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ENGLISH PROVINCIAL ENGAGEMENT IN RELIGIOUS DEBATES:
THE SALISBURY QUARREL OF 1705-15

Abstract:

From 1705 until his death in 1715, Gilbert Burnet, Bishop of Salisbury, was embroiled in a series of disputes in his diocese. The origins of the disputes lie in Burnet's support for the toleration of religious dissent. But the disputes spread into the issue of the legitimacy of the Glorious Revolution and resistance to tyrants. The disputes provide an insight into the ways in which provincial and national controversies interacted. The actions of the mob, the electorate, the clergy and tract writers of all persuasions in London and Salisbury were the cause and consequence of this complex interplay of national and local identities. Salisbury was in some ways a microcosm of the issues that confronted people in the quarter century after 1688, but in the intensity of the conflict it was unique.

The religious and political history of the period 1688 to 1720 was dominated by intense anxiety over the legitimacy of the Glorious Revolution and religious toleration. Passive obedience, resistance to rulers, oaths and parliamentary authority were all hotly contested. Consequently the accession of Queen Anne in 1702 and the identification of the Hanoverian dynasty as her lawful successors were highly controversial. Historians have paid considerable attention to the various expressions of these national debates: the Convocation controversy of 1705, the Sacheverell trial in 1710 and the intellectual backdrop to the Bangorian controversy in 1713-17. They have not however considered the relationship between national and local events in this period. An opportunity to examine this interplay is afforded by the 'Salisbury quarrel'¹ of 1705-15 in which Bishop Gilbert Burnet defended the Whig cause of the Glorious Revolution in his own diocese. It is also an aspect of Burnet's life that has not been examined by historians before.

The Salisbury quarrel engaged with significant national controversies in the context of the parliamentary, civic and ecclesiastical politics in the city and diocese of Salisbury. The quarrel demonstrates the close interplay between local and national debates, and the ways in which people in a locality engaged with national events and issues. The quarrel also shows how national debates were understood within, and

¹ The name was first used in 1711 in a tract entitled *The Salisbury Quarrel Ended*. It makes no appearance in Martin Greig's article on Burnet in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

translated into, a provincial context. It enabled key national ideas to be envisaged and understood locally. Above all, the quarrel shows how the Church and clergy acted as the hinge on which the key national issues and preoccupations turned. Religion was the principal means by which these issues were experienced by people in localities. Finally, the quarrel shows how, in the particular locality of Salisbury, parliamentary elections, ecclesiastical politics and dynastic legitimacy were merged and connected.

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Even before the accession of Queen Anne, the diocese and city of Salisbury had been politicised by two significant factors: the existence of a significant number of Dissenters and the presence of its controversial Whig Low Church bishop, Gilbert Burnet, who held the see from 1689 until his death in 1715.² Neither of these factors was unique: Dissenters had become more visible after the Toleration Act of 1689 and William III's preference for Low Church bishops had swung the episcopate nationally in that direction. The Protestant Dissenters appeared to be problematic to the Anglican clergy of the diocese. In January 1701 Thomas Naish, rector of St Edmund's Salisbury, subdean of the Cathedral, and until then a client of Burnet's, reported that there were 'mighty feuds and distractions among the dissenters in my parish.' He wondered if they divided between themselves so easily, how could their division from the Church of England be seen as a matter of legitimate conscience?³ In the same month Naish voted for a proctor in the fraught elections to Convocation, choosing a candidate who believed that Convocation had an independent right to sit, in contradiction to Archbishop Tenison and Bishop Burnet.⁴ Consequently, he broke with Burnet who then refused to appoint Naish to a prebend he had promised him.⁵

A serious cause for concern for many Salisbury clergy was Bishop Burnet's apparent sympathy for Dissenters. In 1702 the leading Dissenter Edmund Calamy met Burnet, and enjoyed a 'free conversation' with him; Burnet felt that Calamy had put the Dissenters' case well. This established a friendship between the two and Calamy

² H. C. Foxcroft, *A Supplement to Burnet's History of My Own Time*, Oxford, 1932, p. 512.

³ D. Slatter, ed, *The Diary of Thomas Naish*, Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society, 1965, p. 44.

⁴ Ibid, p. 43. For details of the Convocation controversy see N. Sykes, *William Wake*, Cambridge, 1957 and W. Gibson, *The Church of England 1688-1832 Unity and Accord*, London, 2001.

⁵ For Naish's career see G. Tapsell, 'Pastors, Politics and Preaching: the Clergy of the Later Stuart Church' in G. Tapsell (ed), *The Later Stuart Church, 1660-1714*, Manchester, 2013, pp. 90-1.

reassured Burnet that occasional conformity by Dissenters in the Church of England showed their charity towards the Church.⁶ In January 1702/3, Burnet met and discussed the first Occasional Conformity Bill with Calamy and a Dissenting minister from Salisbury. The Bill reflected Tory concern at the perceived growth of Dissent nationally and sought to exclude Dissenters from public office by preventing their occasional conformity in the Church of England. It was, naturally, a cause of embarrassment when Burnet's meeting with Calamy was made public, and Burnet was forced to deny its length and cordiality.⁷ Nevertheless Burnet appeared to his clergy to be too friendly to those who had left the Church. In December 1702 Burnet even told Bishop William Nicolson of Carlisle that he regarded the Church of England as 'a persecuting church.'⁸ Such views infuriated parish clergy and frustrated Burnet's attempts to win clerical support for his reforming agenda for the diocese.⁹ Burnet claimed he was not 'soft' towards Dissenters; in fact he systematically used his patronage over the prebends of Salisbury to boost the incomes of the clergy in the market towns of the diocese where Dissent was strong. This aimed to strengthen their work against Dissenters and to attract the best clergy to these livings.¹⁰

Parliamentary elections in Salisbury were also increasingly tense before 1705. At the December 1701 election for the Wiltshire county seats Burnet publicly backed the Whig candidates who, Naish claimed, 'lye under great mistrusts of favouring dissenters and making alterations to the Church.' During the election, the Dissenters smeared the Tory candidates as Jacobites. Naish voted for the Tories which further incurred Burnet's displeasure. In January 1702, when a new Dean of Salisbury was appointed, prompted by Burnet, he did not reappoint Naish as subdean.¹¹

⁶ D. Spaeth, *The Church in An Age of Danger, Parsons and Parishioners, 1660-1740*, Cambridge, 2000, p. 170.

⁷ T. E. S. Clarke and H. C. Foxcroft, *A Life of Gilbert Burnet, Bishop of Salisbury*, Cambridge, 1907, pp. 397-401. See also Foxcroft, *A Supplement to Burnet's History of My Own Time*, pp. 501-2. Burnet mentioned that it was not just to Dissenters that he was sympathetic and tolerant. He showed 'all possible moderation' to a Jacobite meeting in the city and with government agreement did not act against it, yet, as Burnet noted 'this did no way soften them.'

⁸ C. Jones & G. Holmes (eds), *The London Diaries of William Nicolson, Bishop of Carlisle, 1702-1718*, Oxford, 1985, p. 140.

⁹ Spaeth, p. 13.

¹⁰ Foxcroft, *Supplement to Burnet's History*, p. 504.

¹¹ Slatter, ed, *The Diary of Thomas Naish*, p. 46. Naish's relations with the Bishop deteriorated further; in July 1702 he again voted against Burnet's candidates in the parliamentary elections, and although a month

In 1703, Bishop Trelawny of Exeter told Naish that Burnet had been active in preventing the lower house of Convocation from claiming the right to meet independently of the Archbishop's licence. Naish made the mistake of spreading this story, which also annoyed Burnet. Naish's relations with Burnet broke down entirely when he was appointed to the additional living of Nether Compton without the Bishop's dispensation to hold the living in plurality with St Edmund's. Burnet prosecuted Naish and suspended him from St Edmund's for three years.¹²

In Salisbury, Burnet was vocal about Dissent. In his 1704 visitation charge, in addition to thorough consideration of the duties of the clergy, Burnet warned against the 'false representation and feeble confutation of the opinions of Dissenters.'¹³ In suggesting that the clergy should compose strong sermons, he added 'I must tell you this is that which gives the Dissenters their great strength: for though they are very defective in their critical study of the Scriptures... yet their discourses are full of them.' It was a misjudgement to praise Dissenters at a meeting of the Anglican clergy.

In the coded language of the time, Burnet also reminded the clergy that Queen Anne 'has often recommended moderation to all her people as the best security of the Church.' 'Moderation', for Whigs like Burnet, meant seeking peaceful relations with Dissenters. He addressed the issue of the occasional conformity legislation, flatly saying that the clergy had misunderstood the bishops' reasons for opposing the bills. He reminded the clergy that in 1662 'the Churches of London were very thin, that are now full to the doors; few came then to prayers, most dropt in after their preacher was in the pulpit' but the efforts of the clergy had won over many Dissenters to the Church. This is what he wanted to achieve in Salisbury diocese. Significantly, Burnet did not accept the Tory claim that the Church was in danger from Dissenters. He said that the Church had

later Burnet preached for Naish at St Edmund's, Naish refused an invitation to dinner –suspecting that it was an attempt to dissuade him from casting his vote for the Tory High Church candidates for Convocation. Burnet was infuriated by such clerical disobedience; he wrote of the elections in 1702 that the Tories behaved with 'barefaced partiality'. *Bishop Burnet's History of My Own Time*, London, 1838, p. 719. He cited the borough of Hindon near Salisbury where proof of bribery by the Tories was so clear that there was a proposal to disenfranchise the borough.

