

ANTI-QUACK LITERATURE  
IN  
EARLY STUART ENGLAND

A thesis submitted for the degree of Ph. D.  
in the University of London  
by

ROSS DANDRIDGE

### Abstract

During the thirty years preceding the Civil War, learned physicians such as John Cotta, James Hart, James Primerose and Edward Poeton produced a stream of works attacking those who practised medicine without what they regarded as the proper training and qualifications. Recent scholarship has tended to view these as exercises in economic protectionism within the context of the 'medical marketplace'. However, increasing attention has latterly been drawn to the Calvinist religious preferences of these authors, and how these are reflected in their arguments, the suggestion being that these can be read as oblique critiques of contemporary church reform.

My argument is that professional and religious motivations were in fact ultimately inseparable within these works. Their authors saw order and orthodoxy in all fields - medical, social, political and ecclesiastical - as thoroughly intertwined, and identified all threats to these as elements within a common tide of disorder. This is clearest in their obsession with witchcraft, that epitome of rebellion, and with priest-physicians; practitioners who tended to combine medical heterodoxy, anti-Calvinist sympathies and a taste for the occult, and whose practices were innately offensive to puritan social thought while carrying heavy Catholic overtones.

These works therefore reflected an intensely conservative worldview, but my research suggests that they should not necessarily be taken as wholly characteristic of early Stuart puritan attitudes. All of these authors can be associated with the moderate wing of English Calvinism, and Cotta and Hart developed their arguments within the context of the Jacobean diocese of Peterborough, where an entrenched godly elite was confronted by an unusually rigorous conformist church court regime. They sought to promote a particular vision of puritan orthodoxy against conformist heterodoxy; in light of the events of the interregnum, it seems likely that this concealed more diverse attitudes towards medical reform amongst the godly.

Contents

| Chapter |  | Page |
|---------|--|------|
|         | Acknowledgements                                       | 4    |
|         | Note on Transcriptions                                 | 5    |
|         | Introduction   | 6    |
| 1       | Quackery and Physic in early Stuart England            | 23   |
| 2       | John Cotta, James Hart and the Diocese of Peterborough | 75   |
| 3       | Anti-Quack Literature in the 1630s                     | 118  |
| 4       | Witchcraft, Magical Healing and Medical Demonology     | 162  |
|         | Conclusion   | 214  |
|         | Bibliography   | 226  |

### Acknowledgements

Above all I would like to express my sincerest thanks to the two supervisors of this thesis: Dr Jan Broadway, who shepherded the research through its first two years, and Prof. Lisa Jardine who oversaw its completion. Both in fact offered generous advice, support and enthusiasm throughout the project's life.

Thanks are also due to the staff of all the various libraries and archives upon whose holdings this research is based, in particular those of the British Library and the Northamptonshire and West Sussex Record Offices, for their advice and the use of their facilities throughout.

Dr Warren Boutcher, Prof. Jerry Brotton, Mr David Harley and the late Prof. Kevin Sharpe all read through early drafts of various chapters and offered much helpful advice and criticism for which I am deeply grateful. Particular thanks are due to Prof. Brotton, who stepped in as supervisor during Prof. Jardine's thankfully brief period of illness.

### Note on Transcriptions

When quoting from both manuscript and printed works from the early modern period, I have generally endeavoured to retain the original spelling and punctuation. The principle exceptions regard the use of the letters v and u, and i and j, which I have brought into line with conventional modern usage. Abbreviations, with the exception of ampersands, have been silently expanded, and superscript letters have been lowered. When citing manuscript sources, any deletions within the section of text quoted, unless directly relevant to the point at hand, have also been silently omitted, and any interlinear revisions or additions lowered. Text originally rendered in either secretary or italic hands or italic type has been transcribed using roman type, unless the use of italics in the original clearly affects the meaning of the cited passage.

## Introduction

The subject of this thesis is a series of printed and manuscript works attacking the practice of healing by all those who were not learned, professional physicians adhering to orthodox, Galenic principles. It focuses on those works produced during one relatively brief chronological period; the first of the texts dealt with at length here was published in 1612, the last was probably produced no later than 1638. This involves detailed discussion of the works of just five authors: John Cotta, James Hart, Thomas Brian, James Primerose and Edward Poeton. In this introductory survey, therefore, I hope that as well as outlining the historiographical debates relevant to these works, and signalling how I hope to locate them within the context of these, I can also justify my focus on what may appear to be a rather narrow and obscure subject.

It seems almost mandatory to begin with the simple point that these works have, so far, been subjected to relatively little sustained analysis. Many historians have drawn upon them as sources, and some have used passages in more wide-ranging studies, or brief introductory essays, to consider the aims and nature of these works. Several of these discussions, as I will outline below, are perceptive and extremely useful.<sup>1</sup> But I know of only one full length article devoted to any of the books here discussed, and as far as I know not a single substantial collective study of these works, or indeed of early modern English anti-quack literature in general, has yet been produced.<sup>2</sup>

Beyond this, however, there are particular features of these works which key into lively ongoing debates relating not only to the history of early modern medicine, but to the history of early Stuart England in general. This brings me to the main reasoning behind the limited chronological sweep of my study. Few would be

---

<sup>1</sup> Particularly useful are: Peter Elmer, 'Medicine, religion and the puritan revolution' in Roger French and Andrew Wear (eds), *The medical revolution of the seventeenth century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) pp. 10-45. pp. 13-19; David Harley, 'James Hart of Northampton and the Calvinist Critique of Priest-Physicians: an unpublished Polemic of the early 1620s', *Medical History*, 42 (1998) 362-386. pp. 362-369; Lucinda McCray Beier, *Sufferers and Healers: The experience of illness in Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987) pp. 32-50; Andrew Wear, 'Religious beliefs and medicine in early modern England', in Hilary Marland and Margaret Pelling (eds), *The task of healing: Medicine, religion and gender in England and the Netherlands 1450-1800* (Rotterdam: Erasmus, 1996) pp. 145-169. pp. 158-165.

<sup>2</sup> Todd H. J. Pettigrew, "'Profitable unto the Vulgar': The Case and Cases of John Cotta's *Short Discoverie*" in Elizabeth Lane Furdell (ed.), *Textual Healing: Essays on Medieval and Early Modern Medicine* (Leiden: Brill, 2005) pp. 119-138.

perturbed by any study of the political or religious history of England devoted solely to the thirty years preceding the outbreak of the Civil War; indeed, few periods can have been picked over at greater length by historians working in those fields. But several of those who have commented on the anti-quack literature of this period have suggested that it too has to be viewed within the context of the fierce religious disputes developing during this time; in particular, they have noted the puritan sympathies of several of its authors, and identified the distinctive arguments they put forward as reflecting concerns rooted in Calvinist theology, increasingly being marshalled in opposition to that growth of anti-Calvinist churchmanship which was to reach its apogee with the regime of Archbishop Laud.<sup>3</sup>

The primary aim of this thesis is to investigate these suggestions. By taking together all of the vernacular anti-quack texts produced during this period, identifying the nature of their arguments, and placing these within the various religious and political circumstances within which they were produced, I hope to offer some explanation as to what these authors were really trying to achieve. This will involve consideration of religious motives alongside concerns rooted in more obviously professional medical issues; but equally importantly, I will seek to explore the ways in which concerns rooted in these various different factors in fact interacted with and reinforced one another.

The potential implications of this research for medical historians deploying these works as sources will hopefully be obvious, but it is also my hope that the questions raised will be of broader interest to historians of Stuart England. The value of texts on an array of subjects that may appear, to modern eyes, to have little to do with the great political and religious controversies of the early modern period, as documents of the ideological landscape of that period, is increasingly being recognised.<sup>4</sup> These works seem to offer a particularly rich example of the ways in which seemingly straightforward professional and scientific texts interrelated with broader ideological disputes. They reflected a conscious desire to contribute to these debates among educated professionals heavily steeped in semiotics and keenly aware of the power of metaphor. But beyond the rhetorical sphere, they equally reflected

---

<sup>3</sup> See especially Harley, 'James Hart of Northampton', p. 364.

<sup>4</sup> See for example Kevin Sharpe, 'A commonwealth of meanings: languages, analogues, ideas and politics', in *Remapping early modern England: The culture of seventeenth-century politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) pp. 38-123. pp. 43-45.

contemporary assumptions about the nature of a cosmos filled with what were perceived as very real analogues and correspondences. It was these that allowed the contributions of these authors, for sympathetic readers at least, to appear both natural and readily recognisable.<sup>5</sup>

First of all, however, it is necessary to outline some of the important historiographical debates which have shaped recent interpretations of these texts, and to which my own work can, I hope, make some direct contribution. Foremost among these is that over the concept which has dominated the study of early modern English medicine over the last thirty years: the ‘medical marketplace’. This was developed during the 1980s in the work of Roy Porter, Lucinda McCray Beier, Irvine Loudon and above all Harold J. Cook, whose seminal *The Decline of the Old Medical Regime in Stuart London* gave the concept perhaps its most influential expression.<sup>6</sup> Earlier medical historians had tended to concentrate on the tripartite hierarchy of physicians, surgeons and apothecaries, tacitly assuming that the idealised vision of medical provision promulgated by early modern physicians was rooted in reality. The physicians, especially the ‘great men’ such as William Harvey, were seen as the heroic forebears of the modern medical profession; unlicensed practitioners were dismissed as mere quacks.<sup>7</sup> Proponents of the medical marketplace took the lead in overturning this outlook, instead depicting a pluralistic, little regulated and increasingly commercial medical environment, within which physicians were forced to compete both with their fellow ‘professionals’ - the theoretical boundaries between physician, apothecary and surgeon being largely meaningless in practise - and a host of other practitioners over whom they could in fact claim little cultural authority.<sup>8</sup>

By the 1990s the model of the medical marketplace had become ubiquitous. The implications of this for the interpretation of a set of texts produced by learned

---

<sup>5</sup> David Harley, ‘Medical Metaphors in English Moral Theology, 1560-1660’, *Journal of the History of Medicine*, 48 (1993) 396-435. pp. 398-9.

<sup>6</sup> Harold J. Cook, *The Decline of the Old Medical Regime in Stuart London* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986). An overview of the development and subsequent use of the concept is provided in Mark S. R. Jenner and Patrick Wallis, ‘The Medical Marketplace’, in Jenner and Wallis (eds), *Medicine and the Market in England and its Colonies, c.1450-c.1850* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007)

<sup>7</sup> Beier, *Sufferers and Healers*, p. 2; see for example Charles Singer, *A Short History of Anatomy and Physiology from the Greeks to Harvey* (New York: Dover, 1957) pp. 171-185.

<sup>8</sup> The proponents of the medical marketplace were not the first to reject the tripartite division, although they took the lead in offering an alternative model: see crucially Margaret Pelling and Charles Webster, ‘Medical Practitioners’, in Charles Webster (ed.), *Health, medicine and mortality in the sixteenth century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) pp. 165-235.



physicians in order to attack other medical practitioners were obvious. What had previously often been regarded as relatively enlightened attempts to protect the public from the advances of ignorant charlatans now became self-interested exercises in economic and professional protectionism.<sup>9</sup> For Lucinda McCray Beier the physicians, ‘unable to provide their services cheaply, unable to prove that they were the only healers able to cure diseases and heal wounds’, were forced to fall back on ‘the power of the pen in their competition with unlicensed practitioners’. Their works ‘resemble nothing more than very early examples of yellow journalism, complete with villains, heroes, victims and the plea for a public meting out of justice to all concerned.’<sup>10</sup> Similarly, Doreen Evenden Nagy argues that these works reflected the concerns of a professional group ‘hard-pressed to justify their very existence’, struggling to ‘maintain a foothold in a society which placed a higher value on spiritual health than physical soundness’, and in which most people ‘chose to leave the latter to more readily available traditional practitioners who charged more reasonable fees for their services’.<sup>11</sup>

Such judgements, as will be discussed below in chapter one, clearly do have some validity, and the medical marketplace has undoubtedly helped us to better understand the anti-quack literature of this period; indeed, it has proved an extremely useful conceptual tool for understanding early modern medicine in general. Nevertheless, over the last twenty years the concept, or at least the increasingly indiscriminate way in which it came to be deployed, has come in for growing criticism. Much of this has focussed on its tendency to overemphasise commercial, and underemphasise religious and moral factors in patients’ choices of practitioners; this has led Peter Elmer to dismiss the whole concept, with regard to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as ‘both anachronistic and wide of the mark’.<sup>12</sup> Both David Gentilcore and Andrew Wear have cautioned that the medical marketplace reflects the excessive influence of the free-market economics dominant during the decade in which it was conceived; Margaret Pelling similarly identifies it as ‘present-centred’,

---

<sup>9</sup> J. F. Payne, ‘Hart, James (fl. 1633)’ in Sidney Lee and Leslie Stephen (eds), *Dictionary of National Biography Archive*, 63 vols (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1885-1900) vol. 25, p. 60; Paul H. Kocher, *Science and Religion in Elizabethan England* (New York: Octagon, 1969) p. 142.

<sup>10</sup> Beier, *Sufferers and Healers*, pp. 49, 38.

<sup>11</sup> Doreen Evenden Nagy, *Popular Medicine in Seventeenth-Century England* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1988) pp. 39-42.

<sup>12</sup> Peter Elmer, ‘Introduction’, in Elmer (ed.), *The Healing Arts: Health, Disease and Society in Europe 1500-1800* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004) p. xix.

having ‘lost all contact with contemporary concepts or experience of the market or markets’.<sup>13</sup> David Harley warns of its ‘implicit tendencies to treat practitioners as if they were social equals, supplying an undifferentiated commodity, and to ignore restrictions on the freedom of trade’.<sup>14</sup> For Mark Jenner, Cook, Porter and Beier’s market-dominated accounts were ‘unsatisfyingly economic’.<sup>15</sup>

It is no coincidence that several of these same historians have taken the lead in questioning the protectionist interpretation of seventeenth-century anti-quack literature. Jenner argues that advocates of such an interpretation have ‘paid insufficient attention to the content and structure of condemnations of irregular medicine and to the discursive construction of “the quack.” In particular they have failed to discuss the importance of religious, and especially ecclesiological, discourse in the framing of much medical debate’. Although he was primarily focussed on the anti-quack literature of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Jenner noted that much of the earlier literature, such as that produced by James Hart, was ‘structured...by the Calvinist notion of the calling’.<sup>16</sup>

In fact, Andrew Wear has identified in detail the origins of many of the early Stuart authors’ arguments in Calvinist theology; in particular, he observes that the overriding concern of most of these authors with the practice of medicine by members of the clergy reflects that Calvinist emphasis on distinction of callings, together with concern over the Catholic overtones of clerical healing. Wear remains sceptical of the sincerity of the religious concerns behind these objections, but acknowledges the possibility ‘that arguments drawn from Calvinist teaching fitted the Puritan world of some practitioners and were employed because they were believed in’. If this were the case, he observes, ‘what initially looks like a self-interested attempt to separate

---

<sup>13</sup> David Gentilcore, *Healers and Healing in Early Modern Italy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998) p. 2; Andrew Wear, *Knowledge and Practice in English Medicine, 1550-1680* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) pp. 28-9; Margaret Pelling, *Medical Conflicts in Early Modern London: Patronage, Physicians, and Irregular Practitioners, 1550-1640* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2003) p. 342.

<sup>14</sup> David Harley, “‘Bred up in the Study of that Faculty’: Licensed Physicians in North-West England, 1660-1760”, *Medical History*, 38 (1994) 398-420. p. 398.

<sup>15</sup> Mark Jenner, ‘Quackery and Enthusiasm, or Why Drinking Water Cured the Plague’, in Ole Peter Grell and Andrew Cunningham (eds), *Religio Medici: Medicine and Religion in Seventeenth-Century England* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996) pp. 313-339. pp. 326-7.

<sup>16</sup> Jenner, ‘Quackery and Enthusiasm’, pp. 313, 328-9.

religion from medicine would have been viewed at the time as the implementation of a religious viewpoint.<sup>17</sup>

Harley took up these arguments, but pushed them towards a bolder conclusion. Complaining that the protectionist interpretation of anti-quack literature ‘exemplifies the impatience of many historians with nice theological distinctions and their frequent preference for explanations based on material rather than ideological interests’, Harley upheld the sincerity of the Calvinistic sentiments in Cotta, Hart, Primerose and Poeton’s assaults on quackery and, in particular, their lengthy attacks on clergymen who took up the practice of healing. Furthermore, he argued that most of these priest-physicians were themselves ‘reactionary anti-Calvinists’, and that the early Stuart authors’ attacks on them can therefore be read as works of religious protest by Calvinist physicians alarmed at the growing ascendancy of anti-Calvinist churchmanship during this period.<sup>18</sup>

This possibility had in fact been raised several years earlier in an essay by Peter Elmer, who pointed out that John Cotta’s attacks on priest-physicians may ‘constitute a veiled puritan protest against Anglicanism in general.’<sup>19</sup> Indeed, Elmer is notable for calling attention to the religious motives behind these works throughout the period of the debates outlined above, observing as early as 1980 that the opposition of authors such as Hart and Primerose to priest-physicians ‘was a reflection of “puritan” respect for social convention and propriety’.<sup>20</sup> As criticism of the simplistic deployment of the medical marketplace has gathered pace, so the need to take more seriously the religious concerns put forward by anti-quack authors has become increasingly obvious, and the interpretation of their works as straightforward evidence of the need for physicians to negotiate a commercial free-for-all has itself come to appear increasingly simplistic.

However, the issue of the medical marketplace was not the chief historiographical debate into which Elmer was seeking to intervene by drawing attention to these texts and the puritan outlook of several of their authors; although the

---

<sup>17</sup> Wear, ‘Religious beliefs and medicine’, pp. 159-163, 165.

<sup>18</sup> Harley, ‘James Hart of Northampton’, pp. 362-364.

<sup>19</sup> Elmer, ‘Medicine, religion and the puritan revolution’, p. 15.

<sup>20</sup> Peter Elmer, ‘Medicine, Medical Reform and the Puritan Revolution’, (unpublished University of Wales, Swansea PhD thesis, 1980) pp. 134-5.

conclusions he drew have pointed towards something of an alternative explanation for what these authors were seeking to achieve. Elmer's chief preoccupation was instead with the so-called 'puritanism-science hypothesis'. Developed by historians such as Richard Foster Jones and Christopher Hill, this was given perhaps its definitive expression in 1975 with the publication of Charles Webster's *The Great Instauration*.<sup>21</sup> Within this magisterial work, Webster argued that 'the rise of the scientific movement correlates extremely closely with the growth in strength of the puritan party', and that 'the entire puritan movement was conspicuous in its cultivation of the sciences', since 'the patient and accurate methods of experimental science, penetrating slowly towards an understanding of the secondary causes of things in the search for a gradual reconquest of nature, represented the form of intellectual and practical endeavour most suited to the puritan mentality'.<sup>22</sup>

For Webster, therefore, puritanism was thoroughly compatible with Baconianism, and puritans represented the vanguard of the 'new philosophy'.<sup>23</sup> In the field of medicine, Webster argued, this was manifested in an intense enthusiasm for the new medical theories of Paracelsus, which were 'thoroughly congenial to a puritan audience'. It also produced support for a radical restructuring of the medical profession itself, often looking to the clergy as the basis for a nationwide system of medical provision; indeed, Webster maintained, the combination of the duties of minister and physician 'would have been regarded as an ideal expression of puritan virtue'.<sup>24</sup>

It was specifically this application of the 'puritanism-science hypothesis' to the field of medicine to which Elmer objected, and the works here discussed provided him with key exhibits with which to make his case. He highlighted the fact that not only did puritans such as John Cotta, James Hart and Robert Wittie, the translator of Primerose's work, take the lead in the attack on quackery, but they in fact combined particularly vociferous opposition to both Paracelsianism and priest-physicians with a

---

<sup>21</sup> Richard Foster Jones, *Ancients and Moderns: A Study of the Rise of the Scientific Movement in Seventeenth-Century England* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1965) pp. 87-8; Christopher Hill, 'The Medical Profession and Its Radical Critics', in Hill, *Change and Continuity in 17<sup>th</sup> Century England* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974) pp. 157-178; 'Science, Religion and Society in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', in Charles Webster (ed.), *The Intellectual Revolution of the Seventeenth Century* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974) pp. 280-283.

<sup>22</sup> Charles Webster, *The Great Instauration: Science, Medicine and Reform 1626-1660* (London: Duckworth, 1975) pp. 503, 506.

<sup>23</sup> Webster, *Great Instauration*, pp. 485, 498.

<sup>24</sup> Webster, *Great Instauration*, pp. 282-3.

staunch attachment to both orthodox Galenic medical theory and the pre-eminence of the learned physicians as a distinct profession. For Elmer, it was ‘the arch-conservative Hart’ who demonstrated the ‘true nature of the puritan zeal for medical reform’. Instead, Elmer identified the impetus for medical innovation as coming from among the radical sects, together with various individuals of ‘Anglican’ religious sympathies, all of whom were loosely united by a spirit of eirenicism.<sup>25</sup>

Further illustrating the connections between the study of early Stuart medicine and the controversy-laden religious history of the period, Elmer’s work was heavily influenced by that of Nicholas Tyacke, whose account of early Stuart puritanism as an essentially conservative ideology on the defensive against the advances of a radical, innovative Arminianism has so dominated discussion of the period’s religious politics over the last forty years.<sup>26</sup> Elmer was consciously seeking to apply Tyacke’s ideas to puritan medical thought, and these works provided him with ample evidence for such an interpretation.<sup>27</sup> Similar Tyackean impulses can be detected in David Harley’s account of these works as a Calvinist response to the spread of an innovative, formalist clergy. Both arguments are rooted in similar interpretations of these works as sincere expressions of a Calvinist outlook, and similar identifications of this outlook with an intense conservatism and anxious defence of a status quo which appeared to be coming under growing pressure from new ideological challenges.

The account of the anti-quack literature of the early Stuart period I will offer here accepts much of this interpretation in its essentials, and I hope that it will reinforce the points Elmer and Harley have sketched regarding both the sincerity of the Calvinist religious impulses behind most of these texts, and the conservative, defensive nature of these impulses and the ideological outlook that underwrote them. However, I also hope, in certain respects, to both refine and broaden the interpretation these historians have so far outlined.

Beginning with the points where I feel that some further refinement would be useful, there are two areas in which it strikes me that both Elmer and Harley’s accounts are broadly correct, but where the intentions and motivations of the authors

---

<sup>25</sup> Elmer, ‘Medicine, religion and the puritan revolution’, pp. 14-15, 12.

<sup>26</sup> Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism c.1590-1640* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987).

<sup>27</sup> Elmer, ‘Medicine, religion and the puritan revolution’, p. 11.

in question need to be pinned down somewhat more firmly. The first of these relates to the idea of these works as a form of veiled protest against rival elements within the church. Both Elmer and, at greater length, Harley put forward this argument, but both do so in a somewhat vague manner. Elmer does not go beyond speculation that John Cotta's work may have been a 'protest against Anglicanism in general', while for Harley, Cotta and James Hart's work, later joined by that of James Primerose and Edward Poeton, was responding to the general phenomenon of 'the spread of a learned clergy whose notions of the clerical function were quite different from the Calvinist ministerial ideal.'<sup>28</sup>

But how far was such an anti-Calvinist 'learned clergy' really spreading during the period in which Cotta and Hart were writing, the 1610s and early 1620s? According to Tyacke himself, for most of this period Calvinism was near the peak of its hegemony within the Church of England, enjoying greater royal favour than it had under Elizabeth I. While the outlines of an anti-Calvinist party were emerging, they were still unable to publish their views in print.<sup>29</sup> So why would two physicians from this period feel the need to take up the cudgels in defence of Calvinism? James Primerose's reasons for doing so in the late 1630s, with Laudianism at its peak, may seem more obvious; yet his deployment of Calvinistic arguments, and in particular his treatment of the issue of priest-physicians, is actually rather less strident than that of his predecessors.

In attempting to address these problems, I will argue that Cotta and Hart's works have to be examined firmly within the local context in which the two authors were writing. Both men were residents of Northampton, in the diocese of Peterborough. As the work of John Fielding has revealed, the religious politics of this diocese were in many ways highly anomalous during most of the early Stuart period, and puritans found themselves under sustained pressure here throughout the reign of James I.<sup>30</sup> As I will outline below in chapter two, Cotta and Hart's works can be read as particular responses to this harassment by the diocesan authorities, and their

---

<sup>28</sup> Elmer, 'Medicine, religion and the puritan revolution', p. 15; Harley, 'James Hart of Northampton', pp. 364, 367.

<sup>29</sup> Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, pp. 7, 28.

<sup>30</sup> John Fielding, 'Conformists, Puritans and the Church Courts: The Diocese of Peterborough, 1603-1642' (unpublished University of Birmingham PhD Thesis, 1989); 'Arminianism in the Localities: Peterborough Diocese, 1603-1642', in Kenneth Fincham (ed.), *The Early Stuart Church, 1603-1642* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993).

arguments were often specifically tailored to counter the grounds upon which the ‘avant-garde conformists’ in control of these authorities sought to justify their campaign against the godly.

But I will also suggest that these works may have to be examined within a narrower context not just geographically, but also ideologically. While most recent scholarship, influenced by the arguments of Tyacke as well as Patrick Collinson, has tended to stress the moderation and conservatism of early Stuart puritanism, it may not be entirely accurate to assume that the particularly vociferous defence of both medical orthodoxy and social order that these authors put forward, even if they were rooted in genuine Calvinistic sentiment, were wholly typical of godly thought.<sup>31</sup> Hart, and to a lesser extent Cotta, were entrenched within a local puritan circle that certainly was characterised by a particularly intense conservatism and emphasis on moderation, but this in fact led its members to become increasingly estranged from their fellow godly and ultimately, in several cases, to take up the royalist position at the outbreak of civil war. If the arguments of the anti-quack authors actually related to particularly moderate and conservative strains within Calvinist thinking, this may in turn explain the cautious approach and restrained tone of authors such as Primerose who took up the cause during the 1630s; an issue I will explore further in chapter three.

Elmer has indeed stressed that very different attitudes towards medical practice emerged from within the puritan movement, noting that proponents of the ‘puritanism-science hypothesis’ ‘vastly exaggerate the extent to which puritanism can be seen, at least after 1640, as a single religious movement held together by a common set of goals, ideals and beliefs.’<sup>32</sup> But it may be that debates over anti-quack literature have so far overestimated the extent to which this was the case *before* 1640. It is true that the kind of radical attacks on the medical profession that appeared during the interregnum are difficult to find prior to 1640, and conservatism in medicine seems to have been the dominant attitude among early Stuart puritans, as it was in religion and politics for most of the period.<sup>33</sup> But the virulent critiques of the professions that were to emerge after the outbreak of civil war had been long fermenting, and just as in the field of religion there were always more radical puritans

---

<sup>31</sup> See for example Patrick Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England: religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988) p. 18.

<sup>32</sup> Elmer, ‘Medicine, religion and the puritan revolution’, p. 11.

<sup>33</sup> Elmer, ‘Medicine, religion and the puritan revolution’, p. 13.

who sought to overturn the Elizabethan church settlement, so interest in new medical ideas can be detected amongst the more radical end of the puritan movement long before the 1640s.<sup>34</sup> This is true not just of the separatists who directly foreshadowed the sects of the 1640s and 50s, but also among those more advanced reformers who remained firmly within the Church of England, such as the Elizabethan puritans and Paracelsian physicians Thomas Mouffet, Thomas Penny and Peter Turner. The comparison made by the moderate puritan minister Stephen Denison of his more radical rivals with ‘presumptuous quacksalvers’ may be even more loaded than has previously been appreciated.<sup>35</sup>

So in some respects it is necessary to take a narrower, more localised view of what these authors were trying to achieve. But at the same time, I will suggest that it is equally necessary to view the ideas they express in their anti-quack works within a broader, but still coherent ideological context. Elmer’s view that puritan religious and political conservatism can be extended to medical and social thought has already been noted. As I will outline in chapters two and three, most of the anti-quack literature of the early Stuart period provides ample support for this assertion, with its combination of intense medical conservatism, staunchly orthodox Protestantism and an overriding emphasis on social order and the maintenance of the existing hierarchy in all fields. But little consideration has yet been given as to exactly *why* these authors carried their intense conservatism across these various, very different spheres, and to the wider ideological framework which facilitated such an approach.

In attempting to rectify this, I believe it is necessary to draw on the insights produced by recent research into another field closely related to the history of medicine; that of the history of witchcraft and demonology. This is hardly a bold assertion; most of the anti-quack authors of this period show an intense interest in these subjects, almost to the point of obsession. Two of them, Edward Poeton and, more famously, John Cotta went on to produce texts devoted fully and overtly to demonology. This interest has often been noted - although rather less often discussed in much detail - by historians, and in itself is not particularly surprising, since many of

---

<sup>34</sup> Peter Lake, *The boxmaker’s revenge: ‘Orthodoxy’, ‘Heterodoxy’ and the Politics of the Parish in Early Stuart London* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001) pp. 12-13; Harley, ‘Medical Metaphors’, pp. 434-5.

<sup>35</sup> Quoted in Lake, ‘boxmaker’s revenge’, p. 287.



the practitioners rivalling these learned physicians, be they cunning folk, astrologers, charmers or seventh sons, were doing so on the basis of essentially magical techniques.

But while anti-quack authors did abhor such healers and their overtly magical practices, they in fact cast accusations of witchcraft far more widely, to the point where the practice of healing on the basis of anything other than learned, Galenic physic came to be taken as evidence of some sort of entanglement with the devil. It would be easy to dismiss such claims as hysterical, self-serving hyperbole, particularly if the ‘protectionist’ interpretation of these works were fully accepted. In chapter four of this study, however, I will suggest that these arguments must be taken more seriously if the true nature and purposes of these works are to be understood. In particular, they need to be read in the light of the insights that Stuart Clark, in particular, has offered into the meanings and uses of early modern demonology.

As Clark has illustrated, demonological thought underpinned an intellectual worldview rooted in binary opposition. Within such an outlook, the entire world was divided into pairs of contraries, of which order and disorder, Christ and Antichrist represented the most fundamental. The positive poles of each of these relationships were also seen as corresponding with each other, and the negatives likewise. Within such pairings of absolutes, the only form of change possible was inversion; but the inversion of one such pairing inevitably had consequences that spilled over into every other field. All privations of good and usurpations of order and orthodoxy could therefore be related to one another and ultimately back to the devil himself.<sup>36</sup>

These patterns of thought are everywhere apparent in the anti-quack texts of the early Stuart period, in their dire warnings of the spread of quackery usurping not just the proper order of the medical profession, but that of the commonwealth as a whole: as John Cotta observed, the ‘preposterous intrusion’ of unlearned practitioners

---

<sup>36</sup> Stuart Clark, ‘Inversion, Misrule and the Meaning of Witchcraft’, *Past & Present*, 87 (1980) 98-127, pp. 109-111, 127; *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997) pp. 9, 26, 29, 72. Some of Elmer’s work seems to be pointing in this direction, which is perhaps unsurprising given that he was Clark’s graduate student - see for example his discussion of Cotta’s *Triall of Witch-craft* in a collection edited by Clark: Peter Elmer, ‘Towards a Politics of Witchcraft in Early Modern England’, in Stuart Clark (ed.), *Languages of Witchcraft: Narrative, Ideology and Meaning in Early Modern Culture* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2001) pp. 101-118. pp. 107-8.

into medicine ‘doth disorder the right and propriety of *every thing*’.<sup>37</sup> Again and again these authors present irregular medical practice as both resulting from, and further fuelling the usurpation of medical, religious and social propriety, all of which are presented as inseparably linked. In an era in which the analogy of the ‘body politic’ was both ubiquitous and taken far more literally than in subsequent periods, such arguments drew entirely logically upon widely shared assumptions.<sup>38</sup>

This is indeed the key argument which I hope to advance throughout this study. Quackery for these authors was just one, albeit one particularly pressing manifestation of a broad tide of disorder threatening to overthrow the entire edifice of church and commonwealth. The threat such practitioners posed to order and orthodoxy in medicine was inevitably seen as having wider connotations for social and ecclesiastical order in general. Another urgent threat of this kind was being posed by the Laudians and their ‘avant-garde’ conformist predecessors, and most anti-quack authors were indeed protesting against these as well. But I will suggest that these protests should not be seen as something being pursued in parallel with, or even simply veiled beneath these authors’ attacks on quackery, any more than they should be seen as simply an insincere cover for professional protectionism. In fact, quackery and church reform were seen by these authors as being inseparably linked, and the self-interested defence of the professional privileges of physicians could be seen as part of a perfectly godly defence of the proper order. While these authors were keen to deny that professional self-interest was their only motive in writing, none of them sought to deny that it was *one* of their motives because, as we shall see, protection of these interests was entirely consistent with their religious outlook; indeed, it could even be regarded as a religious obligation.<sup>39</sup>

These connections, I will argue, are most obvious in the preoccupation of all these authors with priest-physicians. Such men were the living proof of the intimate links between what may initially seem disparate threats, individuals seeking to

---

<sup>37</sup> John Cotta, *A Short Discoverie of the Unobserved Dangers of severall sorts of ignorant and unconsiderate Practisers of Physicke in England* (London: William Jones and Richard Boyle, 1612) sig. C [my emphasis].

<sup>38</sup> David George Hale, *The Body Politic: A Political Metaphor in Renaissance English Literature* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971) pp. 7-12.

<sup>39</sup> Petrus Forestus, *The Arraignement of Urines*, translated and epitomised by James Hart (London: G. Eld for Robert Mylbourne, 1632) sig. A4v; James Primerose, *Popular Errours. Or the Errours of the People in Physick*, translated by Robert Wittie (London: W. Wilson for Nicholas Bourne, 1651) sig. B2v-B8.

undermine both the authority of the professional physicians and Calvinist orthodoxy within the church, while sowing social disorder through their negligence and breach of calling. Ultimately, it was the hand of the devil that could be identified behind all such pursuits.

The books upon which this study is focussed were intended to influence the behaviour of an audience far wider than that of the learned physicians themselves, and to intervene in arguments that were taking place among much broader sections of the public. This is why most of them were published in English, despite the general distaste of the authors in question for medical texts written in the vernacular; most vernacular medical literature sought to equip a non-professional readership for medical practice, rather than to warn them away from just such unlicensed provision.<sup>40</sup> Since it is these attempts to exert a wider influence, and the impulses behind them, which this thesis seeks to explore, I have focussed only on those books which were published in English. This obviously places a work such as Peter Bowne's Latin poem *Pseudo-medicorum Anatomia*, which appealed firmly to Bowne's fellow physicians - the second issue featuring dedicatory verses individually honouring all thirty fellows of the College of Physicians - outside of my remit.<sup>41</sup> But it does leave some grey areas. Including James Hart's translation of the Dutch physician Petrus Forestus's Latin work *De incerto, fallaci, urinarum iudicio*, published as *The Arraignment of Urines* in 1623, was a fairly straightforward decision, both because Hart clearly 'epitomized' the work to pursue the same ends as his own later *Anatomie of Urines*, and because he added important and extensive introductory material of his own; it is on these passages that I have primarily focussed.

James Primerose's *Popular Errours* is more of a borderline case. This work was originally published in Latin in 1637, and only appeared in an English translation in 1651, after the period on which this study is focussed. However, I have included Primerose's book in this study, and indeed discussed it at length, for several reasons. Firstly, although it was not published until later, the English translation of this work appears to have been completed by 1640. Secondly, and most importantly, I believe it

---

<sup>40</sup> See especially Forestus, *Arraignment*, sig. A4v-a2.

<sup>41</sup> Peter Bowne, *Pseudo-medicorum Anatomia* (London: Augustine Matthews, 1624); Richard J. Durling, 'Some unrecorded verses in praise of Robert Fludd and William Harvey', *Medical History*, 8 (1964) 279-281.

likely that although Primerose originally produced this work in Latin, he did so with an eye towards its publication in English from an early stage. He certainly remained closely involved with the translation, as will be discussed below in chapter three. Given this, the work stands as far too important, interesting and telling example of the genre to be overlooked; particular as its translator, Robert Wittie, is himself a significant figure in the history of Calvinist anti-quack thought.

I have given some attention to anti-quack works from the decades preceding John Cotta's publication of the *Short Discoverie* in 1612, in particular those of John Securis, Francis Herring and Eleazar Duncon, to illustrate both the themes they share with later authors and those which are absent from these earlier works. However, since it is my contention that a somewhat new and distinctive strain of anti-quack thought was inaugurated by Cotta and developed by his successors, largely in response to contemporary developments, I have reserved detailed focus for the works published after 1612. Similarly, while I will offer some discussion of the anti-quack literature of the interregnum and restoration periods, I have kept this fairly brief and reserved it mainly for my conclusion. Here it can hopefully help to illustrate how the radically changed circumstances of these later periods were reflected in changes to both the arguments that anti-quack treatises put forward, and to the targets that these were directed against, as well as in the different backgrounds of the authors who now chose to take up their pens on such subjects.

Finally, before turning to focus on the works in question, some remarks on the thorny issue of terminology are necessary. Since formulating any precise definition of the term 'puritan' is a task that still vexes the leading religious historians of this period, trying to do so here would be hopelessly foolhardy; I have therefore generally followed David Harley's use of the term to simply describe 'the zealous Calvinists of the Church of England, as opposed to more moderate Calvinists such as Archbishops Grindal, Whitgift, Hutton, Abbot, and Matthew.'<sup>42</sup> This is however complicated by the fact that it is not clear which of these two groups some of these authors fit into, and it may well be that, on medical matters, moderate puritans were in closer agreement with non-puritan Calvinists than with the more radical godly. That said, it is clear that for some of these authors their specifically puritan connections were a

---

<sup>42</sup> Harley, 'James Hart of Northampton', p. 363.

crucial influence on their work, while at the same time their ecclesiastical opponents were increasingly labelling all Calvinists as ‘puritans’. I have therefore made use of both terms throughout, but have tried to qualify how they should be applied to each individual author.

The question of how to refer to the opposing group within the Church of England - Anglicans, Arminians, anti-Calvinists - is equally vexed. I have generally followed John Fielding’s usage in referring to such churchmen, particularly before 1630, as ‘conformists’. This term is helpful in highlighting the key religious issues that provoked the opposition of anti-quack authors, and on which they focussed their arguments, although it does risk confusion, since many of the puritans I discuss here advocated full conformity in the name of order and unity within the church. I take ‘conformist’ as referring to those who were actively supportive of ceremonial conformity; those who reluctantly acquiesced in their demands might be termed ‘conformable’.

Issues of terminology have been little more straightforward with regard to the medical history of the period. In describing healers outside of the ranks of the learned physicians (and surgeons and apothecaries operating outside of the spheres allowed to them by the physicians), I have generally followed what seems to be the current preference for the term ‘irregular medical practitioners’.<sup>43</sup> Although a cumbersome and somewhat opaque phrase, it is perhaps a little less loaded than terms such as ‘quack’ and ‘empiric’, which tend to evoke images of low-grade drug peddlars hardly appropriate for the often highly educated and skilled individuals that were of particular concern to these authors; although I have used both of the latter terms at various points as well, if only for the sake of brevity. That being said, these authors themselves were clearly seeking to minimise the distance between learned practitioners such as priest-physicians and the humble mountebanks, so I feel comfortable in following authors such as Harold J. Cook and Lucinda McCray Beier in referring to the actual works in question as ‘anti-quack’ literature.<sup>44</sup> After all, few would object to the relevant works of William Perkins or George Gifford being referred to as ‘witchcraft treatises’, despite the fact that their chief targets were the

---

<sup>43</sup> See Margaret Pelling’s qualified advocacy of this term in *Medical Conflicts*, p. 10.

<sup>44</sup> Harold J. Cook, ‘Good Advice and Little Medicine: The Professional Authority of Early Modern English Physicians’, *Journal of British Studies*, 33 (1994) 1-31. p. 19; Beier, *Sufferers and Healers*, pp. 38-41, 46-7

seemingly benevolent village wizards rather than the malefic witches that represented, and still represent, the dominant image of the witch in most people's minds.

In the second half of chapter one I will look more closely at the different types of healer comprehended within the phrase 'irregular medical practitioners'. First of all, however, it is necessary to look at the learned physicians themselves, an occupational group which was in many ways just as difficult to define as its irregular rivals. Indeed, these problems of definition can be seen as an important factor in motivating members of this profession to take up their pens against those rivals from whom they were not always readily distinguishable.

### Quackery and Physic in early Stuart England

With the rise of the historiographical concept of the medical marketplace, the struggle of learned physicians to firmly establish themselves at the top of the pyramid of medical practice, with the surgeons and apothecaries reduced to inferior, sharply delineated roles and other practitioners proscribed and suppressed, has emerged as perhaps the single most prominent theme in early modern English medical history. As I have outlined, the works discussed in this study, as attacks by learned physicians on their irregular rivals, have appeared to lend themselves readily to interpretation by proponents of the medical marketplace as simply one salvo in this ongoing struggle. Within such an analysis, they sit alongside the contemporary legal attacks on empirics being pursued by the College of Physicians of London as part of a broad campaign to suppress the economic challenges faced by the profession of physic.

This chapter will seek to assess the accuracy of this interpretation, and try to establish just where these books and their authors should be placed within the broader picture of contemporary medical conflicts. The first half will focus on the physicians themselves, looking in particular at the challenges they faced in defining themselves as a professional group, and how this spurred them into action against what they defined as “irregular” practitioners. This will lead into a consideration of how earlier anti-quack literature, dating back to the mid-sixteenth century, can be seen as reflecting the same concerns, and how far these concerns persist in the literature from the early Stuart period. I will argue that while they were still present, changes in the types of practitioner whose activities these later works tend to emphasise mark them out as representing a distinct tradition, departing from both the earlier literature and the college’s campaign.

