown 1912: 20, n. 35). The repudiation of the movement by leading clergy resulted in a suspension of the cause. In the

spring of 1652, however, Feake summoned messengers from six London congregations to London-house and later to Blackfriars to renew the vision (Feake 1659: 45). There they expounded scripture, and ‘wrestled with the Lord for the fulfilling of his Word... *and advancement of the Kingdom of his dear Son*’ (Ibid.)

In the early months of 1653 the Fifth Monarchists, in their preaching, repeated their attack on the Rump parliament, adding fuel to the fire in the ongoing dispute between the Army and Parliament (Fifth Monarchist Major General Harrison was among the most violent critics of the Rump. See Firth 1893: 526, 528, 529). When the leaders of the Rump produced a bill, in April 1653, to make the tenure of sitting Members in Parliament perpetual Cromwell was forced to act and on 20 April, brought armed troops to Westminster and dispersed the members (see Blair Worden 1971: 473-496). Fifth Monarchy preachers declared their approval of Cromwell’s actions. The General Baptist preacher, John Spittlehouse, declared the expulsion of the Rump as work on behalf of Jesus Christ, and Cromwell as his instrument:

Who [Christ] without all controversy is determined to pluck up all Monarchical, and Antichristian Rule and Government; to the end he may accomplish his yet-unperformed premises, as to rule all Nations, either by his golden Sceptre, or Iron Rod (Spittlehouse 1653: 4).

Spittlehouse proposed that the government of the country should be put in the hands of the army, especially the godly in the army, who were best placed to mediate between Cavaliers and Independents, and in no wise should the saints seek to rule with the Iron Rod (Spittlehouse 1653: 5-9. Spittlehouse realised the differences of opinion among the saints would result in factional conflicts should they possess power. See Liu 1973: 83).

The new assembly, the Barebones Parliament, was chosen by Cromwell and the officers of the army, and inaugurated on 4 July 1653. Cromwell, full of hope, spoke optimistically to the ‘little Assembly’ upon its formation on 4 July 1653 in millenarian terms:

I confess I never looked to see such a Day as this, (it may be, nor you) when *Jesus Christ* shall be owned, as he is *this day*, and in this world: *Jesus Christ* is owned *this day* by you all, and you own him by your willingness in appearing here. And you manifest *this*, (as far as poor Creatures can) to be *a Day of the Power of Christ*, by your willingness (Feake 1659: 48ff).

The assembly was greeted initially with enthusiasm. Feake said of the members, they ‘did set their hearts, (I mean, the faithful among them) *to follow the Lord, and to serve him in the Kingdom of his Son*’ (Feake 1659: 50), however

a series of defeats to reform tithes, to grant freedom of preaching in public places, and reduce the army, however, resulted in Fifth Monarchists among the members becoming disillusioned. Outside of Parliament Thurloe reported on 2 December that,

Anabaptisticall ministers preach constantly with very great bitterness against the present government, but especially against his excellency, calling him the man of sin, the old dragon, and many other scripture ill names (Birch 1742: i.621).

Within three months the Parliament of the saints was dissolved and on 15 December Cromwell declared head of state as Lord Protector. This latter development was denounced by Feake, and other Fifth Monarchists as the 'Abomination of Desolation'. Feake proclaimed that an 'Idol' had been lifted onto the throne of England, which was supposed to be governed by none other than 'the *Lord Jesus Christ himself*' (Feake 1659: 51) At Christ Church, on 19 December 1653, Feake and Vavasor Powell identified Cromwell with the little horn of Daniel 7:8, and Powell called on the congregation to go home and pray, and say, 'Lord, wilt Thou have Oliver Cromwell or Jesus Christ to reign over us?' (*Calendar of State Papers Domestic* 1653-1654: 304) They were subsequently arrested. (Thurloe 1654: i.641) While Powell was being examined before the Council of State on charges of treason in January 1654, Anna Trapnel fell into a trance in which she saw Cromwell transformed from a Gideon-like figure into an ox-like beast with horns which he used to push and scratch the saints. (Trapnel 1654: 13)

The Baptist perspective on this development was reluctant acceptance of Cromwell as Lord Protector. Henry Cromwell in Ireland wrote to Thurloe:

The army generally, both here about the headquarters, as also those in the other parts of the nation, are abundantly satisfied and well pleased with the present government in England; unless it be some few inconsiderable persons of anabaptist judgment, who are also quiet, though not very well contented (*Thurloe*: ii.149).