¹² Slatter, ed, *The Diary of Thomas Naish*, pp. 49, 54, note 2. In April 1706 Naish submitted to the Bishop and his suspension was relaxed.

¹³ G. Burnet, *A Charge Given at the Triennial Visitation of the Diocese of Salisbury in October 1709, to which is added A Sermon Preach'd at Salisbury, and some other places, in the said Visitation*, London, 1704, pp. 9-10. Nicolson regarded the Charge as 'very good' –Jones and Holmes, p. 219.

the support of the Queen, nobility and gentry; only three gentry families in Wiltshire were Dissenters and only one borough had a strong meeting of Dissenters.¹⁴ Burnet was also optimistic for the future, he told the clergy that they enjoyed the blessing of Queen Anne, but he also presented the case for a growth in religious feeling:

There is a happy disposition to piety and devotion sprung up among us, particularly among the younger sort, which gives us ground to hope, that the next Age shall be better than this is. In the Great City, there is another Appearance at daily Prayers and Sacraments, than was known formerly. The thing is very visible, and begins to spread out over the nation. There is a Noble Zeal in many to have Sins repressed: they are encouraging one another in all the Acts of Piety and Virtue...¹⁵

Burnet's case was therefore that religious toleration of Dissent had been advantageous to the Church: 'the Dissenters did not get but lose, both in numbers and in the zeal which a hotter persecution has raised'; this was partly because the clergy had brought Dissenters back to the Church through preaching, publications and conversations.¹⁶ Competition with Dissent had spurred on the Church to greater effectiveness.

In the accompanying visitation sermon, Burnet discussed the issue of the legitimacy of the separation of Dissent from the Church. He argued that the Church, as the body of Christ, was required to be united. But, he said, it was legitimate to separate from the Church on matters of conscience. Dissenters would either be forgiven by God for sincere error or persuaded out of their opinions. Burnet's case was that 'we can conquer them with a spirit of love,' and that Dissenters ought to be judged well for their sincerity.¹⁷ He concluded with a call to abandon divisions in the Church and to live peaceably with neighbours. Such views were thoroughly offensive to the High Churchmen of Salisbury dioceses, who were fearful of the growth of Dissent and keen to root it out.

Burnet clearly believed that the persecution of Dissent was counterproductive. He wrote later in his *History of My Own Time* that the number of Dissenters was 'visibly decreasing' because 'toleration had softened their tempers... and they seemed quiet and content with their toleration, if they could but secure the enjoying it.' Moreover the Church was not threatened: 'the bishops looked after their dioceses with a care that had

¹⁴ Burnet, *Charge 1704*, pp. 10, 13, 16, 22-3.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 14.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 24-6.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. pp. 42, 47, 48-9.

not been known in the memory of man... A spirit of zeal and piety appeared in our churches and at sacrament beyond the example of former times.’ In other words there was a real opportunity for the Church and state to move forward and to lay aside divisions that had dogged the country in the seventeenth century. Paradoxically Burnet saw that the one force which could endanger this was the opposition of the Anglican clergy: ‘there were many indecent sermons preached on public occasions, and those hot clergymen, who were not the most regular in their lives had raised factions in many dioceses against many bishops.’¹⁸ This was particularly the case in Salisbury diocese. So, by 1705, the bishop and his clergy were at logger heads on the issue of Dissent, and into this atmosphere the election of that year fell like a spark onto tinder.

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The background to the election was significant. In November 1704 the Tories in the House of Commons had attempted to tack the Occasional Conformity Bill onto a Land Tax Bill as a way of forcing it through the House of Lords. Queen Anne, exasperated by this stratagem, dissolved Parliament and called a general election to find a more amenable House of Commons. The borough of Salisbury returned two MPs, and contained very few electors, only 55 in 1705. In the elections in November 1701 and July 1702 the Tory Charles Fox and the Whig Robert Eyre shared the two seats. This reflected a truce between the opposing Whig and Tory factions in the city which had fiercely contested the elections in the 1690s.¹⁹ But in 1702 and 1704 Tory High Churchmen had won elections for mayor and clerk of the corporation.²⁰ The Whigs feared that this put the Tories into a prime position to influence the elections in their favour.

In 1705 Burnet was convinced that it was his duty to oppose Charles Fox, who had supported the tack onto the Land Tax Bill. Burnet not only supported the local Whig candidate, the lawyer James Harris, but directly canvassed for him. Burnet’s confidence in entering the election was prompted by Queen Anne’s personal intervention. The Queen spoke ‘severely’ to Burnet of Fox, who she had dismissed as paymaster of the army in

¹⁸ *Burnet’s History of My Own Time*, p. 785.

¹⁹ E. Cruickshanks, S. Handley & D. W. Hayton, eds, *The House of Commons 1690-1715*, Cambridge, 2002, vol. ii, pp. 692-3. For such electoral truces and shared seats, see W. Gibson ‘Dissenters, Anglicans and Elections after the Toleration Act, 1689-1710’ in R. Cornwall and W. Gibson, eds, *Religion, Politics and Dissent 1660-1832*, Aldershot, 2010.

²⁰ Cruickshanks, S. Handley & D. W. Hayton, p. 693.

April 1705, following his support for the tack and Burnet saw this as a clear statement of the Queen's support for the Whigs.²¹ In reaction to Burnet, Fox chose a second Tory candidate, Richard Kent, to stand with him. Thus the compromise of one Whig and one Tory MP was broken and the contest in the 1705 election was between the Tories, Fox and Kent, and the Whigs, Eyre and Harris. Since Eyre, despite being a Low Churchman, usually attracted both Whig and moderate Tory votes, the real contest was for the second seat between Fox and Harris.²² Burnet wrote of the 1705 election: 'the clergy took great pains to infuse into all people tragical apprehensions of the dangers the Church was in.'²³ Burnet also attracted strong support from Dissenters who even attended Anglican services when he preached.²⁴

The election was a humiliation for Burnet: Eyre polled 38 votes, Fox 32, Harris 24, and Kent 16. The Salisbury electorate remained content with splitting the seats between a Whig and a Tory and had resisted Burnet's attempt to exclude Fox.²⁵ This was consistent with the national picture in which Whigs and Tories were evenly matched and neither had achieved a clear victory. What made the result embarrassing was the effort Burnet had expended in public support for Harris and that so many of his own clergy had flouted his leadership. When the result was announced, the Tory clergy triumphantly ran a flag up the Cathedral flagpole.²⁶ Daniel Defoe reported to Edward Harley of the elections in 1705, that for the most part the Dissenters had not been a problem for the Tories as the clergy and gentry had behaved peaceably towards them. However at Salisbury, 'tis quite another thing; the Bishop's candidate for the town, Mr. Harris, lost it.'²⁷ Indeed Defoe reported that the election in Salisbury was 'pandemonium' and that Burnet and his steward had been 'hustled' by both clergy and the mob and that 'Mr Fox's

²¹ Queen Anne's dismissal of Fox was in spite of the fact that he was engaged to marry a cousin by marriage Lady Hyde. H. C. Foxcroft, 'Salisbury Politics in the Reign of Queen Anne' in A. Dryden, ed, *Memorials of Old Wiltshire*, London, 1906, p. 108.

²² E. Cruickshanks, S. Handley & D. W. Hayton, iii, p. 1005.

²³ *Burnet's History of My Own Time*, p. 778.

²⁴ E. Cruickshanks, S. Handley & D. W. Hayton, iii, p. 697.

²⁵ Fox himself attributed some of his success to the failure of news of his dismissal as paymaster to reach Salisbury in time for the election, presumably fearing that people would know of the Queen's dislike of his politics. Cruickshanks, S. Handley & D. W. Hayton, iii, p. 1101.

²⁶ Cruickshanks, S. Handley & D. W. Hayton, ii, p. 693.

²⁷ Quoted in Foxcroft, 'Salisbury Politics in the Reign of Queen Anne', p. 109.

success very much ruffled my Lord of Sarum's lawn sleeves.'²⁸ Burnet spoke of a 'violent storm' against him in the city and it was clear that his own actions in strongly supporting Harris had been counterproductive.²⁹

The Salisbury election of 1705 was so fraught, with subsequent disputes over the validity of the qualification of some of the Tory aldermen, that in the following year the corporation petitioned for a new charter to clarify the ambiguities in the franchise. To add to Burnet's embarrassment, the Whig Robert Eyre clearly disassociated himself from Burnet and even supported the Tories in their petition for a new charter. The charter, issued in June 1707, effectively cemented into place a Tory majority in the corporation.³⁰

An aftershock of the general election occurred later in 1705 when there was a by-election in the Wiltshire borough of Chippenham. Colonel Chivers, the High Church Tory candidate, claimed to have seen Burnet 'in an infamous place and in scandalous deportment.' This was widely interpreted as meaning that he had seen Burnet in a brothel.³¹ Burnet threatened Chivers with prosecution on a criminal charge of 'scandalum magnatum', or libel of a peer. Chivers was forced to retract and paid £50 to the Bishop in compensation. Burnet saw the libel as a consequence of the Salisbury election of 1705 which had raised 'an anger against me which will follow me as long as I live here.'³² Nevertheless, in December 1705 Burnet spoke in the Lords of the state of his own diocese denying that the Church was in danger.³³

A few weeks after the election, Dean Edward Young of Salisbury died.³⁴ Burnet's extreme concern over the choice of a successor was reflected in the fact that less than twelve hours after Young's death he wrote to Lord Godolphin regarding a replacement. He was aware that John Younger, Charles Fox's tutor, who had supported Fox in the Salisbury election, had been promised the first vacant deanery. Burnet wrote to

²⁸ Bodleian Library, Oxford, Ballard Mss XXI, f 136, 23 May 1705.