The second part of this chapter will undertake a closer investigation of the irregular practitioners themselves, surveying the array of empirical, magical and domestic healers active in seventeenth-century England. This will be done largely from the perspective of their learned critics, which will hopefully provide a fuller general impression of the outlooks of these writers themselves, and further illustrate the points made about them in the first section. While the ways in which anti-quack authors sought to depict many types of irregular practitioner remained relatively

consistent and reflected the general concerns of their profession, it is the new emphases that emerge in the early Stuart works that point us towards the need to look towards other, more religiously-based concerns, that were more specific to the particular circumstances in which the authors wrote.

## I

The learned physicians represented the most distinct and self-consciously ‘professional’ group amongst the period’s medical practitioners; nevertheless, they were not one whose boundaries were easily defined, especially outside of London.<sup>1</sup> So it is worth beginning with an investigation of these boundaries, before going on to consider how the attempts of the physicians to define them more clearly were manifested in their campaign against empirics and the literature that accompanied it.

The touchstone of the physician’s identity, indeed according to Harold J. Cook his ‘sole distinguishing mark’, was the university learning embodied in the degree of MD.<sup>2</sup> This learning was literary and philosophical rather than clinical in nature, based on the study of classical texts, in particular those of Galen. Over the course of the seven years students at English universities were normally expected to spend preparing for the MD, which would itself usually follow seven years spent obtaining an MA, the medical schools aimed to mould the prospective physician’s judgement and character, nurturing his development of what John Cotta describes as ‘the most exquisite powers of understanding, judgement, wit, discretion, and learning.’<sup>3</sup>

The ultimate aim was to equip the physician to formulate advice and counsel for each individual patient, in accordance with that patient’s unique physical qualities and habits of life. For as James Hart put it, it was the duty of the physician not just ‘to attaine to the right and perfect knowledge’ of ‘the severall qualities and virtues of all manner of remedies’, but ‘also with carefull circumspection, to observe and marke the strength of his patients, and their severall natures and constitutions; applying to each and every one of them in due and convenient time, such proper and particular remedies, as may best befit them’. By doing so, he could ‘with a certaine promptnesse of dexteritie of understanding foresee the issue and event of diseases’, thereby ‘preserving likewise and maintaining, as much as in him lyeth, his present healthfull

---

<sup>1</sup> Cook, ‘Good Advice’, pp. 2, 4.

<sup>2</sup> Cook, *Decline*, p. 23; see also Beier, *Sufferers and Healers*, p. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. Bv.



state of bodie'. Early modern physicians regarded themselves primarily as counsellors of health, whose patients should seek their advice just as earnestly in times of good health as of bad, in order to avoid illness altogether.<sup>4</sup>

The nature of the university education leading to the MD or, less commonly, the more junior MB degree was therefore crucial in defining the identity of the learned physicians as a professional group. But its role is rather less straightforward when it comes to defining the boundaries of that group. While the universities may have provided the 'most prestigious accreditation for all ranks of practitioner', and for most physicians the MD was indeed 'their sole and sufficient qualification for the practise of medicine throughout the nation', it was not universally accepted as such.<sup>5</sup> In particular, the College of Physicians of London did not consider the MD in itself sufficient qualification for practise within its jurisdiction, and expected university-educated practitioners in the capital to submit to its own system of examinations and licensing. James Primerose strongly approved of such a policy, complaining that 'on many, although but of meane learning, the Degree of Doctour is conferred, insomuch as from some Universities, they returne Doctours, but little learned, fit for nothing lesse than to teach or practise Physick.' He was not critical of the actual teaching in the universities, but felt that 'in conferring those degrees they are too carelesse, denying them to few or none.'<sup>6</sup>

Primerose was particularly concerned about 'mongrell-Physicians' who he believed had 'bought the title of Doctour in forrain Universities'.<sup>7</sup> The quality of continental medical education had been an ongoing cause of concern for the college since the late sixteenth century, and it required those with foreign MDs to incorporate them at Oxford or Cambridge before becoming candidates for a fellowship. Many continental medical schools, such as those at Padua and Leiden, were in many respects considerably more advanced than those of Oxford and Cambridge, particularly in their use of clinical training. But they also tended to grant degrees after much shorter periods of study. Hart received his MD within four months of matriculating at the University of Basel, while most French universities offered two

---

<sup>4</sup> James Hart, *The Anatomie of Urines* (London: Richard Field for Robert Mylbourne, 1625) sig. C3v; Cook, 'Good Advice', pp. 13-16.

<sup>5</sup> Pelling and Webster, 'Medical Practitioners', pp. 190-193.

<sup>6</sup> Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. B6.

<sup>7</sup> Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. B7.

types of MD: the ‘grand ordinaire’, which required extensive study, and the ‘petit ordinaire’ that would be awarded, for a fee, to those who showed even a slight acquaintance with medical theory.<sup>8</sup>

Concern about the quality of graduates being produced by continental medical schools was not limited to England. In France, too, colleges were becoming increasingly selective over which medical schools they were willing to admit graduates from; the Troyes College of Physicians, for example, would only admit graduates of Paris or Montpellier.<sup>9</sup> It should also be noted that it was not just on the continent that short cuts to a medical doctorate could be found. English monarchs could also create instant Oxford or Cambridge MDs by grace; this was usually done only occasionally, but between November 1642 and January 1643 Charles I created twenty-two such degrees. This brought to a head an issue that William Birken has identified as an important source of ongoing rancour between the College of Physicians and the Crown during the early Stuart period.<sup>10</sup>

So possession of an MD was not universally regarded as sufficient basis for practice as a physician. But on the other hand many individuals without any university medical education assumed the identity of physicians, particularly outside of London, and often did so quite legitimately through possession of a licence from one of various bodies. Indeed, one of the authors here discussed, Edward Poeton, does not appear to have attended university at all, yet he lambasted unlearned practitioners in similar terms, and at similar length, to his graduate contemporaries. He continued to emphasise the need for a physician to be ‘wise, learned, and judicious’, echoing Hart in insisting that it was ‘necessary, that hee be furnished with the notions of such severall sicknesses, as are incident unto the body of man: and that they be likewise well verst in the sundry symptoms, signes, and marks of each severall maladye; which to attayne, requires long and diligent studye.’<sup>11</sup> So despite his own lack of a university education, the qualities that such an education sought to impart still formed the cornerstone of his professional outlook, having been passed on to him during his long

---

<sup>8</sup> John Symons, ‘Hart, James (d. 1639)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 61 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 25, pp. 581-582. p. 581; Cook, *Decline*, p. 52.

<sup>9</sup> L. W. B. Brockliss and Colin Jones, *The Medical World of Early Modern France* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997) p. 193.

<sup>10</sup> William Joseph Birken, ‘The Royal College of Physicians of London and Its Support of the Parliamentary Cause in the English Civil War’, *Journal of British Studies*, 23 (1983) 47-62. pp. 54-5.

<sup>11</sup> British Library, Sloane MSS, 1954, ff. 166-166v.

period as servant to a university-educated physician, Thomas Bonham; himself a key figure in disputes over the right to practise in London.

It is nevertheless often difficult to discern exactly what, if anything, distinguished a physician like Poeton from the more educated irregular practitioners, especially given that, in practice, all physicians had to draw upon empirical skills that lay outside of the university curriculum. The lack of clinical training in the English universities forced them to acquire most of their practical skills in the same way as other practitioners, either through apprenticeship or experiment; indeed, the universities required medical students to spend a period of time working alongside an experienced practitioner before the MD would be granted. A physician's ability to establish a thriving practice depended far less on his educational background than on his cultivation of a reputation for successfully treating patients through whatever means necessary, or whatever means the patient demanded.<sup>12</sup>

This reality both reflected and reinforced the general scepticism contemporaries seem to have harboured towards the claims laid by physicians to an exalted learned status, rivalling that of the clergy.<sup>13</sup> Unsurprisingly, therefore, physicians' claims to a similarly elevated religious status seem to have been met with even wider suspicion. But they did make such claims, drawing on the classical concept of physic as the preservation of nature and the views of theologians who regarded the natural remedies physicians applied as the only lawful means provided by God in the face of disease.<sup>14</sup> Central here was the injunction contained within the apocryphal text of Ecclesiasticus 38:1: 'Honour a physician with the honour due unto him for the uses which ye may have of him: for the Lord hath created him'.

While Francis Herring noted that God 'hath created both Physicke and the Physition', it was Cotta who argued this point in the strongest terms and at the greatest length, arguing that the physician's 'continuall employment and exercise consisteth in executing the perpetuall decrees and counsels of creation', at 'the command of the generall commander of heaven and earth', and asking 'what vertue

---

<sup>12</sup> Cook, *Decline*, pp. 49-50, 53, 60-63.

<sup>13</sup> Pelling, *Medical Conflicts*, p. 17.

<sup>14</sup> David Harley, 'Spiritual Physic, Providence and English Medicine, 1560-1640', in Ole Peter Grell and Andrew Cunningham (eds), *Medicine and the Reformation* (London: Routledge, 1993) pp. 101-117. pp. 101-2.

cometh nearer unto God in goodnesse and mercie?’<sup>15</sup> Such grandiloquent claims, however, seem to have done little to alleviate the physicians’ long-standing reputation for atheism, epitomised by the popular saying that ‘where there are three physicians, there be two atheists’.<sup>16</sup> Again, this perception was fed by the departure of practice from theory. Protestant thought may have regarded sickness as reflecting divine providence, and expected physicians to accompany their treatments with prayer and accept that they would only succeed through divine permission, but in practice most physicians tended to treat disease as something purely natural.<sup>17</sup>

The place where the distinct, corporate professional identity of the physicians was best developed and most clearly defined was London, mainly through the activities of the College of Physicians. Created in 1518, its authority confirmed by statute five years later, the college was invested with the power to examine practitioners in London and the surrounding area, up to a distance of seven miles, and to issue licenses in accordance with its own standards. Its numbers were comparatively tiny, limited to thirty fellows during this period; indeed, when the college was required to submit a complete list of its fellows, candidates and licentiates in 1614, they totalled just forty-one, serving a city of over 200,000 inhabitants.<sup>18</sup>

Possession of an MD was a prerequisite for admission as a candidate, foreign degrees having had to be incorporated at Oxford or Cambridge. Four subsequent years of practice followed by a four-part examination in both medical practice and Galenic theory were also usually required before the candidate could become eligible for a fellowship. Licentiates were not necessarily required to hold an MD, but would be examined on their knowledge of medicine and ability to treat illness in accordance with the learned standards of the college. Those who practised without a licence were liable to find themselves before the college’s *comitia censorum*, made up of the president and four censors, who had the power to impose a fine of five pounds for

---

<sup>15</sup> Francis Herring, ‘A discovery of certaine Strategems, whereby our English Emperickes have bene observed strongly to oppugne, and oft times to expugne their poor Patients Purses’ in John Oberndorff, *The Anatomyes of the True Physition, and counterfeit Mounte-banke*, translated by Francis Herring (London: Arthur Johnson, 1602) sig. F3; Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. Rv.

<sup>16</sup> Andrew Wear, *Knowledge and Practice in English Medicine, 1550-1680* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) p. 34.

<sup>17</sup> John Henry, ‘The matter of souls: medical theory and theology in seventeenth-century England’, in Roger French & Andrew Wear (eds), *The medical revolution of the seventeenth century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1989) pp. 87-113. pp. 88-9.

<sup>18</sup> Webster, *Great Instauration*, p. 251.

every month spent practising without a licence and to have offending practitioners imprisoned. The *Annals* of the college tell us that they pursued 714 practitioners between 1550 and 1640, during which period the total membership of the College itself numbered just 201. It is not hard therefore to understand why Margaret Pelling should characterise the college as ‘a small, homosocial, exclusive institution’ consisting of ‘a cluster of self-conscious humanist intellectuals who were attempting to pursue a literary and legal project at the expense of the majority.’<sup>19</sup>

In both its composition and its intentions, the College of Physicians of London was modelled on those of the continent, and in particular Italy, the centre of renaissance medical humanism and by the early seventeenth century home to fourteen different colleges. But the London college was being grafted on to a far less organised medical culture, and in practice its capacity to impose its authority on the city’s medical practitioners was even more sharply limited than that of its Italian counterparts.<sup>20</sup> This was true even in regard to learned physicians, and throughout the seventeenth century perhaps one-third of London’s physicians simply refused to submit to the college.<sup>21</sup> Many medical graduates believed that their possession of an MD entitled them to practise anywhere in the country, including London. The college made repeated efforts to enforce its licensing regime upon such physicians, and eighty-six of those 714 practitioners pursued between 1550 and 1640 appear to have possessed MDs.<sup>22</sup>

The most famous and influential case in this regard was that of Thomas Bonham, an individual we will encounter again as mentor to the anti-quack author Edward Poeton, during the first decade of the seventeenth century. A Cambridge MD and close associate of the Barber-Surgeons’ Company, Bonham was refused admittance to the college and subsequently fined for illicit practice. Bonham continued in his profession regardless, insisting that he ‘would practise Physick within London, asking no leave of the College’, and that ‘the President and Censors had not any authority over those who were Doctors of the University’. He was subsequently imprisoned, but proceeded to counter-sue the college for trespass against his person and wrongful imprisonment. In 1610, Bonham having spent much of the preceding

---

<sup>19</sup> Pelling, *Medical Conflicts*, pp. 3-4, 11.

<sup>20</sup> Gentilcore, *Healers and Healing*, pp. 60, 206; Pelling and Webster, ‘Medical Practitioners’, p. 165.

<sup>21</sup> Cook, *Decline*, pp. 78-9.

<sup>22</sup> Pelling, *Medical Conflicts*, p. 151.

four years behind bars, the court of common pleas finally ruled in his favour, Chief Justice Edward Coke declaring that ‘it ought to be presumed, every Doctor of any of the Universities to be within the Statute, sc. to be profound, sad, discreet, groundedly learned, and profoundly studied’, and that the parliamentary acts that gave the college the right to act as both judge and prosecutor in the cases it oversaw were ‘against Common right and reason’.<sup>23</sup>

The college was even less effective in regulating the vast numbers of non-university educated practitioners active in London throughout this period. Excluding MDs, barber-surgeons and apothecaries, a total of 395 practitioners were pursued by the college between 1550 and 1640; given that by 1600 it has been estimated that there would have been at any one time some 250 irregular practitioners operating in the city, this clearly represents only a minority.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, the college rarely brought the full weight of its legal powers down upon those it did pursue, releasing most with a warning and on a promise to cease practising. Only periodically, when they possessed unambiguous evidence of unlicensed practice for financial gain, did the college seek to make an example of a particular practitioner by fining and/or imprisoning him or her. Even in these cases the college sometimes proved unable to impose itself, particularly when it attempted to pursue practitioners with powerful patrons or connections at court. Nevertheless, at times the college was willing to press its claims in the face of even the highest authorities, as when committing the empiric William Blank to prison in 1637 despite his possession of letters patent from both the King and the Archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>25</sup>

If the college’s power to regulate medical life in London was severely limited, in the provinces it was virtually non-existent. The 1523 act had provided that any physician ‘to be licensed in any diocese, shall first be approv’d by the College of Physicians.’ But this was a completely unworkable provision, since the college lacked the administrative machinery either to compel candidates to come to London for

---

<sup>23</sup> Charles Goodall, *The Royal College of Physicians of London Founded and Established by Law* (London: M. Flesher for Walter Kettilby, 1684) sig. Bb2v, Bb4; Harold J. Cook, ‘Against Common Right and Reason: The College of Physicians Versus Dr. Thomas Bonham’, *American Journal of Legal History*, 29 (1985) 301-22. pp. 302-4.

<sup>24</sup> Pelling and Webster, ‘Medical Practitioners’, p. 188; Pelling, *Medical Conflicts*, p. 151.

<sup>25</sup> Cook, *Decline*, pp. 82-91; Pelling, *Medical Conflicts*, p. 315; Birken, ‘Royal College of Physicians’, p. 58.

examination, or to punish those who did not.<sup>26</sup> The college could admit physicians practising outside of London as extra-licentiates, but only about one in thirty such practitioners seem to have taken advantage of this.<sup>27</sup>

The main licensing authority throughout England outside of London remained the bishops, who had been invested with such powers by a statute of 1511. This act had intended to regulate the practices of all physicians and surgeons who were not medical graduates or licentiates of the universities, and required that applicants be examined by a committee of 'expert persons in the said faculties'. But it did not prescribe the content of the examinations or the number of examiners required, and in practice the episcopal licensing system functioned sporadically and with considerable variety between dioceses. Little pressure generally seems to have been placed on practitioners to submit to it, and few demands made of those who did. 'The general impression', as R.S. Roberts puts it, 'is that only those who wanted to, bothered to apply for a licence which was not difficult to obtain; letters of recommendation usually sufficed, and a group of friends could easily sign such letters for one another even though they were not all licensed themselves.'<sup>28</sup>

The universities also maintained their licensing functions throughout this period. This was a source of considerable concern to the college, which tended to accuse them of issuing licences indiscriminately; this probably reflected the college's fears over the potential challenge to its London jurisdiction represented by the right to practise throughout the country, rather than just a single diocese, that university licences bestowed. But there is very little evidence to support the college's accusations, and the universities actually seem to have awarded licenses with considerably more discrimination than the episcopal authorities. Many of those granted licences were in fact in the process of obtaining an MD, and most seem to have been skilled, experienced practitioners.<sup>29</sup>

Nevertheless, the sharply limited presence of the college outside of London has long given rise to a view of the English provinces as having suffered from a chronic shortage of quality medical provision during the early modern period. The

---

<sup>26</sup> John R. Guy, 'The Episcopal Licensing of Physicians, Surgeons and Midwives', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 56 (1982) 528-42. pp. 532-33.

<sup>27</sup> R. S. Roberts, 'The Personnel and Practice of Medicine in Tudor and Stuart England: Part I. The Provinces', *Medical History*, 6 (1962) 363-382. p. 366.

<sup>28</sup> Roberts, 'Personnel and Practice (I)', p. 368.

<sup>29</sup> Pelling and Webster, 'Medical Practitioners', pp. 191-4.

perception has been, as Roberts notes, that ‘the mass of the people who lived outside London relied for medical attention on quacks.’<sup>30</sup> But such views are challenged by John H. Raach’s *Directory of English Country Physicians 1603-1642*, which lists 814 individuals that he had identified as physicians practising outside of London during this period, most of whom had attended university, demonstrating that ‘instead of the people having no care, or at best care by quacks and charlatans, we find that they had well-trained doctors by their standards to provide for their needs.’<sup>31</sup>

In many respects Raach’s list needs to be treated with caution. Only 246 of the ‘physicians’ he identifies possessed MDs, and some of those who did seem to be included purely on the basis of their possession of the degree, rather than on any evidence that they actually practised while residing outside of the capital. Others amongst Raach’s list were surgeons or apothecaries by training, who acquired episcopal licences in order to move into general practice, a tendency of which learned physicians certainly did not approve, as will be discussed below.<sup>32</sup> Most problematically of all, in the context of the present study, Raach’s list includes men such as the priest-physician and astrologer Richard Napier, undoubtedly a highly educated and competent individual, but one who was detested by physicians such as James Hart as the epitome of the ‘irregular and ignorant’ practitioner.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, Raach’s basic thesis, that the seventeenth-century English provinces were well stocked with capable medical practitioners, seems sound. But his list also serves to further illustrate the difficulties inherent in fixing the boundaries of the profession of physic, particularly outside of the college’s London jurisdiction

## II

These difficulties, in terms of both practice and regulation, in clearly distinguishing learned, professional physicians from skilled, experienced irregular practitioners, have helped give rise to a powerful interpretation of the College of Physicians’ campaign against irregular practice as representing, in large part, an attempt to reinforce such a distinction. Margaret Pelling sees the accounts of the proceedings against irregulars

---

<sup>30</sup> Roberts, ‘Personnel and Practice (I)’, p. 363.

<sup>31</sup> John H. Raach, *A Directory of English Country Physicians 1603-1643* (London: Dawsons of Pall Mall, 1962) p. 14.

<sup>32</sup> Roberts, ‘Personnel and Practice (I)’, pp. 364-5.

<sup>33</sup> Raach, *Directory*, p. 68; Hart, *Anatomie*, sig. Q4v.



recorded in the college's *Annals* as reflecting a need to construct 'difference and distance' from their opponents, when there was frequently in fact 'equivalence and proximity'.<sup>34</sup> The college rarely pursued traditional or charitable healers, many of whom were protected by the so called 'Quack's Charter' of 1542-43, but instead focussed on those 'other learned "professionals"', as Harold J. Cook terms them, who represented the collegiate physicians' direct rivals: those physicians who did not submit to their authority, surgeons and apothecaries, and educated irregular practitioners.<sup>35</sup> Of the 714 practitioners pursued by the college between 1550 and 1640, 342 are known to have been barber-surgeons, apothecaries or university-educated physicians (with or without an MD); given that the occupations of 155 of these practitioners are unknown, these "professionals" represent well over half the remaining total.<sup>36</sup>

Such practitioners represented the most serious direct economic threat to the physicians, but in both their similarities to the physicians, and in the fact that they forced them to compete for and therefore submit to the demands of patients, they also represented a grave threat to the uniquely learned and socially elevated status the physicians sought to claim for themselves.<sup>37</sup> In order to try and assert their own supremacy, and that of the university learning on the basis of which they claimed it, it was therefore necessary for collegiate physicians not only to legally harass those that challenged their status, but to constantly denigrate their rivals' educational backgrounds, characterising them as 'ignorant' and 'illiterate'.<sup>38</sup>

On the other hand, it was also necessary to pursue those physicians such as Thomas Bonham who had obtained university qualifications, but failed to demonstrate the proper learning, judgement and character they were supposed to denote, and who associated with and supported the claims of groups such as the surgeons who were attempting to usurp the supremacy of that learning. If such men were left to present themselves as legitimate physicians, they threatened to undermine the entire profession of physic. Conal Condren has observed how 'the presupposition of office took proper conduct to be by a *persona* as a function of office; conversely,

---

<sup>34</sup> Pelling, *Medical Conflicts*, p. 4.

<sup>35</sup> Cook, *Decline*, pp. 91-2.

<sup>36</sup> Pelling, *Medical Conflicts*, p. 151.

<sup>37</sup> Cook, *Decline*, pp. 66-7.

<sup>38</sup> Pelling, *Medical Conflicts*, pp. 139, 143; Beier, *Sufferers and Healers*, p. 49.

improper conduct was office abuse. In extremis, abuse sloughed off *persona*, and erased, sometimes almost by distinction, moral identity and social standing.<sup>39</sup> The sheer number of people claiming the *persona* of the physician without satisfying the requirements of the college inevitably magnified this into a collective threat to the identity of their profession, which had to be countered urgently.

If this represents an accurate interpretation of the aims behind the college's campaign against empirics, can contemporary anti-quack literature be seen as reflecting the same aims, and therefore as a corollary to this campaign? As far as the literature from the middle of the sixteenth century through to the opening of the seventeenth is concerned the answer, broadly speaking, seems to be yes. This is perhaps unsurprising given that two of the authors from that period were prominent figures within the college. John Caius, nine times college president, urged his readers 'not to refute the counsell of the present or nighe phisicen learned, who maie, according to place, persone, cause, & other circumstances, geve more particular counseil at nede', and to 'flie the unlearned as a pestilence in a comune wealth. As simple women, carpenters, pewterers, brasiers, sopeballe sellers, pulsters, hostellers, painters, apotecaries (otherwise then for their drogges.)'<sup>40</sup>

Likewise Francis Herring, seven times a college censor, characterised irregular practitioners as 'unlettered Idiots' daily 'leaping from theyr Shopboards, and leaving their Mechanicall Trades'. He was also at pains to highlight their poor character, condemning their 'impudence and Vanitie' and detailing the 'cunning Sleights, and petie tricks of Legerdemaine...wherby divers honest Men and Women, have bene notoriously abused, deluded, emunged of their Money'.<sup>41</sup> But he was equally critical of 'the ficklenesse, and fugitive Inconstancie of our Patients, who being perswaded by every pratling Gossip that commeth in to see them...will have for every Day they are sicke almost, a new and severall Phisition'. Herring clearly deplored the fact that physicians were being expected to compete for patients, and the way in which this threatened to blur the boundaries of their profession, 'which hath bene in preceding Ages, a Colledge of learned, grave and profound Philosophers', but 'is now become

---

<sup>39</sup> Conal Condren, *Argument and Authority in Early Modern England: The Presupposition of Oaths and Offices* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) p. 6.

<sup>40</sup> John Caius, *A booke, or counseill against the disease commonly called the sweate, or sweatyng sicknesse* (London: R. Grafton, 1552) sig. A8, D4.

<sup>41</sup> Herring, 'discovery of certaine Stratagemes', sig. E-Ev, F3.

the Common Inne, Receptacle, and Sanctuarie of Make-shifts, Bankerupts, and Impostors.’ All of this prepared the way for his defence of the college’s regulatory activities against the ‘odious Calumnie, and slanderous untruth, which these base and out-cast Companions give out, when they are punished by the Colledge...that they are onely pursued by us, because they take away our profit’.<sup>42</sup>

Although they were both based outside of the college’s jurisdiction, the works of John Securis of Salisbury and Eleazor Duncon of Ipswich betray very similar concerns. Securis, writing in the early Elizabethan period, divided his *Detection and Querimonie* into three sections, the first attacking ‘false and unlearned phisitions’, the second ‘the ignorance, presumption, and quid pro quo, of unjust Apothecaries’, and the third ‘the rashenes and lewde temeritie of a great many Surgeons.’<sup>43</sup> It was ‘a great foly’, he complained, for physicians ‘to bestow so much labor and study all our lyfe tyme in the scholes and universities, to breake oure braynes in readynge so many authours...to procede in any degree in the Universities with our great coste & charges’, only for ‘a syr John lacke latin a pedler, a weaver, and oftentimes a presumptuous woman’ to ‘take upon them (yea and are permitted) to mynster Medicine to all menne, in every place, and at all tymes.’<sup>44</sup> Again, however, Securis attributed responsibility for this situation not just to irregular practitioners themselves, but equally to ‘those that geve credite unto them. For as the world goeth nowe a daies, if a phisition or surgion hath a faire tonge...every man unles he be very wise & circumspect, wil lightly geve eare and credite unto him.’<sup>45</sup>

Duncon, writing at the opening of the seventeenth century, similarly attacked ‘Empiricks, or unlearned Physicians’ and ‘our common Apothecaries’, stressing that ‘Ignorance then is the difference whereby these men are distinguished from other Physitians’. Just as the physician’s good character was honed by his learning, so the empiric’s ignorance clearly manifested itself in ‘their hasty, rash and unadvised judging of diseases’, ‘their forwardness in disgracing and slandering other Physicians’

---

<sup>42</sup> Herring, ‘discovery of certaine Strategems’, sig. F2, D4, Gv.

<sup>43</sup> John Securis, *A Detection and Querimonie of the daily enormities and abuses cōmitted in physick* (London, 1566) sig. a6v.

<sup>44</sup> Securis, *Detection and Querimonie*, sig. B2v.

<sup>45</sup> Securis, *Detection and Querimonie*, sig. E5v.

and their ‘subtill and decieptfull’ deployment of ‘vile & contemptible medicines’.<sup>46</sup> Again, Duncon identifies the failure of patients to recognise and accept the superiority of physicians as a major source of the problem, complaining that ‘the base opinion that the ignorant multitude conceiveth of the deepe and profound Arte of Physicke, maketh much for Empirikes’; and again, he defends the college and like-minded physicians against accusations that they were motivated by envy, rather than a ‘naturall and christian compassion’ to protect people from ‘the blind practise of Empirikes’.<sup>47</sup>

The anti-quack literature of the sixteenth and the opening of the seventeenth centuries therefore consciously aligned itself very closely with the regulatory activities of the College of Physicians, and seems to have reflected much the same concerns. Turning to the works of the authors upon whom this study is primarily focussed, those writing in the thirty years prior to the outbreak of the Civil War, all of these concerns can still be seen as very much present. John Cotta condemns the ‘blind rashnesse and ignorance’ of empirics, together with their ‘riot, lusts and lawlessliving’, accusing patients of ‘not making right choyce of their Physition, or perverting good counsell by their owne peevish frowardness, and thereby multiplying unto themselves continuall occasion of complaint’ only to ‘unjustly therefore accuse art, which they never duly sought.’<sup>48</sup> He acknowledged the skill of apothecaries in ‘the excellent preparation and knowledge of medicines’, but stressed that ‘beyond the preparation, the right and judicious dispensation is truly worthy’, and this ‘requireth an understanding able to raise it selfe above the medicine and the maker’.<sup>49</sup>

James Primerose agreed, condemning the intrusion of ‘ignorant’ and ‘bold’ apothecaries into the practice of physic. He was even more scornful of surgeons, claiming that physicians could treat even external conditions ‘better many times than the Surgeon himselfe, in respect of his learning, which now adaies is not desired in a Surgeon’.<sup>50</sup> Even wandering mountebanks, he complained, ‘are sometimes equallized

---

<sup>46</sup> E[leazar] D[uncon], *The Copy of A Letter written by E. D. Doctour of Physicke to a Gentleman, by whom it was published* (London: Melchisedech Braidwood, 1606) sig. D, F2v; Cook, ‘Good Advice’, p. 19.

<sup>47</sup> Duncon, *Copy of A Letter*, sig. Gv, G2v.

<sup>48</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. B, B4v, E2v.

<sup>49</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. G3.

<sup>50</sup> Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. D7-D7v.

with Physicians, and are taken for a certain sort of Physicians'.<sup>51</sup> Similarly, James Hart complained that 'the vulgar not being able to judge of the sufficiencie of the learned Physitian, preferreth often the paines of some ignorant Empiricke', and stressed that 'Neither yet is the skill in this profession so easily attained unto, as many ignorant people do perswade themselves.' Because of this public ignorance, 'into what disgrace and contempt this noble profession is now growne, and that by meanes of the lawlesse and uncontrolled intrusion of ignorant and insufficient persons...ignorant Apothecaries, Surgeons, &c.'<sup>52</sup>

Anti-quack literature throughout this later period therefore continued to voice the same concerns about ill-informed patients dragging physicians into competition with unlearned practitioners, who were being unjustly elevated to the point where they were regarded as a legitimate and sufficient alternative to the physicians - or even as physicians themselves. It would therefore be tempting to regard these later works as a further corollary to the protectionist activities of the College of Physicians; especially since, although all five of the authors upon whom this study is focussed were writing outside of the College's jurisdiction, all but one of them - Cotta - spent part of their career practising in London.

But further reading reveals striking departures from the earlier literature, and from the preoccupations of the college. Indeed, it is worth noting that relations between these authors and the college itself seem to have been either non-existent, as in the cases of Cotta and Hart, or else deeply troubled. Primerose, as we shall see, had been refused a fellowship by the college, and then suffered the indignity of having his appointment to a series of public medical lectures snubbed by it.<sup>53</sup> Poeton had not only trained through service rather than attending university, but this service had been to none other than the College's *bête noire*, Thomas Bonham. In Thomas Brian's case, the college in fact expressed considerable displeasure with his book, *The Pisse-Prophet*, when it was presented to them prior to publication.<sup>54</sup>

More significantly, alongside the ongoing professional concerns, new and distinct arguments and emphases can be seen as appearing in the texts from this

---

<sup>51</sup> Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. C6v.

<sup>52</sup> Hart, *Anatomie*, sig. A6v, C3, C4.

<sup>53</sup> Pelling, *Medical Conflicts*, pp. 173-4.

<sup>54</sup> George N. Clark, *A History of the Royal College of Physicians of London*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964) p. 252.

period. Firstly, there is a greatly increased focus on the activities of magical and occult healers. While Duncon identified witches as ‘one sort of Emperick’, and Securis, himself an almanac writer, briefly critiqued ignorant astrologers and those who claimed natural healing gifts, none of these earlier authors dealt with such subjects in any depth.<sup>55</sup> Although the College of Physicians itself vigorously pursued some of the more prestigious astrologers, waging a particularly bitter struggle against Simon Forman, they showed little interest in eradicating the popular magic of cunning folk, or in witch-hunting.<sup>56</sup> Cotta, on the other hand, devoted a full chapter each to critiquing ‘Practisers by Spels’, ‘Wisards’ and ‘Ephemerides-masters’, and another to the ‘explication of the true discoverie of Witchcraft in the sicke’.<sup>57</sup> Both Cotta and later Poeton were to go on to develop arguments first put forward in their anti-quack works into full-blown demonological treatises, while Primerose and Hart likewise dealt with these subjects at considerable length.<sup>58</sup>

The second, and most striking feature setting these authors’ works apart from those of their predecessors is their intense focus on and hostility towards one particular type of practitioner: the priest-physician. Cotta, Hart and Poeton all identify priest-physicians as their chief targets, Hart devoting one of his treatises entirely to attacking them. Primerose likewise identified them as a major cause of concern in his *Popular Errours*, and devoted his *Antimoniall Cup twice cast* to attacking one particular priest-physician, John Evans. The impression given by these authors was that clerical practitioners were overrunning the country like a plague; yet when we turn back to the earlier authors, even Herring and Duncon writing in the decade immediately prior to Cotta, we find no mention of priest-physicians whatsoever.

It is nevertheless clear that the College of Physicians itself did take exception to the activities of priest-physicians. When the ejected minister John Burges appeared before them in 1612, he was told that the college ‘could not examine, admit, or permit any to the practice of Physick, who had been in Holy Orders’, despite his possession

---

<sup>55</sup> Duncon, *Copy of A Letter*, sig. C3; Securis, *Detection and Querimonie*, sig. B4-B4v; Allan Chapman, ‘Astrological medicine’, in Webster (ed.), *Health, medicine and mortality*, pp. 275-300. pp. 285-6.

<sup>56</sup> Goodall, *Royal College of Physicians*, sig. Xx-Xxv; Lauren Kassell, *Medicine & Magic in Elizabethan London. Simon Forman: Astrologer, Alchemist, & Physician* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) pp. 75-99; Pelling, *Medical Conflicts*, p. 197.

<sup>57</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. H-K4v, N3v-O3.

<sup>58</sup> Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. R5v-S4v, Dd3v-Ff8; Hart, *Anatomie*, sig. I4v, R3, S2; James Hart, *KAINIKH, or the Diet of the Diseased* (London: John Beale for Robert Allot, 1633) sig. (a5)v, Eee3v-Iii3v; British Library, Department of Printed Books, C 54. b. 6 (2), f. 12.

of a Leiden MD incorporated at Cambridge, as it was both against the statutes of the College and ‘repugnant to the Statute Laws of the Kingdom and Canons Ecclesiastical.’<sup>59</sup> William Birken identifies hostility towards priest-physicians as an important factor in fuelling antipathy towards the episcopate within the college, paving the way towards what he sees as their enthusiastic support for Parliament in the Civil War.<sup>60</sup> Certainly, if it were indeed other learned ‘professionals’ that the college particularly sought to pursue, there would hardly seem a more obvious target for their ire than priest-physicians.

And yet, the scale of the action taken against priest-physicians would seem to belie this, as of those 714 practitioners pursued by the college between 1550 and 1640, just fourteen were clergymen.<sup>61</sup> A larger scale pursuit may have been mitigated against by the potential political difficulties such a campaign might have entailed, given the problems generally experienced by the college in pursuing those protected by patrons or with connections amongst the authorities. Nevertheless, this remains a strikingly unimpressive total for what has been described as ‘a dominant group in the medical profession’ during this period, especially given that, as will be discussed below, the college’s definition of a ‘priest-physician’ was actually broader than that employed within most of the contemporary literature. There are even instances of priest-physicians being given positive approbation to practise in London by the college.<sup>62</sup>

The authors from this period can therefore be identified as representing a distinctive strain of anti-quack thought that often overlaps with, but in crucial respects departs from that of both the College of Physicians and the earlier writers. This distinctiveness is displayed primarily in a shift in the types of irregular practitioners that they chose to emphasise. So before considering the significance of these departures, and what the authors were seeking to achieve through them, it is now necessary to look at the irregulars themselves, and to examine in more detail the ways in which the various types of practitioners were depicted by their learned critics.

---

<sup>59</sup> Goodall, *Royal College of Physicians*, sig. Bbb4v-Ccc.

<sup>60</sup> Birken, ‘Royal College of Physicians’, pp. 52-3.

<sup>61</sup> Pelling, *Medical Conflicts*, p. 155.

<sup>62</sup> Andrew Wear, ‘Religious beliefs and medicine’, p. 164.

## III

The first thing that John Cotta felt the need to tell his readers about irregular medical practitioners was that the country was swarming with them: ‘So many and so infinitely do the numbers of barbarous and unlearned counsellours of health at this time overspread all corners of this kingdome’, that they ‘eclipse the Sun-shine of all true learning and understanding.’<sup>63</sup> Whatever one makes of Cotta’s characterisation of such practitioners, there can be little doubt that they outnumbered learned physicians many times over. By 1600 it is estimated that for every one member of the College of Physicians there were five irregulars practising in London, not including those surgeons and apothecaries who incurred the college’s wrath by breaking the prescribed bounds of their own occupations. Outside of London, though the evidence is more fragmentary, it seems clear that irregulars were even more dominant.<sup>64</sup>

But these comprised an extremely wide and diverse range of healers; in Roy Porter’s phrase, ‘he (or she) was called a quack who transgressed what those in the saddle defined as true, orthodox, regular, “good” medicine’.<sup>65</sup> Some of them deployed practices and promoted images of themselves that, in many ways, placed them closer to the physicians than to some of their humbler or more eccentric fellow irregulars. Others offered radically different approaches to healing, and were often called upon in very different circumstances. Hence Cotta, beyond his sweeping condemnations, felt the need to guide his readers through the ‘severall sorts of ignorant and unconsiderate Practisers of Physicke in England’. Of course, Cotta’s guidance is hardly disinterested, but within the context of the present study following it - cautiously - offers a useful way of combining an overview of the irregular practitioners themselves with an exploration of the ways in which Cotta and his fellow learned physicians, those ‘in the saddle’, sought to depict them.

Perhaps the best type of practitioner with which to begin is that which, not least through the propagandising of the medical profession, has come to represent the classic image of the quack, charlatan or mountebank: the itinerant drug seller. These were ubiquitous throughout seventeenth-century England, particularly in its fairs and

---

<sup>63</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. A3.

<sup>64</sup> Pelling and Webster, ‘Medical Practitioners’, pp. 188, 227, 230-1, 165.

<sup>65</sup> Roy Porter, *Quacks: Fakers & Charlatans in English Medicine* (Stroud: Tempus, 2000) p. 11.



market towns where they could set up stages or booths to impress passers-by.<sup>66</sup> Their shows were often highly dramatic, James Primerose describing one ‘experiment of theirs, which the people doe very much admire’, whereby ‘The Mountibank will apply a viper to his breast, about the left pap, and taking the Antidote will feel no harm’.<sup>67</sup> Cotta deplored these practitioners who moved ‘from place to place and from towne to towne, by faire deluding promises and pollicitation to draw the lives of simple credulous men, for their owne gaine, into their owne hands’, and who ‘oft from beyond the sea bring home strange preparations and medicines, but little wit and discretion safely to use them’. According to Primerose, common examples of such purportedly exotic remedies included bezoars taken from the stomachs of animals and pieces of supposed unicorn’s horn.<sup>68</sup>

The key ingredient in most quacks’ nostrums, however, was secrecy. Cotta sneered at ‘how these men leaving their old occupations and mechanicall mysteries wherein they were educate, sodainely find themselves inspired with a spirit of revelation of rare secrets, and thereby promise unto themselves and others miraculous wonders’. Eleazar Duncon remarked that ‘subtill and decieptfull Empirikes grace their vile & contemptible medicines with the name of secrets, that they may the easier allure and illude the simple people.’ Primerose was more sanguine: ‘many ignorant fellows we see doe conceale their remedies, lest if they should become known to other physicians, they should be laughed at.’<sup>69</sup> Exotic tales of how such secrets were acquired could add to the colourful nature of a mountebank’s performance: according to Francis Herring, some would relate ‘a tale of Manardes the great Physition of Spaine’ who kept ‘a secret Booke of most rare and excellent Observations’, claiming that they were ‘with him in his last sicknesse, and observing diligently the place, where Manardes laid up his Jewell, they cunningly after his Death, seized on this Booke.’<sup>70</sup>

Cotta attributed such people’s itinerant lifestyle to their need to flee ‘after they have by their common desperate courses provoked and drawne fourth unwilling

---

<sup>66</sup> Cook, *Decline*, pp. 35-6.

<sup>67</sup> Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. Dv.

<sup>68</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. Q-Qv; Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. Z8-Bb3v. See also Thomas Browne, *Pseudodoxia Epidemica: Or, Enquiries into Very many received Tenets, And commonly presumed Truths* (London: Thomas Harper for Edward Dod, 1646) sig. X3v-X4, Y.

<sup>69</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. Fv-F2; Duncon, sig. F2v; Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. E2.