William Allen, stationed in Ireland, wrote, "'tis a day of darkness and confusion, very unlike that day of the glorious reign of Christ'. (Thurloe 1654: ii.215) Ivey asserts it was the effective centralisation of government in one man that disturbed the Baptists. He recounts that,

In Thurloe's State Papers it is said—'Upon the first hearing of this, many of the Anabaptists here were much troubled, principally because of the title *Lord Protector*, as they think this applicable to God alone' (Ivey 1811-30: 1.234).

Other Baptist responses to the Protectorate came from churches at Hexham, Derby and Burton upon Trent, and Wharton near Bradford (Un-

derhill 1854: 331-334). With scripture citations they addressed Cromwell in messianic terms and gave assurance of their loyalty and support. They professed there, 'subjection to your highness and most honourable council, as the happy powers ordained of God' (Underhill 1854: 332-333).

Following the formation of Cromwell's first parliament in September 1654, one hundred and fifty members of ten London Congregations signed a Fifth Monarchy Declaration protesting against the worst excesses of the Protectorate. Despite Cromwell granting religious toleration, the Declaration spoke of the new era as 'times of Apostasy, and tribulation', a threat to 'the most precious *Cause, Interest, and Monarchy* of the Lord Christ' (*A Declaration of Several Churches*: 2). The signatories included a number of prominent Baptists, though Kiffin later argued some of these were forgeries (Bell 2000: 197).

In 1654 the Fifth Monarchy movement became increasingly radical and militarily ambitious. Since Cromwell, in their eyes, had betrayed the cause of the saints and his parliament usurped the throne of Christ, they were 'traitors' who would 'be dealt with as traitors' (Feake 1659: 52). Feake issued a call to arms to those who desired the appearing of Christ and the establishing of Fifth Monarchy, with these words:

[they were] to endeavour the supplanting and *destroying of Antichrist and his Interest*, both at home and abroad, & to improve with all diligence their Time and Talents for the *Advancement of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ*, throughout all the earth. In order whereunto, They are to *save themselves from that untoward Generation which will not have Christ to reign over them*: And, uniting together in one Spirit, to become a *peculiar people* (or, as it were, a *Nation in the midst of the Nation*) waiting for the word of Command from their Leader, *to execute the vengeance written against Babylon*, for being *drunk with the blood of the Saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus*. Amen, Halleluiah (Feake 1659: 57-8).

Feake expressed in revolutionary language sentiments that Baptists recognised as their own concerns, namely, the desire to establish the Crown Rights of Jesus, though in militaristic language Baptists did not own. There were also points of dissonance between Feake's ambition and those of the Baptists such as the emphasis on the political reign, in contrast to the spiritual reign, of Christ, and the territory of that reign, a national theocracy, rather than the rule of Christ in the church over his own people.

In a letter to the people of Ireland in January 1653/4, William Kiffin offered the most thorough-going critique of the Fifth Monarchist movement from a Baptist perspective. He recognized their two principle policies were first, 'that it was the duty of the magistrate to own their power to be received immediately from Jesus Christ'. This, he recognised, would render them unaccountable to the people, since they claimed to be responsible to

Christ alone. This vision of Christ's rule through the saints represented an alarming pattern of church-state relations to Kiffin, no different in ideology to the divine right of kings, which previously had resulted in despotism (in Underhill 1854: 324).

The second policy of the Fifth Monarchists was that progress towards the millennial reign of Christ may require violent action:

The great rule by which they were to act in their proceedings towards the making of war or peace with the nations, should arise from a spirit stirred up, as they say, by God, to throw down potentates and powers, rather than those prudential rules of justice and righteousness (Letter from Mr. Kiffin, in Underhill 1854: 325).

The accuracy of Kiffin's analysis became evident in the case of Thomas Venner, leader of the congregation in Swan Alley, Coleman Street. According to State Papers for April 1657, Venner planned an armed insurrection to overthrow the government in the winter 1655-6, desiring 'to have no king but Jesus' (*Thurloe State Papers*: 184). Proof that he was no longer talking about spiritual warfare but conflict of a military kind was the discovery of gathered horses and arms with which, 'to fight down the present authority' (Ibid.). According to Thurloe, Venner planned to use the occasion of the funeral of Baptist minister, and Fifth Monarchist, John Pendarves, in October 1656 to launch an insurrection (see White 1973: 251-271; Kreitzer 2009: 49-55). Venner sent out letters summoning people from home and abroad to meet at Abingdon, where Pendarves was to be buried, however, the plot was discovered and frustrated by the intervention of government troops (Anon. 1656: 2-3).