²⁹ Salisbury was not unique in such scenes; in the same election, Exeter witnessed similar revolts by clergy against their Whig bishop. N. Sykes, 'The Cathedral Chapter of Exeter and the General Election of 1705' *English Historical Review*, 45, 1935, p. 266

³⁰ Eyre's pragmatism in supporting the move was endorsed in 1708 when, having been appointed as solicitor-general, he stood for re-election, and was re-elected in October.

³¹ W. Gibson and J. Begiato, *Sex and the Church in the Long Eighteenth Century*, London, 2017, chapter 8.

³² Clarke and Foxcroft, *A Life of Gilbert Burnet*, pp. 417-8.

³³ Jones and Holmes, p. 317.

³⁴ Burnet's relations with Dean Younger had been bad; the Dean had prosecuted the Bishop over a visitation dispute in 1701-2. Westminster Abbey Muniments, 56714-56733.

Godolphin warning of endless strife between himself and the dean if Younger was appointed. Burnet regarded Younger as good natured but he was governed by his Tory wife. He told Godolphin that there had been ‘great heat’ over the election and both Whigs and Tories claimed the Queen’s support.³⁵ To Burnet’s annoyance, Younger was appointed to the deanery bolstering the Tory influence in the city, and Burnet had to accept an opponent in charge of the Cathedral.

Burnet’s concerns over ecclesiastical appointment were well-founded. In June 1706, when Burnet wanted to appoint White Kennett, a Low Church Whig ally, to a vacant canonry of Salisbury, he recruited the Queen and the Duchess of Marlborough as allies to persuade Dean Younger to support the appointment. Even so, Younger opposed Kennett and blocked his election. The Queen called Younger to London to explain himself and refused to allow him to serve his duty as a royal chaplain for opposing Kennett’s appointment. Thereafter Burnet said that ‘all who had countenance from the Dean have been persons who have set themselves against [him] with the utmost indecency, because [Burnet] studies to support the Queen and her government.’³⁶ In such circumstances, Burnet needed clerical supporters in his diocese. When, in 1706 a vacancy arose in the parish of Tidworth, Burnet wrote to the Lord Chancellor that he wanted a replacement to be of ‘moderate’ views ‘with whom he might live easily.’ Consequently the Lord Chancellor promised to consult Burnet on the appointment to the parish.³⁷

In the wake of these difficulties, Burnet hit back from the pulpit. On 10 March 1705/6, Burnet preached a lenten sermon at the Chapel Royal, which was published by the Queen’s command. The text of the sermon was an arch reference to his enemies: ‘Man that is in Honour and understandeth not, is like the Beasts that perish’ (Psalms XLIX, v 20). Referring to men who attacked honour and authority, Burnet said ‘what is crooked cannot be made straight...’ He urged people to consider events calmly and rationally. Perhaps with the recent election in mind, he argued that history was full of reverses of fortune and it was a lack of understanding if any man thought he was out of the reach of it. Burnet also recounted all the things for which men should be grateful:

³⁵ Bodleian Library, Oxford, Add. Mss., D 23 ff 9 and 30-33.

³⁶ Quoted in G. V. Bennett, *White Kennett, 1660-1728*, London, 1957, pp. 96-7. Thomas Hearne said that Burnet had laboured ‘tooth and nayle’ to have Kennett elected to the canonry.

³⁷ Slatter, ed, *The Diary of Thomas Naish*, pp. 61-2.

Queen Anne's rule, the example it gave to other nations and those who lived in 'the temper so often recommended.'³⁸

However Burnet did not take his own advice regarding calm reason, in July 1706 he inflamed the clergy in his diocese by inviting them to sign an address to the Queen on the Duke of Marlborough's victories. Such an address for a Whig foreign venture was provocative enough, but in the address Burnet included a comment: 'none but the confederates of our enemys, and those who are deluded by them can imagine our Church to be in danger.' The Tory clergy, who were certain the Church was in danger from the growth of Dissent, refused to sign the address and Burnet abused them as 'enemys to the Queen and factious.' Initially the Salisbury clergy drew up their own address to the Queen, and when it was not possible to present it, they chose to sign that of the Grand Jury rather than Burnet's.³⁹

Later that year Burnet preached on 31 December 1706 at St Paul's Cathedral before both houses of Parliament. The sermon was to celebrate 'the wonderful successes of this year' and was a classic Whig performance. Bishop William Nicolson called it an 'elegant harrange.'⁴⁰ In the sermon Burnet praised Queen Anne and the establishment of 1688: she presided over a government which was successfully defending itself and which could be the model for Britain's enemies. He lambasted France for enslaving its people, and argued that absolute monarchs were a danger to their subjects. For Burnet, the mark of Britain's excellent constitution was that 'the poorest are not afraid to complain.' He revisited the events of 1688, and spoke of James II who had broken through all the liberties of the people and subjected everything to his own will. James had violated his coronation oath and persecuted people for refusing to become Catholics. Burnet added: 'of this I speak with more assurance, having been an eye witness of those scenes of horror.' Turning to 1706 he argued that peace was to be desired but not 'a false delusory

³⁸ G. Burnet, *A Sermon Preached in Lent at the Chappel of St James's On the 10th Day of March 1705/6*, London, 1706, pp. 10, 17, 18-19, 27. In a Spittal Sermon at Easter 1706, Burnet pointedly argued that 'because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.' -G. Burnet, *A Sermon Preached Before the Right Honorable the Lord Mayor, The Alderman, and Governors of the Several Hospitals of the City of London at St Sepulchre's Church on Easter Monday 1706*, London, 1706

³⁹ Slatter, ed, *The Diary of Thomas Naish*, pp. 55-7. Naish was active in taking the address round the county to ask clergy to sign it, over ninety did so. Burnet learned the lesson and made sure that his address on the Union of England and Scotland the next year was unoffensive and the Tory clergy signed it.

⁴⁰ Jones and Holmes, p. 406.

peace.’ Burnet also argued that ‘this nation seems to be under the peculiar care of providence...’⁴¹

Burnet also mobilised his allies: less than three months later, on 9 March 1706/7, John Hoadly, who Burnet had appointed Prebendary of Salisbury in 1705, preached a remarkable sermon in Salisbury Cathedral. It was an assize sermon for the county of Wiltshire on *The Nature and Excellency of Moderation*.⁴² The moderation that John Hoadly praised was the watchword of Low Churchmen who sympathised with Dissent; High Churchmen were presented as immoderate and intolerant.⁴³ Hoadly argued that moderate men did not condemn Dissenters who made honest use of their consciences. Scripture, he said, was the Dissenters’ rule and that anyone who read it with sincerity was assured of salvation. He also claimed that ‘those things which are not plain are not necessary; those things which we cannot comprehend are no farther necessary than is revealed.’ This left little room for Church authority. Indeed Hoadly attacked some councils of the Church for imposing ‘scholastic niceities’ and ‘zealous hatred’ on other Christians. Such censorious High Churchmen ‘turn Christianity into blood and destruction’ and make ‘his own sect as a conjuror’s circle, the only place of safety from the devil.’⁴⁴

In contrast, when Hoadly thought of the Dissenters he said ‘the God of Justice and mercy will acquit and receive them, in what Church or body of men whatsoever’ and he included Catholics in this. Hoadly argued that moderate churchmen and Latitudinarians regarded Anglican prayers, doctrines, ceremonies and bishops as an ideal, but recognised that conscience could justify separation from it. Hoadly did not just concede Dissenters’ claims of conscience, he positively endorsed them, saying that a sincere man had a duty to separate from the Church if he was following his conscience, and in doing so he did not sin. He even argued that Dissenters did not need the forgiveness of Anglicans: ‘forgiveness for what? For not being of the same complexion and stature, and gate, for

⁴¹ G. Burnet, *A Sermon Preach’d Before the Queen and the Two Houses of Parliament at St Paul’s on the 31st December 1706, the Day of Thanksgiving for the Wonderful Successes of this Year*, Edinburgh, 1707, pp. 6, 8, 14, this was before the final agreement of the Act of Union in 1707.

⁴² For John Hoadly’s views see W. Gibson, ‘Brother of the more famous Benjamin: the Theology of John Hoadly’ *Anglican and Episcopal History*, Vol LXXV, No 3, 2006.

⁴³ J. Hoadly, *The Nature and Excellency of Moderation. A Sermon Preach’d in the Cathedral Church of Sarum at the Assizes held for the County of Wilts, March 9th, 1706/7*, London, 1707, p. 4.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 6-7.

the differences in those things are no more necessary than not agreeing in all opinions.’ He also claimed that an Anglican dialogue with Dissent could enliven the Church and that the clergy might gain from some emulation of Dissenters’ energy, comparing it to the wind that cleansed the fog from the countryside.⁴⁵

All of this was larded with a strongly Whig account of the Glorious Revolution and an attack on passive obedience. In his peroration Hoadly advanced moderation as the true salvation of 1688:

‘Twas moderation after the extravagancies and madness of the troublesome times... that brought again to the kingdom and throne the royal family... ‘Twas moderation whether men would or no, that brought them to lay the design that the Glorious Revolution that sav’d us from the two worst things in the world, Popery and Slavery...