<sup>70</sup> Herring, ‘discovery of certaine Strategems’, sig. Ev.

death'.<sup>71</sup> Clearly, avoiding the consequences of failed treatments was one advantage of itinerancy, but for most the decision to take to the road was probably a matter of simple economics; the average market town could offer only limited demand for their goods, so it made sense to market them across a wider area. Nevertheless, the numbers of resident drug sellers were also increasing during this period, facilitated by the emergence of new advertising techniques drawing on cheap print and increased literacy. Such vendors would post up broadsides or pass out simple handbills advertising their medicines, usually just specifying its usefulness and where it could be obtained. By the restoration period London seems to have been saturated with such bills, stressing the unique and infallible nature of the remedies they advertised.<sup>72</sup>

As the quotes above hopefully illustrate, the itinerant drug seller was as much a figure of mockery as of concern for anti-quack authors, and it is no coincidence that mountebanks and charlatans, with their improbable claims and 'rude and clownish' performances, have emerged as the dominant image of the early modern irregular medical practitioner.<sup>73</sup> But between the quacks and the learned physicians lay what Pelling describes as an 'extensive territory', the inhabitants of which have been expelled by the 'cultural dominance of the academically qualified physician', who sought to identify irregular practice with ignorance and absurdity, distancing it from the learning and gravity they claimed for their own profession.<sup>74</sup> This 'extensive territory' was populated by the ordinary practitioners of physic, who provided their patients not just with medicines, but also with informed medical counsel that usually drew on extensive experience, reading and practical training.

This was normally acquired through apprenticeship; Cotta describes how those who 'by oft serving Physitions, or by continuall conversing with them and viewing their custome and practise, or by their owne employment from their directions in applications and administrations unto the sicke' would 'ingrosse unto themselves supposed speciall observations, and choice and select remedies, and with such small wares thus taken up credite, set up for themselves'.<sup>75</sup> However, Robert Wittie,

---

<sup>71</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. Qv.

<sup>72</sup> Cook, *Decline*, p. 38; Porter, *Quacks*, p. 53.

<sup>73</sup> Duncon, *Copy of A Letter*, sig. F2.

<sup>74</sup> Pelling, *Medical Conflicts*, p. 13.

<sup>75</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. L.

translator of James Primerose's works, was sceptical of the claims many ordinary practitioners made to having trained under prominent physicians, describing how 'most of these fellows' claimed either to be related to the famous Cambridge physician William Butler, or to have 'served him, and learned much from him: & this is enough (forsooth) to beget them credit among the vulgar, and make them Doctors, which title they willingly embrace'. However, Wittie assured his readers that Butler, who had died in 1618, neither had any nephews nor ever kept any apprentices.<sup>76</sup>

Butler's particular appeal to irregular practitioners was, in part, probably a simple reflection of the prominence he acquired through his occasional treatment of members of the royal family. But it was also likely fuelled by his renowned willingness to combine traditional Galenic remedies with newer Paracelsian methods, and the renowned eccentricity of the resulting treatments. These included treating a parson who had suffered an opium overdose by placing him in the belly of a freshly killed cow, and having a patient suffering from ague surprised and thrown twenty feet from a balcony into the Thames; both interventions apparently met with success.<sup>77</sup> According to Thomas Brian, among those claiming to have learnt their trade from Butler was William Trigge, a shoemaker who became one of London's most famous practitioners; Trigge's lawyer, the future regicide John Cook, would claim in 1648 that he had treated 30,000 patients since 1624. For Brian, however, Trigge was 'no other but an Asse (though he pretendeth great learning amongst silly people)', and he faced repeated harassment by the College of Physicians between the 1630s and 1650s.<sup>78</sup>

Butler's example notwithstanding, some physicians did offer apprenticeships or train up their servants to the point where they could set up in practice for themselves. Even John Argent, the future president of the College of Physicians, took in a young man to learn physic in 1601, despite that organisation's official hostility to apprenticeship, while as we have seen Edward Poeton considered his training under Thomas Bonham a sufficient basis from which to join the learned attack on irregular

---

<sup>76</sup> Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. A5v-A6.

<sup>77</sup> ODNB, 9, pp. 235-6. p. 235.

<sup>78</sup> Webster, *Great Instauration*, p. 289; Thomas Brian, *The Pisse-Prophet, or, Certaine Pisse-Pot Lectures* (London: E.P. for R. Thrale, 1637) sig. H-Hv.

practice himself.<sup>79</sup> On the other hand, many ordinary practitioners could also draw on some degree of formal education, sometimes at university level; Cotta complained of those who had attended ‘grammar schooles, or in Universities have made short study’, whereby they ‘have a taste of good arts and sciences, but are not truly learned’.<sup>80</sup>

Many of the more educated irregulars would publish books or pamphlets, allowing them to promote their wares in print in a way that drew attention to their learning and appeared more respectable than the handbills of the common drug sellers.<sup>81</sup> The priest-physician and astrologer John Evans produced a particularly interesting example of this genre, in order to promote his antimonial cups. Evans quoted Paracelsus and a host of other learned medical authorities at length in asserting the power of his remedy to cure ‘all contagious and infectious diseases’, before providing a guide as to how it should be administered, and claiming the approval of the former Lord Mayor Sir Thomas Myddleton for its use. The critical piece of information that the pamphlet communicated, however, was that the cups were ‘made and sold by John Evans Minister of Gods word dwelling in Gunpowder-Alley neere fetter lane.’<sup>82</sup> Evans further assured his readers that if they broke their cup they should ‘reserve the metall, & bring it to me in weight, & without any commixture, and for ten shillings I will give them a new Cup’. Primerose, in his response to Evans’ pamphlet, wryly noted that ‘This is the best tricks of all his booke’ as ‘three cups of 4 or 5. ounces a piece, doe not stand the maker to above ten Shillings’.<sup>83</sup>

The training and education upon which most ordinary practitioners based their practice, centred on apprenticeship, was similar to that drawn upon by surgeons and apothecaries; indeed Harold J. Cook has remarked that ‘it is best to view the “surgeons” and “apothecaries” as ordinary medical practitioners who belonged to guilds rather than as medical specialists.’<sup>84</sup> That this was case begins to explain why

---

<sup>79</sup> Pelling, *Medical Conflicts*, p. 185; Thomas Bonham, *The Chyrurgians Closet: Or, An Antidotarie Chyrurgicall* (London: George Miller for Edward Brewster, 1630) sig. A4; BL, Sloane 1954, ff 143-193.

<sup>80</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. L2v-L3.

<sup>81</sup> Cook, *Decline*, p. 42.

<sup>82</sup> John Evans, *The Universall Medicine: Or the Vertues of the Antimioniall Cup* (London: John Haviland, 1634) sig. A3v, A4v, A8v, ¶v.

<sup>83</sup> Evans, *Universall Medicine*, sig. A8v; James Primerose, *The Antimioniall Cup twice cast: Or, A Treatise concerning the Antimioniall Cup, shewing the abuse thereof*, translated by Robert Wittie (London: B.A. and T. Fawcet, 1640) sig. E.

<sup>84</sup> Cook, *Decline*, p. 45.

learned physicians devoted so much time to attacking these two types of practitioner. Although the physicians were perfectly willing to acknowledge the legitimacy of surgeons and apothecaries as practitioners, this acceptance was dependant upon their willingness to occupy a subordinate position subject to the physicians' supervision, and to remain within strictly limited fields of practice. For surgeons this meant treating external wounds and sores, cutting for the stone, setting bones, amputations, phlebotomy and the like: 'Whatosoever is done by the hand is Chyrurgicall', wrote Primerose, 'therefore in proper speaking only manuell operations doe make a surgeon'.<sup>85</sup> For the apothecaries it meant preparing and dispensing drugs as prescribed by the physicians, the college possessing legal power 'to enter into the house or houses of all and every Apothecary' to search their wares and destroy anything found 'defective, corrupted and not meet nor convenient to be ministred in any Medicines'.<sup>86</sup> This reflected Francis Herring's view of the physician 'as a great Commaunder' who 'hath as subordinate to him, the Cookes for Dyet, the Surgions for manuell Operations, the Apothecaries for confecting, and preparing Medicines'.<sup>87</sup>

As with much of early modern medical practice, however, the reality bore little relation to the pious ideals of the physicians, and entry into general practice was extremely widespread among both surgeons and apothecaries, who would often prescribe and administer remedies for all manner of conditions, both external and internal. Not only were surgeons and apothecaries therefore following the ordinary practitioners in encroaching upon the professional territory claimed by the physicians, but they were doing so within organised guild structures – in London the Barber-Surgeons' Company and, from 1617, the Society of Apothecaries – which provided them with added legitimacy and respectability as well as vehicles for organised opposition to the dominance of the physicians.<sup>88</sup>

Hence the surgeons and apothecaries emerged as 'the arch-rivals of the academic physicians', and their moves into general practice consistently aroused intense opposition from learned critics. Cotta decried the 'common unlearned Surgeons' who 'take unto themselves an emerited priviledge in physicke practise',

---

<sup>85</sup> Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. D6.

<sup>86</sup> Goodall, *Royal College of Physicians*, sig. D2.

<sup>87</sup> Herring, 'discovery of certaine Strategems', sig. E3-E3v.

<sup>88</sup> R. S. Roberts, 'The Personnel and Practice of Medicine in Tudor and Stuart England: Part II. London', *Medical History*, 8 (1964) 217-234. pp. 224-229; Cook, *Decline*, pp. 45-7.

while Primerose complained of ‘many of our Apothecaries’ who ‘being altogether ignorant of the operations that belong thereunto, and yet are so bold, that they dare practise physick’.<sup>89</sup> John Securis had put forward similar arguments in the mid-sixteenth century: ‘it is not decente, that eyther Surgion or Apothecarie, or any other manne, beyng no physition should practise or use any inward medicine without the learned and approved physitions counsayle.’<sup>90</sup>

But such protestations of the ignorance and unlearned nature of the surgeons and apothecaries belied both the rising status of such practitioners, and the fact that many of them were making important and original contributions to medical knowledge and practice that often rivalled or surpassed those of the physicians themselves. Apothecaries were developing their knowledge of botany and exploiting the plants and drugs arriving from the new world, while the surgeons were helping to introduce chemical medicine into England through the works of men such as William Clowes and John Banister.<sup>91</sup> Surgeons could indeed be just as jealous as physicians in guarding their professional privileges, and just as anxious to establish their elevated moral and intellectual stature. Clowes complained that ‘many in these dayes, being in deede no better than runnagates, or vagabondes’ would ‘intrude themselves into other mens professions...wherein they were never trained, or had any experience: of the which a great number be shamelesse in countenance, lewde in disposition, brutish in judgement and understanding’.<sup>92</sup>

So seventeenth-century physicians faced growing competition not just from quacks and mountebanks, but also from a large body of ‘sound empirical practitioners’, offering treatments on the basis of extensive practical experience and training.<sup>93</sup> But what advantages could these competitors offer to patients, *vis à vis* the learned physicians? Cost was certainly a factor; physicians would generally charge between ten shillings and a pound to visit a patient, making them prohibitively

---

<sup>89</sup> William Birken, ‘The Social Problem of the English Physician in the early Seventeenth Century’, *Medical History*, 31 (1987) 201-216. p. 203; Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. F2v; Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. D7v.

<sup>90</sup> Securis, *Detection and Querimonie*, sig. Bv.

<sup>91</sup> Birken, ‘Social Problem of the English Physician’, p. 203; Pelling and Webster, ‘Medical Practitioners’, p. 177; Charles Webster, ‘Alchemical and Paracelsian Medicine’, in Webster (ed.), *Health, medicine and Mortality*, pp. 301-334. p. 327; Webster, *Great Instauration*, p. 253.

<sup>92</sup> William Clowes, *A Briefe and necessarie Treatise, touching the cure of the disease called Morbus Gallicus* (London: Thomas Cadman, 1585) sig. B3v.

<sup>93</sup> Roberts, ‘Personnel and Practice (I)’, p. 363.

expensive for the poor at a time when a family of seven might have to live off as little as sixpence a day.<sup>94</sup> While some physicians would take on some poorer patients on a charitable basis, or through parish welfare, this was woefully inadequate given the level of demand; Poeton conceded this point, and called for an expansion of parish welfare in order to address it.<sup>95</sup> It is therefore hardly surprising that many poorer people might turn to an empiric who would sell them a bottle of medicine for a couple of shillings, or to a practitioner such as Trigge who claimed to treat the poor for little or no payment.

But the role of cost should not be overstated. Most surgeons and apothecaries would themselves have been beyond the means of the poor, who would often be left reliant on the kinds of domestic, charitable and folk-healing described below.<sup>96</sup> On the other hand, Cotta tells us, ‘oft times men of better sort and qualitie’, who could comfortably afford a learned physician, would instead turn to an irregular practitioner.<sup>97</sup> To some extent this reflects the fact that many irregulars offered distinctive services and conditions to patients that learned physicians generally would not. One of these was anonymity; when a patient consulted an irregular in person it was likely to be a one-off, perfunctory encounter, avoiding the regular home visits - ideally three a day in cases of dangerous disease, according to Thomas Brian - and potential accompanying moral censure that a physician would expect to make.<sup>98</sup> Many irregulars would not even require a consultation, offering to diagnose patients on the sight of their urine alone, which could be brought by a servant; the appeal of this practice in the case of potentially embarrassing conditions such as venereal disease is obvious.

An even more significant advantage over physicians offered by irregulars was their greater willingness to medicate their clients. Where physicians emphasised regimen and good counsel towards the maintenance of health, accompanied by the sparing use of mild remedies, many irregulars would willingly provide potent drugs, appearing to offer a far more straightforward and tangible route to good health; ‘in

---

<sup>94</sup> Webster, *Great Instauration*, p. 289.

<sup>95</sup> BL, Sloane 1954, f. 153v; see also Sloane 2563, ff. 5-6v.

<sup>96</sup> Wear, *Knowledge and Practice*, p. 22; Webster, *Great Instauration*, p. 289; Pelling and Webster, ‘Medical Practitioners’, p. 182.

<sup>97</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. B4v.

<sup>98</sup> Brian, *Pisse-Prophet*, sig. H3.

these dayes’, Cotta complained, ‘with what senseless madnesse, men are become worshippers of medicines’.<sup>99</sup>

It would ultimately be misleading, however, simply to attribute the appeal of irregular practitioners either to price or to a willingness to fill gaps in the provision offered by physicians. While physicians may have presented themselves as the default choice of healer for those who could afford their services, patients themselves were capable of choosing between different practitioners in different cases of illness, often adopting a ‘try anything’ approach. With large numbers of skilled, experienced individuals offering their services amongst the ranks of the irregulars, it would perhaps be far more perplexing if a great many patients had failed to take advantage of them. However, to make this point is not necessarily to fully accept the medical marketplace model of seventeenth century medicine, at least in its most economic manifestations. The factors influencing patients’ choices of practitioner were complex and multi-faceted. This is most obvious in relation to the array of charitable and magical healers that continued to thrive during this period, alongside the various empirical and commercial medical practitioners - and frequently overlapping with them in terms of both personnel and practice.

#### IV

The most widespread source of charitable, or indeed any other form of healing in early modern England was the home itself: ‘Now adaies in many families the Wife farmes as it were the estate & undertakes all the expenses & to save Charges adventures to bee Physicion’, wrote the anonymous author of ‘A Just & necessarie Complaint concerning Physicke’, a manuscript work probably dating to the early 1640s.<sup>100</sup> Every housewife was expected to be able to provide her family with basic medical care, particularly since paediatric medicine was virtually unknown in England during this period.<sup>101</sup> Women were tasked with producing and administering herbal cures and traditional cordials, knowledge of which would be passed between generations orally or, within literate households, in manuscript form.<sup>102</sup>

---

<sup>99</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. D2v; Porter, *Quacks*, p. 50.

<sup>100</sup> BL, Sloane 2563, ff. 1-19v. f. 3. My dating of this work, catalogued as mid seventeenth-century, is primarily based on the author’s reference to ‘this Happie time of Refomacion’, ‘Happie’ later having been deleted and exchanged for ‘Hopefull’; probably a reference to the period of the Long Parliament.

<sup>101</sup> Beier, *Sufferers and Healers*, p. 5; Harley, ‘Medical Metaphors’, p. 426.

<sup>102</sup> See for example BL, Additional MSS, 57944.



Those women with particular reputations for knowledge of herbs and plant lore, the proverbial ‘old wives’, were important medical providers, especially in rural areas. Gentlewomen, too, fulfilled an important role within rural medical provision, often providing their neighbours with medicines and treatments on a charitable basis; Lady Margaret Hoby and Lady Grace Mildmay offer just two examples of this very widespread phenomenon.<sup>103</sup> Midwives, whose ranks were still dominated by women during this period, also offered more general healing services and sometimes entered into general practice; like physicians, surgeons and apothecaries midwives were licensed by the episcopal authorities, although the requirements imposed on prospective midwives tended to focus on issues of religious soundness and good moral character, rather than strictly medical knowledge and competence.<sup>104</sup>

The attitudes displayed in anti-quack literature towards such practice are, at times, surprisingly ambivalent. Certainly their learned physician authors were, in general, deeply hostile to the practice of medicine by women; Cotta argued that women’s ‘authority in learned knowledge cannot be authentically, neither hath God and nature made them commissioners in the sessions of learned reason and understanding [...] their counsels for this cause in matters of so great and dangerous consequent, modestie, nature, law, and their owne sexe hath ever exempted.’<sup>105</sup> Hart followed him in maintaining that ‘Their fraile sexe is both unfit and unfurnished with sufficiencie for managing of so great matters. It is in no wayes sutable to the modestie which ought to be seene in that sexe, to meddle with so publike a profession.’<sup>106</sup>

However, in the face of practice by gentlewomen, most of these authors ‘were uncharacteristically taciturn’, in Lucinda McCray Beier’s phrase, tending to pull back somewhat from the position outlined above, and offering qualified support to those who provided mild remedies and took appropriate counsel from physicians.<sup>107</sup> Hart stressed that he did not wish ‘to speake against the charity of some noble personages of this sex, ready both with their paines and purses, to supply the wants of the poore and needy’, and praised ‘Lady Farmer, widow to that noble Knight, Sr. George Farmer of Cason by Toceter’ as ‘a great reliever of the necessities of the poore’, who

---

<sup>103</sup> Beier, *Sufferers and Healers*, p. 216.

<sup>104</sup> Thomas R. Forbes, ‘The Regulation of English Midwives in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries’, *Medical History*, 8 (1964) 235-244. p. 235.

<sup>105</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. E.

<sup>106</sup> Hart, *Anatomie*, sig. C4v.

<sup>107</sup> Beier, *Sufferers and Healers*, p. 216.

she supplied ‘with her best cordialls, or other physicall drugges in her possession...as should be advised by wise and learned counsell: and yet, herselfe never venturing on such things as might endanger any.’<sup>108</sup> The author of the ‘Just & necessarie Complaint’ likewise qualified his lengthy attack on domestic and charitable medicine by stressing that he conceived ‘farr better than the former’ those ‘gentlewoomen who have bin religiouslie & prudentlie affected to the workes of mercie in relieving the necessities of there poore distressed neybour & servants’.<sup>109</sup>

In part, this ambivalence probably reflected concerns over the potential loss of patronage from such women, who expected to play an active role in their family’s medical treatment and were quite happy to turn to other practitioners if the physician was not willing to accommodate himself to this - but whose positive testimony, on the other hand, could prove the making of a physician’s practice.<sup>110</sup> Antagonizing and insulting such women would clearly not have been a wise commercial move; it was far more sensible for the authors to present themselves as offering sympathetic advice and counsel. Robert Wittie dedicated his translation of Primerose’s *Popular Errours* to Lady Francis Strickland in a spirit of simultaneous supplication and correction, claiming that it was ‘my Countries Ladies and Gentlewomen, for whose sakes especially I undertooke this taske. I thought it pittie that so learned, judicious and usefull a booke, for the amendment of their Errours, should passe without cognizance’.<sup>111</sup>

However, in analysing the equally tentative approach towards female practitioners adopted by the College of Physicians, Margaret Pelling has suggested that it reflected even deeper insecurities amongst physicians about the social position of their art: ‘wherever men appropriated tasks associated with women or with feminized spaces within the household, they incurred some penalty in status terms...all male practitioners, but especially physicians, were compromised by the gendered connotations of the work they did and the places in which they did it’.<sup>112</sup> The collegiate physicians, Pelling argues, therefore sought to compensate for this by on the one hand belittling the activities of ‘poor’ and ‘old’ women, and on the other

---

<sup>108</sup> Hart, *Diet*, sig. (a7)v.

<sup>109</sup> BL, Sloane 2563, f. 4v.

<sup>110</sup> Cook, *Decline*, pp. 47-8, 53-5, 60-1, 67

<sup>111</sup> Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. A3-A3v.

<sup>112</sup> Pelling, *Medical Conflicts*, pp. 191, 196.

calling attention to the charitable practice of medicine by gentlewomen, whose status made them the type of female healer whose activities physicians were most comfortable acknowledging. This served to conceal the fact that it was actually ‘very difficult to suggest, for London at least, that there was a form of practice followed by women which was distinct from that of men’; women practised publicly and charged fees, obtained medicines from apothecaries as well as hedgerows, and were eligible to join the Barber-Surgeons’ Company.<sup>113</sup>

But while such insecurities may indeed help explain anti-quack authors’ equivocal attitude towards the practice of medicine by women, it is not clear to me that they particularly shared in any desire of the College of Physicians to whitewash the ‘middling sort’ of female practitioner, at least to any significantly greater degree than they did their male equivalents. Indeed, the passages in which these authors gave their limited approval to the practice of charitable gentlewomen were usually inserted to qualify critiques of those women whom they regarded as publicly usurping the role of the physician or surgeon. This is particularly striking given that they were all writing in provincial locations where gentlewomen and ‘old-wives’ were indeed perhaps more typical of female practice than they were in London; although that is not to suggest that skilled, publicly practising women were not also present in such places.<sup>114</sup> Hart complained of ‘Women-physitians’ who ‘assume unto themselves a lawlesse liberty to prescribe diet for the diseased’ and thereby ‘intrude upon so sublime a profession, in administring physicke.’ What was worse, such women were ‘sought unto not onely by those of ordinary education, but even also by some of better breeding.’<sup>115</sup> Primerose claimed that women ‘especially are busied about Surgery, and that part chiefly which concernes the cure of Tumours and Ulcers’, which ‘cannot be known but by a skilfull Physician’. In fact, Primerose’s chief complaint about such women was that they acquired their knowledge in the same ways as male ordinary practitioners: ‘Againe, they usually take their remedies out of English bookes, or else make use of such as are communicated to them by others’.<sup>116</sup>

---

<sup>113</sup> Pelling, *Medical Conflicts*, pp. 193, 197, 202-3, 212; Pelling and Webster, ‘Medical Practitioners’, p. 174.

<sup>114</sup> Pelling and Webster, ‘Medical Practitioners’, p. 233.

<sup>115</sup> Hart, *Diet*, sig. (a5)v-(a6)v.

<sup>116</sup> Primerose, *Popular Erroures*, sig. C5-C5v.

As Primerose's remark suggests, vernacular medical books were an important means for the dissemination of medical knowledge among both commercial and domestic practitioners; David Harley describes them as the means by which 'the rudiments of Galenic medicine' became 'part of common knowledge, forming the basis of self-diagnosis and self medication.'<sup>117</sup> Paul Slack has estimated that some 166,000 copies of such works may have been in use around the country by 1604, their number representing some 3% of the total output of English printers. He identifies 153 different titles as having appeared in print by this point, ranging from textbooks, anatomies and theoretical works to remedy collections, herbals and plague tracts. Popular works such as Thomas Moulton's *Myroure or Glasse of helthe* and Andrew Boorde's *Breviarie of Health* went through numerous editions.<sup>118</sup>

However, while the authors of such works tended to claim that they were writing 'for the great benefit and comfort of the poorer sort of people that are not of abillitie to go to the Physitions', it is in fact likely that, at least until the great explosion of vernacular medical publishing during the interregnum, their readership was largely limited to medical practitioners and members of the social elite.<sup>119</sup> The kind of gentlewoman practitioners outlined above would obviously span both of these categories, and appear to have drawn upon such books in treating their families and acting as 'charitable neighbours' towards the local poor.<sup>120</sup> But amongst lay gentry readers these books served a second purpose, that of empowering them as patients within their relationships with professional physicians; Sir Thomas Elyot, in his *Castel of Helthe*, set out to ensure that 'every manne may knowe the state of his owne body, the preservation of helthe, and how to instructe welle his physytion in syckenes that he be not deceyved.'<sup>121</sup>

So vernacular medical textbooks and remedy books served both to instruct practitioners lacking in a university medical education, and to equalise the relationship between patient and physician. Unsurprisingly, therefore, most of those physicians who wrote against irregular practice detested them; but the fact that such

---

<sup>117</sup> Harley, 'Medical Metaphors', p. 433.

<sup>118</sup> Paul Slack, 'Mirrors of health and treasures of poor men: the uses of the vernacular medical literature of Tudor England', in Webster, *Health, medicine and mortality*, pp. 237-273. pp. 238-43.

<sup>119</sup> A. T., *A Rich Store-house or Treasury for the Diseased* (London: Thomas Purfoot and Raph Blower, 1596) sig. A; Slack, 'Mirrors of health'. pp. 240-1, 256-261.

<sup>120</sup> William Bullein, *Bulleins Bulwarke of defence againste all Sicknes, Sorues, and woundes* (London: Jhon Kyngston, 1562) sig. Aa6.

<sup>121</sup> Thomas Elyot, *The Castel of Helthe* (1539) sig. A; Slack, 'Mirrors of health', p. 260.

authors were themselves publishing medical works in English obviously placed them in an awkward position. Almost every author of medical literature in the vernacular during this period felt the need to apologise for or justify his decision to forsake Latin and Greek, but particular anxiety over this choice can be detected in the works of the anti-quacks.<sup>122</sup> John Caius felt obliged to defend his decision to publish his *counseill against the sweate* in English at particular length: ‘the common setting furthe and printing of every foolishe thyng in englishe, both of phisicke unperfectly, and other matters undiscretly, diminishe the grace of thynges learned’, he insisted, yet he now turned to the vernacular due to the ‘necessite of the matter, & good wyl to my countrie, frendes, & acquaintance’.<sup>123</sup> James Hart likewise insisted that he had ‘ever beene as averse as any from the publication of any such Physicke bookes in our vulgar tongue, as might give the least incouragement to ignorant Droanes and Dunces’, and that ‘there can be no right use of such Bookes’ which ‘have not a little emboldened a many ignorant busie-bodies to thrust their sickle into another mans harvest.’ He justified his own decision to publish in English both by distinguishing his polemical work from these ‘Physicke practicall bookes’, and by claiming to be responding to an urgent need to reform the habits of the ‘deluded multitude’, requiring a work tailored specifically ‘to the capacitie of the meanest.’<sup>124</sup>

Beyond the domestic sphere, traditional forms of healing continued to be dispensed by an array of magical and occult practitioners; as has been noted, after being largely overlooked in the works of Securis, Herring and Duncon, these emerged as an issue of growing concern for Cotta and subsequent authors.<sup>125</sup> The archetypal practitioner of popular magic and folk-magical healing in early modern England was the cunning man or woman, ‘a professional type’, according to Owen Davies, ‘that for centuries was as integral to English life as the clergyman, constable and doctor.’<sup>126</sup> Cotta describes how these were ‘reputed a kind of good & honest harmles witches or wisards, who by good words, by hallowed herbes and salues, and other superstitious

---

<sup>122</sup> Beier, *Sufferers and Healers*, p. 35.

<sup>123</sup> Caius, *sweatyng sicknesse*, sig. A4v, A7.

<sup>124</sup> Forestus, sig. A4v-a2.

<sup>125</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. H-K4v, N3v-O3; Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. R5v-S4v, Ff4v-Ff8; BL, Sloane 1954, ff. 161-193.

<sup>126</sup> Owen Davies, *Popular Magic: Cunning-folk in English History* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007) p. VII.

ceremonies promise to allay and calme divels, practises of other witches, and the forces of many diseases'.<sup>127</sup> Cunning folk did indeed offer a wide array of services, from identifying thieves and locating lost or stolen goods, to providing love magic to help clients identify future spouses or improve the behaviour of their current one. Some supplied soldiers or sailors with protective charms, or participated in treasure hunting.

But cunning folk's speciality, the most distinctive feature of their trade and the cornerstone of their reputations, was unbewitching. This was not a unique service, and many physicians were themselves quite willing to diagnose and attempt to treat bewitchment; Cotta expounded at length on the correct way to identify witchcraft, and indeed argued that in certain cases, 'when in the likenesse and similitude of a disease, the secret working of a supernatural power doth hide it selfe', the physician alone possessed the requisite knowledge and judgement to recognise it.<sup>128</sup> But whereas Cotta counselled extreme caution in identifying bewitchment, cunning folk would diagnose and attempt to treat such conditions far more readily, sharpening their appeal to clients who generally already harboured suspicions along these lines.<sup>129</sup>

In such cases, cunning folk also offered two services few physicians would be willing to provide. Firstly, they would dispense protective charms, often derived from Latin prayers or Bible passages; according to Reginald Scot, wearing the first chapter of St John's Gospel around one's neck was considered particularly effective.<sup>130</sup> Secondly, the cunning man or woman would be willing to identify the witch responsible and prescribe appropriate counter-magic to break their spells. Cotta outlines some of the forms this could take: the 'casting of Witches into the water, Scratching, Beating, Pinching, and drawing of blood', the use of 'mumbled sacred or mysticall words', or 'the burning of bewitched cattell, or the burning of the dung or urine of such as are bewitched'.<sup>131</sup> The latter type of ritual was intended to produce a

---

<sup>127</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. K4.

<sup>128</sup> John Cotta, *The Triall of Witch-craft, Shewing the True and Right Methode of the Discovery* (London: George Purslowe for Samuel Rand, 1616) sig. K3v; *Short Discoverie*, sig. H2-K4.

<sup>129</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. H2, H3; Davies, *Popular Magic*, pp. 104-5.

<sup>130</sup> Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (New York: Dover, 1972) p. 154.

<sup>131</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. H3v; *Triall*, sig. O4v.

painful sympathetic effect in the witch responsible; similar methods involved burning thatch from the suspected witch's cottage, or a piece of the victim's clothing.<sup>132</sup>

Cunning folk were a matter of extreme concern for clerical demonologists during this period, most English witchcraft writers focussing on them at greater length than 'black' or malefic witches, on the grounds that they entrapped the souls of their clients rather than merely attacking their bodies. The Essex puritan minister George Gifford explained how the Devil 'worketh by his other sort of Witches, whome the people call cunning men and wise women to confirme all his matters, and by them teacheth many remedies, that so he may be sought unto and honored as God.'<sup>133</sup> Edward Poeton adopted a similar position, insisting that cunning folk could heal only through the assistance of Satan, who 'will be very industrious to be an instrument of bodily health...if in the interim; hee can (by any sleight or strategem) wreake, hurt or wounde the soule'.<sup>134</sup> Cotta, in his *Short Discoverie*, was slightly more equivocal, arguing that cunning folk were 'sometimes divellishly assisted', but 'sometimes onely superstitiously vaine'.<sup>135</sup> But both authors agreed with contemporary clerical authors that cunning folk constituted a plague, Cotta insisting that they were 'at this day swarming in this kingdom', and Poeton that 'this land even swarmeth in every countye and corner with white witches'.<sup>136</sup> While such claims are surely exaggerated, research on Elizabethan Essex has revealed that there was not a village in that county more than ten miles from the location of a known cunning man or woman.<sup>137</sup>

Keith Thomas ascribes the popularity of cunning folk primarily to 'the shortage of able physicians, particularly for the poorer classes'; certainly, they were generally far more affordable than physicians, usually charging little more than a few shillings for their services.<sup>138</sup> But like empirics and ordinary practitioners, cunning folk could also be perceived as providing a more tangible service to their patients than the physicians, which allowed them to appeal even to those who could afford the latter's fees. Such patients would normally turn to a cunning man or woman only after

---

<sup>132</sup> George Gifford, *A Dialogue concerning Witches and Witchcraftes* (London: Oxford University Press for the Shakespeare Association, 1931) sig. B-Bv, E3v; Davies, *Popular Magic*, pp. 108-9.

<sup>133</sup> Gifford, *Dialogue*, sig. A3.

<sup>134</sup> BL, Sloane 1954, ff. 166v, 169, 170.

<sup>135</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. K4.

<sup>136</sup> Cotta, *Triall*, sig. I2v; BL, Sloane 1954, f. 164v.

<sup>137</sup> Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England: A regional and comparative study* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1999) pp. 119-20; Davies, *Popular Magic*, pp. 67-8.

<sup>138</sup> Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Penguin, 1991) pp. 244-5, 296.

a physician had first been consulted, but had provided only a vague diagnosis and ineffective treatments. This would serve to stoke suspicions of witchcraft, leading the patient to the widely acknowledged experts in that field, who would provide them with a concrete diagnosis of such and prescribe a clear course of action towards dealing with the problem.<sup>139</sup>

Operating alongside the cunning folk were less sophisticated magical healers known as charmers or blessers, who would treat a wide range of natural conditions through the use of simple verse charms, healing objects or innate ability. Poeton describes there as being ‘many among us, who have charmes against the biting of mad dogs. The stinging of serpents. Bleeding at the nose. Blastings. Inflammations. Burnings with fyer. Agewes. toothache. Cramps. Stiches. prickings, rageings, akeings, swellings, hart burnings. flowings of the head &c’.<sup>140</sup> Most demonologists, and many subsequent historians, drew little distinction between charmers and cunning folk, resulting in what Owen Davies describes as ‘the most significant confusion in the history of popular magic.’<sup>141</sup> But Cotta made no such mistake, devoting a separate section of the *Short Discoverie* to charmers, or ‘Practisers by Spels’, noting that he spoke ‘not of enchanted spells, but of that superstitious babling, by tradition of idle words and sentences, which all that have sense, know to be voide of sense, as the other divellish.’ One charm commonly wrapped in silk and worn around the neck, according to Cotta, in Latin read ‘The divell digge out thine eyes, and fill up their holes with his dung.’<sup>142</sup> Most charmers made no charge for their services, respecting a tradition of gratuity.

Other magical practitioners claimed to heal simply by touching or stroking the sick party; most prominent among these of course was the monarch himself, whose touching to cure the King’s Evil - scrofula, and in common parlance various other conditions of the head, neck and eyes - was the one kind of magical healing that anti-quack authors had little choice but to indulge. According to Primerose, ‘the power of curing the Kings Evill, is by the blessing of God granted to the Kings of great Brittain, and France’; but he was anxious to stress that, contrary to the popular belief

---

<sup>139</sup> Davies, *Popular Magic*, pp. 104-5.

<sup>140</sup> BL, Sloane 1954, f. 173v.

<sup>141</sup> Davies, *Popular Magic*, p. 83.

<sup>142</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. H-H2.



that the royal touch was an innate gift of the monarch's own person, it was in fact 'wholly performed in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ' and 'that the aforesaid Kings on whom God hath bestowed that favour, have it upon a certain condition, nor is it derived unto their successors, unlesse they be lawfull heires, and abide in the Christian Faith.'<sup>143</sup>

But the King was not the only individual who claimed to be able to cure by touch alone. Primerose relates that 'of late I have heard of some, who reporting they are Seventh-Sonnes, do promise great matters about the healing of the Kings-Evill, which they professe to doe by touch alone, and so beguile the too credulous people'.<sup>144</sup> This may well be a reference to James Leverett, a gardener and supposed seventh son examined by the College of Physicians in 1637 at the behest of the Star Chamber. He claimed to have cured at least three hundred people, but was ultimately condemned by the college as 'an Impostor and a deceiever'. The seriousness with which Leverett's case was treated reflects the intense concern with which the authorities regarded this intrusion upon powers supposedly reserved to the monarch.<sup>145</sup> Another stroker is described by Poeton, 'that fidlers seventh son; surnamed (by some) the yong prophet of Godlyman' [Godalming]; he had apparently been consulted by, among many others, a woman 'with an ulcer in her face' which 'hee did onely stroke with his hand...and so shee was recovered.' But, Poeton argued, 'our young prophet, hath not so much as one worde out of gods booke, to warrant either his profession or practice', and therefore he 'must necessarily doe it by the help of the devill.'<sup>146</sup>

A more sophisticated form of occult healing was offered by the astrologers, although at the popular level many such practitioners probably had little knowledge of the complex theoretical basis of their art. These offered a service similar to that of the cunning folk, and indeed many cunning folk themselves drew on astrological methods, and treated the 'planet-struck' in much the same way as they did the bewitched.<sup>147</sup> But other astrologers practised on the basis of genuine knowledge; the most prominent, such as Simon Forman and William Lilly, operating large practices

---

<sup>143</sup> Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. Ff6-Ff7; Thomas, *Religion*, pp. 227-31.

<sup>144</sup> Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. Ff4v.

<sup>145</sup> Goodall, *Royal College of Physicians*, sig. Lll3v-Nnn4; Thomas, *Religion*, pp. 237-8.

<sup>146</sup> BL, Sloane 1954, ff. 190-192v.

<sup>147</sup> Thomas, *Religion*, pp. 358-60, 757-9.

in or around London. They generally offered a wide range of services, advising clients on such topics as relationships, business affairs, lost property, and missing persons; but medicine too represented a ‘major department of the astrologers’ art’.<sup>148</sup>

Genuine astrology offered considerable intellectual appeal and respectability, and many of the leading astrologers were successful in attracting large numbers of patients from amongst the gentry and aristocracy; more than one-sixth of Lilly’s clientele may have belonged to the gentry, while around one-quarter of the priest-physician and astrologer Richard Napier’s patients were drawn from the aristocracy and higher gentry alone.<sup>149</sup> The ability of the astrologers to appeal to such patients, together with their intellectual pretensions, marked them out as serious rivals to the physicians; it is therefore unsurprising that, despite their indifference towards folk-magical healers, the college vigorously pursued astrologers such as Forman and John Evans. They attempted to depict such practitioners as ignorant and laughable: Forman, we are told, when he was examined on physic and astrology ‘answered so absurdly and ridiculously, that it caused great mirth and sport amongst the Auditors’.<sup>150</sup> But this assessment sits awkwardly alongside the formidable scholarship displayed in Forman’s own papers; indeed, he seems to have deliberately downplayed his own learning before the censors. This would be in keeping with the scornful attitude which he took towards the college, before which he revelled in an apparently unschooled approach to medicine.<sup>151</sup>

Astrological medicine was based on the assumption that the influence of the stars interacted with the humours of the body, and that different regions of the heavens influenced particular parts of the body. The astrological doctor would typically begin a consultation by establishing the patient’s identity, age, where he or she lived and, most importantly, the time of ‘decumbiture’, when they first fell sick. These details would then be used to calculate a horoscope of the disease, using the hour of decumbiture in the same way as the hour of birth would be used in calculating a nativity. By establishing how the patient’s symptoms corresponded with the movement of the stars and observing those stars’ forthcoming movements, the

---

<sup>148</sup> Thomas, *Religion*, p. 375.

<sup>149</sup> Jonathan Andrews, ‘Napier, Richard (1559-1634)’, *ODNB*, 40, pp. 181-3. p. 181; Thomas, *Religion*, p. 379.

<sup>150</sup> Goodall, *Royal College of Physicians*, sig. Xx.

<sup>151</sup> Kassell, *Medicine & Magic*, pp. 76-8.

astrologer could offer a prognosis and prescribe appropriate remedies. These tended to be fairly orthodox in nature, and similar to those of the regular physicians, although they could also include magical amulets, folk remedies or even exorcism.<sup>152</sup> Many astrologers also dispensed medical advice - and advertised their services - through their almanacs. These often included general advice on medical matters, as well as more specific instructions on the appropriate days to undergo procedures such as bloodletting or purging; it has indeed been argued that the proliferation of such works in Tudor and Stuart England played an even more important role in shaping the public's beliefs about medicine than the vernacular medical literature discussed above.<sup>153</sup>

While astrology was by no means immune to scepticism during this period, this tended to be heavily qualified, and focussed on specific practices or beliefs rather than on the basic validity of the concept; while John Calvin attacked judicial astrology, divination of the future which he saw as incompatible with free will, he was happy to accept 'natural astrology', within which he included most medical astrology. William Perkins likewise rejected the possibility of accurate prognostication, attacking a group of famous almanac writers in print as the 'Foure Great Lyers', but nevertheless fully accepted that the stars exerted influence upon terrestrial affairs.<sup>154</sup>

A similarly limited scepticism tends to characterise the works of anti-quack authors, which is perhaps unsurprising given that many learned physicians themselves continued to make extensive use of astrology during this period; indeed John Securis, as has been noted, was himself an almanac writer. Even John Cotta did not reject the art altogether, providing 'it is not mixed, or intermeddleth with Magicke'; he held to the then widespread view of astrology as an essentially natural form of divination.<sup>155</sup> 'No man can deny the heavens as generall and superiour causes to have power over all things created under heaven', he argued, and this held true for medical matters where 'Evill and maligne constellations beget plagues, pestilences, and other epidemiall

---

<sup>152</sup> Chapman, 'Astrological medicine', pp. 288-291; Michael MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam: Madness, anxiety, and healing in seventeenth-century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1981) pp. 26-8.

<sup>153</sup> Louise Hill Curth, *English almanacs, astrology & popular medicine: 1550-1700* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007) pp. 7-8, 121-2.

<sup>154</sup> William Perkins, *Foure Great Lyers, Striving who shall win the silver Whetstone* (London: Robert Waldegrave, 1585); Chapman, 'Astrological medicine', pp. 279-81.