Venner planned a further uprising in January 1657 for which he hoped to recruit a number of Baptists to the cause. Venner described them as 'the (private mark) rebaptized bretheren', or 'the bretheren of the (private mark) rebaptized meeting', a group associated with John Portman (details are derived from Venner's Journal, transcribed in part in Champlin Burrage 1910: 724, 728-9. Burrage supposes that the 'private marke' was a reference to some sort of badge or token by which those associated with Venner might recognise one another and which made unnecessary the use of names). Some Baptists were initially receptive to his overtures, but believed his timing mistaken due to an erroneous interpretation of Revelation chapter eleven (Burrage 1910: 729). In addition, the London Baptists received letters from other churches, notable Abingdon and Ipswich, warning them to beware of Venner's spirit. The final decision of the Baptists to distance themselves from Venner's plans proved to be fortuitous, as Venner was betrayed and imprisoned (*Thurloe State Papers*: 186; also Burrage 1910: 739).

Kiffin's response to what he called the 'pretence of the fifth monarchy' was to warn fellow Baptists against supporting an anti-government movement, and to encourage acquiescence with the political regime ('Letter from Mr. Kiffin', in Underhill 1854: 324). The posture of Christians to the state must be that taught in God's word:

For that expreseth no other thing, to Christians, but exhortations to be subject to all civil powers, they being of God, and to pray for all that are in authority, that under them we may live a godly and quiet life in all godliness and honesty (Ibid: 323).

Having heard that in Ireland some of the Baptists were intent on making public protest against 'this present authority' he sent a letter on 20th January 1654, arguing that association with Fifth Monarchist attempts to 'throw down potentates and powers' would be utterly ruinous for the Baptist cause (Ibid: 325). The wiser course, he proposed, was 'to give a public testimony in the face of the world that our principles are not such as they have been generally judged by most men to be; which is, that we deny authority, and would pull down magistracy'. He reasoned:

And if any trouble should arise, either with you or us, in the nations, which might proceed to the shedding of blood, would not it all be imputed and charged upon the baptized churches? and what grief and sorrow would be administered to us... (Ibid)

Baptists, he argued, would be prudent to adopt a 'humble and patient waiting for the kingdom of our Lord Jesus' (Ibid: 322). This *laissez faire* policy was seized on by some of his opponents as evidence that Kiffin was beholden to Cromwell, on account of receiving trading rights that resulted in financial gain, a charge Kiffin strongly denied (see Orme 1823: 24).

In a further effort to distance Baptists from Fifth Monarchists, Kiffin attended a number of Fifth Monarchists' meetings in 1656/7 in order to argue his case. Thurloe describes one service at Allhallows, at which Kiffin and John Simpson made an appearance. Christopher Feake used the occasion to call for Fifth Monarchist supporters to come out of 'complying' and 'corrupt' congregations, and join with him (Thurloe 1654: 758). Henry Jessey responded to 'declare his dissatisfaction' about 'dividing and renting the churches' (White 1973: 107) to which Feake made a response. Kiffin and Simpson then also spoke to oppose the 'renting' of churches, and to object the 'fastening of the terms Antichristian and Babylon upon the civil government'. Many in the congregation called out, 'Mr. Kissin is a courtier and Mr. Simpson an apostate', but Kiffin, however, remained steadfast and succeeded in preventing a mass defection of Baptists to the Fifth Monarchists.

The last occasion when Particular Baptists were in danger of allying themselves with the Fifth Monarchists to establish the reign of King Jesus, was the Western Association meeting at Dorchester, May 1658 (White 1971-77: 96-98). Thurloe sent three spies, John Cooke, Daniel Cary and George Forde, to infiltrate their gathering, their whereabouts having been betrayed by a 'trusty and fit agent attending them', that is, a 'plant' already inside the Baptist fellowship.

Letters from various churches in the Association were read, a common theme of the epistles being that the 'season' in which they were living was 'a time of apostasy and persecution, wherein the sufferings of Syon were'. Preaching and prayer followed, where again the theme was the sufferings of the saints and their various afflictions. Evidently, the fervour of the meeting escalated, and some prayed that, 'God would put a hooke into the nostrils of and destroy him who is enemy of God and his people'. Fortunately, for the conservative members, that afternoon captains William Kiffin, Richard Deane, a Mr Warren, Mr (Edward?) Harrison and six others London Baptists arrived (see White 1971-77: 108, notes 39-43). The following morning Kiffin replaced Thomas Collier as the 'regulator' of the meeting. On the following afternoon, John Cary, John Vernon and adjutant William Allen arrived at the gathering, whose intention was to urge that Fifth Monarchists and Baptists should combine (Capp 1972: 122. Vernon and Allen were brothers-in-law and had served in Cromwell's army in Ireland. They resigned their commissions in 1656 having become critical of the Protectorate government. It was Allen's connection to the Dorchester Baptists that brought spies among them since Allen was under surveillance by the government for possible sedition. See Hardacre 1962: 292-308). That night, a private meeting took place where, 'a great contest arose about their joining with the fifth monarchy men'. The spies reported the discussion was inconclusive on account of Kiffin opposing it. Further conversations between the Baptist 'grandees' took place over the next two days behind closed doors, and no account of the debate on the proposal to join the Fifth Monarchists was published. The following day the gathering dispersed, the messengers being charged to relay the conclusion of the discussions to the churches. The Baptists had resolved not to join the Fifth Monarchists, and yet again Kiffin had steered the Particular Baptists away from a course that would have resulted in their obliteration.