Moderation was the source of Queen Anne’s virtue, of foreign victories and of the Union with Scotland.⁴⁶ John Hoadly’s assize sermon was the most extreme expression of Low Church latitude towards Dissent. No churchman in the century went as far as this in advocating the legitimacy of Dissent and its separation from the Church. Since Hoadly was Burnet’s protégé, the Tory High Church clergy naturally assumed that he was the Bishop’s mouthpiece. The sermon produced a storm of protests and seemed designed to inflame the clergy of the diocese of Salisbury.

Despite the offence given by Hoadly’s sermon, at the episcopal visitation of 1708, Burnet returned to the issue of treatment of the Dissenters. His visitation articles asked clergy and churchwardens:

Are there any in your Parish who, under pretence of Liberty of Conscience, wholly neglect all publick worship of God; neither going to Church, nor to any assembly that meet together according to the late Act for exempting His Majesty’s Protestant Subjects Dissenting from the Church of England from the penalties of certain laws?⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Ibid, pp. 8, 9, 9-10.

⁴⁶ Ibid, pp. 11-12, 14, 16. And if this were not enough, Hoadly concluded with a reference Archbishop Tillotson had made at the funeral of Bishop Wilkins of Chester: ‘I purposely mention his moderation, and likewise adventure to commend him for it.’

⁴⁷ *Articles of Visitation and Enquiry concerning Matters Ecclesiastical Exhibited to the Ministers, Churchwardens, and Side-men of every parish within the Diocese of Sarum at the Triennial Visitation of the Right Reverend Father in God, Gilbert, by divine permission, Lord Bishop of Sarum, 1708*, n.p., 1708, p. 6.

This question seemed to equate attendance at Dissenters meetings with attending the parish church and that only those who did not attend either Anglican or Dissenting worship were the Bishop's concern. Once again, Burnet has caused offence.

In the accompanying letter to the clergy, Burnet was characteristically stern. He warned them to be on their guard against 'popish emissaries' and also to avoid controversies. Burnet, aware that he was unpopular, told them 'we hope we may appeal to you ourselves, whether we have not studied to do our duty among you in the best manner... have we not assisted and encouraged you in your labours on all occasions?' He commended the Protestant succession to them and recounted that since 1688 Providence had protected England for twenty years.⁴⁸

Burnet's favoured clergy also continued to add to the tension. On 20 April 1708 Burnet appointed Rice Adams, whom he had also made Prebendary of Salisbury, to preach the visitation sermon in the Cathedral. Adams, preaching on *The Excellency, Wisdom and Usefulness of an Upright and Sincere Conversation*, argued the case for moderation again. Like Burnet and Hoadly, Adams argued that reason had to conquer passions. He used the language of Puritanism to present the advantages of moderation to a weary pilgrim, avoiding 'dark and slippery places' and 'being misled by crooked byways.' He sought justice and charity toward Dissenters. In considering the High Church claims of the independence of the Church from the State, Adams claimed that recent statements seemed to strike at the foundations of the Reformation.⁴⁹

Three months later, on 18 July 1708, at the assize sermon in the Cathedral, John Hoadly preached another barnstorming defence of the Latitudinarian position. Like Adams, he attacked the divisions promoted by High Churchmen. But he equated the separation of Dissenters with the position of High Churchmen. Hoadly argued that Dissenters might have separated from the Church, but High Churchmen had thrown off Church authority. He accused the latter of haughtiness and a motivation of 'something besides conviction' – a hint perhaps at Jacobitism. But either way, schism and opposition to superiors were the same. Hoadly traced the ways in which High Churchmen wanted to

⁴⁸ *A Letter from the Bishop of Salisbury to the Clergy of his Diocese to be read at the Triennial Visitation in April and May 1708*, passim.

⁴⁹ Adams, *The Excellency, Wisdom and Usefulness of an Upright and Sincere Conversation, Recommended in a Sermon preach'd in the Cathedral Church of Sarum at the Triennial Visitation there on April the 20th 1708*, London, 1708, pp. 5, 11, 15.

control people's minds which God had given them to exercise freely.⁵⁰ He linked the freedom of conscience which Britons enjoyed but which were trampled on abroad, and for which Britain was fighting. Thus in the suite of sermons of 1705-08 Burnet and his allies pushed back against the electoral defeat and argued the Whig Latitudinarian case directly to the clergy and people of the diocese.

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Events in London raised tension between Burnet and his clergy even further. In February and March 1710, despite Burnet's advice to the contrary, the Whig government impeached Henry Sacheverell before Parliament for sedition.⁵¹ Notwithstanding his misgivings, Burnet took a leading part in it, regarding Sacheverell's inflammatory High Church sermon as anathema. Burnet's role in the trial naturally attracted opprobrium from opponents. Burnet led the Whig bishops in attacking Sacheverell during the trial and his speech was widely circulated in print.⁵² Many of the replies to and defences of Burnet were anonymous.⁵³ Such a work was *A Vindication of the Bishop of Salisbury and Passive Obedience*. It introduced an aspect of the Salisbury quarrel that was to dog the Bishop for some time: whether he had been consistent in his opposition to the duty of passive obedience to rulers. The work argued that passive-obedience and non-resistance had historically been the doctrines of the Church of England and sardonically claimed that Burnet could not have spoken a speech ascribed to him during Sacheverell's trial since Burnet had been an adherent of passive obedience before the Revolution of 1688. The *Vindication* claimed that Benjamin Hoadly, John Hoadly's brother, was Burnet's accomplice in putting biblical injunctions against rebellion, 'upon the wrack to stretch him to his terms' and pointed out that clergy who supported occasional resistance also endorsed occasional conformity. The author of the *Vindication* even claimed to have

⁵⁰ J. Hoadly, *The Abasement of Pride: A Sermon Preach'd in the Cathedral Church of Salisbury at the Assizes held for the County of Wilts, July 18th 1708 Upon the Occasion of the Late Victory*, London, 1708, p. 6, 9.

⁵¹ The solicitor general who took the decision to prosecute Sacheverell was Robert Eyre, MP for Salisbury.

⁵² Burnet's speech, together with those of Bishop Talbot and Lord Haversham, took two and a half hours. – Jones and Holmes, p. 97.

⁵³ Arthur Mainwaring claimed that he had been specifically encouraged to attack Burnet in print. *Four Letters to a Friend in North-Britain Upon the publishing the Tryal of Dr Sacheverell*, London, 1710.

transcribed a sermon that Burnet had preached in Westminster Abbey which also suggested he had changed his position.⁵⁴

A number of the tracts attacking Burnet after the Sacheverell trial took up the claim that he had changed his position on the issue of passive obedience. The author of *An Impartial Examination of the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Salisbury's, Oxford's, Lincoln's and Norwich's Speeches upon the First and Second Articles of Dr Sacheverell's Impeachment* placed Burnet's support for passive obedience in the 1670s alongside his speech at the Sacheverell trial and asked the bishop to retract one or the other.⁵⁵

The aftermath of Sacheverell's trial witnessed remarkable violence in London, some of it directed against Burnet. During the trial a man 'cleft the skull of another' in a tumult in front of Burnet's door, which was near a London Dissenters' meeting house. Later, Burnet's house was threatened with fire and on one occasion he was only saved by the arrival of troops.⁵⁶ In Salisbury, the news of Sacheverell's light sentence was treated as an acquittal with bells ringing, bonfires and wine made freely available by the corporation. Sacheverell's health was toasted and those who refused to join in were threatened. The disorder lasted for almost a week with fires burning across Salisbury. Finally the corporation intervened to prevent a celebration in the market place. Salisbury was a natural place for such celebrations not just because Burnet was its bishop, but also because Sacheverell's mother lived in an almshouse for widows of clergy in the city. During his triumphal tour of England in the wake of the trial, Sacheverell visited his mother there.⁵⁷ Sacheverell was said to have toasted Burnet as 'the Presbyterian Bishop of Sarum' and to have 'rudely insulted' him.⁵⁸ At the same time, the congratulatory addresses to the Queen on the trial of Sacheverell included one from the archdeacons

⁵⁴ *A Vindication of the Bishop of Salisbury and Passive Obedience, with Some Remarks upon a Speech which goes under his Lordship's Name*, London, 1710, pp. 5, 16.

⁵⁵ *An Impartial Examination of the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Salisbury's, Oxford's, Lincoln's and Norwich's Speeches upon the First and Second Articles of Dr Sacheverell's Impeachment*, London, 1710, p. 1.

⁵⁶ *Burnet's History of My Own Time*, p. 849.

⁵⁷ Holmes, pp. 8, 265. In fact, Burnet, as patron of the almshouses had granted Sacheverell's mother her place there. Bennett, *White Kennett*, p. 105.