<sup>155</sup> Cotta, *Triall*, sig. I.

contagions'.<sup>156</sup> But as 'generall causes', he added, the heavens 'produce not particular effects', and 'have no certaine or absolute power over the diseased'; it was therefore for the physician, perhaps under the advice of a 'true' astrologer, to consider the ever varying effects of the stars upon the bodies of his patients.<sup>157</sup> 'I cannot but deteste', he added, 'the shamelesse dayly cousenage and imposture, heathenishly practised by many, under the colour, pretext and false shadowes of true Astronomy.'<sup>158</sup> Primerose likewise acknowledged that the movement of the stars could affect the body, but stressed it 'is only a procatartick and universall cause, which moves and stirs up the internall causes'; therefore 'the figments of the Astrologers, touching the dominion of the signes over all the parts of the body, are altogether to be rejected as faigned fables.'<sup>159</sup>

## V

Alongside astrology, another 'occult' art that carried considerable intellectual appeal, and continued to occupy an important place within the world of early Stuart medicine, was alchemy. The production of medicines had always been a key aspect of the alchemist's art, as developed by such medieval luminaries as Ramon Llull and Arnaldus de Villa Nova. Their experiments centred on the pursuit of 'the Philosopher's Stone and Elixir of Life; of which potion the efficacy is so certain and wonderful, that by it all infirmities whatsoever are easily curable, human life is prolonged to its natural limit, and man wonderfully preserved in health'. By the beginning of our period, alchemical medicine was achieving its 'full efflorescence', in the words of Charles Webster, with the arrival of Paracelsian medical philosophy.<sup>160</sup>

The radical ideas and treatments associated with the great Swiss chemist and reformer Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombast von Hohenheim, better known as Paracelsus (1493-1541), were the source of a controversy raging across most of Europe during this period; the 'innumerable dissensions amongst the learned' over

---

<sup>156</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. O-Ov.

<sup>157</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. Ov-O2v. His views here are similar to those of Francis Bacon (Chapman, 'Astrological medicine', p. 283).

<sup>158</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. O3.

<sup>159</sup> Primerose, *Popular Erroures*, sig. R5v, R7v.

<sup>160</sup> Webster, 'Alchemical and Paracelsian medicine', pp. 302-3. The first quote is from a petition presented to Henry VI.

such issues, Cotta complained, ‘burthen the whole world’.<sup>161</sup> Paracelsus and those of his more thoroughgoing followers emphatically rejected the entire edifice of Galenic medicine and traditional humoral pathology, along with the Aristotelian natural philosophy upon which they were based, as products of heathen impiety.<sup>162</sup> Instead, they sought to replace these with what they regarded as a specifically Christian form of healing, conceiving of disease and medicine in a highly spiritual manner drawing heavily on alchemical, neo-Platonic and hermetic ideas. Instead of an internal imbalance, they saw disease as the product of specific external causes, for which they tended to prefer chemically-prepared remedies to the traditional herbal treatments of the Galenists. Rejecting likewise the Galenist belief that disease was cured by the application of contrary qualities, Paracelsians prescribed these remedies on the assumption that like cured like.<sup>163</sup>

Charles Webster has demonstrated that the works of Paracelsus were widely disseminated in England by the end of the sixteenth century, the first general English defence of the new medical philosophy being published in 1585.<sup>164</sup> Authors such as Primerose tended to depict those who adopted such ideas as a distinct ‘Paracelsian Sect’, but in fact their appeal spilled across the medical occupations. A leading role was played in their promotion by prominent surgeons such as William Clowes and John Banister. They were also taken up enthusiastically by priest-physicians such as Thomas Tymme and John Evans, for whom Paracelsus was no less than an ‘Orientall Star of Naturall, Spagiricall, and Magneticall light and knowledge’.<sup>165</sup> They even found some advocates amongst the fellows of the College of Physicians, such as Thomas Penny and the great naturalist Thomas Mouffet, although these men’s relations with the college’s leadership tended to be troubled, Mouffet for example reacting angrily when the college initially overlooked him for a promised

---

<sup>161</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. Mv.

<sup>162</sup> Paul H. Kocher, *Science and Religion in Elizabethan England* (New York: Octagon, 1969) pp. 250-3.

<sup>163</sup> Ole Peter Grell, ‘Medicine and religion in sixteenth-century Europe’, in Elmer (ed.), *The Healing Arts*, pp. 84-107. pp. 94-5.

<sup>164</sup> Charles Webster, ‘Alchemical and Paracelsian medicine’, in Webster (ed.), *Health, medicine, and mortality*, pp. 301-334; R[ichard] B[ostocke], *The difference betwene the auncient physicke and the latter physicke* (London: Robert Walley, 1585).

<sup>165</sup> Evans, *Universall Medicine*, sig. A4v.

candidateship in 1584 and implying that this may have been the result of papist skullduggery.<sup>166</sup>

But no such sympathy towards Paracelsus is to be found in the anti-quack literature of the period. Francis Herring fulminated against ‘that brain-sicke Germaine, that notorious Sophister, and Impostor of the World’, marvelling at ‘how any man of wisdom and modestie’ could be taken in by the ‘incredible insolencie and impudencie, the intollerable vanitie and follie, the ridiculous and childish crakings and vantings’ to be found within his work.<sup>167</sup> This was an assessment strongly influenced by the work of Thomas Erastus, ‘the great Antagonist of the Paracelsian Sect’ as Primerose describes him, who characterised Paracelsus as an ignorant, deluded drunkard, a heretic and a demonic magician, not to mention a ‘grunting swine’.<sup>168</sup> Similar views of Paracelsus’s character recur in the work of Primerose himself, as well as in those of James Hart and Edward Poeton.<sup>169</sup>

However, for all their loathing of Paracelsus and their intense medical conservatism, these authors did not altogether reject chemical medicine, which Primerose anxiously insisted ‘was not at first invented by Paracelsus, but was practised many ages before him’.<sup>170</sup> Cotta condemned those who altogether dismissed such remedies ‘as damned and hellish poisons’, pointing to the ‘ingenuous spirit’ of Galen, who was always open to new remedies.<sup>171</sup> This was echoed by Hart, who insisted that of Paracelsus’s ‘wholesome and approved chemical remedies either of his own invention, or collected from other men, I am so farre from disallowing them, that being discreetly used, I doubt not that but that they may and doe produce very laudbale [sic.] and desired effects’.<sup>172</sup> Primerose likewise insisted that ‘chymicall remedies ought not to be neglected, being administred by a prudent Physician’, and stressed their compatibility with Galenism.<sup>173</sup> In this respect, all three men’s thoughts

<sup>166</sup> Webster, ‘Alchemical and Paracelsian medicine’, pp. 321-3, 327-9; V. H. Houliston, ‘Sleepers Awake: Thomas Moffet’s Challenge to the College of Physicians of London, 1584’, *Medical History*, 33 (1989) 235-246. p. 240.

<sup>167</sup> Francis Herring, *A Modest Defence of the caveat given to the wearers of impoisoned Amulets, as Preservatives from the Plague* (London: Arnold Hatfield for William Jones, 1604) sig. F4; ‘discovery of certaine Stategems’, sig. F2v.

<sup>168</sup> Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. O6v; Walter Pagel, *Paracelsus: An Introduction to Philosophical Medicine in the Era of the Renaissance* (Basel: S. Karger, 1958) pp. 311-333. Quote at p. 314.

<sup>169</sup> Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. Ffv-Ff2, Gg5v, Dd4; Hart, *Diet*, sig. Hhh2v; Sloane 1954, f. 189.

<sup>170</sup> Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. D4v.

<sup>171</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. Mv.

<sup>172</sup> Hart, *Diet*, sig. Hhh3.

<sup>173</sup> Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. O6, D4v-5.

reflected the ‘Paracelsian compromise’ which took hold during this period, whereby the leadership of the College of Physicians accepted many of the chemical remedies derived from Paracelsian thinking; this received its classic expression in the *Pharmacopeia Londinensis* issued by the College in 1618, with the Paracelsian royal physician Theodore Turquet de Mayerne playing a substantial role in its production.<sup>174</sup> The *Pharmacopeia* included more than one hundred chemical remedies, some of them directly Paracelsian in derivation.

This compromise allowed England to avoid the worst extremes of the fierce disputes over Paracelsus’s ideas that had riven many of the continent’s medical faculties over the preceding decades, at least until the 1640s. But it did not remove the bitter theoretical differences that underlay them, and the college itself made no concession to the philosophical ideas implicit in the new remedies it accepted. Neither, unsurprisingly, did the anti-quack authors. Primerose stressed that ‘the Galenists doe justly refuse the doctrine of Paracelsus’, an ‘illiterate man’ who was ‘voyd of reason’, and whose approach to medicine ‘spares neither spirits, nor words, nor conjuring tricks’. Hart likewise condemns the Paracelsians’ ‘mystical, miraculous, if not cacomagicall manner of curing’.<sup>175</sup>

It is not difficult to see why these authors objected so strongly to Paracelsianism as a philosophical system. For as Primerose notes, Paracelsus did not just seek to modify or refine current medical practice, but ‘he endeavors to overturn Galens method of physick, and brings in a new Physiologie of his owne...and a new method of curing’.<sup>176</sup> He and his more thoroughgoing followers’ complete rejection of Galenism and Aristotelianism challenged the very cornerstone of the professional identity of the traditional humanist physicians, the foundation of whose practice, at least in theory, lay in their knowledge of the Galenic corpus.

An equally serious threat was presented by the Paracelsian determination to offer a specifically Christian form of healing. In contrast to the Galenist focus on a heathen literary corpus, Paracelsians emphasised the scriptures as a source of knowledge of nature, together with direct study of God’s creation itself. They

---

<sup>174</sup> Allen G. Debus, *The Chemical Philosophy: Paracelsian Science and Medicine in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, 2 vols (New York: Neale Watson, 1977) 1, pp. 186-91.

<sup>175</sup> Primerose, *Antimoniall Cup*, sig. C2v, C3v, *Popular Erroures*, sig. D5 [my emphasis]; Hart, *Diet*, sig. Hhh2v.

<sup>176</sup> Primerose, *Popular Erroures*, sig. D5.

envisaged the ability to heal as essentially a divine gift with which pious practitioners were directly infused by God; this was envisaged not as a new approach, but a return to the medicine of the ancient Israelites.<sup>177</sup> This was contrasted with the healing of the Galenists which, Richard Bostocke declared, ‘is not founded upon the rule of Gods worde, but upon the authoritie of men reprobate of God’, led by Galen who ‘in his workes hath blasphemed of set purpose and by expresse wordes.’<sup>178</sup> For Galenic physicians seeking to present themselves as divinely appointed maintainers of God’s creation, whose profession ‘cometh nearer unto God in goodnesse and mercie’ than any other, and whose ‘wisdomme more inwardly converseth with the hidden and secret workes of God and nature’, this obviously struck at an extremely sore point.<sup>179</sup> Robert Wittie went so far as to claim that Galen, though ‘indeed no Christian’, had heard report of the healing miracles of the apostles and ‘fell into Admiration, and made a Voyage towards Judaea to know the certainty of it by his own view, but as God would have it died by the way’.<sup>180</sup>

## VI

The new alliance between religion and medicine advocated by Paracelsus gave his ideas obvious appeal to one major group of practitioners who have yet to be discussed, but who have already been identified as the chief target of the early Stuart authors: priest-physicians. These men and their practices spilled right across the spectrum of professional, empirical, charitable and occult medicine, and their numbers were such that they have been described as constituting a ‘dominant group in the medical profession’ during this period.<sup>181</sup> Most of the works under discussion here certainly support this impression: ‘The grand and most common offenders in those kinds before remembred, and in these dayes,’ Cotta claimed, ‘are divers Astrologers, but especially Ecclesiasticall persons, Vicars and Parsons, who now overflow this kingdome’.<sup>182</sup> For Hart they were ‘the ringleaders and cheife maintainers of such disorder’, while Primerose complained that ‘Among men of Ecclesiasticall

---

<sup>177</sup> Elmer, ‘Medicine, religion and the puritan revolution’, p. 16; Webster, ‘Alchemical and Paracelsian medicine’, p. 330.

<sup>178</sup> Bostocke, *difference betwene the auncient phisicke...and the latter*, sig. Biv-Bii.

<sup>179</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. Rv.

<sup>180</sup> Robert Wittie, *Scarbroughs Spagyricall Anatomizer dissected* (London: B. G. for Nath. Brooke, 1672) sig. B7-B7v.

<sup>181</sup> Pelling and Webster, ‘Medical Practitioners’, p. 199.

<sup>182</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. M3v.



order...there are many that do seriously, and greedily, and with much gain to themselves, undertake the cure not of souls only, but of bodies likewise'.<sup>183</sup> Both the latter two authors produced treatises specifically devoted to attacking such practitioners, Hart's manuscript 'Discourse of the lawlesse intrusion of Parsons & Vicars upon the profession of Phisicke' critiqued priest-physicians in general, while Primerose's *Antimoniall Cup twice cast* focused on the practice of one prominent clerical practitioner, John Evans.

The association between medicine and the clergy in early modern England was as close as it was long standing. During the middle ages, as Ole Peter Grell describes, the church had 'held a virtual monopoly on learned medicine', which had been centred primarily on the monasteries.<sup>184</sup> One of sixteenth-century England's most popular vernacular medical works, *The treasury of healthe*, was attributed to Pope John XXI, himself a physician prior to his accession.<sup>185</sup> Even Thomas Linacre, the chief founder of the College of Physicians of London, had been in holy orders. Many of those preparing for a career in the church simultaneously pursued medical studies, often being licensed to practice by their universities on this basis. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the episcopal authorities were also willing to licence clergymen for practice; it is worth noting that Richard Napier, who was to be singled out by John Cotta and James Hart as the very epitome of quackery, was himself licensed to practice perfectly legitimately.<sup>186</sup> The theoretical knowledge readily available to such men was reinforced with first-hand experience of dealing with the afflicted, through the visitations they were expected to make to the sick-beds of their parishioners once they assumed their parochial duties.

For some intending clergymen, particularly those of a puritan persuasion, medicine offered an alternative career upon which to fall back in times of religious persecution; perhaps the most prominent example of this was provided by John Burges, the famous nonconformist preacher who obtained an MD and set up in medical practice during his long period of deprivation. However, other intending

---

<sup>183</sup> BL, C 54. b. 6 (2), f. 1; Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. B8v.

<sup>184</sup> Ole Peter Grell, 'Medicine and Religion in Sixteenth-Century Europe', in Peter Elmer (ed.), *The Healing Arts: Health, Disease and Society in Europe 1500-1800* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004) pp. 84-107. p. 85.

<sup>185</sup> Slack, 'Mirrors of Health', p. 251; Darrel W. Amundsen, 'Medieval Canon Law on Medical and Surgical Practice by the Clergy', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 52 (1978) 22-44. p. 38.

<sup>186</sup> Beier, *Sufferers and Healers*, p. 11.

ministers studied medicine with the specific intention of combining the treatment of the sick of their parish, and sometimes beyond, with their pastoral duties. Most of these seem to have regarded it as a perfectly natural extension of the clerical function: ‘a generalitie in humane learning, beseemeth a Divine: and of all Sciences none more sutable to profession than Physick’, argued Thomas Tymme, citing the healing miracles of Christ and the apostles and St Luke’s background as a physician; ‘it cannot be but a commendable labour, & a charitable worke in whomsoever, to seeke by good means to preserve life.’<sup>187</sup> Nicholas Gyer, another minister who published on medical matters, stressed that both ‘the Divine and the Phisition work upon one subject, they assemble themselves in one place, vz. the chamber of the sick, they both visite and busie themselves about the sick to doe him good, he is no longer Homo but Cadaver if there bee once a separation of the soule from the bodie.’<sup>188</sup> Similarly, Simon Harward argued that ‘the conjunction betwixt the body and soule being so neare, and the sympathy so great’, he could ‘see no cause but that he which studieth Divinity, may lawfully now and then so bestow a spare houre in viewing of the remedies ordayned by God for mans infirmitie’.<sup>189</sup>

But the two most celebrated advocates for the practice of medicine by the clergy were Robert Burton and George Herbert. Burton dismissed the complaints of physicians, claiming that he knew ‘many of them which have taken orders in hope of a Benefice’, and asking ‘why may not a melancholy Divine, that can get nothing but by Simony, professe Physicke?’. Indeed, he added, a ‘good Divine either is or ought to be a good Physitian, a Spirituall Physitian at least.’<sup>190</sup> Similarly, Herbert’s model country parson would both treat the poor of his parish and teach them simple remedies: ‘if there be any of his flock sick, hee is their Physician’.<sup>191</sup> ‘Yet is it easie’, Herbert added, ‘for any Scholer to attaine to such a measure of Phisick, as may be of

---

<sup>187</sup> Joseph Du Chesne, *The Practise of Chymicall, and Hermeticall Physicke, for the preservation of health*, translated by Thomas Tymme (London: Thomas Creede, 1605) sig. \*2.

<sup>188</sup> Nicholas Gyer, *The English Phlebotomy: Or, Method and way of healing by letting of blood* (London: Andrew Mansell, 1592) sig. A7.

<sup>189</sup> Simon Harward, *Harwards Phlebotomy: Or, A Treatise of letting of Bloud* (London: F. Kingston for Simon Waterson, 1601) sig. A6v-A7.

<sup>190</sup> Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (Oxford: John Lichfield and James Short for Henry Cripps, 1621) sig. a9v.

<sup>191</sup> George Herbert, ‘A Priest to the Temple’, in *Herbert’s Remains* (London: Timothy Garthwait, 1652) sig. D7, E12v.

much use to him both for himself, and others'; all they needed was to see one anatomy, own one herbal and read one book on physic, ideally by Fernel.<sup>192</sup>

The type of clerical healing advocated by Herbert was essentially charitable and domestic: 'though the Parson sets forward all Charitable deeds, yet he looks not in this point of Curing beyond his own Parish, except the person be so poor, that he is not able to reward the Phisicion'; he ought 'not to inroach on others Professions, but to live on his own.'<sup>193</sup> Many priest-physicians, however, did not observe any such restrictions. John Evans's pamphlet has already been described, while Richard Napier treated tens of thousands of patients from throughout the country, amassing a considerable fortune in the process.<sup>194</sup> The consensus among anti-quack authors was that priest-physicians were motivated by covetousness rather than charity: 'It is well knowne', according to Hart, 'that these men not only practise in their owne parishes, among their neibors and friends (the which were yet more tollerable) but they often buisy themselves most where sufficient Physitians are to bee found'. What was worse, some 'use yet a more base and dishonest custome of intruding themselves & offering their services to the gentry and people of best note'.<sup>195</sup>

Priest-physicians also came under fire for their tendency to draw heavily upon a range of heterodox practices. The use of judicial astrology seems to have been particularly widespread amongst their number; Napier's deployment of this art has already been described, while John Evans acted as tutor to the young William Lilly. Evans was also one of several ministers to publish almanacs, 'as though', Hart lamented, 'it were not enough to beat a man but they must bragg of it also'. John Vaux, the clerk of St Helen's, Auckland, went so far as to sell his almanacs at the communion table.<sup>196</sup>

Many priest-physicians also displayed a similar interest in alchemy, Paracelsianism and hermeticism. This is most obvious in Tymme's translation of the *Practise of Chymicall, and Hermeticall Physicke*, by the French royal physician and Paracelsian Joseph Du Chesne, also known as Quercetanus, and in the fulsome praise showered upon Paracelsus by Evans in his pamphlet. Evans defended his use of

<sup>192</sup> Herbert, 'Priest to the Temple', sig. F.

<sup>193</sup> Herbert, 'Priest to the Temple', sig. F2v-F3.

<sup>194</sup> MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam*, pp. 26, 32; Harley, 'James Hart of Northampton', p. 364.

<sup>195</sup> BL, C 54. b. 6, f. 7. See also Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. B8v; BL, Sloane 1954, ff. 154, 156v.

<sup>196</sup> Bernard Capp, *Astrology and the Popular Press: English Almanacs 1500-1800* (London: Faber & Faber, 1979) pp. 58, 143, 148; BL, C 54. b. 6, f. 12; Thomas, *Religion*, p. 382.

antimony, ‘by the consent and common opinion of all Hermetically Philosophers...the originall and beginning of all metals’ with specific reference to Paracelsus, and his antimonial cups represent a classic example of the kind of chemical panacea promoted by the Paracelsians.<sup>197</sup> The same can be said of *aurum potable*, dispensed by the Northamptonshire priest-physician John Markes in accordance with a formula provided by the Paracelsian physician Francis Anthony.

However, the practice with which priest-physicians seem to have been most closely associated was less overtly esoteric. This was uroscopy: diagnosis and prognostication on the basis of a visual examination of a sample of the patient’s urine. This venerable diagnostic tool had been a staple of the medieval physician’s art, the man gazing into a urine flask becoming the iconic image of the medical profession. But during the sixteenth century, as humanist physicians turned away from medieval digests and towards newly-printed editions of the works of Galen himself, they found that nowhere did he endorse this practice alone as a sufficient means of diagnosis. By the end of the century, therefore, uroscopy had instead become emblematic of quackery.<sup>198</sup>

That is not to say that learned physicians had come to reject the technique altogether. But they now stressed that its usefulness was limited to certain conditions affecting those parts of the body through which the urine passed directly, such as the bladder and kidneys, and that even here it had the power to deceive: ‘urine is a strumpet, and will lye, and the best doctor of them all may be deceeived’, Poeton warned. To be of any use, therefore, the urine had to be seen while it was freshly passed, and considered within the context of the patient’s other symptoms and general constitution, on the basis of a full consultation.<sup>199</sup> But many practitioners were willing to diagnose and prescribe treatments for their patients by uroscopy alone, claiming by ‘sole and bare inspection of the urine’, as Hart described it, to ‘lay open the whole disease, together with the state and constitution of every part of the body’.<sup>200</sup> As a consequence of this, according to Poeton ‘our country Corydons, (with one une-

---

<sup>197</sup> Evans, *Universall Medicine*, sig. A5.

<sup>198</sup> Vivian Nutton, ‘Idle old trots, cobblers and costardmongers: Pieter van Foreest on quackery’, in Henriette A. Bosman-Jeglesma (ed.), *Petrus Forestus Medicus* (Amsterdam: Stichting AD & L, 1996) pp. 243-254. pp. 247-8.

<sup>199</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. O4v; Hart, *Anatomie*, sig. E3v, F4v; BL, Sloane 1954, f. 145, 144.

<sup>200</sup> Hart, *Anatomie*, sig. D2v.

animall consent) have caught it up for a custome, to carry their waters up and downe the country, to this or that cunning man, cunning woman, Quack, knave, or els to some potent Parson Pissprophet, from whom they expect no less than a Delphian oracle.’<sup>201</sup> What was worse, many uroscopists would not even demand to see the patient in person, diagnosing conditions using urine carried to them by a servant or family member of the afflicted individual.<sup>202</sup> As a consequence, many patients seem to have come to expect all practitioners, including physicians, to offer such a service, and if they failed to do so ‘every rude rustick will be ready to affront him to his face, and tell him in playne terms, that it seemes (to him) that hee is a man of small skill’.<sup>203</sup>

The abuse of uroscopy that they attributed to ‘piss-prophets’ was therefore a matter of extreme concern to learned critics of irregular practice. Hart’s *Anatomie of Urines* and *Arraignment of Urines* are both primarily devoted to critiquing it, as are Thomas Brian’s *Pisse-Prophet* and Edward Poeton’s manuscript treatise ‘The Urinall crackt in the carriage’. Cotta too deals with the practice at considerable length, while Primerose claimed that it ‘first gave occasion’ to his *Popular Errours*, being ‘the most Common Errour to bee refuted’.<sup>204</sup> Hart and Brian give the two most detailed accounts of the practice, the former describing and critiquing the diagnostic signs uroscopists claimed to read in the patient’s urine, relating mainly to its thickness, colour and contents. He dismisses the ‘inveterate opinion’ that different sections of the urine, once contained within a flask, corresponded to different parts of the body, and argues that every different colour of urine, even red or black, can indicate a range of conditions or result from perfect health, depending on the patient’s constitution.<sup>205</sup>

Brian fully endorsed Hart’s arguments on the deficiencies of uroscopy as a diagnostic tool, but he himself focused on the fraudulent tactics uroscopists used to cover for these deficiencies, apparently drawing on his own experiences as a reformed piss-prophet. In particular, he describes how those who bring the urine sample ‘are handled, deluded and made to shew how the sicke partie is affected, and yet to beleieve that the Doctour perceiveth the Disease by the Urine.’ This might be done by

---

<sup>201</sup> BL, Sloane 1954, f. 144v. Thomas Willis reported being confronted

<sup>202</sup> Hart, *Anatomie*, sig. D4v; BL, Sloane 1954, f. 147.

<sup>203</sup> BL, Sloane 1954, f. 145v. Thomas Willis reported being confronted with similar expectations in the 1650s: Harley, ‘Medical Metaphors’, p. 413.

<sup>204</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. O4-P3v; Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. F3v.

<sup>205</sup> Hart, *Anatomie*, Iv-I2, K3v-N4.

sending a servant or associate out to tell the ‘pisse-messenger’ that the doctor was not yet able to see him or her, and then striking up a conversation, ‘getting out of them all things necessary to the judging of the disease’, which would then be passed on to the doctor prior to the consultation; similar deceptions were commonly practised by cunning folk.<sup>206</sup> A particular source of annoyance amongst learned critics was the claim many uroscopists made to be able to discern whether a woman was pregnant, and to predict the sex of the child; the latter claim was particularly absurd, according to Primerose, given that ‘no man this day is living, or ever was, that could certainly know a beasts urine from a mans.’ Brian describes how some would even prescribe pregnant women an ‘electuary, made from quinces’ that they claimed ‘will make her bring forth the more wise and understanding child’.<sup>207</sup>

Brian attributed the appeal of uroscopists largely to price: ‘That covetousnesse in the common people, to save their money...causes them to send their waters likewise unto Physicians’.<sup>208</sup> Poeton too concedes that their fees were considerably lower than those of consulting physicians, which is hardly surprising given that they could treat far more patients in a shorter time.<sup>209</sup> But, at least in the case of priest-physicians, fees might be further ameliorated by the practitioner’s sense of charitable duty; Napier’s fees seem to have been considerably lower than those of most regular physicians, and he would often forgo them for the poor.<sup>210</sup> And as has been noted, diagnosis on the basis of uroscopy also offered patients a high degree of anonymity, given that they did not necessarily even need to be present at the consultation.

The deployment of uroscopy by priest-physicians is confirmed by the astrologer George Atwel, who sympathetically described how Napier, to whom he had ‘often been for physick...continually used both the Urine and erected a figure also.’ However, Atwel goes on to relate Napier’s opinion that ‘where his figure deceived him once, the Urine did it ten times...the Urine would not shew many things that the

---

<sup>206</sup> Brian, *Pisse-Prophet*, sig. A3-A3v, B, G4-G5; Davies, *Popular Magic*, p. 114.

<sup>207</sup> Hart, *Anatomie*, sig. G3-G4v; Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. F8v-G3; Brian, *Pisse-Prophet*, sig. D8-E. This supposed property of quinces is further discussed by Laurent Joubert: *Popular Errors*, trans. Gregory David de Rocher (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1989) pp. 162-4.

<sup>208</sup> Brian, *Pisse-Prophet*, G8-G8v.

<sup>209</sup> BL, Sloane 1954, f. 153v.

<sup>210</sup> MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam*, p. 32; ODNB, p. 181.

figure would, as about women with child'; this may suggest that priest-physicians were not quite as uncritical in their use of uroscopy as their opponents maintained.<sup>211</sup>

It should also be stressed that the practice of diagnosing on the sole basis of uroscopy was by no means limited to priest-physicians. Many empirics and ordinary practitioners continued to use it throughout this period and beyond, a major controversy erupting over the use of the technique by the London-based German quack Theodor Myersbach as late as the 1770s.<sup>212</sup> Cunning folk, too, made extensive use of this technique, while many astrological doctors would resolve horary questions on the sight of their patient's urine, interpreting the heavens at the moment either when it was passed or when it was brought into the consulting room.<sup>213</sup> And despite its increasing association with quackery, and the fact that it was forbidden by the College of Physicians as 'a ridiculous and foolish thing' fit only for 'Witches and Conjurers', many regular physicians themselves continued to offer diagnoses solely on the basis of uroscopy.<sup>214</sup> Baldwin Hamey the younger, who was to hold multiple offices in the College during the mid-seventeenth century, initially struggled to establish his practice in London until he diagnosed the daughter of Mary Peyton on the basis of a sample of her urine; he did not see the patient, although her mother did relate her symptoms to him. She soon recovered and Peyton's testimony proved the making of Hamey's practice.<sup>215</sup> Brian confirms that 'Physicians (the more too blame they) have intimated and pretended this knowledge'; indeed, it is often his fellow physicians, rather than any irregular practitioners, who seem to be the chief targets of his *Pisse-Prophet*.<sup>216</sup>

For most of the authors from this period, however, it was priest-physicians who were the worst abusers of uroscopy; Hart identifies them as 'the chiefe upholders & maintainers of this base Uromancie so much now a dayes admired', while Poeton describes them as 'the maine props, of that pernicious practice of pisportage'.<sup>217</sup> The intense concern these authors expressed over uroscopy can therefore be seen as

---

<sup>211</sup> George Atwel, *An Apology, Or, Defence of the Divine Art of Natural Astrologie* (London: Vincent Wing for Samuel Speed, 1660) sig. D5v-D6.

<sup>212</sup> Porter, *Quacks*, pp. 180-192.

<sup>213</sup> Thomas, *Religion*, p. 225.

<sup>214</sup> Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. Hv.

<sup>215</sup> Cook, *Decline*, p. 53.

<sup>216</sup> Brian, *Pisse-Prophet*, sig. A6.

<sup>217</sup> BL, C 54. b. 6, f. 1v; Sloane 1954, f. 157; see also Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. F6v.

combining with their direct attacks upon priest-physicians, and their increased concern over subjects such as judicial astrology, to form a sustained attack on the practice of medicine by the clergy which forms the core of their works. This represented a sharp break with earlier authors who made no mention of priest-physicians whatsoever; Eleazar Duncon briefly critiqued uroscopy, but made no reference to its use by clergymen.<sup>218</sup>

At first glance, however, the concern expressed by the later authors may seem consistent with the professed outlook, if not necessarily the prosecutorial practice, of the College of Physicians, which barred clergymen from membership and disapproved of the willingness of the universities to grant medical licences to those studying for the ministry. Such an impression would, however, be misleading. Not only was the college seemingly reluctant to actively pursue priest-physicians, but their definition of what actually constituted a priest-physician, and the nature of their opposition to such practitioners, differed significantly from that of most of the anti-quack authors. The college's general view was that once an individual entered the church, they permanently and irrevocably acquired clerical status; hence its refusal to licence Burges, despite the fact that he had been deprived seven years earlier. It therefore took an absolute view of ordination that Margaret Pelling describes as 'Catholic in content if not in intention.' William Birken sees this approach as reflecting a further attempt to reinforce the boundaries of the medical profession by requiring a total, exclusive dedication to it, and seeking to eradicate the historical overlap with the clergy epitomised by no less a figure than Thomas Linacre.<sup>219</sup> The college was therefore concerned with the professional challenge posed by priest-physicians; whether or not the individual practitioners actually had any pastoral responsibilities at the time of their application was irrelevant.

However, when we turn back to the early Stuart literature, it becomes clear that most of its authors, for all their particular loathing of priest-physicians, actually took a more flexible view of ordination than the college. Hart argued that it was 'unreasonable' that those who had trained for the clergy but showed sufficiency in medical practice, 'should be debarred from doing good', providing 'they first resigne

---

<sup>218</sup> Duncon, *Copy of A Letter*, sig. F3-F4.

<sup>219</sup> Pelling, *Medical Conflicts*, pp. 155, 322-3; Birken, 'Royal College of Physicians'. p. 53.



their liveings and charges to those that will afford them better attendance.<sup>220</sup> Cotta likewise focussed his objections to priest-physicians on their ‘alienation of their owne proper offices and duties...by the necessarie coincidence oft times of both callings requiring them at the same moment in distant places’.<sup>221</sup> Poeton too emphasised priest-physicians’ ‘greate boldenes’ in attempting ‘the discharge of so many dueties, as these two misticall callings doe require’, which displayed the ‘slender regarde they have of those poore sheep, which Christ hath committed to their charge.’<sup>222</sup> Primerose maintained that physic could not ‘with a safe conscience be exercised by any Divine *who hath the cure of soules*’.<sup>223</sup> Among these authors, only Brian seems to have held to the college’s view that ‘silenced Ministers’, without pastoral duties, should be just as ineligible to practise physic as those in possession of a benefice.<sup>224</sup>

Most of the early Stuart authors therefore focussed their attack on the *simultaneous* practising of medicine and divinity. This attack remained partly professional in nature, Hart bemoaning the ‘lawlesse intrusion upon other mens right’ of which those who undertook this dual vocation were guilty. But an even greater emphasis was placed on religious objections, and the pastoral negligence and breach of the clerical vocation, ‘the alienation & neglecting of their owne callings’, that it involved.<sup>225</sup> This, together with their increased focus on occult practitioners and their greater emphasis on the divine nature of the physician’s calling, heralded a shift away from the more narrowly professional concerns of both the earlier authors and the College of Physicians.

Beginning with Cotta’s *Short Discoverie*, a new generation of anti-quack authors put forward a critique of irregular medical practice that was far more pointedly religious in character, and that purported to centre on religious objections. This immediately raises two questions: why did such a shift occur, and how far were these religious objections sincere, rather than a mere cover for the kind of professional concerns apparent in the work of their predecessors and the activities of the College of Physicians? In order to address these questions, it is first necessary to focus more closely on the two authors who first developed this new strain of anti-quack thought:

---

<sup>220</sup> BL, C 54. b. 6, f. 10v.

<sup>221</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. M3v.

<sup>222</sup> BL, Sloane 1954, f. 155.

<sup>223</sup> Primerose, *Popular Erroures*, sig. C3 [my emphasis].

<sup>224</sup> Brian, *Pisse-Prophet*, sig. F2.

<sup>225</sup> BL, C 54. b. 6, f. 1v.

John Cotta and James Hart. Their arguments need to be viewed not just within the context of the professional concerns of physicians in general, but also within that of the dramatic religious developments going on during this period within their home diocese of Peterborough.

John Cotta, James Hart and the Diocese of Peterborough

Of all the anti-quack works from the early Stuart period, John Cotta's *A Short Discoverie of the Unobserved Dangers of severall sorts of ignorant and unconsiderate Practisers of Physicke in England* has perhaps received the most attention from historians, who have tended to regard its as a typical, indeed perhaps archetypal example of an early modern assault on irregular medical practice from the perspective of a learned, professional physician.<sup>1</sup> While in part this probably reflects Cotta's subsequent fame as a demonological writer, it is also a testament both to the seemingly wide-ranging nature of his critique, and to his relentless professional orthodoxy. The latter quality is even more evident in the work of James Hart, identified along with Cotta by Peter Elmer as 'one of the most outspoken defenders of medical privilege and orthodoxy' in seventeenth-century England, although still one whose work 'was fairly typical of the conservatism of the medical profession in general'.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, as I noted in my introduction, the religious bases and potential religious purposes of these two authors' arguments have not gone unnoticed by recent historians.<sup>3</sup> However, the depth to which they have been explored is limited and, in particular, little attempt has been made to place them within the context of contemporary religious developments in the diocese of Peterborough, within which both Cotta and Hart's home town of Northampton was located. The following chapter will seek to go some way towards addressing this issue, arguing that these authors' critiques of irregular medical practice can be seen, in considerable part, as a response to the activities of the diocesan authorities; as such, they represent a significant break with earlier anti-quack literature, which was to prove profoundly influential upon later authors as the religious policies pioneered in Peterborough were implemented at the national level during the 1630s.

---

<sup>1</sup> Pettigrew, 'John Cotta's *Short Discoverie*'; Cook, 'Good Advice', pp. 18-19; Wear, *Knowledge and Practice*, p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> Elmer, 'Medicine, religion and the puritan revolution', p. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Harley, 'James Hart of Northampton'; Elmer, 'Medicine, religion and the puritan revolution', p. 15; Wear, *Knowledge and Practice*, p. 33.

## I

John Cotta was born in Coventry at some point during the early 1570s; Elmer suggests 1575, but Cotta's claim in the *Short Discoverie*, published in 1612, to have lived 'above 40. yeares' would suggest a date of no later than 1572. Cotta goes on to claim that he had 'now twenty yeares bene an understanding observer and partaker of divers and different medicinall practise', suggesting that by the time he graduated BA from Trinity College, Cambridge in 1593 he was already pursuing medical studies.<sup>4</sup> He gained his MA from Corpus Christi College, Cambridge in 1596, after which he initially seems to have returned to the town of his birth, describing himself as 'being present' when 'a child of one M. Barker of Coventry was afflicted' in 1598. Todd H. J. Pettigrew has suggested that during this period Cotta may have been observing cases with his father Peter, himself a prosperous physician, which seems plausible; as we have seen, aspiring physicians often acquired the practical skills they required by working alongside an experienced practitioner.<sup>5</sup> However, Cotta had already been operating his own practice in Northampton for some time when he received his MD, also from Corpus Christi, in 1604, describing in the *Short Discoverie* an incident from 1600 in which a shoemaker of the town 'falling dangerously sick, called my counsell together with an Empericke'.<sup>6</sup>

Like Coventry itself, Northampton was at this time a puritan stronghold, and Cotta seems to have quickly become active within the godly circle that dominated the central parish of All Saints; indeed it was 'the singular favors, love, merite and tried worth' of the prominent puritan gentleman Sir William Tate of Delapré Abbey that Cotta claimed to have first 'detained' him in the town.<sup>7</sup> It was probably in large part through Tate's patronage that Cotta was able to establish a thriving practice among the Northamptonshire gentry, and the *Short Discoverie* is dedicated to those of his patients drawn from among this social class.<sup>8</sup> Among these was Sir Euseby Andrew, a former sheriff of Northamptonshire, whose death from poisoning Cotta gave evidence of at the assizes in 1620.<sup>9</sup> As well as being Tate's cousin, Andrew was the son-in-law

---

<sup>4</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. M2v; Peter Elmer, 'Cotta, John (1575?-1627/8)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 61 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 13, pp. 578-9. p. 578.

<sup>5</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. I2; Pettigrew, 'John Cotta's *Short Discoverie*', p. 125.

<sup>6</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. C4.

<sup>7</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. A2; *ODNB*, p. 578.

<sup>8</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. A2.

<sup>9</sup> Northamptonshire Record Office, Isham (Lampport) MSS, 2681.

of the leading puritan landowner Sir Richard Knightley, who was in turn an associate of John Hales, a prominent Coventry puritan with whom Cotta had familial connections. Cotta's progress amongst Northamptonshire's gentry circles was eventually crowned with his second marriage in 1625 to Anne Tresham, ironically the daughter of a leading recusant Catholic landowner, Sir Thomas Tresham. Despite the county's fierce religious divisions, such marriages across religious lines were not uncommon where economic advantage could be offered, and indeed Anne's mother was herself the sister of William Tate.<sup>10</sup>

By this time Cotta had already returned to Coventry, possibly after inheriting his father's practice, and it was here that he died in late 1627 or early 1628. Before leaving Northampton, however, he completed three more works that have survived, the first and most famous of which being his 1616 demonological treatise *The Triall of Witch-craft*. In the same year he returned to the subject of irregular medical practice with *Cotta contra Antonium*, an attack on the chemical physician Francis Anthony and his Northamptonshire agent, the priest-physician John Markes; this was, however, not published in print until 1623, Cotta claiming to have held it back 'upon solicitation of some worthie Gentlemen my friends, who in the behalfe of D. Anthony, promised a faire and equall satisfaction from him.' He also produced a manuscript account of his testimony in the Euseby Andrew case, which was not published in print until the late nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup>

One thing frustratingly absent from amongst the surviving evidence for Cotta's life is any record of a direct connection with the man often regarded as his successor, James Hart. However, as two graduate physicians who were both active members of the puritan community in the parish of All Saints, and given the similarity of their views and concerns, both medical and religious, together with the connections between the social circles within which they both moved, it seems inconceivable that they were not acquainted with one another. Hart was certainly familiar with the *Short Discoverie*, which he references in his own work.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> W. J. Sheils, *The Puritans in the Diocese of Peterborough 1558-1610* (Northampton: Northamptonshire Record Society, 1979) p. 117.

<sup>11</sup> John Cotta, *Cotta contra Antonium: Or, An Ant-Antony* (Oxford: John Lichfield and James Short for Henry Cripps, 1623) sig. \*\*; Northants R. O., Isham (Lamport) MS 2681; Cotta, 'The Poysoning of Sir Euseby Andrew', *Tracts (Rare and Curious Reprints, MS., etc.), Relating to Northamptonshire*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Series (Northampton: Taylor & Son, 1881).

<sup>12</sup> Hart, *Anatomie*, sig. B.

Hart himself was originally from Edinburgh, the nephew of William Hart, king's advocate and justice-depute of Scotland; he may be the James Hart who received his MA from Edinburgh University in 1599.<sup>13</sup> During the first decade of the seventeenth century Hart spent several years on the continent, including periods living in Paris and at Fontenay-le-Comte in Poitou; while staying in the latter he himself experienced a period of serious illness, being 'surprised with a bastard Tertian ague', from which it took him several months to fully recover.<sup>14</sup> In 1608 he matriculated at the University of Basel, receiving his MD the following year; he also spent time in Germany and Bohemia, and in his works he repeatedly refers to his experiences in and observations of these various countries, including an encounter with some German Paracelsians who claimed to be dispensers of the philosopher's stone, and a tale related to him in Paris of a clown who was widely believed to be able cure the plague with a spurge he dug up in a nearby wood.<sup>15</sup>

Hart came to England in 1610, later describing how in that year he had treated a 'lustie young fellow, servant to a Gentleman a friend of mine' in London, who according to the Hart ultimately died because the means he had been prescribed 'were by his friends neglected'.<sup>16</sup> Since Hart appears never to have been a licentiate of the College of Physicians, practising in London put him in danger of prosecution for illicit practice, while his unincorporated foreign degree and Scottish origins both presented barriers to his admission as a candidate; though Scots had been permitted membership after the accession of James I, they continued to face discrimination in this regard, as James Primerose was later to discover.<sup>17</sup> All of this likely influenced Hart's decision to depart the capital fairly swiftly, settling instead in Northampton in around 1612. Here he established a successful practice, receiving his letters of denization in 1626 and remaining in the town until his death in 1639.<sup>18</sup> Like Cotta, he proved successful in forging connections among the local puritan gentry, securing as a patron eastern Northamptonshire's most significant godly landowner, Sir Edward

---

<sup>13</sup> John Symons, 'Hart, James (*d.* 1639)' *ODNB*, 25, pp. 581-582. p. 581.