It is evident from the survey of relations between Particular Baptists and the Fifth Monarchy movement that Fifth Monarchists might have had considerable impact on emerging Baptist ecclesiology throughout the late 1640s and 1650s. If it is asked, what would an alliance between Baptists and Fifth Monarchists have meant for the development of Baptist ecclesiology the following points can be made. First, the Fifth Monarchy movement rep-

resented a proposal to extend the scope of Christ's kingdom from the sphere of the church to the wider compass of the world. This Fifth Monarchy ideological construct was crystallized in the Norfolk Petition of February 1649 (Anon. 1648/9: 17-18) where the vision of the church is co-extensive with that of the state:

1. Quaere. Whether there is not a Kingdom and Dominion of the Church, or of Christ and the Saints, to be expected on earth?
2. Q. Whether this Kingdom... be not external and visible in the world, yea, extend not to all persons and things universally?

The Petition then states that according to the Prophets, 'the Church comes to have the outward and visible Government of the world' (Ibid: 4-5). The Norfolk Petition calls for the social order to be brought under the Laws of Christ, and to be administered by the officers of Christ. The Fifth Monarchy Manifesto of 1654 likewise speaks of Christ as 'King of kings, and of all Nations' (*A Declaration* 1654: 16; see also Spittlehouse 1653: 13-14; Feake 1659: 40). In contrast, Baptists preached the rule of Christ in the Church, the dominion of Christ over the saints, the laws of Christ governing the godly.

Second, the Fifth Monarch movement externalized the kingdom of Christ and believed the political instruments of power, especially government, should be used to establish the reign of Christ over the world (Spittlehouse 1653: 6-10). If the first point in their agenda concerned the *scope* of Christ's reign, this element concerned the *medium* of Christ's reign, namely the government. The Norfolk petition explained,

[Christ's] Kingdom must either be monarchical, as when Christ the Head and King appears visibly; or Parliamentary, as in the meantime, when Christ's Officers and the Churches Representatives rule (Anon. 1648/9: 6).

While Fifth Monarchists stressed the necessity of correct political, legal and ecclesiastical structures for the appearing of Christ's kingdom, Particular Baptists spoke of the internal, spiritual dominion of Christ in the lives of the saints (White 1973a: 100). John Spittlehouse proposed that the reins of government should be given to the godly in the army and Thomas Collier preached,

Some apprehend that Christ shall come and reign personally, subduing his enemies, and exalting his people, and that this is the new heaven and the new earth; but this is not my apprehension: but that Christ will come in the Spirit, and have a glorious Kingdom in the spirits of his people, and they shall by the power of Christ in them, reign over the world, and this is the new heavens and the new earth (Collier 1647a: 8, and 32. See also Collier 1647b: 151-168).

He continues on, emphasising over and over that heaven is God's kingdom, and the kingdom is within the saints. The spiritual nature of Christ's reign meant Baptists argued for separation of Church and State.

Third, following from the previous point, Fifth Monarchists aspired to make the national government conform as closely as possible to the rule of Christ, and increasingly regarded their duty as admonishing the government for failing to be so. The Fifth Monarchists justified the use of violence against an ungodly government on the basis that they were 'preparing the way for the Lord' (See Anon. 1656b: 16; also Solt 1961: 318). Scripture was cited to justify this policy as a means to achieve the purposes of Christ, a popular text being taken from Ezekiel 21:26-27:

Thus saith the Lord God; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him.