⁵⁸ W. Bisset, *The Modern Fanatic Part III Being a Further Account of the Famous Doctor...*, London, 1714, pp. 6, 11.

in Salisbury diocese which contained slights on Burnet.⁵⁹ Burnet was clearly annoyed and recorded in his memoirs disquiet at the addresses ‘in which the absolute power of our princes was asserted.’⁶⁰ Burnet was so provoked by events in 1710 that he wrote to an archdeacon that he was incapable of giving an account of events in Parliament, but added ‘men of bad tempers and bad principles are doing all they can to drive us into confusion... I am sorry to see so many of our clergy, as it were, out of their wits.’⁶¹

In May 1710, on his entry to the city of Salisbury, Burnet was met by the mayor and aldermen as was customary, but the welcome was grudging and the bishop was not in a gracious frame of mind. This mutual antipathy between bishop and corporation led to the high point of the Salisbury quarrel. In a sermon in the Cathedral Burnet mentioned the disorders in Salisbury, condemned them and implied that they had been stirred up by Catholics. The Tory corporation took grave offence. A week later the mayor and eight leading aldermen got up and walked out of St Thomas’s church during another sermon by Burnet.⁶² Thomas Naish reported that ‘the Bishop greatly resents this affront.’⁶³ The episode was so shocking that it was widely written about that it even made its way into the Paris newspapers.⁶⁴

On 29 May 1710, Burnet’s preached another sermon in the Cathedral; it was a thoroughly Whig rendition of St Matthew’s injunction: ‘Render unto the Caesar the things which are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s’ –which text was often cited by advocates of passive obedience to support their position. However Burnet argued that the passage meant people should be obedient to those who govern ‘by long possession; but if they claimed rights not allowed them by God or the constitution, no obedience was due.’ This seemed to square the circle of Whigs legitimately resisting James but not Tories resisting Anne. Burnet attacked the claim that people owed unlimited obedience to rulers as impious. With an eye to the tumult arising from the Sacheverell trial, Burnet asserted that people owed obedience not to riot and attacked those who claimed to support passive obedience but who challenged the Queen and her

⁵⁹ Clarke and Foxcroft, p. 445.

⁶⁰ *Burnet’s History of My Own Time*, p. 852.

⁶¹ Huntington Library Ms, HM 7395, Burnet to Welchman April 6, 1710.

⁶² Cruickshanks, S. Handley & D. W. Hayton, ii, p. 694; H. C. Foxcroft, ‘Salisbury: Politics and Parliamentary History since 1612’ in *VCH Wiltshire*, vol 6, 1962.

⁶³ Slatter, ed, *The Diary of Thomas Naish*, p. 68. Naish’s entry is dated 15 May 1710.

⁶⁴ Foxcroft, ‘Salisbury Politics in the Reign of Queen Anne’, p. 113.

representatives.⁶⁵ Talk of hereditary right was, he claimed, an ‘insinuation’ against the Protestant Succession which drew ‘unthinking people’ into dangerous political views. Burnet admitted that he had

gone further in this matter than I have ever done formerly: but the day and the present temper into which the concealed designs of some, and the extravagant follies of others have put too many, who do not rightly apprehend matters, have made me look on it as a part of my duty to open this clearly to you.⁶⁶

Burnet also turned his scorn on the Corporation of Salisbury because, in an address to the Queen, it included the phrase ‘we will be Your Majesty’s loyal and obedient subjects without reserve’, which Burnet took to be a blasphemous statement of support for non-resistance.⁶⁷

Burnet’s three Salisbury sermons of May 1710 were not tolerated by the leading Non-juror controversialist, Charles Leslie, who was a long-standing enemy of Burnet. Leslie published a response, under the pseudonym ‘Misodolus’, entitled *The Good Old Cause*. In a mock sympathetic opening, Leslie claimed that no man had been more persecuted than Burnet ‘even to mobbing!’ But he did not take long to warm to his task, within six lines he claimed Burnet’s speech contained ‘all the marks of Grubb’ and added Burnet’s ‘Heart is False.’⁶⁸ Leslie heaped opprobrium on Burnet and questioned the legitimacy of the Revolution of 1688. What Leslie particularly objected to was that Burnet had been ‘the principal manager’ in William’s 1688 Declaration against James.⁶⁹ Like Sacheverell, Leslie advanced passive obedience and hereditary right, comparing resistance to the dangers of the Civil War. He also raised the question of Burnet’s consistency, suggesting that Burnet had preached a different account of resistance in 1674 and asserted traditional Anglican passive obedience in his *Vindication of the Church and State* in 1673, and accused Burnet of hypocrisy in giving thanks for the Prince of Wales’s birth in 1688 and later denouncing him as a changeling.

⁶⁵ G. Burnet, *A Sermon Preach’d in the Cathedral-Church of Salisbury on the 29th Day of May, in the Year 1710*, London, 1710, pp. 4-6, 8.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 1710, p. 10.

⁶⁷ Slatter, ed, *The Diary of Thomas Naish*, p. 69.

⁶⁸ *The Good Old Cause, or Lying in Truth, Being a Second Defence of the Lord Bishop of Sarum from a Second Speech and also The Dissection of a Sermon it is said his Lordship Preached in the Cathedral Church of Salisbury Last 29th of May*, London, 1710, p. 1.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 7, 15.

It is clear that Burnet had advocated passive obedience in the 1670s; there is also evidence that he had urged Lord William Russell to denounce resistance to rulers when he was awaiting execution after the Rye House plot. But Burnet had never embraced the unlimited high view of passive obedience derived from Sir Robert Filmer's patriarchalism; he had seen passive obedience as qualified and a means to achieve tranquillity and peace in Church and State. By 1710, Burnet's goal of tranquillity had not changed, but the means to achieve it had shifted to endorse resistance to a ruler who did not accept the constitutional settlement of Church and State.⁷⁰

No sooner had Leslie's tract been issued than Burnet's sermon of 1674 was republished so that people could see the differences between it and what Burnet had said during Sacheverell's impeachment. It is not clear whether the printing was commissioned by Burnet in an attempt to clear his name of hypocrisy or Leslie in an effort to present the evidence the other way.⁷¹ However the *Good Old Cause* was taken by the government to be a reflection on its loyalty and a warrant was issued for Leslie's arrest; as he failed to appear in court he was outlawed in August 1710. Within a year, Leslie visited St Germain's and paid respects to the Old Pretender.⁷²

Meanwhile, Burnet's friends were keen to raise his defence against Leslie's *Good Old Cause*. In *The New Ill Designs of Sowing Sedition Detected*, a supporter made no bones that he was defending Burnet's speech during the Sacheverell trial and his Salisbury sermon on 29 May.⁷³ The tone of the tract was a fierce knock-about attack on Leslie who was variously described as: a student of 'his great tutor Beelzebub', a man from whose mouth 'foam drivels so fast out of both corners', and one who could be found 'all week strolling about with false news and on Sundays at the Upper-end of the Table in a Jacobite Conventicle, praying for his nameless sovereign of the masculine

⁷⁰ For detailed consideration of Burnet's opinions on this, see Helen Foxcroft's essay 'Additional Editorial Note: Change in Burnet's views concerning passive obedience' in Foxcroft, *Supplement to Burnet's History of My Own Time*, pp. 515-9.

⁷¹ G. Burnet, *The Royal Martyr and the Dutiful Subject, in Two Sermons. The Royal Martyr Lamented in a Sermon Preached at the Savoy on King Charles the Martyr's Day, 1674/5, and Subjection for Conscience-Sake Asserted in A Sermon Preached at Covent-Garden Church December the sixth, 1674*, London, 1710.

⁷² J. H. Overton, *The Non-Jurors, The Lives, Principles and Writings*, London, 1902, pp. 160-1.

⁷³ The full title of the tract being: *The New Ill Designs of Sowing Sedition Detected; And The Pretended Friends, but the Private Enemies of the Church and State Discover'd and Expos'd or, A Vindication of the Lord Bishop of Salisbury's Speech in the House of Lords, at the Tryal of Dr Sacheverell; and His Lordship's Sermon Preached in the Cathedral Church of Salisbury, on 29th of May last past. In a modest Reply to a scurrilous pamphlet entitul'd The Good Old Cause, or Lying in Truth*, London, n.d.

gender, and preaching up resistance and rebellion.’ *New Ill Designs of Sowing Sedition Detected* also advanced a strong defence of Burnet. It made clear that no man deserved the ‘mobbing’ Burnet had received.⁷⁴ Returning to the issue of resistance, the author wrote that obedience could never be unlimited and that Burnet held this view.⁷⁵ The author pointed out that even Sacheverell’s counsel, Sir Simon Harcourt and Constantine Phipps, asserted that they did not dispute or question the legitimacy of the Revolution and Harcourt even went as far as to say that the resistance of 1688 was ‘not inconsistent with the doctrine of the Church of England’, indeed the seven bishops in 1688 also clearly resisted James’s authority. In contradiction, Leslie’s denial of a contract between ruler and ruled, the author cited both Magna Carta and the Kentish men’s negotiations with William the Conqueror. Burnet’s Salisbury sermon of 29 May was praised because there was so much public opposition to the Revolution and Burnet had preached obedience to the Queen.⁷⁶

Matters in Salisbury continued to attract attention in London. In June 1710 another supporter of Burnet published *A Letter from A Gentleman in London to a Citizen of New-Sarum*. The letter opened with the claim that an account of what had happened at Burnet’s sermons in the Cathedral in May was the subject of much London coffee-house conversation. According to the account, which muddled up two sermons, as soon as Burnet mounted the Cathedral pulpit the mayor and corporation of Salisbury put on their hats ‘and (very indecently) walk’d out of Church’ because they had taken offence at Burnet’s previous sermons. In fact, of course, this had happened at St Thomas’s Salisbury, not in the Cathedral. The author made much fun of the fact that Londoners could not see what the Salisbury citizens might have objected to in Burnet’s sermon.⁷⁷ Occasionally such tracts made metropolitan jibes at provincial audiences. The

⁷⁴ Suggesting some close knowledge of Burnet and the events of 1688, the author accused Leslie of having controlled the mob which defended Judge Alibone’s house in the summer of 1688 from those who wanted to attack it for Alibone’s part in the trial of the seven bishops. It was claimed that Leslie led the mob away to the Temple in gown and cassock. For the paradoxical position of Tory bishops resisting James, see W. Gibson, *James II and The Trial of the Seven Bishops*, Basingstoke, 2009, pp. 116 et seq.