<sup>14</sup> Hart, *Anatomie*, sig. M4-M4v.

<sup>15</sup> Hart, *Anatomie*, sig. S3-S3v.

<sup>16</sup> Hart, *Anatomie*, sig. Gv-G2.

<sup>17</sup> Pelling, *Medical Conflicts*, pp. 172-4.

<sup>18</sup> Hart, *Anatomie*, sig. M4; Harley, 'James Hart of Northampton', p. 365.

Montague, who Hart thanked for ‘the love and favour I have ever found both from your selfe and whole family ever since my first comming into this countrie’.<sup>19</sup>

Hart’s first published work was 1623’s *The Arraignement of Urines*, a translation of the Dutch physician Petrus Forestus’s *De incerto, fallaci, urinarum iudicio*, an attack on irregular medical practitioners and, in particular, their excessive and improper use of uroscopy. Hart identified this practice as the chief means through which such practitioners committed ‘fraud and cozenage’ against the public, and in 1625 he published his own treatise focussed on the subject, *The Anatomie of Urines*; both works were dedicated to Prince Charles.<sup>20</sup> Shortly afterwards he scribally published ‘A Discourse of the lawlesse intrusion of Parsons & Vicars upon the profession of Phisicke with the Absurditie of the same &c’, a copy of which is bound between the preface and text of the British Library’s copy of the *Anatomie of Urines*, along with a note that it was intended for publication along with that work ‘but could by noe means bee licenced.’<sup>21</sup> Finally, in 1633, Hart published *KAINIKH, or the Diet of the Diseased*; dedicated to Montague, this is his largest and best-known work, within which he seeks to prescribe appropriate diet for both the healthy and the sick.<sup>22</sup>

## II

Cotta’s *Short Discoverie* is divided into three books, the first two of which are mainly given over to describing and critiquing the activities of the succession of different irregular medical practitioners outlined in the previous chapter: from quacksalvers and wise-women to wizards and astrologers, together with those legitimate medical practitioners such surgeons and apothecaries who broke the prescribed bounds of their own professions by intruding upon the physician’s realm of internal medicine. The third book then outlines how ‘The true Artist’ in physic can be distinguished from all such pretenders.<sup>23</sup> Cotta firmly adheres to the established view of the medical profession that all irregular practitioners lacked the education necessary to practise physic, that they were ‘barbarous and unlearned counsellours’, guilty of ‘blind

---

<sup>19</sup> James Hart, *KAINIKH, or the Diet of the Diseased* (London: John Beale for Robert Allot, 1633) sig. ¶4.

<sup>20</sup> Hart, *Anatomie*, sig. A5.

<sup>21</sup> BL, C 54. b. 6: Hart, *Anatomie*, sig. B4v. A second copy of the manuscript survives in the Bodleian Library: MS Rawlinson D 146; an edition based on the British Library copy, with emendations from the Bodleian, is provided in Harley, ‘James Hart of Northampton’, pp. 371-386.

<sup>22</sup> Hart, *Diet*, sig. ¶3-¶4v.

<sup>23</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. F-G4v, K4-K4v, N3v-O3, Q2.

rashness and ignorance'; the learned physician, by contrast, possessed 'the most exquisite powers of understanding, judgement, wit, discretion, and learning', honed by a lifetime of devoted study and practice. He therefore attributed his decision to publish this work to a 'generall duty unto a common good' and a concern for those 'whose harmes by unskilful hands I have oft heretofore sorrowed.'<sup>24</sup> However, Cotta also freely admitted to being concerned by the threat that irregular practitioners posed to his own professional interests, complaining that 'it is in these daies a customary thing to dissuade physicke', and giving several examples of occasions upon which his advice had to compete with that of an empiric in the treatment of a patient.<sup>25</sup>

Hart's critique is more detailed and tightly focussed than Cotta's, and although he insists that he took 'a greater care to satisfie the simplest understandings (for whose cause I have principally published these my paines)', it is also more conspicuously learned.<sup>26</sup> *The Anatomie of Urines* opens with a list of more than eighty authors whose works Hart claimed to have used as sources for his arguments, which included such continental luminaries such as Andreas Libavius and Johannes Lange, as well as English authors such as John Caius; he adds that this is not an exhaustive list, but merely 'to an indifferent and unpartiall Reader sufficient'. Hart goes on to quote extensively from many of these authors, making particularly profuse use of Lange, the former court physician at Heidelberg.<sup>27</sup> *The Anatomie* also includes accounts of medical affairs in the countries Hart had visited, and lengthy historical digressions, including a brief relation of the entire history of the medical profession going back to Adam.<sup>28</sup>

Rather than dealing with a variety of different practitioners in succession as Cotta had, Hart uses examples of their ignorance and negligence to illustrate his discussion of the various ways in which uroscopy is misused and misinterpreted by them all. However, in the actual targets he selects for criticism, and in both the substance of the arguments he puts forward against them and the motives that he claims prompted him to do so, Hart follows Cotta very closely. He condemns a wide range of practitioners: 'ignorant Empirickes, women-physicians, with a many of our

---

<sup>24</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. A3, B-Bv, S3v.

<sup>25</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. E2v, C4, K4-K4v.

<sup>26</sup> Hart, *Anatomie*, sig. Bv.

<sup>27</sup> Hart, *Anatomie*, sig. B3v-B4v, sig. D3-F; John L. Flood and David J. Shaw, *Johannes Sinapius (1505-1560): Hellenist and Physician in Germany and Italy* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1997) p. 39.

<sup>28</sup> Hart, *Anatomie*, sig. Cv-C2v.



fancy Surgeons, and many mo[r]e’, emphasising their ‘ignorant and insufficient nature’, contrasted with the ‘reason and experience’ of the learned physician.<sup>29</sup> Like his predecessor he both claims ‘the love and respect I beare unto the publique good’ as his chief motivation in launching this attack on those who ‘not onely sucke the substance from the deluded multitude, but often precipitate their bodies into Charon’s boat’, but also freely admits to seeking ‘the vindicating of our Æsculapian Art from abuse as much as in me lyeth’, complaining that ‘the vulgar not being able to judge of the sufficiencie of the learned Physitian, preferreth often the paines of some ignorant Empiricke’.<sup>30</sup>

Cotta presented his critique of irregular practice as something essentially new: ‘The matter and subject it selfe, unto common reading, is of a virgine fresh and as yet undivulged view’, and ‘no man (that as yet I heare) hath undertaken this taske’.<sup>31</sup> But as we have seen, both Cotta and Hart’s works are in many respects consistent with those of earlier anti-quack authors such as Francis Herring and Eleazar Duncon, who deplored ‘the tragicall histories of the sicke of this age, manifestly killed by the ignorance of Empiriks’, and claimed as motive ‘Our Consciences toward God, our Dutie toward our Prince, our Love to our Countrey, the honour of our Profession’.<sup>32</sup> But we have also seen that Cotta, and subsequently Hart, departed radically from their predecessors in other important respects. Most significantly, while both authors followed Herring and Duncan in condemning the full range of irregular medical practitioners, their works are principally focussed on one particular type of practitioner of which neither Herring nor Duncon made any mention in their respective treatises: priest-physicians.

Cotta identifies ‘Ecclesiasticall persons, Vicars and Parsons’ as ‘The Grand and most common offenders’ in irregular practice; Hart was even more scathing, singling out the ‘foule Ulcer’ of priest-physicians for criticism in both his preface to the *Arraignment*, and in the *Anatomie*.<sup>33</sup> Hart then circulated a treatise devoted

---

<sup>29</sup> Forestus, *Arraignment*, sig. A3; Hart, *Anatomie*, sig. A3v, A6v.

<sup>30</sup> Forestus, *Arraignment*, sig. A4v, (\*)3v; Hart, *Anatomie*, sig. A6v.

<sup>31</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. A2-A2v, A3.

<sup>32</sup> Duncon, *Copy of A Letter*, sig. D3v; Herring, ‘discovery of certaine Strategems’, sig. D4-G2, sig. Gv.

<sup>33</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. M3v; Forestus, *Arraignment*, sig. A4v; Hart, *Anatomie*, sig. D4v-Ev, Q3-R3v. Pettigrew, ‘John Cotta’s *Short Discoverie*’, pp. 122-4 disputes the identification of priest-

entirely this subject, the ‘Discourse of the lawlesse intrusion of Parsons & Vicars’, in which he condemns priest-physicians as not just ‘the ringleaders and chiefe maintainers of such disorder’, but as ‘Monsters’ who were ‘shamles and void of honesty’.<sup>34</sup> Although such controversial sentiments were enough to ensure that this work was refused a licence, Hart was ultimately able to publish much of it in print embedded within the introduction and conclusion to his *Diet of the Diseased*; it is interesting to note, however, that the introduction to this work is paginated separately from the rest of the text and is spread across two gatherings signed (a) and (aa), between the ¶ gathering of the dedication and the A gathering. The work carries a licence from the College of Physicians, having been approved by the college president John Argent, together with Doctors William Clement and Theodore Goulston; this would have carried considerable weight with the ecclesiastical censors, who invested a good deal of trust in the opinion of the college when licensing medical works. But the three physicians approved the work after only professing to have read it in part, so Hart may in fact have added these controversial sections after the *Diet* had already been licensed.<sup>35</sup>

In some respects the criticisms that Cotta and Hart levelled at priest-physicians were similar to those they directed at other irregular medical practitioners: they were poorly educated in medicine and their treatments were inadequate or dangerous. Cotta condemns their ‘rash, ignorant and unskilfull errors’, while Hart deplors their practising a ‘profession wherein they were never instructed nor trained up’, and wonders how many ‘beneficed mens errors be buried in the bosome of the earth’.<sup>36</sup> He further identifies priest-physicians as ‘the chiefe upholders & maintainers of this base Uromancie so much now a dayes admired’, and to which his first two works were devoted to debunking; Cotta likewise immediately follows the chapter of the *Short Discoverie* explicitly devoted to attacking priest-physicians with chapters attacking

---

physicians as the chief targets of the *Short Discoverie*, offering a radically different interpretation of the book as ‘the first rigorous and detailed English discussion of that branch of medical ethics that articulates the obligation of those to whom public health is entrusted, politic medical ethics’; however, his analysis makes no reference to Hart’s subsequent work, or to the involvement of Cotta and local priest-physicians in contemporary religious disputes.

<sup>34</sup> BL, C 54. b. 6, ff. 1, 7v, 7.

<sup>35</sup> Hart, *Diet*, sig. (a)-(aa3)v, Mmm2-Mmm4; Harley, ‘James Hart of Northampton’, p. 367; Webster, *Great Instauration*, pp. 266-7.

<sup>36</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. N; Forestus, *Arraignment*, sig. A3v.

the two practices most widely associated with their work, uroscopy and judicial astrology.<sup>37</sup>

However, it was not such specifically medical objections that formed the core of these writers' opposition to priest-physicians; indeed, Hart's 'Discourse of the lawlesse intrusion of Parsons & Vicars' makes minimal reference to the kind of learned medical authorities that he deployed so liberally in the *Anatomie*, instead putting its arguments forward on the basis of canon and civil law, together with biblical and modern theological sources. The fundamental problem with priest-physicians was not the inadequacy of the medicine they provided, but the fact that, as clergymen, they practised medicine at all. To Cotta, the pursuit of this dual vocation by clergymen necessarily involved 'alienation of their owne proper offices and duties', the 'immensitie' of which demanded their full devotion, just as the practice of medicine did of those who pursued that profession.<sup>38</sup> Hart put the same point across in even more scathing terms: by 'imposing upon themselves a needlesse necessity of two so weighty callings, the duties of the one so manifestly crossing the performance of the other', he argued, 'these mens negligence endangereth the soules of their flockes, while they care most for their fleeces'.<sup>39</sup> It was in such religious terms that these authors primarily framed their attack; the dual vocation was 'offensive to God, scandalous unto religion and good men...and but presumption borrowing the face of Divinitie'.<sup>40</sup>

These religious objections were further linked to social and political concerns, Cotta arguing that priest-physicians were guilty of an 'unlimited breach of law, and want of reverence and respect of order and distinction of callings, (which true Divinitie doth teach holy men)', and that through their example they suggested that it was acceptable 'to breake publicke edicts, to transgresse lawes, to contemne magistracie, to confound and disturbe good order' which 'forbiddeth, that...one man presume to break into anothers bounds'. Hart picked up this argument to depict the disastrous consequences of such a 'disordered Chaos of callings in a Common wealth', after which 'the taylor shall become a shoemaker, and againe the shoemaker a taylor...thus shall wee have the world returne unto the confused chaos againe'. This

---

<sup>37</sup> BL, C 54. b. 6, f. 1v; Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. M3v-P3v.

<sup>38</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. M3v.

<sup>39</sup> BL, C 54. b. 6, f. 8v; Forestus, *Arraignment*, sig. A4v.

<sup>40</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. N.

was not just a dire material threat to the good order of the nation, but a further affront to God, who ‘is the God of order, not of confusion, and never did allow of this confused Chaos of callings.’<sup>41</sup>

Such arguments may read, particularly to modern eyes, like hysterical panic-mongering. But they in fact keyed into concerns widely shared throughout early modern Europe about the threat to the moral order that could ensue from practitioners breaking the limits of their occupations.<sup>42</sup> What is striking about Cotta and Hart’s work is their singling out of priest-physicians as a particular threat to this order; but that these practitioners did pose such a threat was, for these authors, obvious. This was perhaps clearest in the intense enthusiasm many priest-physicians shared for occult pursuits, and in particular judicial astrology. Such dubious practices drew people away from both the godly means offered by the physician and the rigorous self-examination that was, in the providentialist view of most puritans, the proper response to illness, which they generally believed to be visited upon the sufferer by God as either a trial or a punishment.<sup>43</sup> What was worse, Hart warned, if allowed to continue unchecked such practices would inevitably open the door to ‘Witches and Wizards’ and ‘a world of other forbidden trash.’<sup>44</sup>

Nevertheless, many contemporaries do seem to have viewed these religious arguments with considerable scepticism, and as we have seen many subsequent historians have tended to regard them as little more than a cover for professional and economic self-interest on the part of their authors.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, both authors freely admitted their anger over the professional challenge priest-physicians posed through their ‘lawlesse intrusion upon other mens right’, by which they ‘spoil the more

---

<sup>41</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. M3v, M4v; BL, C 54. b. 6, ff. 4-4v, 10v; Forestus, *Arraignment*, sig. A3v.

<sup>42</sup> Gentilcore, *Healers and Healing*, p. 207.

<sup>43</sup> Andrew Wear, ‘Puritan perceptions of illness in seventeenth-century England’, in Roy Porter (ed.), *Patients and practitioners: Lay perceptions of medicine in pre-industrial society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) pp. 55-99.

<sup>44</sup> Hart, *Anatomie*, sig. S2; Harley, ‘Spiritual Physic, Providence and English Medicine, 1560-1640’, in Ole Peter Grell and Andrew Cunningham (eds), *Medicine and the Reformation* (London: Routledge, 1993) pp. 101-117. p. 101.

<sup>45</sup> BL, Sloane MSS, 1954, f. 152v; James Primerose, *Popular Errours. Or the Errours of the People in Physick*, trans. Robert Wittie (London: W. Wilson for Nicholas Bourne, 1651) sig. B8v; Michael MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety, and Healing in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 8, 32. See Harley, ‘James Hart of Northampton’, p. 362-5 for a critical overview of this tendency.

worthy of his fee, and the proper laborer of his hire’, Hart dismissing the riposte that such clergymen were simply covering for a shortage of trained physicians on the grounds that ‘these men not onely practise in their owne parishes...but they often buisy themselves most where sufficient Physitians are to bee found.’<sup>46</sup>

There seems little doubt that priest-physicians did indeed represent a substantial threat to the material interests of many regular physicians; not only were they so widespread as to have ‘constituted a dominant group in the medical profession’ during this period, but the nature of their practice in many ways posed a sharper and more awkward threat to physicians than that of other irregular practitioners.<sup>47</sup> As discussed in the previous chapter, the claim that they alone possessed a sufficient degree of learning and judgement to practise medicine, based primarily on their university education, was crucial to the professional self-image of physicians; it was therefore natural that authors such as Herring and Duncon should focus their attacks upon empirics’ supposed lack of learning, supported by implications of a lack of moral character. Physicians also claimed a divinely appointed role for themselves as preservers of God’s creation: ‘God being therefore the cause of causes in nature’, Cotta insisted, ‘the Physition is his servant & minister therein’.<sup>48</sup> But not only could clergymen lay claim to a far more obviously apparent divine calling, but they were also, as a profession, both learned and in possession of substantial moral authority. Most had attended university, many even pursuing medical studies while doing so; given that the curriculum followed by physicians themselves was, as we have seen, literary and philosophical rather than practical in nature, it was quite possible for priest-physicians to lay claim to the ‘most exquisite powers of vnderstanding, iudgement, wit, discretion, and learning’ advertised by Cotta as the physician’s unique qualification to practise.<sup>49</sup> Further legitimacy was bestowed upon these clergymen by the willingness of the universities and the episcopal authorities to grant many of them licences to practise.<sup>50</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> BL, C 54. b. 6, ff. 1v, 7; Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. M4v.

<sup>47</sup> Pelling and Webster, ‘Medical Practitioners’, p. 199.

<sup>48</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. Q4v; Cook, ‘Good Advice and Little Medicine’, p. 18.

<sup>49</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. Bv.

<sup>50</sup> John H. Raach, ‘English Medical Licensing in the Early Seventeenth Century’, *Yale Journal of Biology and Medicine*, 16 (1944) 267-288. pp. 282-284. Richard Napier was among those priest-physicians licensed to practise (Beier, *Sufferers and Healers*, p. 11).

The status therefore possessed by priest-physicians threatened the unique position claimed by the regular physicians themselves, but it also sharpened the threat they posed to the physicians' client bases, in particular those sections of it drawn from among the social elite. While members of the gentry and aristocracy were by no means necessarily averse to frequenting 'popular' healers such as cunning folk, they may have found the medical services offered by the learned, respectable clergyman more consistently attractive. It has already been noted that about a quarter of the clientele of Cotta and Hart's nearby contemporary, the famous Buckinghamshire priest-physician and astrologer Richard Napier, were drawn from these classes, and both Cotta and Hart's works are replete with examples of elite patients - the people to whom the *Short Discoverie* was dedicated - suffering at the hands of inept clerical practitioners.<sup>51</sup>

An element of personal conflict with individual priest-physicians can also be seen to be at play, particularly within Cotta's work. His anger was primarily directed towards John Markes, the rector of Gayton, a village five miles from Northampton. The ill feeling between Cotta and Markes dated back to at least 1611 and the bedside of the Northamptonshire gentleman Sir William Samwell, who Cotta had been treating for a fever when Markes was called in. According to Cotta, Markes quickly realised that the fever was about to break, and so 'led by a secret ambition of stealing the praise of such a cure', gave Samwell *aurum potabile*; 'drinkable gold', a cordial within which tiny particles of gold were suspended. There followed a rapid improvement in Samwell's condition, which the patient ascribed entirely to Markes's remedy, leading him to 'studiously and continually defameth his Physition, and with evill clamours filleth all corners of the countrey'. Cotta however insisted that the *aurum potabile* had in fact prevented Samwell from making what would otherwise have been a full recovery, leaving him weakened and, within a few months, suffering from scurvy.<sup>52</sup>

Relations between Cotta and Markes were further soured when a letter from Markes describing the Samwell affair from his own perspective was published in a book by Francis Anthony, the chemical physician who had supplied Markes with the formula for *aurum potabile*. Markes here claimed that the treatments Cotta had given

---

<sup>51</sup> MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam*, p. 51; Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. Nv, N2v-N3; *Cotta contra Antonium*, sig. F2v-I3v; Hart, *Anatomie*, sig. H4, I4, Q3-R3v.

<sup>52</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. N2v-N3.

Samwell ‘were so far from giving him any ease, that the disease did still grow stronger’, until Markes provided the patient with his own remedy.<sup>53</sup> This prompted Cotta, in his reply to Anthony’s work, to accuse Markes of ‘grand dissembling’ and of being ‘a mixt, unperfect, or a mongrel beast’: ‘you shiftingly live a miscellaneous life, and being by sacred vowes unto God and his service consecrate, you intrude your busie ignorance into the office and propertie of other men’.<sup>54</sup>

Markes was almost certainly also the ‘chiefe proctor for aurum potable in Northamptonshire’ encountered by Hart in 1615 or 1616 as one of three or four priest-physicians who had been attending to ‘a Parson, dwelling within some foure miles of the towne of Northampton, surprised with a burning feaver.’ Markes, Hart claimed, ‘thinking to purchase himselfe some praise beyond his fellowes’ prescribed ‘foue [*sic*] pounds worth of Aurum Potabile,’ which the parson’s wife ‘willingly payed for’. The patient however continued to deteriorate, and when Hart arrived he determined that, although the patient’s condition could have been cured if he had been phlebotomized by those attending to him earlier, it was now too late, the parson dying within a few days.<sup>55</sup>

The other individual priest-physician who looms large over both Cotta and Hart’s work is Richard Napier; indeed, according to the astrologer William Lilly, who was personally acquainted with Napier, Cotta’s *Triall of Witch-craft* was specifically intended as an oblique assault on the Buckinghamshire magus. Cotta does not directly identify Napier in any of his works, claiming in the *Short Discoverie* that ‘for the reverence of the callings I spare the men’; even Markes was left unidentified until after his criticism of Cotta had been made public by Francis Anthony.<sup>56</sup> But it seems hard to believe that Cotta did not have Napier in mind, and more importantly expect his readers to have him in mind, when he was fulminating against priest-physicians. Not only was Napier probably the most famous such practitioner in the country during this period, estimated to have consulted with some sixty thousand patients during his

---

<sup>53</sup> Francis Anthony, *The Apologie, or Defence of a Verity heretofore Published concerning a Medicine called Aurum Potabile* (London: John Legatt, 1616) sig. Ev-E2.

<sup>54</sup> *Cotta contra Antonium*, sig. G4v.

<sup>55</sup> Hart, *Anatomie*, sig. I4-I4v.

<sup>56</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. N.

thirty-seven years in practice, but he was based in the village of Great Linford, just twelve miles from Northampton.<sup>57</sup>

Hart clearly shared few of Cotta's compunctions about identifying his targets, addressing the 'Parson-practiser, dwelling about a dozen of miles hence, one of our chiefe Calculators of Nativities in all the countrey' at length in the *Anatomie of Urines* over his treatment of 'an Alderman of Northampton' who was 'suddenly surprised with a chilnesse in his legges, and shortly after accompanied of the like in his backe, bones, and upper parts' in 1623.<sup>58</sup> Hart tells us that after being sent a sample of the patient's urine, Napier first misdiagnosed him as suffering from 'a blind Ague', and then, when the local surgeon refused to carry out the phlebotomy he had prescribed because the patient was becoming jaundiced, instead prescribed a vomit, after taking which the patient developed a variety of painful new symptoms, but 'The Parson being earnestly intreated to affoord his patient his presence in this so great extremity, no prayers would prevaile'.<sup>59</sup> Hart was then called in and was briefly able to alleviate these symptoms somewhat, but the patient died two days later, leading Hart to condemn Napier's 'carelesse (and as I thinke) irregular and ignorant proceeding in this businesse': 'I know your gravitie would disdain the name of an Empiricke, but pardon me good master Parson, this course was too Empiricall.'<sup>60</sup>

### III

It is therefore clear that both Cotta and Hart faced direct competition from priest-physicians, and that this fed into a deep enmity that both authors felt towards particular local practitioners of this kind. Nevertheless, it would be simplistic to dismiss the religious objections they put forward as mere cover for professional self-interest and personal grudges. If this were the case, one might ask why Francis Herring and Eleazor Duncon were so immune to such factors as to entirely overlook the subject of priest-physicians, who were by no means a localised phenomenon of the east midlands. It might also be asked why Cotta and Hart chose to focus their criticisms primarily upon the dual vocation in and of itself, rather than on the

---

<sup>57</sup> William Lilly, *Mr. William Lilly's History of His Life and Times, From the Year 1602, to 1681* (London: J. Roberts, 1715) sig. D3v; MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam*, p. 26.

<sup>58</sup> Hart, *Anatomie*, sig. Q3.

<sup>59</sup> Hart, *Anatomie*, sig. Q3v.

<sup>60</sup> Hart, *Anatomie*, sig. Q4-Q4v, R.



deficiencies they observed in the actual medicine practised by priest-physicians, which might have been expected to be of more immediate concern to potential patients.

It should also be remembered that attacking members of the clergy carried a certain degree of risk; this can be seen in Hart's inability to obtain a license for his 'Discourse of the lawlesse intrusion of parsons and vicars', while Cotta bemoaned 'The paines and losse of secured safetie in silence' he expected to suffer after publishing the *Short Discoverie*.<sup>61</sup> Some of this risk would have extended to the publishers of these works. Both of Hart's works on uroscopy were published by Robert Mylbourne, and it is striking to note that of the more than ninety surviving works published under his name, Hart's appear to be the only ones devoted, ostensibly at least, to the subject of medicine. The overwhelming majority of the rest deal with the subject of religion, and are mostly by Calvinist authors such as George Carleton, John Burges, Richard Bernard and Daniel Featley. Indeed, Mylbourne's publishing activities earned him considerable enmity in conformist church circles; he accused John Cosin of persecuting him and his authors, while the conformist standard bearer Richard Montagu said Mylbourne 'should be half-hanged'.<sup>62</sup>

This choice of publisher reflects the true nature of Hart and Cotta's objections to priest-physicians, which as David Harley observes 'resulted from, and appealed to, the concerns of the Calvinist majority in the Jacobean Church of England', to which the two puritan doctors firmly belonged, 'who watched with alarm the spread of a learned clergy whose notions of the clerical function were quite different from the Calvinist ministerial ideal'.<sup>63</sup> For Calvinists, it was the responsibility of the minister to show constant concern for the spiritual health of his parishioners; puritans such as Hart, in particular, placed an overriding emphasis on the responsibility of ministers to 'preach in season and out of season'.<sup>64</sup> Taking up a second profession, particularly one as demanding as medicine, would inevitably result in the neglect of these responsibilities for which, Cotta argues, 'no mans sufficiency was ever sufficient'.<sup>65</sup>

---

<sup>61</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. A2v.

<sup>62</sup> Sheila Lambert, 'Richard Montagu, Arminianism and Censorship', *Past & Present*, 124 (1989) 36-98, p. 65.

<sup>63</sup> Harley, 'James Hart of Northampton', p. 364.

<sup>64</sup> BL, C 54. b. 6, f. 1.

<sup>65</sup> *Cotta contra Antonium*, sig. G4v.

Priest-physicians could therefore be seen as deeply offensive to puritan practical divinity, but Calvinist objections to their practising ran even deeper than this. For simply by pursuing a dual vocation, priest-physicians were immediately putting themselves in breach of one of the very cornerstones of the Calvinist worldview: the doctrine of callings. Perhaps the definitive outline of this doctrine was provided by William Perkins in his *treatise of the vocations*, a work that occupied a critical position in puritan social thought and is referenced by Hart in his manuscript discourse. ‘Every person’, Perkins insisted ‘without exception, must have some personal and particular calling to walke in: This appeareth plainly by the whole word of God’. Perkins goes on to add that ‘the office of a minister [is] to execute the dutie of teaching his people...the office of a Physitian is, to put in practise the good meanes whereby life and health are preserved.’<sup>66</sup> The key biblical passage in this respect was 1 Corinthians 7.20, ‘Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called’, also cited by Hart in his preface to the *Arraignment*.<sup>67</sup> It has already been noted that Cotta and Hart protested both the neglect priest-physicians showed for their own profession and the intrusion they perpetrated against that of physicians themselves; drawing on the doctrine of callings, these authors could suffuse both aspects of this critique, rather than just the first, with religious meaning.

Calvinist clergy apparently shared in their medical co-religionists’ criticisms of priest-physicians and their practices, Hart asserting that the dual vocation had ‘both out of the pulpit, and by the pen of the learned been spoken against’.<sup>68</sup> Few Calvinist clergymen seem to have practised anything more than domestic medicine; although some, such as John Burges, did turn to the practice of physic after ejection from the church, as we have seen Hart noted that this was perfectly acceptable, as long as they possessed sufficient skill and did not attempt to pursue both professions simultaneously.<sup>69</sup> Antipathy towards the dual vocation does seem to have broken down somewhat among the radical fringe of the puritan movement, the sometime separatist ministers James Forrester and Henoah Clapham both being pursued by the

---

<sup>66</sup> William Perkins, *The Works of that Famous and Worthie Minister of Christ, in the Universitie of Cambridge*, M. W. Perkins (Cambridge: John Legat, 1603) sig. Kkkk6; BL, C 54. b. 6, f. 1v; Christopher Hill, *Puritanism and Revolution: Studies in Interpretation of the English Revolution of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century* (London: Penguin, 1986) pp. 212-233.

<sup>67</sup> Forestus, sig. A4.

<sup>68</sup> Hart, *Diet*, sig. (aa); see Perkins, *A salve for a sicke man* (Cambridge: John Legate, 1595) sig. E5.

<sup>69</sup> BL, C 54. b. 6, f. 10v; Harley, ‘James Hart of Northampton’, p. 365; Hill, *Continuity and Change*, p. 165.

College of Physicians for illicit practice around the turn of the seventeenth century.<sup>70</sup> But among mainstream Calvinists, those few who involved themselves in medical practice were anxious to insist that they did so on a purely charitable basis, and only in the face of necessity. George Herbert's heavily qualified advocacy of the priest-physician role has already been outlined, and when the puritan theologian Henry Holland was brought before the college for illicitly practising medicine he insisted he had done so only 'for friendship's sake among the members of his own family and poor people', for which he had always refused payment.<sup>71</sup>

But for Cotta and Hart, even such charitable practice had to be strictly regulated. They maintained that the doctrine of callings was of such overriding religious significance that even the Christian imperative to charity, and irregulars who practised on a charitable basis, had to conform to it; even 'respects of charitie and mercie' Cotta insisted, could not be allowed 'to confounde and disturbe good order'. Hart agreed that 'ther is no charge given them to exercise this charyty, it belonging to another mans profession'. Medical advice and cordials could be dispensed charitably, but only in full and obedient consultation with a physician.<sup>72</sup>

As we have seen, however, there were many clergymen during this period who were happy to fully conflate the two professions. But most of these full-blown priest-physicians were, to offer Harley's assessment, 'reactionary anti-Calvinists'; they were drawn from the formalist wing of the Church of England and representative of a very different outlook on the ministry to that of their critics, one that emphasised the rituals and sacraments of the church, and the performance of good works, while de-emphasising the sermon.<sup>73</sup> Such clergymen were not unconcerned with distinction of callings, and clearly felt the need to address the issue in their written works, but their approach to it was less rigid, and they were willing to justify their intrusion into medicine upon the basis of charitable imperative, biblical precedent and the affinity of

---

<sup>70</sup> Pelling, *Medical Conflicts*, pp. 322-3. Both Forrester and Clapham seem to have veered between radical separatism and zealous conformity, in each case bypassing the puritan mainstream.

<sup>71</sup> 'Annals of the College of Physicians of London from the year 1608 to the year 1647', translated by J. Emberry, S. Heathcote and M. Hellings, 4 vols, 1953-57. 4 August 1598 (vol. 2, p. 115). Harley attributes Herbert's position to the tension between his 'broadly Calvinist theology' and 'non-Calvinist ecclesiology' ('James Hart of Northampton', p. 364.

<sup>72</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. M-M4v; Hart, *Diet*, sig. (a7)v; BL, C 54. b. 6, f. 6v.

<sup>73</sup> Harley, 'James Hart of Northampton', pp. 363-5.

body and soul.<sup>74</sup> Rather than the doctrine of callings, it was adherence to the prescribed rituals and ceremonies of the church that these men tended to uphold as the lynchpin of social order. In 1592 Nicholas Gyer expressly linked his advocacy of the dual vocation with a commitment to church conformity, juxtaposing his decision to write on medical matters with the destructive activities of ‘divers dogged Divines of this age, Penry, Browne, Barrow, and the sectaries’. Gyer’s successors, however, extended this hostility to the godly mainstream, as is apparent in the activities of Richard Napier.

Most of the criticisms Cotta and Hart levelled at priest-physicians were epitomised by the figure of Napier, and his great fame and proximity to Northampton offered them a highly effective tool with which to make their points about priest-physicians and conformity. Napier was widely known as an ardent supporter of ceremonial conformity and fierce critic of puritan practical divinity, who on several occasions clashed publicly with local puritan clergy, his most famous opponent being the great controversialist theologian William Twisse. He enjoyed much warmer relations with senior conformists however, including among his visitors the future Laudian Bishop of Peterborough John Towers. Napier’s approach to the ministry emphasized the rituals and sacraments of the church, and favoured set prayers over the kind of intense self-examination promoted by puritans; what was more, having suffered a breakdown at the pulpit early in his career, he did not himself preach at all, instead employing a curate to perform these aspects of his duties.<sup>75</sup>

Napier was deeply unsympathetic towards those whose consciences were disturbed by what he regarded as puritanical concerns, and he tended to treat religious anxiety in much the same way as other mental illnesses, often prescribing purges and vomits. In this respect his practice mirrored the thought of Robert Burton, another conformist divine and advocate of the priest-physician role, who saw puritans as suffering from ‘religious melancholy’, a form of mental illness that they spread through their preaching, which through its emphasis on the constant struggle required to avoid damnation and achieve salvation broke down the mental resolve of those who heard it.<sup>76</sup>

---

<sup>74</sup> Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy*, sig. A9v; Du Chesne, *Hermeticall Physicke*, sig. \*2; Gyer, *English Phlebotomy*, sig. A7; Harward, *Phlebotomy*, sig. A6v-A7.

<sup>75</sup> MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam*, pp. 19, 22-3, 30-1, 222, 20.

<sup>76</sup> Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy*, sig. Yyv-Ccc8; MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam*, pp. 31, 221, 223-4.

Less evidence survives for John Markes's religious preferences, although like Napier he was a graduate of that 'hotbed of anti-Calvinism in the late sixteenth century', Exeter College, Oxford.<sup>77</sup> He was also for much of his career a pluralist, holding the benefices of both Gayton and Pattishall between 1583 and 1605. This was a practice widely disliked among puritans because of the inevitable non-residency involved; what is particularly striking, however, is the identity of the individual in whose favour Markes ultimately resigned the vicarage of Pattishall: Gerence James, a former curate of Napier's who subsequently took up the practice of medicine himself and seems to fully have shared in his mentor's heterodox proclivities.<sup>78</sup>

A third individual local priest-physician at whom Hart directed barbs in his 'Discourse' was Richard Langham, 'one of their cheife champyons, and admired as some more then earthlie creature in Northamptonshire'.<sup>79</sup> Langham was another pluralist, at one point holding three local benefices simultaneously. He retained two of these until the Civil War, during which he was to be sequestered from them for his 'malignancy', after joining the royalist forces at Newark despite his by then advanced age.<sup>80</sup>

The drift away from Calvinist orthodoxy among priest-physicians can be further observed in the careers and writing of Thomas Tymme and Simon Harward, both of whom enthusiastically embraced neo-platonism and hermeticism. Initially a client of Edmund Grindal and translator of Calvin, by the early seventeenth-century Tymme had not only become a disciple of John Dee, but was using his work to stress the importance of prayer and good works against the emphasis on preaching that tended to dominate Calvinist devotional works.<sup>81</sup> In the eyes of their orthodox Calvinist critics, this taste for heterodox beliefs both reflected and compounded priest-physicians' negligence and lack of respect for callings, and inevitably found

<sup>77</sup> Harley, 'James Hart of Northampton', p. 364.

<sup>78</sup> George Baker, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Northampton*, 2 vols (London: J. B. Nichols & Son, 1822-41) vol. 1, p. 300.

<sup>79</sup> BL, C 54. b. 6, f. 11; Harley, 'James Hart of Northampton', p. 384.

<sup>80</sup> Langham was rector of Thornby, Northamptonshire from 1603-1624, Rector of Deane, Northamptonshire from 1614, and Rector of Bottesford, Leicestershire from 1623 [Henry Isham Longden, *Northamptonshire and Rutland Clergy from 1500*, 15 vols (Northampton: Archer & Goodman, 1938-42) 8, p. 175].

<sup>81</sup> Thomas Tymme, *A Silver Watch-bell. The sound wherof is able (by the grace of God) to win the most profane worldling, and carelesse liver, if there be but the least spark of grace remaining in him, to become a true Christian indeed, that in the end he may obtaine everlasting salvation* (London: T. C. for William Cotton, 1605); *The Chariot of Devotion* (London: G. Eld for Thomas Baylie, 1618), sig. A3; Harley, 'James Hart of Northampton', p. 363.

expression in activities that horrified godly propriety, such as judicial astrology, alchemy and magic.<sup>82</sup>

Equally alarming to these critics were the Catholic overtones of priest-physicians' activities. Hart complained that he had 'not knowne such disorder, even amongst the papists themselves, in this point as among our owne clergie'; the obvious implication here being that Church of England clergymen were behaving not only in a way that might be expected of Papists, but were taking Papistical excess to uncommon extremes. Indeed, the way in which these authors characterised priest-physicians often recalls depictions of Catholic priests in contemporary Protestant polemic, in particular the suggestion that they were shape-shifters and dissemblers; this is perhaps most obvious in Cotta's attack on the 'grand dissembling' of John Markes, who 'shiftingly' lived 'a miscellaneous life'.<sup>83</sup> Hart further noted that some Catholic priests had taken up the dual vocation, and presented this as a natural consequence of the deficiencies of their ceremonial approach to the clerical calling:

Their idle and lazy life gives them more advantage for this their lawlesse intrusion ...having said their soule masses or de profundis for the dead, having little or nothing els to doe besides their sett services,wilbe willing, (if any fooles will trust them) to patch up a poore liveing in practising upon them...helping themselves also with inchantments, charmes & such forbidden trash. The idle Monke, in regard of his retired life, having for the most parte nothing els to employ himself about, but mumbling over his mattens, And saying over his sett prayers like a parrott, hath yett a great gapp opened to bring his purpose to passe.<sup>84</sup>

By contrast, Hart insists, 'In all the reformed Churches either on this or the other side of the sea Lutherane or other, the like disorder is not to be found.'<sup>85</sup>

Obviously Hart's arguments represented a gross caricature of the actual Catholic approach to the ministry, and indeed to the dual vocation itself. The Roman Church in fact forbade the practice of physic and surgery by the clergy because of the contact with human blood it entailed, and generally policed the division between the professions strictly. Numerous Catholic voices were raised against the dual vocation,

<sup>82</sup> Thomas, *Religion*, p. 321.

<sup>83</sup> *Cotta contra Antonium*, sig. G4v; Condren, *Argument and Authority*, p. 105.

<sup>84</sup> BL, C 54. b. 6, f. 9v.

<sup>85</sup> BL, C 54. b. 6, f. 9.

such as that of the Italian physician Battista Codronchi, while both Hart and Primerose were happy to quote passages from medieval canon law restricting clerical involvement in medicine.<sup>86</sup> But it remains the case that Catholic priests could offer their parishioners what David Gentilcore describes as a ‘spiritual pharmacopeia’ that was simply unavailable to any vaguely orthodox Protestant minister, in the form of such rituals as benedictions, bible readings over the sufferer and, most dramatically, exorcisms.<sup>87</sup>

Indeed, the sacraments themselves could be regarded as means of physical healing within Catholicism. The mass, baptism and confirmation had long attracted parasitical beliefs in their power as physical preservatives, while Codronchi suggested that even confession could be regarded as a physical treatment, in that it alleviated the fear of mortal sin, which could produce real and serious bodily consequences.<sup>88</sup> The Catholic Church also continued to offer an array of miraculous cures through relics, images and shrines, as well as the activities of ‘living saints’. And the Church’s healing was not only restricted to spiritual means; exorcists would often make use of powerful natural medicines, and while they were forbidden from the blood-letting medical occupations, Catholic clergymen were permitted to run apothecary’s shops within their monasteries.<sup>89</sup>

So while the Catholic Church did place close bounds on the healing activities of its priests, they were still left considerably greater scope in this field than their Protestant rivals. As faulty as his reasoning may have been, there is more than a grain of truth in Hart’s assertion that this was a reflection of the Catholic approach to ministry and ceremony. Their Church allowed for the dispensation of divine influence through intercessionary agents, whether sacraments, holy objects, saints or clergymen; Calvinists, by contrast, sought to minimise what they regarded as a diffusion of divine power, which they sought to concentrate entirely on God and his providence. This involved stripping clergymen and their ceremonies of any intrinsic power to bring

---

<sup>86</sup> David Gentilcore, *Healers and Healing in early Modern Italy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998) pp. 15-16; Harley, ‘James Hart of Northampton’, p. 369; Harley, ‘James Hart of Northampton’, p. 369; BL, C 54. b. 6, ff. 3-3v; Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. C3-C4. The exact scope of these restrictions remains an issue of controversy: see Amundsen, ‘Medieval Canon Law’, p. 26.

<sup>87</sup> Gentilcore, *Healers and Healing*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>88</sup> Thomas, *Religion*, pp. 38-42; P. G. Maxwell-Stuart, *Witch Hunters: Professional Prickers, Unwitchers & Witch Finders of the Renaissance* (Stroud: Tempus, 2005) p. 74.