General Harrison quoted Daniel 7:18, 'the saints... shall *take* the kingdom' (cited in Capp 1972: 131). The revolutionary implications of such words is not difficult to appreciate, and it appeared to some of the Fifth Monarchists that they had been spoken for just such a time as theirs. Evidence of verbal violence among the Fifth Monarchists is the intercepted report of Beverning in the *Thurloe State Papers* for August/September 1653 where he writes:

Last Monday in the afternoon I went to the meeting at Blackfriars [the church of Christopher Feake]... The scope and intention of their meeting is to preach down governments, and to stir up the people against the United Netherlands. Being then in the assembly of the saints, I heard one prayer and two sermons; but good God! what cruel, and abominable, and most horrid trumpets of fire, murder and flame! I thought upon the answer, which our Saviour gave to James and John, Luke ix. 55. *Nescitis qualis spiritus vos sitis* (Thurloe 1654: 1. 441. Translation = 'You do not know of what kind of spirit you are of', Luke 9:55).

In contrast, the majority of Baptists considered it to be Christ's prerogative when he should establish his kingdom, and they would wait patiently for that event. The Midland Association assembly of 15 October 1656 stated:

When the Lord shall make his people a smiting people will he not first clearly put a just and lawful power and authority into their hands or cause such a power to be [at] their sides and to command them as that in the exercise thereof or in yielding obedience thereunto their actions shall be clearly just and good... We offer it to the serious consideration whether it be not implied in Romans 11:12, 15 that the Gentile churches be in a low condition till the calling of the Jews and whether it may not be gathered from Micah 4:8, that the Jewish Church shall

have the kingdom and the first dominion, Japhet being to dwell in the tents of Shem, Genesis 9:27. If so, then whether it doth not behove us with patience and quietness to wait for the time (White 1971-77: 30).

Such a policy of quietism towards the State, which distanced Baptists from the violent methods of the Fifth Monarchists, resulted in harsh criticism from the Quaker Richard Hubberthorn who in his tract of 1659 asked about the consistency of the Baptist position given their participation in the Civil Wars,

And what do you bear Arms or Fight for, if not for a Government according to Truth, and that Righteousness may establish the Nation?... And if you now resolve to live peaceably, and submit to what Government shall be established, then your Fighting is at an end: And if *Charles Stuart* come, or any other, and Establish Popery, and Govern by Tyranny, you have begged Pardon by Promising willingly to submit and live peaceably under it as the Ordinance of God... but some did judge that ye had been of another Spirit (Hubberthorn 1659: 4).

Not all Baptists were agreeable to the policy of accommodation, as was evident from the *Declaration of Several of the People Called Anabaptists*, in 1659, but, as shown above, the influence of London leaders, particularly William Kiffin and Samuel Richardson was decisive. Thus, it can be said that although the Particular Baptists were not untouched by the radical wing of Fifth Monarchism they rejected violent engagement with the authorities and maintained their commitment to the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom, and the spiritual preparation to be made by the saints awaiting its arrival.

Consequently, energy spent in preparation for the return of Christ was expended not in political engagement, but in refining and expanding the Church of King Jesus. This accounts for John Pendarves' double agenda, namely the starting of new congregations, gathered according to the biblical pattern, and secondly the deepening and strengthening of commitment among the saints (see White 1973b: 268). The first of these issues explains Pendarves' strong emphasis on believer's baptism and adherence to closed-membership Calvinistic Baptist congregations. For Pendarves this was the closest it was possible to get to the New Testament pattern of the church, an essential requirement for a people purified and prepared for the advent of King Jesus.

## Conclusion

Particular Baptist attempts to reconstitute the Church throughout the 1640s and 1650s was allied to a set of convictions about the rights of Christ as prophet, priest and king, to rule in and over his church. The impact of this

ideological commitment was thorough-going in relation to practices of church life such as baptism, membership, discipline, decision making, and ministry. In particular, the rule of Christ was a central and dominant doctrine, and carried within an eschatological imperative. In this regard, Baptists participated in the growing millennial expectation commonly held by Puritans. This explains the urgency of Baptist action in forming congregations, and the willingness of many to undertake considerable personal risk to establish a sectarian, congregational form of ecclesia.

Millennial Christology also determined that convictions which inspired believers in the 1630s to renew the Church according to the teaching and purposes of King Jesus inspired the saints in the 1650s to pressurise the political authorities to make England a theocracy. Prominent Baptists like Henry Jessey, John Pendarves, Hanserd Knollys, and unknown numbers of others, were drawn towards the militant expression of the ubiquitous millenarianism of the age, politicised by the Fifth Monarchists. By 1660, however, Charles II was on the throne of England, not King Jesus, and it was evident that Christ's Kingdom was not yet of this world, and the rule of the saints did not yet include the machinery of government. The Baptist perspective on the spiritual nature of Christ's kingly reign, the spiritual dominion in the lives of the saints, was vindicated as the shrewd theological position as millenarian enthusiasm waned.

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