⁷⁵ *The New Ill Designs of Sowing Sedition Detected*, pp. 5-6, 9.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 11-12, 15-16.

⁷⁷ *A Letter From A Gentleman in London to A Citizen of New-Sarum With his Answer to the Same*, London, 1710. It is dated 13 June 1710. Thomas Naish claimed the same: ‘His [Burnet’s] design in this is to perswade the world that this is the sermon in which he first disgusted that body: and I find many in London and the country deceived by it as taking it for that same: but alas, that first sermon was so bad and offensive, that tis not suffered to see the light. –Slatter p. 69.

anonymous author of *A Full View of the Bishop of Salisbury's Principles for the Year MDCCX* commented patronisingly that Burnet's sermons in the city probably carried more weight with a less sophisticated Salisbury congregation.⁷⁸

Four days later an *Answer* from the citizen of Salisbury was published in response to the *Letter from A Gentleman in London to a Citizen of New-Sarum*. The citizen pointed out that 'the unhappy feuds and dissensions which we of this place have so boyled (for too long a season) have not been more remark'd and talk'd of abroad than lamented and bewailed by our selves at Home.' The citizen argued that Londoners were mistaken if they understood that Burnet's 29 May Cathedral sermon was the cause of the offence taken by the mayor and corporation. It was an earlier sermon which amounted to 'a vehement harangue of words, which as much transported the speaker as amazed the hearers.'⁷⁹ The citizen accused Burnet of sleight of hand claiming that he had deliberately made it appear that the Corporation had objected to the Bishop's call for obedience to the Queen. In Burnet's first sermon on 7 May, the corporation was 'charg'd with Tumults! Riots! Mobbs! Being Headed by Papists! As expecting and just ready to receive the Pretender and his friends.' What made this accusation galling was that the city had been 'so quiet' and that the only disturbance was 'a few boys... had in the streets rak'd up some straw, had got a few faggots and stood round their bonfire...' This had been 'drest up' by Burnet so much that it had been the subject of a discussion in the Privy Council.⁸⁰ The citizen had no doubt that the exaggeration of the violence in Salisbury was the work of the 'crafty and designing men' who surrounded Burnet. Now the people of London and elsewhere thought of the people of Salisbury as 'Jacobites, Papists and such fools'. In a postscript the citizen claimed that his motive in writing the *Answer* was to 'plead not guilty, and throw ourselves upon God and our country from whom we can hope to find more mercy than we can yet can at the Hands of our Judge.'⁸¹

In 1711 more light was shed on the events in Salisbury in a tract entitled *The Salisbury Quarrel Ended*. Its author contended that John Hoadly had written to the mayor of Salisbury complaining about the rough treatment of Bishop Burnet when he had first

⁷⁸ *A Full View of the Bishop of Salisbury's Principles for the Year MDCCX*, London, 1711, p. 5.

⁷⁹ While Burnet's sermon that offended the corporation was preached on 7 May, the 'walk out' happened at the sermon at St Thomas's on 11 May.

⁸⁰ *A Letter From A Gentleman in London*, pp. 6-7.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, p. 12 and postscript, n.p.

entered the city in May 1710.⁸² Hoadly related what had happened during the sermon which Burnet had preached in St Thomas's Salisbury:

His Lordship ascending the pulpit, the Right Worshipful and his brethren, as soon as the service was ended, took their hats and walked out of the Church, leaving His Lordship to preach to the walls.

The author of *The Salisbury Quarrel Ended* queried this account, claiming that elsewhere Hoadly had said that only eight of the corporation had walked out. The author also accused Hoadly and Burnet of inconsistency in their statements about the level of disorder in the town after Sacheverell's trial. In one place Hoadly had accused the supporters of Sacheverell of disorder saying they 'thought fit to rejoice in an extraordinary manner' but Burnet had complimented the town and had said 'our riots etc were less than in other places.' The discussion of the Sacheverell riots in Salisbury became muddled, Hoadly's accusation that rioters at the city cheese market had 'insulted, threatened, abused [and] knocked down' their opponents was denied, as was his claim that the tumult had been led by a Catholic.⁸³

The author wrote that, as a consequence of Burnet's preaching, 'the tainted and corrupt lessons of resistance are read publicly in our streets and the poison of Rebellion is laid in every corner.'⁸⁴ In speaking directly to Burnet, the author wrote 'how can we expect your endeavour after truth and peace should be hearty and sincere... when you traduce and blacken the place where you live (a great part of which are your own flock)?' There was much more besides: Hoadly was attacked for suggesting that the mayor of Salisbury had not observing the customary ceremonial on greeting Burnet's entry to the city in May 1710; he was also accused of having persuaded Burnet to withdraw the £10 annual donation he made to the city workhouse. The author asked Hoadly 'is this the way you study to contribute to peace?'⁸⁵

Inevitably other Salisbury clergy joined in the controversy including Burnet's allies. At the assize sermon in Salisbury in July 1710, Francis Fox, the Whig rector of

⁸² The author of *The Salisbury Quarrel Ended* called it 'a trifling paper'.

⁸³ Anon. *The Salisbury Quarrel Ended: or The Last Letter of the Citizen of New Sarum to Mr. Hoadly. In which the true notions of passive obedience and hereditary right are more fully explained*, London, 1710, pp. 5-7. This is an extremely rare item and was printed for W. Taylor, at the Ship in Pater-Noster-Row.

⁸⁴ *The Salisbury Quarrel Ended*, p. 26.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 27, 32, 33.

Boscombe, preached on ‘the lawfulness of oaths.’⁸⁶ Fox argued that God did not forbid oaths, but he railed against those who swore false oaths, a reference to those Jacobites who had sworn the oaths of allegiance and abjuration. He also advanced Burnet’s position, arguing that the Church ordered children to obey their parents, but no one would hold that they should do so if their parents told them to act unlawfully, so no subject was obliged to obey a tyrant. In a comment referring to events in the preceding weeks, Fox claimed wickedness sometimes ‘proceeds from unbridled appetites and ungovern’d passions.’ His peroration was a classic Latitudinarian response to the disturbances of the day: calling on people to have the good sense not to support those who would betray liberties and the constitution.⁸⁷

Burnet was also defended in an anonymous letter to ‘a north Wiltshire clergyman’ in August 1710. The letter concerned the address from the archdeaconry of Wiltshire to the Queen, on the acquittal of Sacheverell, which, the author claimed, had been sent without proper consultation with the Bishop. The address had expressed support for the doctrine of passive obedience and clearly reflected badly on Burnet, since ‘that Good Bishop has appear’d in opposition to your darling doctrine.’ The author turned the tables on the clergy of the archdeaconry of Wiltshire by asking whether passive obedience was consistent with their behaviour to Burnet to whom they had sworn obedience. The clergy were motivated by the desire to see the election of a Tory dominated Parliament. The author defended Burnet as a model bishop, pointing out that he preached and confirmed for a month each year, and gave books to children. He cited Burnet’s charity to schools and emphasised that he had given ten pounds a year to the Salisbury workhouse and money to the widows’ almshouses. He also claimed that the grant of Queen Anne’s Bounty was due to Burnet who had first proposed it to Mary II.

The author of the *Letter* pointed out the duty owed by the clergy to Burnet, that Burnet was respected throughout Europe, and it was a scandal that people reviled him and especially those in his own diocese. The clergy, it was argued, made an error of

⁸⁶ Francis Fox was no relation to Charles Fox the MP for Salisbury who had opposed Burnet, Fox owed his preferment to Burnet.

⁸⁷ F. Fox, *The Lawfulness of Oaths and the Sin of Perjury and Profane Swearing, A Sermon Preached in the Cathedral of Salisbury at the Assizes held for the County of Wilts, July the 22nd 1710*, London, 1710, pp. 10, 22, 29. Fox was a Low Church reformer in Burnet’s mould and a member of the SPCK –Spaeth, p. 247.

judgement in their address, for in claiming that the Queen had a hereditary right to the throne they had made her right to it seem doubtful because they had not mentioned the parliamentary basis for it and therefore implied the succession was not safe. Thus, he argued, ‘whilst you would show your selves such loyal subjects to the Queen, you have done it in such a way as makes you in effect the worst of enemies both to her and your country.’⁸⁸

As Burnet seemed to gain the advantage in print, his opponents’ attacks were redoubled. In August 1710, Burnet was so infuriated by the mayor of Salisbury, William Naish, Thomas’s brother, for accusing him of preaching lies that he had him arrested for ‘scandalum magnatum’.⁸⁹ In January 1711, William Naish was tried before the Lord Chief Justice at the Guildhall in London, found guilty and sentenced to pay £100 damages to Burnet.⁹⁰ Burnet spent the money improving the road across Salisbury Plain.⁹¹

The height of the Salisbury quarrel coincided with the 1710 general election. The Tories had won a landslide victory in the Salisbury mayoral election in 1710, and in the subsequent parliamentary elections Fox was elected without even visiting the constituency and Robert Pitt won the second seat for the Tories ousting Eyre from it.⁹² This was part of the national Tory landslide at the 1710 election. During the election national attention was naturally paid to what was happening in Salisbury. In *The Danger of Moderation in A Letter to a Parliament-Man in the Country*, moderation was presented by the Tories as ‘a very troublesome vertue’ that would bring no quiet. Burnet’s apparent reversal over obedience led the author to call him ‘the man who stood on his Head on Salisbury steeple.’⁹³

Burnet’s own account of the 1710 election in Salisbury mentioned ‘unheard of methods’ used by the Tories and High Churchmen to win the city poll. He described,

⁸⁸ *A Letter to Mr B_____ a North-Wiltshire Clergyman, relating to An Address from that Archdeaconry to the Queen wherein A Character is given of the Bishop of Sarum, and an Account of the Clergy’s Behaviour towards him*, London, 1710, pp. 4-6, 7, 8, 9-12, 13, 15, 16.