<sup>89</sup> Gentilcore, *Healers and Healing*, pp. 15-18.

about any kind of divinely granted physical effects.<sup>90</sup> The obvious implication of this was that ministers had no greater capacity to effect healing than any other non-professional medical practitioners.

But priest-physicians appeared to be claiming just such a capacity, and therefore their practice, for the Calvinist physicians here discussed, carried obvious Catholic overtones. These provided crucial context for Calvinist authors seeking to present such practitioners' disorderly and impious pursuits as fruits of their religious preferences, since it was a commonplace among the godly that anti-Calvinist divinity and attempts to return the Church of England to a more elaborate ceremonialism and sacramentalism represented crypto-papist infiltration. By the time Cotta and Hart were writing, conformist church court officials in their home diocese of Peterborough were being widely accused of harbouring papist sympathies, and their activities were becoming enmeshed with conspiracy theories over 'popish plots', which were to proliferate as churchmen of this stripe grew in influence.<sup>91</sup>

Given all of the above, it hardly seems surprising that Cotta and Hart's vociferous opposition to priest-physicians was not mirrored in the anti-quack works of physicians who appear to have been sympathetic towards conformist divinity. Eleazar Duncon, whose work predated Cotta's by just six years but made no mention of priest-physicians, was the nephew of John Burges and has been identified as a Calvinist on that basis, but it is worth noting that his eldest son, also named Eleazar Duncon, was to become a chaplain to Richard Neile in the 1630s, and declare that 'Good works are efficaciously necessary to salvation.' Duncon's two younger sons also entered the clergy, and were both sequestered from their parishes in the eastern counties during the Civil War.<sup>92</sup> Likewise Thomas Brian, whose apparent Laudian sympathies will be outlined in the next chapter, had little to say on the subject of the dual vocation when he came to write in the 1630s.

---

<sup>90</sup> Wear, 'Religious beliefs and medicine', pp. 161-2.

<sup>91</sup> John Fielding, 'Conformists, Puritans and the Church Courts: The Diocese of Peterborough, 1603-1642' (unpublished University of Birmingham PhD Thesis, 1989) pp. 60-61; Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, p. 227.

<sup>92</sup> Harley, 'James Hart of Northampton', p. 367; Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, p. 54; Robert Shelford, *Five Pious and Learned Discourses* (Cambridge: Printers to the University, 1635) sig. Q4v; Jason McElligott, 'Duncon, Eleazar (1597/8-1660)', *ODNB*, 17, pp. 264-5.



So Cotta and Hart's fierce opposition to priest-physicians can be seen, in large part, as reflecting the Calvinist religious outlook they shared. But this only really offers a starting point towards understanding their works and why they departed from earlier anti-quack literature, and what they were seeking to achieve by publicizing their outlook in such vociferous terms at this time. For Cotta and Hart were by no means the first English Calvinists to take up their pens against empirics; indeed, Calvinist theology seems to have promoted a particular hostility towards irregular medical practice in general. This went beyond its emphasis on the doctrine of callings, originating in Calvin's own endorsement of learned Galenic physic.<sup>93</sup> William Perkins advised his readers 'to make choise of such phisitions as are knowne to be well learned, & men of experience', and cited Forestus in condemning uroscopy.<sup>94</sup> Henry Holland, despite (or, perhaps, prompted by) his own prosecution for illicit practice urged the afflicted to 'seeke for the godly, wise and learned Physician, and take heed of wicked ignorant bold Emphyricks, which kill many men'.<sup>95</sup>

Such sentiments make it clear that later Calvinist opposition to the practice of medicine by clergymen by no means indicated a lack of respect for the profession of physic itself; in fact, both professions were seen as too important and too demanding to be combined.<sup>96</sup> Godly ministers generally accepted the orthodox approach to natural philosophy in which Galenism was rooted, as will be discussed further below in chapter four. They also tended to regard the medical profession as somewhat homologous with their own; both were appointed by God to heal the body and soul of mankind respectively, in accordance with divine providence, and both dispensed advice and remedies, on the basis of a long education and specialised knowledge rooted in a mastery of ancient languages and texts, to an often unwilling and ungrateful public.<sup>97</sup> For Lancelot Dawes both the physicians and his fellow clergymen, along with the magistracy, represented 'the chief pillars, to support a Christian common-wealth'. He likened the three vocations to the liver, heart and brain respectively of the body politic; as well as emphasising the necessity of each, this seems to reaffirm the importance authors such as Cotta and Hart attached to the

---

<sup>93</sup> Wear, 'Religious beliefs and medicine', pp. 156-7.

<sup>94</sup> William Perkins, *A salve for a sicke man* (Cambridge: John Legate, 1595) sig. E4v-E5.

<sup>95</sup> Henry Holland, 'An Admonicion concerning the use of Physick', in I. D., *Salomons Pest-House or Towre-Royall* (London: Thomas Harper and Henry Holland, 1630) sig. H-H4. sig. H3.

<sup>96</sup> Harley, 'James Hart of Northampton', p. 368.

<sup>97</sup> Harley, 'Medical Metaphors', pp. 404-5.

maintenance of these distinct professions as critical elements in the maintenance of social and moral order.<sup>98</sup>

The views of Calvinist clergymen on such matters surely influenced Francis Herring, author of arguably the most significant English attacks on quackery prior to Cotta's; for he himself seems to have been of a puritan disposition, playing a key role on the 'puritan' side during the controversy over the Mary Glover possession case (see chapter four below), and pursuing a secondary career as a fervent Protestant polemicist.<sup>99</sup> His particularly vociferous detestation of Paracelsus, for example, seems to reflect the outlook of the English Calvinist mainstream during this period. Yet, as we have seen, Herring's work was generally very consistent with that of other authors of the Elizabethan and very early Jacobean periods, such as Duncon and John Securis, and with the outlook of the College of Physicians. There is little in his anti-quack publications that anticipates the striking departures made by Cotta and Hart; in particular, Herring's work makes no mention of priest-physicians, despite writing at a time when the college's own attitude towards such practitioners seems to have been hardening.<sup>100</sup> So Calvinist sentiment in itself is insufficient as an explanation for the particular preoccupations of Cotta and Hart's works. So too are changes in the Church of England at the national level; as has already been noted, Calvinist hegemony was arguably more entrenched early in the reign of James I, when Cotta was writing, than it had been for Herring during the last years of Elizabeth.<sup>101</sup> To fully grasp what prompted Cotta and Hart to write their anti-quack treatises, and what they were trying to achieve with them, it is therefore necessary to view them within the local context of Jacobean Northampton, the religious politics of which were not typical of the period.

#### IV

Although the town of Northampton itself was a puritan stronghold, it lay within the diocese of Peterborough, which was during this period to prove an early arena of conflict between puritans and a powerful circle of what John Fielding describes as

---

<sup>98</sup> Lancelot Dawes, *Sermons Preached Upon Severall Occasions* (London: Humphrey Robinson, 1653) sig. P.

<sup>99</sup> Francis Herring, *Popish Pietie, or, The first part of the Historie of that horrible and barbarous conspiracie, commonly called the Powder-treason*, translated by A. P. (London: William Jones, 1610); Michael MacDonald (ed.), *Witchcraft and Hysteria in Elizabethan London: Edward Jorden and the Mary Glover Case* (Routledge: London, 1991), pp. xiv-xv.

<sup>100</sup> Birken, 'Royal College of Physicians', p. 53.

<sup>101</sup> Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, pp. 5, 7, 27.

‘avant-garde conformists’, which had coalesced under the patronage of Thomas Dove, bishop from 1601 to 1630.<sup>102</sup> While Dove was not himself closely tied to any particular faction within the church, he consistently promoted representatives of ‘a particular strand of conformist thinking’, that associated with Richard Neile and his clients, to positions of power within the church hierarchy of the diocese. He began by appointing as his first archdeacon John Buckeridge, a lifelong friend of Neile, tutor to William Laud and future conformist spokesman at the York House Conference.<sup>103</sup> As an absentee, Buckeridge appointed two deputies to exercise his responsibilities, David Owen and Robert Butler, both associates of Neile. Butler initially established himself as the leading figure within this circle, becoming archdeacon himself in 1611; after his death the following year, the civil lawyer Sir John Lambe, another friend of Neile’s initially promoted by Butler, rose to a position of dominance, becoming chancellor of the diocese in 1615; he later went on to become a high commissioner and dean of the court of arches under Archbishop Laud. Other members of the group included the clergymen Samuel Clarke, chaplain to Prince Charles, and Robert Sibthorpe, Lambe’s brother-in-law and perhaps the most zealous voice for this strain of conformist thought, later to find fame as one of the most vociferous supporters of the forced loan.

The diocese of Peterborough, which covered the whole of Northamptonshire and Rutland as well as the Soke of Peterborough itself, ‘was contemporarily a byword for Puritanism’ and ‘heir to a puritan tradition in which godly magistrates and patrons worked hand-in-glove with their clerical counterparts to promote the cause of further reformation’; it was therefore inevitable that conflict would soon break out with the conformists taking over the diocesan courts.<sup>104</sup> The opening shot was fired by Butler in 1603, when he threatened with suspension any ministers who did not, among various other ceremonial requirements, use the sign of the cross in baptism, wear the surplice, and order their congregations to receive communion kneeling. The following year this was given the backing of a royal order for the enforcement of conformity, and over the following two years twenty-nine ministers were suspended in the

---

<sup>102</sup> J. Fielding, ‘Lambe, Sir John (c.1566-1646)’, *ODNB*, 32, pp. 297-8.

<sup>103</sup> John Fielding, ‘Conformists, Puritans and the Church Courts: The Diocese of Peterborough, 1603-1642’ (unpublished University of Birmingham PhD Thesis, 1989), pp. 32, 34.

<sup>104</sup> Fielding, ‘Conformists, Puritans and the Church Courts’, p. 2.

diocese, sixteen of who were ultimately deprived. This represented almost a fifth of the national total, more than for any other diocese.<sup>105</sup>

Among those suspended, and it seems the particular object of Butler's enmity, was Robert Catelin, the vicar of Cotta and Hart's home parish of All Saints and a leading figure among Northamptonshire's puritans. Catelin avoided deprivation at this point after the town's corporation appealed to Robert Cecil, but was again pursued by Butler in 1611, King James himself having expressed displeasure at his continuing nonconformity, which had probably been brought to the King's attention by Richard Neile. He was finally deprived in 1613, the conformist official David Owen being imposed upon All Saints as his replacement; but Catelin was shortly afterwards presented to the benefice of Wootton instead, by Cotta's patron William Tate.<sup>106</sup>

In a break with earlier convention, the drive for conformity in Peterborough was further extended to the gentry, Richard Knightley and Cotta's patient Euseby Andrew being presented in 1604 for refusing to kneel at communion. In response, the puritan gentry of Northamptonshire decided to present the King with a petition pleading for the reversal of the deprivations; drawn up by Sir Francis Hastings, this was signed by forty-five gentlemen, Tate among them, and presented to the Privy Council and King by Hart's future patron Edward Montague, along with Richard Knightley and his son Sir Valentine. The petition was scrupulously loyal and subservient in its wording: 'We your Majesty's loyal and true-hearted subjects...with all reverence upon our knees prostrate ourselves at your Majesty's feet, and most humbly beg and crave of your highnesse that the hand of your kingly favour may be stretched out to moderate the extremity of this decree', which robbed them and their countrymen of 'many faithful preachers' who had tirelessly 'confuted papisme, repressed Brownism and all other schismatical and heretical opinions carefully'.<sup>107</sup>

But this failed to ameliorate the petition in the eyes of the King, who regarded it as tantamount to rebellion, rejecting its demands and removing Montague from the commission of the peace. Around this time, rumours of an impending St Bartholomew's Day-style massacre by Catholics under the leadership of Thomas Tresham began to spread around Northampton, further fuelling the feeling among the

---

<sup>105</sup> Fielding, 'Arminianism in the Localities: Peterborough Diocese, 1603-1642', in Kenneth Fincham (ed.), *The Early Stuart Church, 1603-1642* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993) pp. 93-113. p. 98.

<sup>106</sup> Fielding, 'Conformists, Puritans and the Church Courts', p. 21.

<sup>107</sup> Quoted in Sheils, *Diocese of Peterborough*, p. 110.

town's puritans that they were under imminent threat.<sup>108</sup> In 1611 James issued a further royal proclamation for the enforcement of conformity, and Butler ensured that the requirements in Peterborough were even more rigorous than before, leading to a new round of presentations and suspensions. Butler's promotion to archdeacon in the same year brought the conformists to the peak of their pre-1630s power in the diocese, and further reinforced the siege mentality among Northampton's puritans.

It was in the following year that Cotta published the *Short Discoverie*, a work that primarily attacked a group of clergymen drawn mainly from the conformist wing of the church, and whose practices could be seen as typifying what puritans regarded as the worst excesses of conformist divinity; all of which Cotta criticised from a consistently Calvinistic perspective. Not only was Cotta closely linked with several leading figures within the puritan opposition to the conformist regime, he seems to have taken an active role within it himself, being amongst a group of Northampton puritans prosecuted by John Lambe in the Star Chamber for composing and spreading a rhyme deriding the church courts. According to this scurrilous piece, Lambe 'doth by slights and coning shifts his lies send out everywhere', and his wife 'comes not to the church but lives in dregges of poperie', while David Owen was 'a powder knave then all the rest...a parson poore and ever bare, which of his word his hand or oth, have never any honest care'.<sup>109</sup>

Taking all of this into consideration, an interpretation of the *Short Discoverie* as representing a veiled work of puritan religious protest against the conformist diocesan authorities in Peterborough becomes increasingly tenable. But why would Cotta have such chosen to veil this critique so heavily, and in such a manner, that it has become largely concealed from later readers? There are several possible explanations, the most obvious being that the reaction to the 1605 petition, together with Cotta's own subsequent prosecution, had revealed the dangers inherent in launching a more direct protest. Embedding his protest within such a book also allowed him to address what were undoubtedly genuine objections over priest-

---

<sup>108</sup> Shiels, *Diocese of Peterborough*, p. 126; Fielding, 'Arminianism', p. 99.

<sup>109</sup> National Archives, Star Chamber 8/205/19, ff. 6-6v. It may be noteworthy that the authors of this rhyme treat Robert Butler with remarkable mildness: 'surely he is an honest man and voide of most hipocrisie', although 'he wold by pride exalted be, a Bishoppes living for to spend.' This may reflect a nervousness among Northampton's puritan leaders about attacking the most senior figures within the local church hierarchy, perhaps reflecting the same anxious conservatism and emphasis on social order that characterises Cotta and Hart's work, and anticipating the attitudes of later authors towards the Laudian regime in the 1630s.

physicians themselves, and irregular practitioners in general; focussing on an ostensibly medical issue further allowed Cotta to write from a position of professional authority, and without himself seeming to breach the doctrine of callings that was such an important element within his arguments and the puritan worldview in general.

However, using the issue of priest-physicians to voice his objections also allowed Cotta to make some telling points in regard to the issues of conformity and social order, both of which were central to the puritans' difficulties during this period. James I was, for most of his life at least, basically a Calvinist, and therefore in fundamental doctrinal agreement with the puritans. But he was also nervous about the degree of organisation and gentry-involvement within the puritan movement, and this nervousness was periodically manifested in bouts of intransigence towards puritan nonconformity, as evidenced by the orders of 1604 and 1611. Prominent conformists such as John Lambe and, in particular, Richard Neile played on these fears by bringing instances of puritan nonconformity to the King's attention, and by seeking to link this to a threat to social hierarchy and royal supremacy originating with the lower orders, from amongst which puritans were depicted as drawing most of their strength. James's susceptibility to these kind of arguments is evident in his reaction to the petition of 1605.<sup>110</sup>

Conformists of this stripe also sought to argue that Calvinist doctrine itself, still the mainstream in the Jacobean Church of England, was intrinsically linked with such rebellious tendencies. In particular, they emphasised the core Calvinist doctrine of predestination, which they held to nurture rebellious and egalitarian tendencies in those who believed themselves elect.<sup>111</sup> Conversely, these conformists presented themselves as defenders of social and ecclesiastical hierarchy, demonstrated both in their determination to enforce ceremonial conformity and through their writing and preaching. David Owen's 1610 manuscript work 'The power of Princes, and the dutie of Subjects' warned that 'the Puritanes have gathered their error, of the power of states in Monarchies, to punish and depose Kinges, then which, noe opinion can be more dangerous, where the Nobilitie, are as redy to practise, as Puritane preachers are to prescribe'.<sup>112</sup> The printed version of this work, published later that same year as *Herod and Pilate reconciled*, condemned 'The concord of Papist and Puritan...for the

<sup>110</sup> Fielding, 'Conformists, Puritans and the Church Courts', pp. 60, 131-2.

<sup>111</sup> Fielding, 'Conformists, Puritans and the Church Courts', p. 121; Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, p. 7.

<sup>112</sup> BL, Royal MSS, 18 B v.

Coercion, Deposition, and Killing of Kings’, while Owen’s 1622 Latin treatise *Anti-Paræus*, published in an English translation by the royalist army chaplain Robert Mossom in 1642, defended ‘the free and absolute Power of Kings’, against the encroachment of Pope, ‘Presbytery’ and all other ‘Anti-monarchians’.<sup>113</sup> Robert Sibthorpe promoted a similarly authoritarian view of monarchical power, preaching in 1627 that all must pay the forced loan or any other levy required by the monarch, and labelling any who refused as puritans.<sup>114</sup>

These were precisely the kinds of impressions that Cotta sought to counter with the *Short Discoverie*, by arguing that it was in fact Calvinists, with their emphasis on the doctrine of callings and the imposition of religious and moral discipline through devoted preaching, who were the true bulwarks of an orderly kingdom. Andrew McRae notes ‘a widely consistent shift of focus in preaching, from social justice to social order’ over the course of the Elizabethan period, and identifies Perkins’s *Treatise of the Vocations* as a key product of this shift; this was the tradition within puritan thought which Cotta sought to emphasise.<sup>115</sup> The conformists on the other hand, Cotta argued, nurtured within their ranks individuals whose willingness ‘to breake publicke edicts, to transgresse lawes, to contemne magistracie’, when combined with their abdication of their preaching responsibilities, threatened to overturn the entire social order of the kingdom.<sup>116</sup>

What was more, such individuals were guilty of far more serious nonconformities than any of those of which puritans were accused, in the form of occult practices such as judicial astrology. While Cotta does not issue an outright condemnation of astrology, he denounces excessive reliance upon it as both detracting from God’s omnipotence and, once again, threatening the social order: ‘if heavenly influences compell or force mens actions, and their wils be led and not free, unjustly any man shall be unjust, neither can the lawes of God or men be just ordained against wilfull offenders; but God is just, and lawes are righteous, and therefore mens actions

---

<sup>113</sup> David Owen, *Herod and Pilate reconciled: Or, The Concord of Papist and Puritan* (Cambridge: Cantrell Legge, 1610) sig. ¶; *Anti-Paræus, or, A Treatise in the Defence of the Royall Right of Kings*, trans. Robert Mossom (York: Stephen Bulkley, 1642) sig. B2v-B3.

<sup>114</sup> Fielding, ‘Conformists, Puritans and the Church Courts’, p. 132.

<sup>115</sup> Andrew McRae, *God speed the plough: The representation of agrarian England, 1500-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) pp. 65-71.

<sup>116</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. M4v; Patrick Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants: the church in English society 1559-1625* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982) p. 150-1.

are their owne'.<sup>117</sup> Hart closely echoes these sentiments, with his warnings that priest-physicians would 'have the world returne unto the confused chaos againe', and by drawing attention to their not only using judicial astrology, but even publishing their own almanacs. He depicts all of this as a further outgrowth of their disorderly behaviour: 'as we commonly see that one error draweth on another so have those men to their former fault added yet another'.<sup>118</sup>

Attacking priest-physicians therefore allowed both authors to turn the most dangerous accusations levelled at Northamptonshire's puritans, which had provided the basis for their harassment over the previous years, back upon the conformists; Hart's intentions in this regard are further flagged by his dedication of both his first two works to Prince Charles. By focussing upon a group of clergymen whose heterodox practices were common knowledge, they made it awkward for the conformists to respond to these attacks, at least without seeming to give their approval to such activities. Some conformists undoubtedly were uncomfortable with priest-physicians, not least among them William Piers, Dove's successor as Bishop of Peterborough, as we shall see in the next chapter. But for all their control over the church court machinery of the diocese, the conformists were always a minority faction that faced constant resistance in their attempts to enforce ceremonial conformity. They were not therefore in any position to pursue clergymen who were happy to conform and broadly supportive of their vision for the church.<sup>119</sup>

Again, the renowned figure of Richard Napier was crucial to Cotta, and subsequently Hart, in making these points about conformity. For Napier combined his staunch conformity with an array of heterodox practices. He was primarily renowned for his expertise in astrology, which he had studied under Simon Forman, a controversial subject but one not without its clerical defenders, William Laud chief among them. However, his occult interests extended well beyond this and into the realms of hermetic magic and the raising of angels. Such practices faced uniform

---

<sup>117</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. O.

<sup>118</sup> BL, C 54. b. 6, ff. 10v, 12.

<sup>119</sup> Hart, *Diet*, sig. Mmm2v; Fielding, 'Conformists, Puritans and the Church Courts' pp. 97, 121.



public condemnation from conformists as well as puritans, and those who pursued them were technically liable for the death penalty.<sup>120</sup>

Napier could therefore be regarded as an extremely prominent local manifestation of that combination of intransigent ceremonial conformity, pastoral neglect and disorderly, heterodox practices that Cotta and Hart sought to present as typifying conformist divinity, and both authors probably hoped his example would help connect these various issues in the minds of their readers; William Lilly's interpretation of Cotta's subsequent work on witchcraft as an attack on Napier seems to suggest that such hopes were, to some degree at least, justified. Hart's lengthy account of Napier's negligent treatment of an Alderman of Northampton, outlined above, offered a particularly obvious vignette of the threat to magistracy men such as him presented, Hart condemning Napier for his 'carelesse (and as I thinke) irregular and ignorant proceeding in this businesse, which concerned no lesse than a mans life: the life...of a magistrate, whom this corporation could not so well at this time have spared'.<sup>121</sup>

Cotta and Hart may have sought to put the example of John Markes to similar use, Hart notably pairing Napier's negligent treatment of said local magistrate with Markes's equally fatal mistreatment of that other pillar of order within the community, a local parson.<sup>122</sup> While Markes did not enjoy the same national fame as Napier, it is clear that over the course of his fifty years as rector of Gayton he developed a considerable medical practice, ultimately passed on to his eldest son James, and acquired some degree of renown, largely through William Samwell's promotion of his services and his association with Francis Anthony.<sup>123</sup> This spread at least as far as Oxford, where the physician Henry Ashworth, on falling ill himself, sent for *aurum potabile* from Markes after hearing of its supposed beneficial effects on Samwell. In a letter to Cotta reproduced in *Cotta contra Antonium*, Ashworth related the complete ineffectiveness of this remedy in treating his condition, and makes it clear that Markes shared Napier's enthusiasm for occult practices: 'It were fitter for M. Markes, and men of the ministry' he insists, 'to attend their office &

---

<sup>120</sup> MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam*, p. 18. See BL, Sloane MS 3822 for Napier's scrawled relation of an angelic consultation in which 'Raphael told me' of 'a great plague 1609 in London & through the world'.

<sup>121</sup> Hart, *Anatomie*, sig. Q4-Q4v.

<sup>122</sup> Hart, *Anatomie*, sig. I4-I4v.

<sup>123</sup> NRO, Archdeaconry of Northampton Wills, 1<sup>st</sup> Series, Book EV 323; 2<sup>nd</sup> Series, Book G 81.

function, rather than...to give doubtfull answers as Wizards, or to erect false figures as Impostors; or to professe soothsaying as Magitians...or to doe the worke of the Lord negligently'.<sup>124</sup> Gerence James, protégé of Napier and Markes's successor to the vicarage of Pattishall, likewise shared in both men's occult interests, a collection of magical treatises in his hand surviving in the British Library.<sup>125</sup>

The interests shared by these men, considered together with Cotta and Hart's descriptions of multiple priest-physicians apparently co-operating in the treatment of patients, may begin to suggest the vague outline of a network of clerical practitioners joined by a common theological, medical and philosophical outlook. This would have represented a dangerous phenomenon in the conspiracy-prone minds of many of Northampton's puritans, and Cotta and Hart's work would clearly play well on such concerns.<sup>126</sup>

A note of caution is necessary here, however, as it is clear that lay puritans did not always share in the objections to priest-physicians harboured by puritan physicians and clergymen, at least not in times of desperate illness. William Samwell was himself a puritan and a signatory to the 1605 petition. In a letter to Anthony, Markes described how Samwell had endured various treatments from Cotta before Markes 'perswaded the giving of your medicine. But at the first I could not obtaine that he should take a new and unknowne thing. At last by the importunity of his friends, and the necessity of his disease still increasing, he yeilded and tooke it.'<sup>127</sup> Puritans can likewise be found among the patients of Richard Napier, although probably in disproportionately small numbers. Local puritan divines were anxious to discourage their flocks from resorting to him and using the treatments he prescribed; Lilly describes how Napier gave one epileptic girl 'a constellated Ring, upon wearing whereof, she recovered perfectly', until 'some scrupulous Divines' convinced her parents it was 'Diabolical'.<sup>128</sup>

---

<sup>124</sup> *Cotta contra Antonium*, sig. H4v-I2v.

<sup>125</sup> BL, Sloane MS 3826; C 54. b. 6, f. 8; Harley, 'James Hart of Northampton', p. 380; George Baker, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Northampton*, 2 vols (London: J. B. Nichols & Son, 1822-41) vol. 1, p. 300.

<sup>126</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. I3; Hart, *Anatomie*, sig. I4.

<sup>127</sup> *Cotta contra Antonium*, sig. F2v-F3.

<sup>128</sup> Lilly, *Life and Times*, sig. D3; MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam*, p. 30-1.

So as well as on the one hand using priest-physicians to attack the conformists more broadly, Cotta may also have sought to stress the association of these practitioners with anti-Calvinist divinity in order to steer his fellow puritans, particularly from amongst the gentry, away from resorting to priest-physicians themselves. By doing so they both endangered their own souls and the order of the kingdom, and gave succour to their ecclesiastical enemies. Of course, this was also the social group from amongst which Cotta most assiduously courted patients, and while Cotta's puritan activism leaves little reason to doubt the sincerity of his opposition to the conformist regime in Peterborough, it is worth noting that this opposition also accorded with his material interests in this respect. Fielding notes that signing the 1605 petition 'was likely to boost a gentleman's prestige', citing the example of Sir Arthur Throckmorton, a newcomer to the county who signed it despite there being 'nothing to suggest that he saw himself as a member of the godly; rather, this was his chance to win prestige among his peers'.<sup>129</sup> Cotta certainly was one of the godly, but it is nevertheless clear that in maintaining the patronage of men such as William Tate and Euseby Andrew, and expanding his practice within the circles they had access to, it was very much in his professional interests to somehow put his objections to the diocesan authorities into print.

## VI

James Hart's repetition of Cotta's arguments and concerns, particularly over issues of conformity and social order, together with his similar patronage connections among Northamptonshire's puritan gentry, help to mark his work out as a continuation of his predecessor's veiled attack on the diocese of Peterborough's conformist authorities. Like Cotta, Hart was actively involved in the puritan opposition to the conformist regime within Northampton, as a supporter of Robert Catelin and opponent of both David Owen's incumbency at All Saints and Robert Sibthorpe's at St Giles, in the east of the town.

Hart is also named as a trustee under the will of the schoolmaster Simon Wastell, who had been presented for aiding Catelin in 1604 and had then supported and assisted him after his reinstatement with such assiduousness that he was to be

---

<sup>129</sup> Fielding, 'Conformists, Puritans and the Church Courts', p. 195.

awarded the freedom of the borough in 1607.<sup>130</sup> Like Hart's first two works, both editions of Wastell's verse epitome of the Bible were published by Robert Mylbourne, and following his medical co-religionists he used this work to pass comment on the plight of Northampton's puritans; in the second edition, appearing in 1632, Wastell lamented of England 'that the light is come into the world amongst us, and wee love darknesse more then light...if we have but so much of the gold of the Sanctuary as wil tip our tongues, & guild over our externall cariage, we thinke we have enough'.<sup>131</sup>

However, as similar as the contents of Hart's arguments are to those of Cotta, as well as those of other local godly figures such as Wastell, when the two physicians' works are viewed alongside one another some noteworthy differences do become apparent, albeit mostly relating to their style and presentation. While Cotta identified priest-physicians as 'The grand and most common offenders', with which the *Short Discoverie* dealt, and directs subtle or marginal criticisms at them throughout the book, he reserved his most direct criticism of them for a single chapter towards the middle of what was ostensibly a general work; even here, his language is relatively restrained.<sup>132</sup> In contrast, Hart placed his most direct and vehement attacks on priest-physicians in the preface of his first work, *The Arraignment of Urines*, and in a manuscript treatise entirely and explicitly devoted to that subject. He is also markedly more forthright in his condemnation of the 'foule Ulcer' such practitioners represented, asking 'may wee not as well justify Judas as these men, if not better?'.<sup>133</sup>

Such flourishes are characteristic of the generally more combative and confident tone of Hart's work when compared to Cotta's, and while this may in part have reflected differences between the personalities of the two authors, it can also be seen as a consequence of changes in the local religious situation that they were both seeking to influence. As we have seen, the *Short Discoverie* was written at a time when the conformists were nearing the peak of their pre-Laudian power, and as such it can be read as a counter-attack from a puritan faction that felt besieged and vulnerable. By the time Hart came to publish the *Arraignment* in 1623, however, the

---

<sup>130</sup> NRO, Arch. of North'ton wills, 2<sup>nd</sup> Series, Book L 137; Fielding, 'Conformists, Puritans and the Church Courts', p. 185; Sheils, *Diocese of Peterborough*, pp. 126-7.

<sup>131</sup> Simon Wastell, *Microbiblion, or the Bibles Epitome* (London: Robert Mylbourne, 1629) sig. A4v; *A True Christians Daily Delight: Being The Summe of every chapter of the Old and New Testaments* (London: G. Eld and M. Flesher for Robert Mylbourne, 1623).

<sup>132</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. M3v.

<sup>133</sup> Forestus, *Arraignment*, sig. A4v; BL, C 54. b. 6, ff. 9v, 6v.

conformists had suffered a reversal in their fortunes, as the godly gentry of Northamptonshire launched a fight-back centred on parliament and the lay courts.

In 1616 articles were brought before Sir Edward Coke at the assizes accusing Sir John Lambe of persecuting the people of the county, Lambe's patron John Williams having to intervene to save him. Five years later Lambe was called before parliament as a delinquent on similar charges; although Williams was ultimately again able to rescue him, this time by securing him a knighthood, he was nevertheless now forced to abandon the vigorous attempts to enforce ceremonial conformity that he had pursued in the previous decade. Meanwhile, the puritans in Northampton itself had succeeded in forcing Owen to resign from All Saints in 1616; this was followed in 1619 by Sibthorpe's resignation from St Giles. Both were replaced by puritan ministers, Jeremiah Lewis and William Bird respectively, the latter being an old enemy of Lambe's.<sup>134</sup> Northamptonshire's godly therefore had good reason to be in a more confident mood by 1623; as well as being reflected in Hart's more combative work, this change in circumstances may explain why Cotta was now willing to send *Cotta contra Antonium*, with its markedly more forthright attack on John Markes than that which had appeared in the *Short Discoverie*, to the printers after holding it back in manuscript for seven years.

The leading figure within this puritan fight-back was Hart's patron Edward Montague. As well as supporting the charges against Lambe in 1616 and 1621, Montague took the lead in opposing one of the most unpopular aspects of Lambe's regime amongst puritans, his attempts to enforce the Book of Sports. Issued nationally by King James in 1618, this permitted most pastimes after evening prayers on Sunday, outraging the strict sabbatarianism of Northampton's godly. Montague first sought to take advantage of the book's wording to actually prevent disorderly public festivities, using its provision that people should pursue the activities it permitted in their own parishes to try and prevent the town feast of Grafton Underwood in 1618, by blocking guests and entertainers from other parishes from attending; the attempt was unsuccessful, but became a local *cause célèbre*, sharply polarizing the rival factions.<sup>135</sup> Three years later Montague took a leading role in drafting a parliamentary bill forbidding illegal sports on Sunday even after evening prayer; initially refused

---

<sup>134</sup> Fielding, 'Conformists, Puritans and the Church Courts', p. 84-5, 198, 77.

<sup>135</sup> Fielding, 'Conformists, Puritans and the Church Courts', pp. 77-8.

royal consent, this ultimately became law in 1625. He also sponsored a bill against pluralities, and gave prominent support to a bill to provide for an ‘educated and resident clergy’.<sup>136</sup>

Hart places his protest against priest-physicians firmly within the context of this broader campaign for redress through parliament of puritan grievances, led by his patron: ‘the assembling of so many sage Senators, according to the ancient and laudable custome of this kingdome, to apply fit salves to the festered sores of the same, putteth me in good hope of some redresse, as well of the abuses here complained of, as of divers other disorders.’<sup>137</sup> Among these other abuses of which Hart complained was ‘that many of our learned Levites are not so well provided for as I could wish’, having to survive on livings ‘not exceeding forty, thirty or twenty pounds’; in contrast, he claims, some of ‘the most grosse and notorious’ exponents of the dual vocation held livings of ‘four or five hundreth pounds a yeere, & some of them againe duple, some triple beneficed men, non residents they cannot chuse but bee’, while still others were ‘knownen to be open usurers.’<sup>138</sup> All of these complaints keyed in with Montague’s concerns.

In addition to his parliamentary activities, Montague was a major source of patronage for local godly ministers. According to John Fielding, these formed ‘a group of likeminded men’ who ‘constituted a tight-knit association bound by ties of kinship and friendship’, centred on Montague and under his protection.<sup>139</sup> This circle included the clergymen Joseph Bentham, Nicolas Estwick, William Spencer and, most prominently, Robert Bolton, all of whom, like Montague himself, adhered to a strain of puritanism characterised by keen moderation and intense social conservatism. These men helped to formulate Montague’s agenda, and although their published references to their patron were obsequious in the extreme, they appear to have been considerably more frank and firm towards him in private, Montague asserting during a dispute over a strip of land that ‘Mr Bentham will not let me inclose’.<sup>140</sup>

---

<sup>136</sup> Fielding, ‘Conformists, Puritans and the Church Courts’, p. 200.

<sup>137</sup> Hart, *Anatomie*, sig. S4; see also sig. A5; BL, C 54. b. 6, ff. 4-4v.

<sup>138</sup> BL, C 54. b. 6, ff. 7v, 8.

<sup>139</sup> Fielding, ‘Conformists, Puritans and the Church Courts’, p. 25.

<sup>140</sup> Esther S. Cope, *The Life of a Public Man: Edward, First Baron Montagu of Boughton, 1562-1644* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1981) p. 146; Robert Bolton, *Some Generall Directions*

Hart seems to have been firmly ensconced within this group, and his work too in many ways reflects their outlook; in turn, his ideas seem to have permeated the thinking of his clerical associates. In particular, a strong emphasis on social order and the strict maintenance of the social and political hierarchy was a cornerstone of Montague and his circle's thinking. This is strongly evident in the work of Robert Bolton, who insisted that 'Sovereignty is sacred in itselfe' and thus 'ennobles the subject that receives it, with a remarkable splendour, and a kind of divine character', a 'deputation' of which could be seen 'shining in the face and presence of every subordinate magistrate.'<sup>141</sup> Like Hart, he warned of dire consequences if the existing social order were allowed to break down:

take Sovereignty from the face of the earth, and you turne it into a Cockpit. men would become cut-throats and Canibals one unto another. Murder, adulteries, incests, rapes, robberies, perjuries, witchcrafts, blasphemies, all kinds of villanies, outrages and savage cruelty, would overflow all Countries. We should have a very hell upon earth, and the face of it covered with blood, as it was once with water.<sup>142</sup>

In what may have been intended as a riposte to David Owen, Bolton goes on to argue that 'our Religion affords no rules of rebellion; nor allowes and grants any dispensation to subjects for the oath of their Allegiance', defending this assertion on the grounds that 'our English Popelings have made so many bloody assaults against the sacred persons of Queene Elizabeth and King James; and the Protestants of France having farre better opportunity, and more power, have never stird rebelliously against their Kings'.<sup>143</sup> Crucially, Bolton seems to have carried this respect for hierarchy into the ecclesiastical sphere. He praised the Calvinist bishop of Derry George Downame, who had preached and published in defence of the apostolic and divine nature of episcopacy while seeking not to alienate moderate puritans, as 'one of the greatest schollers of either Kingdome'.<sup>144</sup>

---

*for a Comfortable Walking with God* (London: Felix Kyngston for Edmund Weaver, 1626) sig. A2-A6v.

<sup>141</sup> Robert Bolton, *Two Sermons Preached at Northampton* (London: George Miller for Edward Bagshaw, 1635) sig. Bv.

<sup>142</sup> Bolton, *Two Sermons*, sig. B4v.

<sup>143</sup> Bolton, *Two Sermons*, sig. E3-E3v.

<sup>144</sup> Quoted in Harley, 'James Hart of Northampton', p. 373; George Downame, *Two Sermons, the one Commending the Ministerie in Generall: the other Defending the Office of Bishops in Particular* (London: Felix Kyngston for Matthew Lownes, 1608). Note also Downame's remarks on the weight of the clerical calling and its appointment by God (sig.Bv-B2).

It is likely no coincidence that Hart himself later approvingly referenced Downname on this same point.<sup>145</sup> Bolton was prone to ill health, and took a strong interest in medical matters; in particular, he fiercely rejected the notion promoted by the likes of Robert Burton and Richard Napier that the zealous religiosity of puritans was linked to mental illness, condemning such theories as resulting from ‘the extremest malice of the most mortall enemies to the waies of God’.<sup>146</sup> Hart refers to Bolton’s work in his ‘Discourse of the lawlesse intrusion of Parsons & Vicars’, and David Harley has suggested that the two men may have collaborated to some degree in the production of this treatise, Bolton providing Hart with the many telling references to canon law upon which he draws; Hart in turn may have provided Bolton with some of the medical references of which his own work made profuse use.<sup>147</sup> Preaching at Bolton’s funeral in 1631, Nicholas Estwick delivered a statement of the clerical vocation highly reminiscent of that promoted by Hart: ‘other professions do aime at the good of this life, the Physitian at the health of the body...but the end of the Ministry alone, is chiefly to save mens soules’.<sup>148</sup>

Bolton himself was succeeded as vicar of Broughton by Joseph Bentham, who references Hart directly in the dedicatory epistle to his 1635 work, *The Christian Conflict*, addressed to Montague. Bentham seems to have shared fully in Hart’s key concerns, condemning ‘changers of calling unwarrantably...who through pride, selfe-love, and discontent, run out of, forsake and leave those particular places and select stations wherein Christ our Commander hath settled them’, and insisting that such behaviour ‘Argues much disobedience and disloyalty’ and ‘Is a meanes to disorder the Church and Common-wealth.’ He particularly abhorred ‘Ministers of Gods Word’ who ‘through idlenesse, covetousnesse, fearfullnesse or other sinfull and sinister respects...forsake the Gospell, and their profession.’<sup>149</sup> As this suggests, Bentham also fully shared his predecessor Bolton’s intense concern for social order and was even more resolute in his upholding of monarchical power, asserting that even when the proper godly virtues ‘are wanting in the government of Kings and Princes, subjects

---

<sup>145</sup> Hart, *Diet*, sig. (aa)v.

<sup>146</sup> Robert Bolton, *Instructions for a Right Comforting Afflicted Consciencs, with speciall Antidotes against some grievous temptations* (London: Felix Kyngston for Thomas Weaver, 1631) sig. O6v.

<sup>147</sup> BL, C 54. b. 6, f. 7; Harley, ‘James Hart of Northampton’, pp. 367, 378.

<sup>148</sup> Nicolas Estwick, *A Learned and Godly Sermon Preached on the XIX. day of December, Anno Dom. MDCXXXI* (London: George Miller, 1633) sig. G4v-H.

<sup>149</sup> Joseph Bentham, *The Christian Conflict* (London: G. M. for Philemon Stephens and Christopher Meredith, 1635), sig. A5, Aa4v-Aa5.



dare not complaine, check, controll or reprove them...Subjects neither can nor ought to correct their Princes.’<sup>150</sup>

Such sentiments might not have seemed out of place in David Owen or Robert Sibthorpe’s work, and with the Laudian regime approaching its zenith they were leading Montague and his circle to become increasingly estranged from the more radical elements among the Northamptonshire godly. After presenting the petition of 1605, Montague had won respect and admiration from across the puritan spectrum, together with a position of leadership that he was able to carry into the parliaments of the early 1620s to such effect. However, as is reflected in the views of the clergymen he chose to patronise, Montague always placed an overriding emphasis on social order and the maintenance of the traditional hierarchy. He demonstrated this in 1607 by taking the lead in putting down the Midland Revolt, a popular protest against enclosure centred on the lands of Thomas Tresham, despite both his family’s long standing enmity towards the Treshams and the sympathy he had earlier expressed for the victims of enclosure in parliament.<sup>151</sup>

By the mid 1630s, Montague’s standing amongst the county’s puritans had declined sharply. His apparent support for the Duke of Buckingham in 1626, followed by his prompt payment of the forced loan in 1628, led him to become closely associated with an increasingly unpopular court; this was reflected in the defeat of his candidates for knight of the shire in the elections of 1626 and 1628.<sup>152</sup> The conformists soon came to realise that an opportunity existed to drive a wedge between moderate and radical puritans in Northamptonshire by focussing on issues of conformity rather than those of Calvinist doctrine, and as they imposed their ceremonial requirements with increasing vigour during the 1630s most of Montague’s clients opted to conform. They often did so with great reluctance - Estwick for example struggled at great length with the issue of whether or not to publish the Book of Sports after its reissue in 1633 - and they certainly shared the deep concerns of more radical puritans over the growing doctrinal threat posed by Arminianism. But, as Fielding describes, this threat ‘was perceived to be eclipsed by that to the social hierarchy posed by nonconformity’, and it was the relative weight that they put upon

---

<sup>150</sup> Bentham, *Christian Conflict*, sig. Q7.

<sup>151</sup> Cope, *Life of a Public Man*, pp. 50-52.

<sup>152</sup> Richard Cust, *The Forced Loan and English Politics 1626-1628* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987) pp. 110-111; Fielding, ‘Conformists, Puritans and the Church Courts’, p. 200.

these concerns which distanced Montague and his circle from more radical puritans, who shared their concern for social order and the doctrine of callings but ultimately subordinated this to the need to uphold right religion as they saw it. It was this division that ultimately led both Montague and Bentham to take the royalist position at the outbreak of civil war, for which the former was imprisoned and the latter sequestered.<sup>153</sup>

Seen within this context, Hart's decision to dedicate his *Diet* to Montague takes on considerable extra significance. Had he chosen to dedicate the *Arraignment* or *Anatomie of Urines* to Montague, in the early 1620s, it may have appeared a natural choice for a Northamptonshire puritan; but to address a book published in 1633 to the 'so noble, judicious, wise and pious' Montague reads more like a conscious re-affirmation of support for an embattled patron and his moderate, conforming preferences.<sup>154</sup> Of course Montague was a wealthy and powerful sponsor, but to attribute Hart's continuing loyalty to such material interests alone would be to overlook just how closely his ideological concerns meshed with those of Montague and his clerical clients. He seems to have shared their overriding concern with social order and their intense conservatism, as well their general preference for avoiding controversial doctrinal issues.

Ministers such as Bentham ultimately felt able to conform with the Laudian regime precisely because they tended to emphasize the pastoral aspects of Calvinism, rather than those points of doctrine to which the conformists most objected, in particular predestination. By focussing his attacks on the disorderly practices and neglect towards pastoral duties exhibited by some conformist ministers, rather than explicitly on any perceived deficiencies in conformist theology or the church hierarchy, Hart was able to produce a critique of the conformists within the church which, while it may now seem heavily obscured, in fact probably spoke quite clearly and directly to the concerns of many puritans, particularly those of moderate inclinations. John Cotta had left Northampton by the time these divisions within the puritan community were being exacerbated, but the near-identical nature of his concerns to Hart's, his similar avoidance of doctrinal controversies and his intense concern with social order all place his work within the same intellectual tradition, as

---

<sup>153</sup> Fielding, 'Conformists, Puritans and the Church Courts', pp. 210, 231-2, 235.

<sup>154</sup> Hart, *Diet*, sig. ¶4v.

do his close contacts with many of the local gentry, including individuals connected with Montague's circle such as William Tate and Euseby Andrew.<sup>155</sup>

In arguing that religious concerns were foremost in the minds of John Cotta and James Hart when they came to produce the works here discussed, and in seeking to situate them within their local religious and political context, I could perhaps be accused of giving disproportionately little attention to the medical concerns to which the bulk of their works are given over, and which of course provided both men with their livelihoods. But this should certainly not be read as an implicit argument that these medical concerns were merely a vehicle through which the authors could deliver their religious protests, or that they were simply thrown in alongside these objections by authors who, having decided to go into print, wanted to rattle off loosely-related attacks against as many transgressors as possible.

Rather, my argument is that when the depth of these authors' opposition to the conformist church court regime is appreciated, and when we recognise just how seamlessly they marshalled both religious and medical arguments in opposition to it, we can arrive at a clearer understanding of the nature of their opposition to all the individuals and groups they critiqued. The puritan opposition to the Peterborough conformists was in many ways a deeply conservative movement. Puritans had dominated both town and county government for decades, the clergy were used to being expected to practice only occasional conformity and the gentry to having immunity from the church courts.<sup>156</sup> 'As leaders of local society', W. J. Sheils explains, the puritan gentry 'saw themselves as the protectors of its privileges. When central government chose to use its prerogative in the ecclesiastical sphere, it was the threat to local custom in addition to the religious consequences which roused the gentry to action.'<sup>157</sup> The petition of 1605 focussed on restoring the situation that had existed prior to 1603, and stressed the invaluable role of the ejected ministers in maintaining social and religious order; this is why a figure such as Edward Montague could take a leading role in its presentation. Montague conforms closely to Patrick Collinson's depiction of Jacobean puritan MPs, whose 'desire for religious reform

---

<sup>155</sup> Sheils, *Diocese of Peterborough*, pp. 103, 107, 110-12, 117.

<sup>156</sup> Sheils, *Diocese of Peterborough*, pp. 102-8, 120-7; Fielding, 'Conformists, Puritans and the Church Courts', pp. 62-3.

<sup>157</sup> Sheils, *Diocese of Peterborough*, p. 110.

was not part of a wider interest in political reform [...] On the contrary, it was consistent with an intensely conservative world view'.<sup>158</sup>

The works by Cotta and Hart discussed in this chapter reflect a very similar worldview, but one within which they also fully integrated their professional concerns as physicians. This led them to emphasise the importance of maintaining the traditional, established order in religion, together with rooting out negligent and impious practices; but given their elevation of the profession of physic to a religious status almost equal with that of the clergy, it was also entirely natural that such an emphasis should be carried over to medicine and manifested in staunch support for the traditional authority of the university-educated physicians and Galenic medical theory. Both the conformist faction within the church and irregular medical practitioners of all stripes offended grossly against this worldview, and priest-physicians served as a living reminder that these were not distinct threats, but were both part of a broad tide of disorder and godlessness that threatened to submerge the country and its godly residents; a tide that also included such threats as witchcraft and Paracelsianism, as we shall see.

This is not to lurch towards the opposite extreme to that rejected above, and naïvely argue that Cotta and Hart were paragons of altruism, motivated by pure religious principle to advance arguments that just happened to ideally serve their professional and economic interests. Apart from anything else, both authors freely admitted to being in part motivated by professional self-interest; even their opposition to the church court regime itself can be seen as according with their material interests. Instead, I would suggest that the religious outlook adhered to by these authors was fully compatible with, and indeed to a great extent legitimised, the pursuit of a considerable degree of professional self-interest. Drawing on the doctrine of callings, they condemned equally the neglect priest-physicians showed for their own profession, and their intrusion upon the livelihoods of others; it therefore stood to reason that for physicians to defend their own profession, and their own client base, from such intrusion was a perfectly godly enterprise.<sup>159</sup>

So while the activities of the conformist church courts occasioned the publication of these works, it was entirely natural for their authors to bind up their

---

<sup>158</sup> Collinson, *Religion of Protestants*, p. 150.

<sup>159</sup> See Harley, 'Spiritual Physic', p. 112.

protests against these with a more general attack on irregular medical practitioners and their methods, and a robust defence of the professional interests of physicians. In doing so, they laid down a template that was to prove profoundly influential among later writers of a similar religious and professional outlook, as the rise of Laudianism presented them with many of the same challenges that had already been faced by the puritans in the diocese of Peterborough over the previous three decades.

## 3

Anti-Quack Literature in the 1630s

By the 1630s, much the same strand of conformist churchmanship to which John Cotta and James Hart's works can be read as a response had risen to national dominance within the Church of England. During the same decade a spate of further anti-quack works were published by authors scattered throughout the country: James Primerose in Yorkshire, Thomas Brian in Essex and Edward Poeton in Sussex. If the interpretation of Cotta and Hart's works outlined above is accepted, the appearance of these new treatises seems anything but surprising; it would appear only natural for godly physicians to take up the cudgels against priest-physicians and the conformist divinity they epitomised when this form of divinity came to be imposed upon their own localities, as it had already been in Northampton.

But do the works in question, and what we know of their various authors, in fact support such an interpretation? While their arguments do often recall those of Cotta and Hart, they also depart from them at various points, both in emphasis and in substance. And whereas we have clear evidence for Cotta and Hart's puritan allegiance and direct involvement in contemporary religious disputes, such external evidence as we have for the religious outlooks of the authors of the 1630s is both confused and scanty, forcing us to rely on what are often rather ambivalent statements within the works themselves. This is not to say that religious issues, in particular Calvinistic anxiety over contemporary church reforms, ceased to occupy an important position within most of these works. But these have to be carefully examined and placed firmly within the context of the other concerns put forward by their various authors, recognising the fundamental connections that they drew between what may appear to be disparate issues.

Given these complexities it seems appropriate, initially at least, to approach the various authors from the 1630s individually. This chapter therefore begins with a series of case studies devoted to the three major authors from the period and their key works on this subject. I will then attempt to draw some broader conclusions about the nature of these texts, and the place of religious concerns within them, considering in particular the ways in which arguments that originated as direct expressions of protest were now fully integrated into wider expressions of the same intensely conservative

medical, religious and social worldview from which, as we have seen, they had themselves arisen.

## I

Perhaps the best place to start is with the work that cleaves most closely to the model laid out by Cotta and, in particular, Hart: ‘The Urinall Crackt in the carriage’, a manuscript treatise by Edward Poeton of Petworth in West Sussex. Though an obscure figure, Poeton has already been mentioned above in connection with the controversial physician and surgeon, and *bête noire* of the College of Physicians, Thomas Bonham. Almost nothing is known of his life prior to his coming into Bonham’s service, including his date or place of birth, although his son John’s matriculation at Oxford University in 1637, at the age of eighteen, would seem to suggest a date before 1600.<sup>1</sup> He may have been related to the Edward Poeton who served as a sub-constable for Kentish Town in 1614/15.<sup>2</sup> Poeton does not appear to have attended university, but apparently aspired to a career in medicine from an early age with ‘an exorbitant eagernes’, later describing how this led him to associate with two respected physicians, both of whom were willing to train him; however, he claims to have broken off contact with both due to religious objections to the magical techniques they deployed in their practices, by which he had initially been fascinated.<sup>3</sup>

Exactly when Poeton came into Bonham’s employment is unclear, though he tells us he was ‘a long, (and the last) servant’ of the famous doctor. Their relationship was clearly extremely close, Poeton describing Bonham after his death as ‘to me a Master, yea more, a Father’.<sup>4</sup> His was the first signature to Bonham’s will of 1625, and although this did not specify anything as being left to Poeton, Bonham nevertheless proved ‘at his death a bountifull Benefactor; for he gave and delivered unto mee before he dyed, all his Manuscripts, both of Physicke and Chyrurgerie’.<sup>5</sup> It is likely that Poeton’s service to Bonham constituted the kind of informal apprenticeship which, as we have seen, was one of the typical ways in which non-

---

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses: The Members of the University of Oxford, 1500-1714*, 4 vols (Oxford: Parker and Co., 1891), III, p. 1175.

<sup>2</sup> William Le Hardy (ed.), *County of Middlesex. Calendar to the Sessions Records. New Series Volume II 1614-15* (London: C. W. Radcliffe, 1936), pp. 94, 207, 286.

<sup>3</sup> Sloane 1954, ff. 179, 180-180v, 183v.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Bonham, *The Chyrurgians Closet: or, An Antidotarie Chyrurgicall* (London: George Miller for Edward Brewster, 1630) sig. a5.

<sup>5</sup> Guildhall Library, MS 9052/6; Bonham, *Chyrurgians Closet*, sig. a5.

graduate medical practitioners would acquire the skills necessary to establish their own practices.

The *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* dates Bonham's death to c. 1628, but Poeton seems to have set up his own practice in Petworth by 1626, letters testimonial towards his practise of physic signed by four local clergyman surviving from December of that year.<sup>6</sup> Poeton implies that he did this after Bonham's death, which is indeed likely if he was Bonham's 'last' servant; Bonham may have bequeathed Poeton his papers simply to help him set up in practice on his own. However, claiming to be responding to demands from members of the Barber-Surgeons' company, Poeton edited and published these papers in 1630 as *The Chyrurgians Closet*, the only printed work attributable either to him or to Bonham.<sup>7</sup>

Poeton's decision to leave London after Bonham's death may itself have been necessitated by his relationship with such a controversial master; after their costly and embarrassing struggle with Bonham, it seems unlikely that the censors of the College of Physicians would have looked kindly upon an application for a licence from his servant, or have been unwilling to act if Poeton began practising illicitly. Away from London Poeton would need only an episcopal licence to practise legally; he describes himself as 'Licentiate in phisick and chyrurgery', although his surviving letters only offer approbation for his practise of the former.<sup>8</sup> But his decision to relocate to Petworth may also have been influenced by a pre-existing relationship with Sir Henry Dawtry, to whom Poeton later dedicated one of his manuscript treatises, addressing him as 'the ancientest of all myne acquaintance in these southern parts'. Dawtry was a member of one of Petworth's two leading gentry families, holding extensive land in both Sussex and Essex.<sup>9</sup>

A thriving town of about one thousand inhabitants during this period, Petworth also offered a potentially rich source of patronage in the form of the Earl of Northumberland and his household; Poeton's dedication of another of his works to Ann, Countess of Northumberland, suggests he indeed sought entry into this elevated

---

<sup>6</sup> Harold J. Cook, 'Bonham, Thomas (c. 1564-c. 1628)', *ODNB*, 6, p. 538; West Sussex Record Office, Archdeaonry of Chichester Episcopal Records, I/66/3.

<sup>7</sup> Bonham, *Chyrurgian's Closet*, sig. a5.

<sup>8</sup> Sloane 1954, f. 1; Bonham, *Chyrurgians Closet*, sig. a3.

<sup>9</sup> G. H. Kenyon, 'Petworth Town & Trades, 1610-1760, Part I', *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, 96 (1958) 35-107. p. 58; Sloane 1954, f. 162; WSRO, Miscellaneous Papers, 852.



circle.<sup>10</sup> But his practice may have proved less profitable than he hoped. His commonplace book, which survives in the British Library as the ‘Medical Collections’, records numerous poems and proverbs relating to themes of financial shortage and the virtues of poverty, suggesting this was a state with which Poeton was familiar: ‘I see he is more happy that hath nothing to loose, then he that looseth that which he hath. I will therefore neither hope for riches nor feare Poverty. Of riches let me never have more, then an honest man can beare away’; ‘some though poore in purse are rich in mind, And they that have of wealth the greatest store, Are (in content) most miserable poore. Much better then is my estate than theirs, I have content, and they the golding cares.’<sup>11</sup>

Nevertheless, Poeton remained in Petworth until his death, being buried in the parish church on 13 June 1644, and it was here that he produced his four surviving manuscript works.<sup>12</sup> All of these survive in single holograph copies in the British Library, bound together as the ‘Medical Treatises’.<sup>13</sup> Two include dedicatory epistles, and all four are carefully written in a clear secretary hand, within equally carefully drawn margins and title pages and with consistent pagination and running titles: they were clearly intended for circulation. The first, and by some distance the longest, is ‘The Midwives Deputie’, a guidebook on midwifery which Poeton claimed to have originally compiled for the use of his wife, ‘a sworne midwife’, on the basis of his experiences in his own practice and under Bonham, together with the works of various learned authors.<sup>14</sup> Among these is the celebrated physician and surgeon Jacob Rueff of Zurich, whose *The expert midwife* was published in English in 1637; this, together with Poeton’s dedication of ‘The Midwives Deputie’ to Ann of Northumberland, who also died in 1637, suggests this first work was probably completed in that year.<sup>15</sup> Poeton’s second treatise is an advice book on the care of infants, ‘The ordering of yong children’; this is described on the title page of ‘The

---

<sup>10</sup> Anthony Fletcher, *A County Community in Peace and War: Sussex 1600-1660* (London: Longman, 1975) p. 10; Sloane 1954, f. 2.

<sup>11</sup> BL, Sloane MS 1965, ff. 142v, 139v; see also f. 143v.

<sup>12</sup> ‘Petworth Burials 1559-1876’, *Indexed Transcripts of Parish Registers for Petworth*, transcribed by J. Wallis and P. Thompson. CD-ROM. Waterlooville: Parish Register Transcription Society, 2005. p. 54.

<sup>13</sup> Sloane 1954. The assertion that these are holographs is made upon comparison with Poeton’s commonplace book, and his signature to Bonham’s will.

<sup>14</sup> Sloane 1954, ff. 1-93. f. 2.

<sup>15</sup> P. M. Dunn, ‘Jacob Rueff (1500-1558) of Zurich and *The expert midwife*’, *Archive of Diseases in Childhood: Fetal and Neonatal Edition*, 85 (2001) 222-224.

Midwives Deputie’ as having been ‘added’ to that treatise, and so was presumably written at about the same time or shortly afterwards, and intended to be read in conjunction with it.<sup>16</sup>

The third treatise, and principal subject of the discussion in this chapter, is ‘The Urinall crackt in the carriage’, a short work primarily focussed on the abuse of uroscopy. Within it Hart refers to ‘a late booke penned by Mr Tho: Bryan, called the Pissprophet, or pisspot lectures’; this book, discussed below, was published in 1637, suggesting that Poeton completed this treatise fairly soon after producing his earlier works.<sup>17</sup> Likewise, his fourth treatise, a demonological work entitled ‘The winnowing of white witchcraft’, alludes to ‘The Urinall Crackt in the carriage’ in a manner that implies it followed closely in its wake.<sup>18</sup> The close succession in which they appear to have been published may well suggest that Poeton conceived of all four of these works together as constituting a coherent project.

Poeton cites numerous sources within ‘The Urinall Crackt in the carriage’, including works by Robert Record and Andrew Boorde, as well as critiquing a 1623 defence of uroscopy by John Fletcher.<sup>19</sup> However, his dominant influence throughout is clearly James Hart. Poeton repeatedly references the *Anatomie of Urines* of ‘that learned man’, together with Hart’s translation of *The Arraignment of Urines* of Petrus Forestus, ‘in both of which there is to be founde both pleasure, profit, and satisfaction...to any moderate minded man’.<sup>20</sup> Poeton follows Hart in arguing that the visual inspection of urine can only be of use in diagnosing certain conditions of particular body parts, such as the bladder or kidneys, and that it must be viewed when freshly voided and within the context of a thorough consultation with the patient and knowledge of his or her constitution. Instead, he complained, ‘country Corydons’ would present physicians with samples of urine carried in ink or aqua vitae bottles, expecting ‘no less than a Delphian oracle.’<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> Sloane 1954, ff. 94-142, 1.

<sup>17</sup> Sloane 1954, f. 153.

<sup>18</sup> Sloane 1954, f. 164.

<sup>19</sup> John Fletcher, *The Differences, Causes, and Judgements of Urine* (London: John Legatt, 1623); Sloane 1954 ff. 144v, 145, 150.

<sup>20</sup> Sloane 1954, ff. 150, 153. See also ff. 144, 147v-149.

<sup>21</sup> Sloane 1954, ff. 144, 146-146v, 144v.

Poeton follows Hart equally closely in apportioning blame for the spread of ‘this cursed common custom, of pernicious pisportage’ which had ‘even as a deluge, overflowed this whole Ileland’.<sup>22</sup> Quacks and cunning folk certainly bore their share of responsibility; Poeton directs particularly sarcastic contempt towards a Surrey wise-woman he refers to as the ‘Dame of Darking’ [Dorking]. He attributes the success of such individuals to both ‘the clownish conditions of our country pissporters, whom neither reason can perswade, nor rule bring to obedience’, and the unwillingness of the rich to provide sufficient relief to the sick poor, leaving them unable to afford the charges of legitimate physicians.<sup>23</sup> However, Poeton was in no doubt who were ‘the maine props, of that pernicious practice of pisportage and of those uromanticke oracles, which by the seduced sorte of silly people, are thence expected’: priest-physicians.<sup>24</sup>

The arguments Poeton puts forwards against medical practice by the clergy again closely follow those earlier advanced by Hart (and John Cotta), centred around the doctrine of callings in general, and the particular weightiness of the two callings involved, the combining of which could only result in negligence of both:

either of these callings, may justly claime a whole man, together with his utmost abilities. As for that so transcendent a mistery as divinitie, who is (as sayth St Paul) sufficient, to understand, and dispence the same, as he ought? And as for Physick, the more that any man looke into it, the greater labaryntes shall he finde in it. Yea some one only part of that profession, will even require the sole labour, and whole life of a man, to mine up the misteries thereof.<sup>25</sup>

Priest-physicians’ negligence in physic was obvious in their reliance upon and abuse of uroscopy, and Poeton deplored their intrusion into his profession: ‘What necessitie is there then, for any such, so much as once, to shtathe their sickles, in another mans harvest? And to usurp a calling, which is so incongrous unto them.’ But for Poeton, as for his predecessors, the greatest affront offered by priest-physicians lay in their neglect of their own calling: ‘is it a seemly thing think you; for a man of your sanctitie, to be hugging of a harlott (for Urina est Meritrix) when you should be

---

<sup>22</sup> Sloane 1954, ff. 153, 145v.

<sup>23</sup> Sloane 1954, ff. 158v, 145v, 153v. Thomas Brian also refers to ‘The Queane at Darkin’: *Pisse-Prophet*, sig. B.

<sup>24</sup> Sloane 1954, f. 157.

<sup>25</sup> Sloane 1954, f. 155.

heaving up your hands and hart, in prayer, to almightie god, for the happines, and welfare, of his poore people?’<sup>26</sup>

But such negligence was merely the inevitable consequence of the core transgression of which priest-physicians were guilty: a lack of respect for distinction of callings, as appointed by God. ‘Hath not the lord separated you, from among your brethren to take care of mens soules...And hath hee not called others to study for the benefit of mans body?’; ‘Is it not then an over greate boldenes in any man to adventure, the discharge of so many dueties, as these two misticall callings doe require? But the fruites of these mens lyves doe surely shew forth, even the very sap of their soules, such is the slender regarde they have of those poore sheep, which Christ hath committed to their charge.’<sup>27</sup> Such a transgression, with which these men ‘rob even god himself of his right’, was motivated not by charitable feeling toward the sick poor, Poeton insisted, but purely by that ‘very canckred covetuousnes, which (you know) is the roote of all evill.’ Those guilty of it therefore represented ‘a stinking blemish, to that calling which is of all others the most beautifull’.<sup>28</sup>

This was as fiercely worded an attack on priest-physicians as any to appear during the early Stuart period, equalling Hart’s ‘Discourse on the lawlesse intrusion of Parsons & Vicars’, and like that treatise probably reflecting the greater freedom to fulminate on such subjects that scribal publication could offer. As will be discussed in the following chapter, Poeton compounded all of this with his subsequent treatise on witchcraft, levelling implications that priest-physicians’ practices, in particular their abuse of uroscopy, were redolent of diabolism. All of these criticisms, primarily religious in focus, built upon those of Hart. So were his arguments likewise expressions of Calvinist-inspired religious protest? Was he too using the issue of priest-physicians to draw attention to conformist heterodoxy and their disregard for both the devoted preaching ministry, and the proper social and political order, vouchsafed by the doctrine of callings that was so central to Calvinist thought?

Poeton was clearly familiar with religious issues: he was acquainted with several local clergyman, his son John later entered the clergy himself, and he handles

---

<sup>26</sup> Sloane 1954, f. 156v.

<sup>27</sup> Sloane 1954, ff. 156v, 155.

<sup>28</sup> Sloane 1954, f. 155v.

theological arguments with confidence in his ‘winnowing of white witchcraft’.<sup>29</sup> If, as I have suggested, Hart and Cotta’s arguments spoke clearly to mainstream godly opinion, there is little reason to believe that this would have been lost on Poeton. That it indeed was not is perhaps most evident in his decision to close his discussion of the lawfulness of clerical healing with a quote from the *Phylomythie* of Thomas Scot:

Who seeks two swordes to sway, hath right to none;  
 Who seeks two offices, is not fit for one:  
 Who seeks two callings, takes too much in hand:  
 Who hath two faiths, doth true to neither stand.  
 One sword, one office, calling, and one faith,  
 Is fit for one man; so this storie saith.<sup>30</sup>

Whether the author of this work can be identified with the Thomas Scot who authored *Vox Populi* is a matter of dispute, but the *Phylomythie* is a work of equally strident Protestant polemic, vociferously attacking both the papacy and English ‘church papists’, as in lines one and four above respectively, while staunchly defending the Scots and Dutch.<sup>31</sup> By citing this passage, Poeton can be seen as both placing his objections to priest-physicians within the wider context of Calvinist protest, and highlighting the centrality of the doctrine of callings within this outlook. It also allows him to restate the interconnected concern for order and integrity in the church, professions and commonwealth displayed in Cotta and Hart’s works. ‘One sword, one office, calling, and one faith’: the pursuit of each is intimately connected with the others.

Poeton’s deployment of this source, together with his reliance upon - and repetition of the arguments of - James Hart again points towards a Calvinist outlook and the presence of an element of religious protest at the centre of his work on uroscopy. Nevertheless, Poeton may not have regarded himself as a puritan. While the evidence provided by his surviving commonplace book needs to be treated with caution - just because Poeton found a rhyme or proverb to be worth recording does not necessarily mean he shared the sentiments being expressed - it does seem to reveal a recurring theme of mild disapproval towards excessively inflexible religious

---

<sup>29</sup> William Page and P. H. Ditchfield (eds), *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: Berkshire*, 4 vols (London: Dawson’s of Pall Mall for the Institute of Historical Research, 1972) IV, p. 511.

<sup>30</sup> Thomas Scott, *Philomythie, or Philomythologie. wherein outlandish Birds, Beasts, and Fishes, are taught to speake true English plainely* (London: Francis Constable, 1616) sig. C2; Sloane 1954, f. 156.

<sup>31</sup> Sean Kelsey, ‘Scott, Thomas (d. 1626)’, *ODNB*, 49, pp. 476-9.

zeal. Various entries poke gentle fun at puritans for their social naivety and tendency to fall into lengthy *ex tempore* prayer at the drop of a hat. One poem, seemingly contradicting the oft repeated assertion that puritans were viewed by their contemporaries as greedy misers, mocks a puritan for unquestioningly lending money to a man who then uses it to pay the puritan's wife to sleep with him: 'you did ill to lend husband take heed, The falsehood of the world you do not spye'.<sup>32</sup> Several other entries uphold the legitimacy, within due bounds of moderation, of merrymaking and recreations against the 'meere coxcombes' that 'hate such incriments'.<sup>33</sup>

But nowhere in Poeton's collections are puritans mocked for reasons of doctrine or nonconformity. The evidence is too thin to make any sort of definitive judgement, but perhaps the current within the Church of England within which Poeton can be most comfortably placed is that of moderate, conformable Calvinism. This had represented the mainstream in the Jacobean Church under the Calvinist Archbishops Abbott and Matthew, but by the 1630s anti-Calvinist critics were increasingly coming to conflate it with puritanism.

One of the most vocal and controversial of these critics represents an obvious target for a work of Calvinist-flavoured protest within Poeton's locale. During the 1620s and 30s, Petworth was closely connected with one of the most effective lightning-rods for Calvinist disaffection during the entire early Stuart period: Richard Mountague. He had acquired the rectory of the town in 1623, the year before he published his hugely controversial *New Gagg for An Old Goose*; an ostensibly anti-Catholic work, but one which argued that most of the points raised against the Church of England by its Catholic critics actually applied only to puritan teachings which, Mountague held, were not true doctrines of the Church of England.<sup>34</sup> Mountague denied that this church was doctrinally Calvinist, maintaining that predestination and

---

<sup>32</sup> Sloane 1965, ff. 147v, 149v; Peter Lake, 'A Charitable Christian Hatred': The Godly and their Enemies in the 1630s', in Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales (ed.), *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560-1700* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996) pp. 145-183. p. 159; John Spurr, *English Puritanism, 1603-1689* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998) p. 22.

<sup>33</sup> Sloane 1965, ff. 139v-140.

<sup>34</sup> Richard Mountague, *A Gagg for the New Gospell? No: A New Gagg for An Old Goose* (London: Thomas Snodham for Matthew Lownes and William Barret, 1624) esp. sig. A2-A4v, Aa2.

the perseverance of the saints were mere ‘private opinions’; in his 1625 *Appello Caesarem*, he labelled all of those who held to them as puritans.<sup>35</sup>

Mountague’s works provoked a ferocious controversy during the 1620s, the House of Commons petitioning the King to have them burned and suppressed and launching a protracted attempt to prosecute their author, while the bishops themselves thrashed out the issues Mountague raised at the York House conference in 1626.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, in 1628, on the death of the Calvinist George Carleton, Mountague was raised to the Bishopric of Chichester; according to Anthony Fletcher, this ‘provided the first triumph of the Arminian party’.<sup>37</sup> As Bishop, Mountague sought to ‘translate the new theological fashion into an administrative reality’, his articles enquiring at length about the proper administration of the church’s prescribed rites and ceremonies, such as the use of the sign of the cross in baptism, while dropping enquiries about the frequency with which ministers preached or procured sermons. Instead, Mountague forbade ministers to ‘preach or teach any thing contrary to his Majesties late Injunctions, about Predestination, falling from Grace, &c. to trouble mens minds with those deep and darke points, which of late have so distracted and engarboyled the world.’<sup>38</sup> He also launched a campaign for the repair and improvement of church buildings and furnishings, which was further intensified after 1638 by his successor, Brian Duppa.<sup>39</sup>

On being raised to the episcopacy, Mountague was granted a royal dispensation to retain the rectory of Petworth, which was also passed on to Duppa when Mountague departed for the bishopric of Norwich. The numerous letters Mountague wrote from Petworth to his friend and ally John Cosin during the 1620s suggest that he had grown deeply attached to the town and had soon begun to tentatively enter into the elite of its society. Most significantly, he seems to have begun forging connections within the circle surrounding Henry Percy, earl of Northumberland. Notable among these was Edward Dowse, former tutor to Henry’s son and heir Algernon; Mountague assured Cosin that Dowse would ‘speake, if need

---

<sup>35</sup> Richard Mountague, *Apello Caesarem. A Just Appeale from Two Unjust Informers* (London: Matthew Lownes, 1625) sig. I2v; Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, p. 47.

<sup>36</sup> Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, pp. 125-180.

<sup>37</sup> Fletcher, *County Community*, p. 76.

<sup>38</sup> *Articles to be enquired of, throughout the whole diocesse of Chichester* (London: R. Y. for Thomas Bourne, 1631) sig. A4v (Mountague is here referring to Charles I’s proclamations of 1626 and 1628 for the ‘peace and quiet of the Church of England’); Fletcher, *County Community*, pp. 79-80.

<sup>39</sup> Fletcher, *County Community*, p. 81.

be' in his support.<sup>40</sup> The same letters suggest that, while the *New Gagg* had initially perturbed moderate elements within the town, those 'of our coate, but not cutt', these people were now becoming increasingly sympathetic towards Mountague and his views.<sup>41</sup> It may be that the ambitious Mountague was beginning to establish a party of like-minded conformists in the town foreshadowing that which he was later to assemble in Chichester during the 1630s.<sup>42</sup>

However, it is easier to identify a potential target for Calvinist opposition within West Sussex during the 1630s than it is to firmly identify any such actual opposition itself, at least on any sort of organised basis.<sup>43</sup> Whereas Cotta and Hart actively participated within a fairly organised godly opposition party in Northampton, there is little evidence for the existence of such a party in Petworth; although during the interregnum Francis Cheynell does seem to have found some popular support within the town, which was the base from which he sought to enact godly reforms throughout Sussex.<sup>44</sup> There are however a few scraps of evidence for Poeton's involvement in more low-level dissent against the diocesan regime in Chichester. Poeton's patron Henry Dawtry seems to have faced repeated problems with the church courts, first for his failure to carry out repairs to the church in Funtington, where he held land, and then, in 1641, for failure to pay his church rates. It may well be, however, that this can be explained by simple parsimony, not untypical of the gentry during the 1630s when it came to church upkeep; as Peter Lake notes, there was no 'leaky roof' faction among English Protestants.<sup>45</sup> In 1636 Poeton himself had appealed against his selection as a churchwarden, with responsibility for enforcing Mountague's exacting new programme for church upkeep, on the grounds that physicians and surgeons were exempt from such service. But few who could avoid it were probably eager to take up the tiresome responsibility of enforcing the more than

---

<sup>40</sup> John Cosin, *The Correspondence of John Cosin*, ed. George Ornsby, 2 vols (Durham: Andrews & Co for the Surtees Society, 1869) I, pp. 31, 68, 73, 97; Fletcher, *County Community*, p. 78.

<sup>41</sup> *Correspondence of John Cosin*, p. 74.

<sup>42</sup> Fletcher, *County Community*, p. 78.

<sup>43</sup> Fletcher, *County Community*, p. 62.

<sup>44</sup> Fletcher, *County Community*, pp. 62, 107, 157.

<sup>45</sup> WSRO, Ep I/17/25, f. 23; Ep I/17/28, f. 32v; Kevin Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992) p. 319; Peter Lake, *The boxmaker's revenge: 'Orthodoxy', 'Heterodoxy' and the Politics of the Parish in Early Stuart London* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001) p. 303.



seventy articles issued by the conformist bishops.<sup>46</sup> So all of this hardly constitutes a campaign of resistance against the diocesan authorities; but taken together with Poeton's writings, such episodes do perhaps at least hint at a lack of enthusiasm for Mountague and Duppa's reforms.

Still, it remains difficult to place Poeton's work within a wider context of Calvinist protest within his local area, and as we have seen the evidence provided by his own work allows only for a very tentative identification of his own religious sympathies. This makes it necessary to reconsider the professional factors involved. Even if it is accepted that Cotta and Hart's earlier attacks on priest-physicians were intended as a puritan response to the activities of the conformists in Peterborough during the previous two decades, did these arguments retain their religious currency during the 1630s, outside of that diocese and away from the staunchly conformist shadow of Richard Napier, England's most famous (or notorious) priest-physician? Is it possible that Poeton was simply co-opting such arguments for his own professional advantage? Certainly, Poeton's treatise implies that he faced direct competition from local priest-physicians; in particular, he refers to 'a Parson practicante (in these parts) who had a singular dexteritie; in the dispatch of such as presented their ported piss unto him', many of them later resorting to Poeton when the parson's treatments failed.<sup>47</sup> Many of Poeton's subsequent remarks seem to be particularly directed towards this individual; unfortunately, however, this man's identity is not made as obvious as those of the individuals targeted by Cotta and Hart.

In addition, Poeton's status as an episcopally licensed, non-university trained physician may have made his attack on irregular practice an even more useful tool for his professional advancement than it had been for his graduate predecessors. Licentiates occupied a somewhat ambiguous position, lacking the university education that was, in theory, the cornerstone of their profession's identity and given approbation under a system that operated sporadically and often with little rigour. Producing an anti-quack treatise offered Poeton a way to place a distance between himself and those competent irregular practitioners which, as I outlined in chapter one, may not have been immediately obvious to observers.<sup>48</sup> He may have been

---

<sup>46</sup> WSRO, Ep I/17/25, f. 274v; Fletcher, *County Community*, p. 82.

<sup>47</sup> Sloane 1954, ff. 157-157v.

<sup>48</sup> See David Harley, "'Bred up in the Study of that Faculty": Licensed Physicians in North-West England, 1660-1760', *Medical History*, 38 (1994) 398-420.

particularly sensitive to such pressures both as the former servant of a man who had staked his entire right to practise on his university education, and as a relative newcomer to Petworth attempting, perhaps in the face of financial struggle, to establish himself within the town's society. No irregular practitioners can have made him feel more insecure than the largely university-educated, socially respectable figures of the priest-physicians.

Such professional factors were surely relevant to Poeton's decision to produce 'The Urinall Crackt in the carriage'. However, as I have argued with regard to Hart and Cotta's works, these factors are by no means incompatible with Calvinist religious concerns; indeed, they could be thoroughly intertwined with them. The right, indeed the duty to uphold the integrity and distinctiveness of one's profession was implicit within the doctrine of callings, and was even more urgent for authors who invested the profession of physic with such great religious significance. It should also be restated that attacking members of the clergy could be a risky strategy, as Hart had earlier found when attempting to license his 'Discourse'.

Poeton too may have stirred controversy with his treatise: on the title page of 'The Urinall Crackt in the carriage', the words 'Penned by E. P. of Petworth' have been deleted, while a line of text below this has been rendered illegible, with the exception of the words 'Published for'. Given the general freedom of all Poeton's surviving treatises from annotation by later readers, this seems most likely to have been the work of the author himself. Unlike his other two freestanding treatises, this work also lacks a surviving dedicatory epistle.<sup>49</sup> Shortly afterwards, Poeton produced 'The winnowing of white witchcraft', which resumed his attack on uroscopy and priest-physicians, but in a much more heavily veiled (if ultimately no less trenchant) form. The most obvious explanation for this would seem to be that Poeton was seeking to distance himself from 'The Urinall Crackt in the carriage', presumably because its arguments provoked more controversy than he had hoped for or expected. We can only speculate as to why: it could be that he underestimated the degree to which these arguments would be recognised as works of partisan Calvinist protest, but it could equally mean that his work was simply misinterpreted - or misrepresented - as an anti-clerical screed.

---

<sup>49</sup> Sloane 1954, f. 143.

So, if we are to go any further towards identifying precisely what role religion plays within Poeton's work, it is now necessary to try and divine how far the arguments put forward by Hart and Cotta within the context of Jacobean Northampton had carried their original partisan currency into the wider religious disputes of late-1630s England. The obvious place to start here is with the other contemporary anti-quack author, beside Hart, cited by Poeton: Thomas Brian of Colchester, who deals with many of the same issues, but approaches them in an often markedly different way.

## II

The author of *The Pisse-Prophet, or, Certaine Pisse-Pot Lectures*, is another deeply obscure figure, but he is probably the Thomas Brian who matriculated at Clare College, Cambridge in 1622, receiving his MA and medical licence in 1629.<sup>50</sup> He first set up in practice at East Grinstead in Sussex, where he seems to have been influenced towards making fraudulent use of uroscopy after being 'taxed by a Gossip' who 'because I asked her so many questions (the which shee thought I should have resolved my selfe by the water) she would none of mine advise, but reported that i had no skill in waters.'<sup>51</sup> He later moved to London, where he claims to have sat as an MP, although I have been unable to find his name among the roll of known members for any of Charles I's parliaments.<sup>52</sup>

Brian seems to have initially completed *The Pisse-Prophet* by 1635, in which year he presented his 'booke concerning urynes' to the College of Physicians, by whom it was 'distasted' to the point that five days later they ordered 'that no fellowe Candidate or Licentiate shall presume to sett his hand to the approbatione of anye phisicke or surgerye booke...unles the said booke bee first approved by the President and Censors'.<sup>53</sup> In the wake of this controversy, Brian held off on publishing his book until 1637, and it was presumably during the intervening two years that he relocated to Colchester; the title page of *The Pisse-Prophet* describes him as having been 'lately

---

<sup>50</sup> John Venn and J. A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigiensis: a biographical list of all known students, graduates and holders of office at the University of Cambridge from the earliest times to 1900. Part 1: From the earliest times to 1751*, 4 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922) I, p. 244.

<sup>51</sup> Brian, *Pisse-Prophet*, sig. C8v.

<sup>52</sup> Brian, *Pisse-Prophet*, sig. A.

<sup>53</sup> 'Annals of the College of Physicians of London from the year 1608 to the year 1647', translated by J. Emberry, S. Heathcote and M. Hellings, 4 vols, 1953-57. 23-28 March 1634 (Vol. III, pt 2, p. 412).

in the Citie of London'. He may have decided that publication was safer and easier away from the jurisdiction of the College, but he must also have revised the text considerably prior to its eventual publication, as he refers to numerous people and events in and around his newly adopted home town.<sup>54</sup> Brian afterwards seems to have returned to complete obscurity, yet *The Pisse-Prophet* proved to be one of the more enduring anti-quack works to originate during the early Stuart period, receiving further editions in 1655 and 1679; it may be significant that this makes it the only one of the works focussed upon in this study to receive a new edition in English after the restoration.

The College's objections to Brian's book were probably fuelled by the fact that he seems never to have taken out a College licence, presumably relying on his Cambridge licence as sufficient approbation for his practice. But they also probably harboured genuine concerns about the content of the work. The same concerns were voiced by Edward Poeton after the book's eventual publication, when he advised readers of 'The Urinall Crackt in the carriage', if they could not find a copy of James Hart's work, to read *The Pisse-Prophet*, but expressed fear that Brian's book 'will be so buisily bought up' by 'sotts, that ere they have read them foure times over, they will be transformed from half fooles, into whole knaves'.<sup>55</sup> This concern reflects the very different approach Brian takes to his subject matter.

As we have seen, James Hart and John Cotta's anti-quack works combined general attacks on the moral, educational and religious failings of irregular practitioners with discussions, based on learned medical theory, of the sharp limitations of uroscopy and other diagnostic methods favoured by empirics. Brian accepted all of these arguments, citing both men's work with enthusiasm and agreeing with both that effective treatment could only really be prescribed on the basis of a full and thorough consultation, and that 'there is no certaine knowledge of any Disease to be gathered from the Urine alone'.<sup>56</sup> But for Brian, the impossibility of diagnosing and prognosticating on the sole basis of a visual examination of a carried urine was simply a starting point for his main undertaking, which was to provide a detailed exposé of the fraudulent methods used by those who purported to do so. He describes how they would trick those who brought the urine into revealing information about

---

<sup>54</sup> Brian, *Pisse-Prophet*, sig. A, A5, G5v, G7v.