⁸⁹ Slatter, ed, *The Diary of Thomas Naish*, p. 70.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 71.

⁹¹ Clarke and Foxcroft, pp. 445-6.

⁹² Cruickshanks, S. Handley & D. W. Hayton, ii, p. 694; ‘Salisbury: Politics and Parliamentary History since 1612’ in *VCH Wiltshire*, vol 6, 1962.

⁹³ *The Danger of Moderation in A Letter to a Parliament-Man in the Country*, London, n.d. –but certainly 1710, pp. 2, 5.

a vast concourse of rude multitudes brought together, who behave themselves in so boisterous a manner that it was not safe, and in many places not possible for those who had the right to vote to come and give their votes for a Whig... The clergy had a great share in this; for, besides a course for some months of inflaming sermons, they went about, from house to house, pressing their people to shew on this great occasion their zeal for the Church, and now, or never, to save it.⁹⁴

Burnet was so shocked by the Tory landslide nationally that he warned Queen Anne of the danger to her in the new government and the growing threat of Jacobite feeling.⁹⁵

Burnet gave his response to the election in the autumn of 1710 in two strongly worded sermons preached in the Cathedral on 5 and 7 November. In the first, he adamantly refused to accept any criticism of the government under Queen Anne; he spoke in providential tones of the national ‘freedom from the plague’ which he said was unprecedented, as was that ‘we send out numerous plantations, who are still part of our selves.’ He referred to Britain as a happy island and contrasted it with the bad weather, crop failure and famines that had affected Europe. As a gun-powder plot sermon, Burnet naturally referred to the ‘diabolical plot’ and he could not resist comparing it to the Catholic ‘plot’ of the reign of James. The constitution of Britain rested on the sovereign and parliament; James –inspired by Catholics- had tried to root out the Constitution by use of royal power to dispense with laws. Burnet also used the sermon to respond to the accusations that he had changed his position since 1673-4; he claimed that in 1674 he had never asserted anything but that ‘a magistrate governing by law was not to be resisted upon the account of religion’ which was not a contradiction of his position in 1688, when the King did not govern according to the law. Whereas Queen Anne ruled according to law and therefore ‘there should be no complaining in our streets.’⁹⁶

Burnet’s second sermon on 7 November 1710 was similarly uncompromising. Preached on a thanksgiving day, Burnet gave a nod in the direction of the victories in Europe. He adopted a strongly Whig providential tone, thanking God for the ‘several turns of wind that brought our late King over.’ But his real concern remained a defence of the Church’s relationship with Dissent. Burnet argued that High Churchmen had been uncharitable toward Dissent in seeking to exclude them from salvation. He also called the

⁹⁴ Burnet’s *History of My Own Time*, p. 857.

⁹⁵ Jones and Holmes, p. 566.

⁹⁶ G. Burnet, *Two Sermons Preached in the Cathedral Church of Salisbury: the First on the Fifth of November, Gun-powder Treason Day; the Second on the Seventh of November, being the Thanksgiving Day in the Year 1710*, London, 1710, pp. 5-6, 9, 11-12, 13, 15, 17.

High Church position ‘a disgrace’. His peroration condemned the ‘perfidious party at home ever endeavouring to betray and ruine us’ but hoped that ‘the Protestant Succession be for ever secured!’⁹⁷

Burnet’s two sermons in Salisbury attracted the attention of the Tory publisher Edmund Curll, who issued *The White Crow* –an allusion to the unlikely rarity of Burnet’s argument- within a few weeks.⁹⁸ Curll referred to ‘the great felicity which I formerly enjoyed at this place in your Lordship’s Conversation.’ He claimed that Burnet’s sermons amounted to no more than that ‘an usurper may become a lawful prince and a lawful prince an usurper.’ In another display of metropolitan condescension Curll emphasised that Burnet’s ‘logical syllogism’ would

have the desired effect with the Sarumnians, who can appear no other than the meanest of freshmen in this art, compared to your Lordship, but these... discourses tho’ all deliver’d at Salisbury... carried I suppose their conviction along with ‘em at that place...

Curll repeated that Burnet had shifted his position since 1674, and that he hardly thought Queen Anne would want to rely on Burnet’s grounds for monarchy, which would have legitimised Cromwell. Curll went as far as to concede that James II had invaded the ‘laws and liberties’, but questioned whether the Revolution had been the right way to redress this grievance. He also argued that those who advanced either the hereditary or the parliamentary right to the throne of Queen Anne had made an error, the two were inseparable. Discussing Burnet’s sympathetic treatment of the Dissenters, Curll claimed that he supported toleration but felt that occasional conformity led to hypocrisy and made religion subservient to politics, whereas it ought to be ‘the foremost badge of every true Christian.’⁹⁹

Responses to Burnet’s two sermons in Salisbury continued to emerge during 1711. The Tory author of *Remarks on Two Late Sermons* questioned the right of people to resist their rulers. The author argued that Burnet’s view laid a ruler open to deposition because a subject objected to his rule. He also suggested that, even if James II had abandoned the country he could not be regarded as a pretender when he sought to obtain

⁹⁷ Ibid, pp. 23-4, 28-9, 30-2.

⁹⁸ Curll’s work was dated 25 November from Glasgow.

⁹⁹ E. Curll, *The White Crow: or an Enquiry Into Some More New Doctrines Broach’d by the Bishop of Salisbury in a Pair of Sermons Utter’d in that Cathedral on the V and VII Days of November 1710. And his Lordship’s Restauration Sermon, last 29th of May*, London, 1710, pp. 1-5, 10-11, 15, 17-18, 29-31, 33. This was Dr Wise’s visitation sermon preached at Canterbury on 1 June, 1710.

back his kingdom and added: ‘My L--- of S---- is not the only person that has changed his mind.’ He also played a game with the nature of hereditary and parliamentary monarchy, asking how could a parliamentary monarch confirm his own right to succeed without a pre-existing hereditary connection: ‘if Her Majesty have no hereditary right, she has no right at all.’ The author of the *Remarks* also claimed that Low Churchmen had united with Dissenters in the 1710 elections to oppose ‘men of true Church Principles’ and that not only were occasional conformists damaging the Church but were in effect schismatics who were admitted to its communion.¹⁰⁰

By May 1711, when Burnet’s next triennial visitation was due, he was too old to visit the diocese in person and instead sent a letter to be read to the clergy. Burnet was clearly bruised by the Salisbury quarrel, he told the clergy

in the age in which we live, we must not expect any great degree of esteem or love, but for our works sake; and bad as the age is, there are not many instances of those who do the work of the Ministry with a due measure of affection, zeal and discretion, but they feel that a large share of love and esteem visibly follows it.

Nevertheless, Burnet said that he sometimes met ‘unacceptable things’. He also warned again of the danger of opening the way to those who might damage the Church, ‘when we cast open the doors of the sanctuary without due care by which thieves and robbers may come in to steal, kill and destroy.’¹⁰¹

Thereafter, whatever Burnet published made him a lightning-conductor for attacks, and some of these were extreme. In the 1711 roman a clef, *Memoirs of Europe towards the Close of the Eighth Century*, Burnet was represented as the Bishop of Antioch who had ‘infected’ the fallen angels.¹⁰² Another high flown attack on Burnet was *Her Majesty and Her Royal Father Vindicated*, published in 1713, in response a collection of Burnet’s sermons. The tract expressed crypto-Jacobite views. It cited Burnet’s claim that James II had dropped the Great Seal into the Thames when he fled, and argued that this showed he did not intend to abdicate the throne. The author argued

¹⁰⁰ *Remarks on Two Late Sermons Preach’d in the Cathedral Church of Salisbury In a Letter to a Friend. To Which is added a Postscript Wherein the Charge of Uncharitableness against the Church for Condemning Lay-Baptism as invalid, is more particularly consider’d and confuted*, London, 1711, p. 3, 10, 12, 15.

¹⁰¹ G. Burnet, *A Letter from the Bishop of Salisbury to the Clergy of his Diocese. To be read at the Triennial Visitation in May, 1711*, London, 1711.

¹⁰² *A Key to the Second Volume of The Memoirs of Europe... London 1711. Memoirs of Europe towards the Close of the Eighth Century... London 1711, p. 204.*

that Burnet's views on the Revolution were as far from the truth 'as Salisbury from Geneva.' The picture painted of James was extraordinarily sympathetic: his behaviour was blamed on misfortune and an ill-starred birth, poor advice and bad luck. The tract also denied that in 1688 Princess Anne left London with 'an army commanded with by the Bishop of London' –which would have made her as rebellious as Burnet.¹⁰³

When Burnet published a new edition of his *Discourse of the Pastoral Care*, the best-selling guide to clerical duties, another anonymous tract appeared attacking the work, entitled *The Clergy and the Present Ministry Defended*. The author made clear that 'old men have a privilege to commend themselves'; but again, the apparent contradiction between Burnet's sermons of 1674 and 1708 was a centrepiece of the attack.¹⁰⁴ He asked whether Burnet looked to Presbyterian Scotland or Calvinist Geneva for his model of a Church. He pointed out that the 'beam' in Burnet's eye prevented him from seeing the numbers of Dissenters who threatened the Church.¹⁰⁵ In the same year Roger Laurence, author of *Lay Baptism Invalid*, first published in 1709, entered the debate in a satirical tract entitled *Sacerdotal Powers*.¹⁰⁶ Laurence questioned whether Burnet had been the author of the sermons of 1710, pointing out that Burnet's 'extirpation of papists' was in contradiction to his claim of moderation and despite a promise to avoid politics.¹⁰⁷

On the national stage, the Salisbury quarrel even reignited controversies which had previously faded from view. Burnet's *Exposition of the Thirty Nine Articles*, which had been published in 1699, and which had subsequently been censured by Convocation, was defended in 1713 in *A Defence of the Right Reverend The Lord Bishop of Sarum...*¹⁰⁸ The author of this work acknowledged how long ago Burnet's *Exposition* had been

¹⁰³ *Her Majesty and Her Royal Father Vindicated. In Answer to a Preface to the Volume of Sermons etc Now Publish'd by the Bishop of Sarum. In a Letter to his Lordship*, London, 1713.

¹⁰⁴ *The Clergy and the Present Ministry Defended. Being A Letter to the Bishop of Salisbury, Occasioned by His Lordship's New Preface to His Pastoral Care*, London, 1713, pp. 2-3, 10, 11.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 18-22.

¹⁰⁶ *Sacerdotal Powers: Or the Necessity of Confession, Penance and Absolution; Together with the Nullity of Unauthoriz'd Lay Baptism Asserted In an Essay; Occasion'd by the Publication of the B----- of S-----'s Two Sermons Preach'd at Salisbury the 5th and 7th of November 1710. By the Author of Lay Baptism Invalid*, London, 1713.

¹⁰⁷ For Laurence's arguments in the Lay Baptism controversy, see R. D. Cornwall, 'Politics and the Lay Baptism Controversy in England, 1708-1715' in R. D. Cornwall and W. Gibson (eds), *Religion, Politics and Dissent 1660-1832*, Aldershot, 2010.

¹⁰⁸ The full title of which was *A Defence of the Right Reverend The Lord Bishop of Sarum in Answer to a Book Entituled A Prefatory Discourse to An Examination of the Bishop of Sarum's Exposition of the XXXIX Articles of the Church of England*, London, 1713.

published, but wrote that the more recent clamour might have clouded readers' minds. He addressed the issue of Burnet being thought 'a changeling' and argued that it was 'so unaccountable that no considering man can believe it.'¹⁰⁹ Burnet's *Pastoral Care* was the theme addressed in *Antidotum Sarisburiense*, also published in 1713. Written by 'a High Churchman', almost certainly George Sewell, it asked if bishops could insult a ruler's rights, why should not the world question a bishop's ideas? The author claimed that Burnet's criticisms of the clergy in his preface to his *Pastoral Care* applied only to Salisbury diocese and that other bishops did not make the same complaints. It laboured sarcastically that Burnet must be especially unlucky to preside over a diocese in which there was 'such a parcel of blockheads' among the clergy. Sewell pointed out that Burnet defamed the clergy but did not point out the obligations and duties of the laity. He also reproved Burnet for attacking his clergy for dabbling in politics when he did the same. He warned Burnet that he was naïve in his dealing with Dissenters and that nothing but rooting out episcopacy would satisfy them. And, as with the clergy, he charged Burnet with not teaching the Dissenters their duty to the Church, but with repeatedly speaking of the Church's duty to Dissenters. He also reminded Burnet that the clergy of Wiltshire and Berkshire –in Salisbury diocese- had been convinced that the Church was in danger.¹¹⁰

Salisbury also saw the aftershocks of the quarrel reverberate, although they declined in ferocity. In May 1713 Arthur Collier, rector of Langford Magna near Salisbury, preached in the Cathedral at the request of the dean. As a High Churchman, Collier chose the controversial text 'let every soul be subject to higher powers' which he said 'has rung in your ears, especially of late; and also what different notes it has been made to sound... strangely have these words been understood by some, as to be made an Argument for Non-Obedience, and even for Resistance...' Despite a High Church exposition of the text, advocating passive obedience to the civil power, Collier at least sought what he called a 'truce' for the 'divided and distracted nation.'¹¹¹

The final shot in the Salisbury quarrel was fired in 1714, when 'Philoclerus' published *Speculum Sarisburianum*. The author listed Burnet's previous publications and

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, pp. 1-2.

¹¹⁰ *Antidotum Sarisburiense, Or a Free Expostulation with the Bishop of Sarum, (suited to the Present Time...*, London, 1713, pp. 1, 5, 6, 12-14, 23, 32.

¹¹¹ A. Collier, *Christian Principles of Obedience to the Higher Powers in a Sermon Preach'd the 29th of May 1713 at the Cathedral Church of Sarum*, London, 1713, pp. 5, 29.

claimed ‘all this noise is not for nothing’; the bishop aimed to resurrect ‘the Good Old Cause.’ Philoclerus restated all the Tory High Church tropes: defence of James II, rejection of his abdication, endorsement of Sacheverell and of passive obedience. Philoclerus’s summary added that ‘if such circumstances should attend his Lordship at Salisbury, when the religious illuminations were begun in Smithfield, as once upon a time did on a certain person’ Burnet might flee to Holland but he would not claim to have deserted his diocese as he accused James of deserting his Kingdom.¹¹²

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The Salisbury quarrel undoubtedly represented the lowest point that relations between a bishop and his diocese fell to in the eighteenth century. The quarrel coloured Burnet’s feelings toward his see city; as Helen Foxcroft commented: ‘when, [Burnet] drew up a will, of which the items in general are singularly just and generous, the alienation which this series of events had excited in his mind was reflected in the modest proportion of his bequests to the town of Salisbury.’¹¹³ Unlike the thousands of pounds he left to Aberdeen and Saltoun, he granted just a half year’s salary to the master of the charity school, £20 for the poor of Salisbury, £5 to the poor of each of the parishes and £5 to the poor of the Cathedral close ‘to be distributed by Mr Hoadly.’¹¹⁴ This last, seemed a suggestion that he wanted only the deserving Whig poor to receive his charity.

The quarrel was fueled by the leading political and religious anxieties in the period of the ‘rage of party’, including passive obedience of rulers; whether the Church was in danger; the legitimacy of tolerance of Dissent; the validity of Dissenters’ separation from the Church and of their use of occasional conformity, and the competition between the Hanoverian succession and the Jacobite claim. All these brought the men and women of Salisbury onto the streets in March 1710 and to the polls

¹¹² *Speculum Sarisburianum, In Remarks on Some Passages in a Pamphlet Entituled An Introduction to the Third Volume of the History of the Reformation of the Church of England by the Right Reverend Father in God, Gilbert, Lord Bishop of Sarum... with a postscript containing some Reflections on the Preface introductory to his Lordship’s Sermons preach’d on several Occasions etc and lately publish’d*, London, 1714, pp. 8, 13, 19, 24, 29, 44, 50, 94, 97.

¹¹³ Foxcroft, ‘Salisbury Politics in the Reign of Queen Anne’ p. 115.

¹¹⁴ *A True Copy of the Last Will and Testament of the Right Reverend Father in God, Gilbert Lord Bishop of Sarum*, London, 1717. The ungenerosity was also evident in the pens of his opponents, one of whom wrote ‘The Bishop of Salisbury’s Descent into Hell’, a song which depicted Burnet’s receipt into Hell by the Devil, J. Hogg, *The Jacobite Relics of Scotland, Being The Songs, Airs and Legends of Adherents to the House of Stuart*, Edinburgh, 1819, pp. 72-3.

throughout this period. The same people read locally produced tracts and sermons and heard the arguments from the pulpits of the diocese. The national events, such as the votes in Parliament for or against the occasional conformity bills, the celebration of Marlborough's victories and the trial of Dr Sacheverell placed onto the national stage the disputes between Burnet and his High Church clergy. In each case the people of Salisbury were presented with a consistent choice: Burnet, Latitudinarianism, Whiggery, Francophobia and the legitimacy of resistance to tyrants, or High Churchmen, Toryism and passive obedience to rulers. What made Salisbury unique was not the issues that confronted the populace but the binary polarities of the personalities of Burnet, the presence of Dissenters and the stubbornness of the High Church clergy. The complex and sprawling issues contained in the Salisbury quarrel were a microcosm of those national and religious anxieties experienced by many people in this period. It is clear that in sermons, tracts and coffeehouse talk these significant national concerns were translated into a local context. The Salisbury quarrel exemplified the ways in which citizens connected themselves to vital national issues and located themselves in the complex matrix of Whig and Tory, Low and High Church and Jacobite and Hanoverian.