<sup>55</sup> Sloane 1954, ff. 153-153v.

<sup>56</sup> Brian, *Pisse-Prophet*, sig. A4, H3v, A2, B3.

the patient upon which they could form a diagnosis, how they deceived these messengers into believing that the diagnosis had been reached purely through uroscopy, and how they couched their prognoses in such terms that, whatever the outcome, no blame could rebound upon the practitioner: ‘Pisse-messengers...are handled, deluded and made to shew how the sicke partie is affected, and yet to believe that the Doctour perceiveth the Disease by the Urine’.<sup>57</sup>

Brian offers details of how uroscopists would plot with ‘some Nurse, Mid-wife, Apothecary, or such like, who first set upon the messenger being come to the Doctours house...and so fall to parly with the messengers, getting out of them all things necessary to the judging of the disease.’<sup>58</sup> He relates the kind of leading questions and careful guesswork which uroscopists themselves used to effectively “cold read” these messengers: for example, to achieve the uroscopist’s supposed trademark of diagnosing pregnancy, he should simply claim to be leaving the urine to ‘settle’ and in the meantime inveigle out of the servant whether their mistress’s period had stopped.<sup>59</sup> It is not hard to see why Poeton would fear that such a work, for all its critical approach, could end up being appropriated as a handbook for unscrupulous uroscopists, in much the same way as Reginald Scot’s thoroughgoingly sceptical *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, with its detailed debunking of numerous magical rituals, became a popular handbook amongst cunning folk.<sup>60</sup>

Brian himself makes it clear from the outset how he obtained such an extensive knowledge of these matters: ‘If you please to take my confession too, you shall have it: I for mine own part have been so fortunate herein, that I have seldom failed in my predictions of determining a woman to be with childe by the Urine, as I have made them beleeve’; he therefore intended to ‘set downe the fallacies, by which I judged her, and every other Physician doth judge every woman to be with childe; as also by which we give judgement of the Disease, Sex, and the like, seeming to doe it onely by the Urine.’<sup>61</sup> *The Pisse-Prophet* was therefore a confessional work of sorts, outlining the ‘cunning cozenage’ formerly used by Brian in his own practice. This may have further provoked the ‘distaste’ of the College of Physicians. Not only was

---

<sup>57</sup> Brian, *Pisse-Prophet*, sig. B.

<sup>58</sup> Brian, *Pisse-Prophet*, sig. G4v.

<sup>59</sup> Brian, *Pisse-Prophet*, sig. D7-D7v.

<sup>60</sup> Owen Davies, *Grimoires: A History of Magic Books* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) p. 70.

<sup>61</sup> Brian, *Pisse-Prophet*, sig. A3-A4.

Brian, himself probably a licensed physician who had attended university, admitting to having used an array of fraudulent methods in his practice, but throughout the book he singles out not quacks, but rather his fellow physicians as being chiefly responsible for the craze for uroscopy: ‘pride in the Physicians, to shew more skill then ever they learned out of their Master Hippocrates, made this to become a custome’.<sup>62</sup>

Earlier authors had been perfectly willing to admit that physicians were guilty of such abuses, but they tended to depict them as having been pressured into them by public demand which, fed by the claims of empirics and priest-physicians, had come to expect diagnosis solely through uroscopy.<sup>63</sup> Brian agreed that ‘many ignorant Rascalls have got much credit, who have accomodated themselves to the humouring of the vulgar people’, but this could not excuse physicians claiming a skill that not even Hippocrates or Galen could attain: ‘however you will not be ashamed to assume and arrogate it unto your selfe...and to derogate what you can from other men: and this is very common to you with most other men of our Profession...hang honesty, what care you for it?’<sup>64</sup> Rather than placing distance between physicians and irregular practitioners, Brian could be seen as drawing a disconcerting amount of attention to their similarities. He was not however seeking to fundamentally challenge the authority of the physicians as a professional group; he dismisses quacks and empirics, and instructs his readers to only use ‘such a Physician as is authorized and allowed, either by the Universities, or by the learned College of Physicians of London’. Rather, he was calling for reform within the profession: ‘let the Physician choose whether hee will be honester than to use such deceit’, as ‘Pisse-mongers...deserve not the name of a Physician.’<sup>65</sup>

This focus on reforming the behaviour of physicians themselves, rather than on countering the activities of other types of medical practitioner, sets *The Pisse-Prophet* apart somewhat from the works of John Cotta, James Hart and Edward Poeton. This is never more evident than in Brian’s treatment of priest-physicians. Brian is not completely silent on this subject, complaining that ‘too many such Parsons and persons are suffered to abuse the common people in our dayes’, while

---

<sup>62</sup> Brian, *Pisse-Prophet*, sig. G8v.

<sup>63</sup> Forestus, *Arriagnment*, sig. L4, M.

<sup>64</sup> Brian, *Pisse-Prophet*, sig. G6, F6.

<sup>65</sup> Brian, *Pisse-Prophet*, sig. A8v, H2, H3, A6v.

describing the ‘Parson of Caverly’ who ‘gained the name of a cunning man’.<sup>66</sup> He agrees with his predecessors that none should ‘be suffered to exercise two callings of such weight as are Divinitie and Physicke’, and upholds distinction of callings in general: ‘let the Shooe-maker not presume to goe beyond his Last...Let every other man exercise that Art and faculty which he understands’.<sup>67</sup> Uroscopy was probably just too widely associated with priest-physicians by this point for Brian to overlook them entirely; but when set alongside the earlier critiques, as well as that subsequently penned by Poeton, his remarks on this subject seem both limited and restrained.

Even more telling is the way in which Brian conceives of priest-physicians as a group, bracketing beneficed practitioners together with ‘silenced Ministers who have turned Physicians’, i.e. puritan clergy who had taken up medical practice after being stripped of their parochial responsibilities for nonconformity. As we have seen with regard to John Burges, Brian’s view was perfectly consistent with the attitude of the College of Physicians, but it contrasts strikingly with Hart’s opinion that if a clergyman could show sufficient skill in physic ‘it were unreasonable they should be debarred from doing good’, provided ‘they first resigne their liveings and charges to those that will afford them better attendance’.<sup>68</sup> As has been noted, Hart’s objection was specifically to the *simultaneous* exercising of the clerical and medical functions; crucially, his position left the door open for nonconformist ministers to turn to medical practice in the event of deprivation, a not uncommon course for puritans such as Burges who fell foul of the ecclesiastical authorities. But for Brian, such individuals were worthy only of mockery: one such former minister who practised in Kent, he remarks, ‘might as well have worne the Surplice, and baptized with the Crosse, against his conscience, as to make a common practice of lying against his conscience wilfully.’<sup>69</sup>

Brian here seems to be jeering at deprived ministers-turned-physicians as much for their inflexibly anti-formalist religious preferences as for their medical intrusions. Elsewhere, he spells out his position even more clearly, condemning ‘silenced Ministers who have turned Physicians (whose tender consciences would not

---

<sup>66</sup> Brian, *Pisse-Prophet*, sig. G5, F2.

<sup>67</sup> Brian, *Pisse-Prophet*, sig. F2, H3.

<sup>68</sup> BL, C 54. b. 6, f. 10v.

<sup>69</sup> Brian, *Pisse-Prophet*, sig. F8v.

serve them to subscribe to the decent ceremonies of the Church).<sup>70</sup> In the context of the late 1630s, this reads as a clear endorsement of Laudianism. Brian was familiar with the works of Cotta and Hart, and approved of their medical arguments, yet he largely skirts around the issue of priest-physicians that was so central to those two puritan authors. When he does confront this issue, he does so in a way that departs from the earlier authors, throws barbs at nonconformists, and stresses approval for the current government of the church. It seems that not only was Brian alert to the religious connotations of these arguments, but that he suspected his readers might be as well; he therefore had to deal with priest-physicians in a way that pointedly could *not* be taken as a wider critique of the church authorities. If this is the case, the earlier critiques would seem to have retained much of their value as religious polemic by this point. Brian therefore sought to gloss over them, whereas Poeton sought to use them. So too, albeit perhaps rather more cautiously, did the final author whose work this study addresses at length: James Primerose of Hull.

### III

In contrast to Brian and Poeton's obscurity, we possess a considerable amount of information about the life of Primerose, although some important aspects of it remain frustratingly unclear. He was born in 1600 at Mirambeau, the son of a Scottish minister in the French Reformed Church and former chaplain to James I, and grandson of James's principal surgeon; Primerose's education was, at least in part, funded by the king. He was raised in Bordeaux, and received his MA from the university there before moving on to the University of Montpellier, from which he gained his MD in 1617, and of which he later produced a short history, *Academia Monspelienses descripta*. At some point he also studied in Paris under the famous anatomist Jean Riolan the Younger, whose staunchly traditionalist Galenism exerted a powerful influence upon him.<sup>71</sup> Immediately after graduating from Montpellier, and following a public dissertation, Primerose was admitted to the Bordeaux College of Physicians, although he seems to have then fairly quickly moved on to England.<sup>72</sup>

---

<sup>70</sup> Brian, *Pisse-Prophet*, sig. F2.

<sup>71</sup> J. A. R. Bickford and M. E. Bickford, *The Medical Profession in Hull 1400-1900: A Biographical Dictionary* (Hull: Hull City Council, 1983) p. 104.

<sup>72</sup> Brockliss and Jones, *Medical World of Early Modern France*, p. 193.



After having his degree incorporated at Oxford he probably first set up in practice in Yorkshire, but by 1629 he had moved to London. Here, like Brian, he was soon to become embroiled in controversy with the College of Physicians.

Primerose first appeared before the college for examination in December 1629, seeking admittance as a fellow; however, although the censors were ‘fully satisfied’ with his answers, they decided that due to his nationality he could only be admitted as a licentiate. Nevertheless, they did accelerate the process of issuing his licence, and within a week he was examined for the third time and admitted ‘by universal agreement’, William Harvey being among the signatories to his licence.<sup>73</sup> But Primerose was to receive a further snub from the college just a month later, after winning the support of Charles I for his delivering a public medical lecture in London. The college’s response to the King on this matter, aptly described by George Clark as ‘barely civil’, protested that the fellows were ‘all practitioners of Physicke and as such are all fitt rather to bee professors than Auditors’, but that if the king insisted the lectures go ahead, one of their own number should read it, as ‘Dr Primrose is bound by his allowance to practize to bee ane Auditor of our Lecturers for divers years, as all other young men are obliged to be.’<sup>74</sup>

The proposed lectures were dropped, but no sooner was this matter resolved than Primerose had become embroiled in the controversy with which his name has continued to be primarily associated ever since, over Harvey’s newly propounded account of the circulation of the blood. This was discussed during a series of lectures delivered at the college between December 1629 and February 1630. Primerose, following his mentor Riolan, was unconvinced, and at some point seems to have received a rebuke on the matter from the college president John Argent.<sup>75</sup> Primerose’s response was to put his objections into print as the *Exercitationes et animadversiones*, dedicated to Argent, Harvey and Charles I.<sup>76</sup>

‘Historians have been uniformly negative about Primerose’s writing’, notes Roger French, not least ‘because he appears to have been so wilfully blind to the

---

<sup>73</sup> Annals, 3-10 Dec. 1629 (III.2, pp. 268-9).

<sup>74</sup> Annals, 9 Jan. 1630 (III.2, pp. 271-2); Clark, *Royal College of Physicians*, p. 257.

<sup>75</sup> Roger French, *William Harvey’s natural philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) p. 115.

<sup>76</sup> James Primerose, *Exercitationes at Animadversiones in Librum, De Motu Cordis, et Circulatione Sanguinis* (London: William Jones for Nicholas Bourne, 1630).

truth'.<sup>77</sup> For Robert Willis, the nineteenth-century physician, historian and translator of Harvey's works, the *Exercitationes* was 'remarkable for any characteristic other than a candid spirit in pursuit of truth; it abounds in obstinate denials, and sometimes in what may be termed dishonest perversions of simple matters of fact, and in its whole course appeals not once to experiment as a means of investigation'.<sup>78</sup> But such judgements miss the point of Primerose's work. He opposed Harvey's theories precisely because he regarded them as a threat to the literary and philosophical basis, centred on the works of Galen, Hippocrates and Aristotle, upon which he believed the successful practice of medicine to be founded. Harvey's theories and the subsequent obsession over them in the universities, by contrast, seemed to Primerose to offer little of practical relevance to the treatment of patients. Following Riolan, Primerose dismissed vivisection as an unnatural and traumatic intrusion into the subject body, the results of which could tell nothing of that body's normal state. He was writing not as a nineteenth-century empirical scientist, but as a conservative renaissance humanist seeking to maintain the purity of the classical texts; it would therefore have been perverse for him not to argue his case primarily on the basis of those same texts.<sup>79</sup> Later negative judgements upon Primerose's works also sit awkwardly alongside the high esteem with which they seem to have been regarded in his own time, and the numerous reprints they received; according to the respected Dutch physician Zacutus Lusitanus, Primerose was an 'excellent man', whose *Popular Errours* would 'bee entertained with great applause in these Belgian Provinces, in Europe, yea throughout the whole world'.<sup>80</sup>

However, the long-standing suggestion that Primerose's attack on Harvey was driven by attention-seeking ambition may have rather more validity.<sup>81</sup> Following in the footsteps of his father and grandfather, Primerose may have come to London seeking advancement at court, for which securing Charles's support for his lectures would obviously have represented a very useful first step. By critiquing Harvey, he was setting himself up as a champion of orthodoxy, a position the wider connotations

---

<sup>77</sup> French, *William Harvey*, p. 115. French's own account, pp. 114-21, provides an important corrective, as does William Birken, 'Primrose, James (1600-1659), *ODNB*, 45, pp. 387-9.

<sup>78</sup> Quoted in William Munk, *The Roll of the Royal College of Physicians of London*, 3 vols (London: Royal College of Physicians, 1878) I, p. 197.

<sup>79</sup> French, *William Harvey*, pp. 116, 210.

<sup>80</sup> Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. Bv-B2.

<sup>81</sup> See Munk's own remarks in *Roll*, I, p. 197.

of which he may have hoped would carry appeal in court circles. His attack was probably further fuelled by his repeated rebuffs from the college, which may have generated both personal resentment towards Harvey, one of its leading figures, and a feeling that he needed to demonstrate his own professional authority. Presenting himself as the champion of traditional authority, and casting Harvey as the usurper, could be seen to serve both these purposes.<sup>82</sup>

However, whether Harvey's status as a highly respected royal physician made him a particularly advisable target is a dubious proposition, and such ambitions as Primerose had at court seem to have come to little; by 1634 he had abandoned London altogether and settled in Hull, where he was to remain until his death in 1659. He nevertheless remained a leading figure in the ongoing disputes over circulation, producing at least four more books attacking Harveian theories, as well as works on an array of other medical matters, from pharmacy to gynaecology and paediatrics, all in Latin. It was also in Hull that he produced the two works here discussed. *De Vulgi in Medicinâ Erroribus* was first published in Latin in 1638, then in an English translation by Robert Wittie, entitled *Popular Errours*, in 1651; the Latin original received further editions in Amsterdam in 1639, Rotterdam in 1658 and Leiden in 1668, while a French edition, translated by Jean de Rostagny from Wittie's English, appeared in 1689.<sup>83</sup> Appended to the English edition of *Popular Errours* was a brief treatise attacking the antimonial cups dispensed by the priest-physician and astrologer John Evans. This had originally been published separately in 1640, again in Wittie's translation, as *The Antimoniall Cup twice cast*. Primerose's Latin original, *De calice ex antimonia sive stibio*, was eventually to appear as an appendix to the 1658 edition of *De Vulgi Erroribus*.

Wittie inserted an array of commendatory material at the beginning of his text of *Popular Errours*, praising both Primerose's work and his own translation. Most notable among these are two poems by Andrew Marvell, who lavishly praises the work and, in particular, Wittie as

*The good Interpreter*. Some in this task

---

<sup>82</sup> French, *William Harvey*, pp. 114-115.

<sup>83</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), pp. 262, 345.

Take of the Cypresse veile, but leave a mask,  
 Changing the Latine, but doe more obscure  
 That sense in English which was bright and pure.  
 So of Translatours they are Authors grown,  
 For ill Translatours make the booke their own.<sup>84</sup>

Primerose himself seems to have developed a respected practice in Hull, and any lingering acrimony between him and the college apparently dissipated after he absented himself from London. In 1641, when Roger Drake sought the college's approval for a book defending his Harveian theories against an attack by Primerose, the college refused to become involved in the dispute.<sup>85</sup> What is more, some of Primerose's attacks on irregular practitioners appear to have been prompted by the concerns of, and perhaps even direct appeals from, fellows of the college. The chapter of *Popular Errours* addressing supposed seventh sons who 'of late I have heard...do promise great matters about healing of the Kings-Evill, which they professe to doe by touch alone', probably refers to the case of James Leverett, the London gardener who claimed to have healed at least three hundred people by touch, and who after a series of trials the college had declared 'an Impostor and a deceiver'. If so, the 'Physicians of principall note' who Primerose claimed to have asked him to add this chapter were surely fellows of the college.<sup>86</sup> The activities of John Evans may well have been brought to Primerose's attention by similar means, given the priest-physician's protracted and acrimonious conflict with the college, and in particular the royal physician Theodore Turquet de Mayerne, who Evans had publicly insulted.<sup>87</sup> Such appeals to Primerose would further illustrate the regard with which he was held in his own time, and suggest that his efforts to present himself as an authoritative voice of orthodoxy had in fact met with some success.

Nevertheless, Primerose was soon to find himself in trouble again in Hull, but this time with the ecclesiastical authorities, being fined for non-attendance at divine worship in 1637 and again in 1640. This, compounded by his ready deployment of Roman Catholic sources in his writing, has given rise to the suggestion that he was

---

<sup>84</sup> Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. A8v-B.

<sup>85</sup> Annals, 19 April 1641 (III.2, p. 519).

<sup>86</sup> Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. Ff4v; Goodall, *Royal College of Physicians*, sig. LlI3v-Nnn3v.

<sup>87</sup> Annals, 5 June 1635 (III.2, p. 420), 3 April 1637 (III.2, p. 444).

himself a recusant.<sup>88</sup> But there is no convincing evidence that Primerose ever broke from his background in French-Scottish reform; he was married in a Huguenot church in London and his brother served in the Protestant church at Rouen. While J. A. R. and M. E. Bickford's observation that Primerose 'is likely to have been an extreme Puritan by upbringing' is perhaps overstated, there seems little reason to doubt Roger French and David Harley's separate conclusions that he remained an orthodox Calvinist throughout his life.<sup>89</sup>

Further evidence for this position is provided by Primerose's extremely close and long-standing relationship with his translator, the puritan physician Robert Wittie, later described by George Fox as 'a great Presbyterian' who had 'taken ye Scotch Covenant'.<sup>90</sup> Wittie had settled in Hull after graduating BA from Cambridge in 1633, making Primerose's acquaintance soon afterwards while teaching at the local grammar school. It may be that Primerose provided him with the practical experience that was required of intending graduate physicians; Wittie obtained his own medical licence in 1641, followed by an MD from Cambridge in 1647. When Primerose died in 1659 he left both his sons under Wittie's guardianship; by this time Wittie had moved to York, from where he was to achieve fame as a promoter of the mineral springs at Scarborough.<sup>91</sup> Although Wittie supported Parliament in the Civil War, his puritanism seems to have been decidedly moderate and conservative in nature; after the restoration he conformed to the Church of England, haranguing Fox for not doing the same during a bad tempered meeting at Scarborough Castle in 1665.

While it may be unwise to infer too much about Primerose's religious outlook from that of his protégé, it is perhaps particularly noteworthy that Wittie dedicated *Popular Errours*, presumably with Primerose's agreement, to Lady Frances Strickland, the wife of a leading local puritan MP, Sir William Strickland. Strickland

---

<sup>88</sup> Hugh Aveling, *Post Reformation Catholicism in East Yorkshire 1558-1790* (York: East Yorkshire Local History Society, 1960) p. 65; *ODNB*. See Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. C3v-C4v, L-L2v for examples of Primerose's sympathetic deployment of Catholic sources, but note that this was originally written for a Europe-wide, multi-confessional readership, and that Catholics and Protestants often shared the same philosophical language (French, *William Harvey*, p. 114). James Hart's own deployment of medieval canon law has been noted above, p. 95.

<sup>89</sup> Bickford and Bickford, *Medical Profession in Hull*, p. 104; French, *William Harvey*, p. 114; Harley, 'James Hart of Northampton', p. 367.

<sup>90</sup> J. A. R. and M. E. Bickford, 'Wittie, Robert (bap. 1613, d. 1684)', *ODNB*, 59, p. 910-11; *The Journal of George Fox*, ed. Norman Penny, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911), II, pp. 95-6.

<sup>91</sup> Robert Wittie, *Scarborough Spaw, or, A Description of the Nature and Vertues of the Spaw at Scarborough in Yorkshire* (London: Charles Tyus and Richard Lambert, 1660).

had been associated with the presbyterian party, and was notable for his intense social conservatism, manifested in virulent opposition to tithe refusers and, in particular, the Quakers, ‘a growing evil and the greatest that ever was...all levellers against magistracy and propriety’; this was a preoccupation that Wittie seems to have shared.<sup>92</sup> In the dedicatory epistle to *Popular Errours*, Wittie draws attention to the nature of the human body as a ‘Microcosme’, being corrupted by errors ‘growne vulgar and popular’, drawing attention to the wider connotations Primerose’s attack on quackery, like those of Cotta and Hart before him, carried in regard to social and political order.<sup>93</sup> Finally, it is worth noting that when *Popular Errours* finally came to the press it was with the publisher Nicholas Bourne, who specialised in religious texts of a Calvinistic flavour, including the works of John Preston, Daniel Featley and Arthur Dent, and who had long been involved in the production of Protestant-themed newsbooks in partnership with Nathaniel Butter.<sup>94</sup>

*Popular Errours* is a larger and more wide-ranging work than any of the others discussed in this study, with the exception of James Hart’s *Diet of the Diseased*. Only the first and shorter of its two books is in fact devoted to the subject of medical practitioners; although the techniques empirics used come up repeatedly in the second book, which concerns erroneous opinion on diseases, these are dealt with alongside misconceptions harboured by the wider public. *Popular Errours* therefore belongs to a distinct tradition of general medical error books, which had originated with the French royal physician Laurent Joubert’s *Erreurs Populaires* of 1578.<sup>95</sup>

Primerose refers to Joubert, the former chancellor of the faculty of medicine at his *alma mater* of Montpellier, but seems to give his work little credit: ‘he hath left the worke imperfect, and hath unfolded but a few Errours, and those not very grosse’.<sup>96</sup> While it is true that Joubert’s work was left unfinished on his death, Primerose’s judgement belies the wide range of subjects Joubert did in fact cover in his completed

---

<sup>92</sup> Thomas Burton, *Diary of Thomas Burton, Esq.*, ed. John Towill Rutt, 4 vols (London: Henry Colburn, 1828) I, pp. 169, 220. As well as his dispute with Fox, see Robert Wittie, *Pyrologia Mimica, Or, An Answer to the Hydrologia Chymica of William Sympson* (London: T. N. for J. Martyn, 1669) sig. R2v.

<sup>93</sup> Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. A4.

<sup>94</sup> Baron, S. A., ‘Bourne, Nicholas (b. in or before 1584, d. 1660)’, *ODNB*, 6, pp. 856-7.

<sup>95</sup> Laurent Joubert, *Popular Errors*, trans. Gregory David de Rocher (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1989); Davis, *Society and Culture*, pp. 224, 258.

<sup>96</sup> Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. B3.

volumes, and the similarity in both structure and subject matter - not to mention title - between Joubert and Primerose's works.<sup>97</sup> This genre was ultimately to achieve its most famous expression, albeit in a form expanded to take in more general questions of natural philosophy, with Sir Thomas Browne's *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*. Browne praised Primerose's 'learned & full Discourse of vulgar Errors in Physick', while noting that he had only dealt with 'two or three' of the issues Browne himself goes on to discuss; these include the medical uses of bezoar stones and unicorns' horns, the administration of medicine on the dog days, and the weapon-salve.<sup>98</sup>

The place of Primerose's work within this tradition raises one immediate question: why did he originally publish it in Latin? Wittie himself notes that 'the booke doth more concerne the vulgar and unlearned'; if Primerose's intention was to correct the common misconceptions of the public, why produce it in a language that limited it to an elite of professional physicians and other learned readers?<sup>99</sup> Both Joubert and Browne published their error books in their respective vernaculars. Joubert, who also wrote voluminously in Latin, was no medical democratizer, and had been a fierce critic of France's surgeons, apothecaries and midwives.<sup>100</sup> But he rejected the idea that the interests of the medical profession were best served by depriving the people of knowledge of the subject, instead following the physician Pierre Tolet's maxim that 'If you want a servant to follow your orders, you can't give them in an unknown tongue'. Joubert realised that the only way to impose the authority of physicians and learned medicine upon both patients and practitioners was to communicate it to them in their own language, and this was the very reason why he developed the concept of the medical error book.<sup>101</sup> So why did Primerose depart from this?

Perhaps the most obvious answer lies in his desire to reach a continental audience, as is clear from the work's appearance in Amsterdam just a year after its publication in London. But this desire was linked to issues of professional self-image. Primerose was a participant in one of the great academic medical debates of his day.

---

<sup>97</sup> Hart also opens his 'Discourse' by referring to a story from Joubert's work: BL, C 54. b. 6, f. 1; Joubert, *Popular Errors*, p. 68. Compare this also with Primerose, *Popular Erroures*, sig. B2v.

<sup>98</sup> Browne, *Pseudodoxia*, sig. A5, K3, X3v-Y, Ee3-Ff4v; Primerose, *Popular Erroures*, sig. R4-S3v, Z8-Bb3v, Dd3v-Ff2. Browne also criticises Joubert as being of minimal use, yet uses virtually the same sources as him (Joubert, *Popular Errors*, p. xvi).

<sup>99</sup> Primerose, *Popular Erroures*, sig. A4.

<sup>100</sup> Joubert, *Popular Errors*, p. xv.

<sup>101</sup> Davis, *Society and Culture*, pp. 225, 258.

This made it desirable that all his major writings be accessible to all the other participants in and observers of these trans-national debates, but it may also have made him particularly nervous of departing from the expected language of learned medical dispute. Joubert had done so, but being one of Europe's most respected physicians made it easier for him to withstand the criticism that he did indeed receive.<sup>102</sup> Primerose, on the other hand, may have felt less secure in his position, especially after his seemingly impeccable professional qualifications had failed to secure him a fellowship of the College of Physicians of London. Indeed, it may have been just such concerns that led him towards producing his error book in the first place. For a physician who had always sought to present himself as a staunch guardian of orthodoxy, a book in which he systematically distinguished truth from error in medicine offered an excellent means by which to advertise this before his fellow physicians. So correcting popular misconceptions may in fact have been less significant for Primerose than parading his knowledge of them before his colleagues.

However, I would also suggest that while Primerose himself was unwilling to be seen to produce an original work in the vernacular, it is likely that he intended for this particular work to appear in English more or less from its inception. Although the English version of *Popular Errors* did not appear until 1651, thirteen years after the Latin, Wittie tells us in his preface to *The Antomionall Cup twice cast*, published in 1640, that he had in fact finished translating the *Popular Errors* before Primerose even began work on this new treatise, which was originally intended as an appendix to its predecessor (as it ultimately appeared in its second edition). The printing of the *Popular Errors*, Wittie complained, was simply 'for some reasons procrastinated for a while'; whatever caused the original delay was presumably then compounded by the outbreak of civil war.<sup>103</sup>

So it seems that Wittie began translating the *Popular Errors* almost as soon as the Latin appeared, and when Primerose decided to append an additional treatise, though he still insisted on producing the original text in Latin, for initial publication he passed it straight to Wittie for translation into English. Wittie also notes, in his preface to the *Popular Errors*, that Primerose continued to take an active interest in the production of the English text throughout, passing on further material to the

---

<sup>102</sup> Joubert, *Popular Errors*, p. xiv.

<sup>103</sup> Primerose, *Antimionall Cup*, sig. A2-A2v.



translator that had not appeared in the Latin original.<sup>104</sup> All of this seems to suggest that Primerose planned for his work to be published in English from a very early stage, and took an intense and continuing interest in the project; he just did not want to be seen to be publishing in the vernacular himself. Wittie on the other hand, as an aspiring physician yet to even gain his licence, had nothing to lose by associating himself with his respected mentor's project. If this was the case, then Primerose was always aiming for a wide domestic readership in the same way as earlier anti-quack authors had, alongside his accustomed, largely continental academic readership.

Like John Cotta's *Short Discoverie*, the first book of *Popular Errours* deals by turns with a wide range of practitioners, among them surgeons, apothecaries, mountebanks and uroscopists. But Primerose's opening chapters are actually more reminiscent of the work of Thomas Brian, with a stinging attack on professional standards among physicians themselves. His condemnation of 'mongrell-Physicians' who had 'brought the title of Doctour in forrain Universities', while as we have seen not entirely without basis, perhaps reflects lingering insecurity over the aspersions cast on his own foreign background by the College of Physicians, not least because he was granted his Montpellier MD at the age of just seventeen.<sup>105</sup> But in general his complaints about physicians are consistent with his approach towards the disputes over Harvey's theory of circulation. Learned medicine, having reached a humanistic peak with the recovery of the writings of the ancients, was under attack from useless novelties: 'For they are not few, who have gotten some fame among the people...which never read Galen and Hippocrates...and follow some new Writers scarce worth the reading'.<sup>106</sup> Like Brian, Primerose held his fellow physicians largely responsible for the public's ignorance of proper medicine, 'For there are very few Errours abroach among the people, to which heretofore some Physitian or other hath not given a being, by reason of some Theoremes and rules of Physick, by them ill understood.'<sup>107</sup>

Significantly however, Primerose departs from Brian in dealing at considerable length with the issue of priest-physicians. But he too can be seen as

---

<sup>104</sup> Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. A6.

<sup>105</sup> Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. B7.

<sup>106</sup> Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. B5-B5v.

<sup>107</sup> Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. B3.

striking a rather ambivalent note on the subject, claiming to ‘have willingly favoured Church-men (as much as I could possibly)’. There are certainly aspects of Primerose’s discussion of the issue which appear to bear out this claim. He opens it with a further jab at unfit members of his own profession, noting that clerical healing ‘is disliked by many Physicians, especially by them that gape all for gain; but seeing that many Physicians of lighter note do scarce patiently brook others better then themselves, it is no wonder if they approve not that order of religious men.’<sup>108</sup> He then outlines at some length the standard case in favour of the dual vocation, citing the example of Marsilio Ficino, which ‘proves it to be lawfull, because to the holy Priest all the offices of charity doe belong’, together with that of the apostles, whose miraculous healing demonstrated that ‘the curing and preventing of diseases is not contrary nor opposite to the study of Divinity, and to the preaching of Gods Word’. Since ‘all mens wits are not alike, and the gifts of God to evry one are not the same’, Primerose suggests, ‘Some perhaps are so prompt of wit, able of memory, and such lovers of pains, that they can imploy their minds in both arts with very much profit’; ‘If therefore any painefull and ingenious Divine hath acquired so much knowledge of Physick, that he is able to make use of it, why shall he not practise it with a good Conscience?’<sup>109</sup>

But having outlined this apparent defence of the dual vocation, and even while perhaps accepting much of it in theory, Primerose goes on to demolish it in practice:

Neither hitherto hath it been my hap to see any Minister (and I have known many) practising Physick, that understood it well...Therefore although the knowledge of both these Arts is possible, yet that seldome happens; for the practise of Physick doth wholly turne away the minde from the study of Divinitie, and the study of Divinitie (in them that preach especially) doth interrupt the practise of Physick; therefore it is very probable, that Physick cannot, with a safe conscience be exercised by any Divine who hath the cure of soules

As for Ficino, ‘he was a man more wittie than learned in Physick...nor doth his bookes of Physick argue any depth of knowledge in that art’.<sup>110</sup> In response to arguments for the legality of the dual vocation, Primerose follows Hart in turning to medieval canon law, citing the decree of the 1163 Council of Tours that ‘no man after

---

<sup>108</sup> Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. B8v.

<sup>109</sup> Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. B8v-C2.

<sup>110</sup> Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. C2v-C3.

a Vow of Religion...be permitted to go forth to read Physick, or the humane Lawes’, since it was Satan who ‘perswades some regular persons to read the Lawes, and to weigh out Physicall confections, and so drawes them out of their Cloysters.’ From this it was clear, for Primerose, that ‘religious persons under pretence of Charitie and Pietie ought not to meddle in Physick, & that it doth proceed from the Devill’.<sup>111</sup>

Much of the apparent ‘willing favour’ Primerose shows priest-physicians was therefore simply a rhetorical edifice for him to tear down. The true strength of his actual opposition to their practise is further emphasised by his lengthy critique of uroscopy, highly reminiscent of Hart’s; indeed it was this practice which, he claims, ‘first gave occasion of this worke’.<sup>112</sup> It is even clearer in his decision to devote his subsequent work, *The Antimoniall Cup twice cast*, to an attack on the priest-physician John Evans.

Robert Wittie, in the dedication to his translation of *Popular Errours*, claimed to have undertaken this work primarily for ‘my Countries Ladies and Gentlewomen...for the amendment of their Errours’; this is accompanied by an engraving of an angel ushering a physicians towards - and a gentlewoman away from - a patient’s bedside.<sup>113</sup> But this may reflect the radically altered circumstances in which Wittie’s translation was finally published. It is worth noting that within *Popular Errours* Primerose brackets female practitioners with priest-physicians, dealing with them in consecutive chapters and insisting that, as he had favoured clergymen, ‘so I resolve also concerning Women’. The tendency of both groups to justify their practice in terms of charitable and domestic obligation rendered this association natural enough, and in the poem explaining the frontispiece of Wittie’s translation, the woman at the patient’s bedside is described as attempting to minister to the patient with her antimonial cup, seemingly acting as a surrogate for the priest-physician Evans.<sup>114</sup>

Indeed, Wittie’s own particular concern with priest-physicians is clear from his own later attempts, in the yet again radically changed circumstances of the restoration period, to organise a professional fraternity of physicians aimed at

---

<sup>111</sup> Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. C3v; Amundsen, ‘Medieval Canon Law’, pp. 31-2; BL, C 54 b. 6, ff. 3-3v.

<sup>112</sup> Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. B3.

<sup>113</sup> Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. A2, A3v.

<sup>114</sup> Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. C5, Av.

bringing legal action against irregular practitioners. In a covering letter of 1672, sent to interested physicians with the society's articles, Wittie complained that 'wee are besieged on every side by Parrish Priests who daily stepp into our ffaculty, which yett the most of them understand not the principles of the Art of physicke'. In another letter sent later that year, Wittie informed one subscriber that it was priest-physicians 'at whence we principally aim', further complaining that 'almost all the divinity are stepping in to practice for lucre sake'.<sup>115</sup>

So despite Primerose's apparent ambivalence on the matter, priest-physicians would appear to have been a matter of major concern both for him and his protégé. Nevertheless, this ambivalence can still be seen as reflecting a distinctive approach to the subject. Primerose's assertion that the clerical practice of medicine may be acceptable in theory, even if it inevitably did not prove so in performance, departs from the view of the College of Physicians that the two were intrinsically incompatible in principle. But it can also be seen as a departure from the arguments, based on the doctrine of callings, put forward by the earlier Calvinist anti-quack authors Cotta and Hart. Indeed, the absence of explicit references to the doctrine of callings from *Popular Errours* has led Andrew Wear, perhaps influenced by suggestions of Primerose's Catholicism, to hold Primerose's work up as a prime example of how attacks could be levelled on the practice of medicine by the clergy *without* reference to Calvinist doctrine.<sup>116</sup>

However, the differences here between Primerose's work and that of Cotta and Hart may be more apparent than substantive. As has been noted, for all his rigid emphasis on the doctrine of callings, Hart provided a get-out clause: ministers could turn to medical practice, providing they fully relinquished their clerical duties. This was important, as it legitimised such practice by those of Hart's puritan co-religionists who were ejected from their livings and forced to support themselves by other means. It also illustrates how the doctrine of callings was bound up with practical concerns over the nature of the ministry and the singular devotion to preaching and counselling it required, as well as broader concerns about social order.

Primerose's insistence that the dual vocation was theoretically acceptable, but 'the practise of Physick doth wholly turne away the minde from the study of Divinitie,

---

<sup>115</sup> BL, Sloane 1393, ff. 12, 15-15v.

<sup>116</sup> Wear, 'Religious beliefs and medicine', p. 164.

and the study of Divinitie (*in them that preach especially*) doth interrupt the practise of Physick’, and that it could not therefore ‘be exercised by any Divine *who hath the cure of soules*’ can be seen, in practical terms, as staking out a position very similar to that of Hart, while pointedly departing from that officially taken by the College of Physicians.<sup>117</sup> This is emphasised by Primerose’s deployment of the same points of canon law as Hart, leading him to assert that the clerical practice of physic ‘doth proceed from the Devill’; a statement hardly reflective of a sincere spirit of ambivalence towards the issue, and one which underlines the primarily religious nature of Primerose’s objections. Intrinsically objecting to the practice of medicine by those who had taken holy orders was reflective of that view of the ‘absolute nature of ordained priesthood’ that Margaret Pelling has noted as ‘Catholic in content if not in intention’.<sup>118</sup> Primerose’s theoretical approbation of the dual vocation distances him from this position, but his robust rejection of it in practice accords fully with the Calvinist position outlined by Cotta and Hart, which offered no particular objection to the practice of medicine by those who had previously been ordained in itself, but stressed that practising the two professions simultaneously inevitably spawned the most dangerous and impious consequences.

#### IV

Nevertheless, there remain differences between Primerose’s work and those of his anti-quack predecessors and contemporaries that are worth exploring. His tone is less confrontational, and the Calvinistic nature of his arguments is presented in a less overt manner. In part, this probably reflects the continental, multi-confessional audience of learned physicians for which his original text was intended. The censorship and official pressures of the Laudian regime may also have been factors; as we have seen, even during the Jacobean period Hart could not get his sharpest attack on priest-physicians past the licensers. Although the licensing regime was not always particularly effective, the legitimacy it bestowed may have been felt especially keenly by authors so concerned with professional legitimacy and respectability, particularly given the active way in which the College of Physicians co-operated with the

---

<sup>117</sup> Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. C2v-C3 [my emphasis].

<sup>118</sup> Pelling, *Medical Conflicts*, p. 323.

censors.<sup>119</sup> Certainly, Poeton's scribally published treatises strike a more combative note than Primerose's printed works. But Hart ultimately did choose to put most of his 'Discourse of the lawlesse intrusion of Parsons & Vicars' into print - and managed to get it past both the licensers and the college, albeit perhaps by stealth - in 1633. And the book to which the college seems to have taken particular exception, Brian's *Pisse-Prophet*, was also the one which had the least to say about priest-physicians, and which displayed the greatest enthusiasm towards Laudianism.

The key factor behind the more restrained tone of Primerose's work instead probably lies in the different central purpose to which he was attempting to put it. Cotta and Hart's works from the 1610s and 1620s were, above all else, conceived as a response to local ecclesiastical developments, and were primarily aimed at and prompted by priest-physicians and the conformist diocesan regime with which these authors saw such practitioners as inseparably bound up. Primerose, on the other hand, was attempting to offer a more general, comprehensive statement of medical orthodoxy. Although he strongly protests against a range of practitioners and the circumstances in which they were able to flourish, his work was probably not responding to any one particular set of developments; in so far as any such developments did drive him to write, it was those in medical theory connected to his dispute with Harvey that were probably paramount, rather than changes within the Church of England.

In this context, it was neither necessary nor wise for Primerose to attack priest-physicians in highly controversial or partisan terms, or to dwell on the issue at excessive length. Instead, he presents his criticisms of them as part of his wider conservative defence of an idealised medical establishment. But within this context, it becomes all the more striking how Primerose draws seamlessly upon essentially religious arguments, rooted in his own Calvinist outlook and in canon law, to sustain his position. Again, religious and medical orthodoxy are presented as entirely compatible, while disorder in both spheres was mutually sustaining. Primerose repeatedly implies that the practice of priest-physicians was both invited and legitimised by the pre-existing disorder within the medical profession itself: 'That the knowledge of both these Arts is possible, the example of some Physicians themselves

---

<sup>119</sup> Anthony Milton, 'Licensing, Censorship, and Religious Orthodoxy in Early Stuart England', *The Historical Journal*, 41 (1998) 625-651; Webster, *Great Instauration*, p. 266.

doth manifest, of whom many study but a little'. While it was highly improbable that excellence could be obtained in either of these callings when they were combined, this defence against the dual vocation was severely undermined when such excellence was so hard to come by among physicians themselves: 'many Physicians (or at least, such as would be accounted so) doe so little bond themselves to the study of Physick, that it is an easie thing with a light labour, to know more in Physick than they know.'<sup>120</sup> To ascribe the ability of priest-physicians to maintain their practice of medicine to deficiencies in the medical profession, while stressing that the simultaneous study of physic and divinity turned the student's mind away equally from each, would also seem to carry a heavily implied criticism of the general condition of the clergy, too.

These patterns of thought in Primerose's work, the seamless intertwining of religious with professional and medical concerns and the identification of different manifestations of disorder as originating from common sources, are identical to those identified in the previous chapter as operating within the works of John Cotta and James Hart. But whereas the earlier authors were marshalling their arguments in response to a particular threat posed by the conformist takeover of Peterborough's church courts, Primerose was offering a more general statement of this conservative Calvinist-Galenist worldview. But like his predecessors, he saw orthodoxy and proper order as under siege from all quarters, by forces of disorder that were ultimately inseparable.

Primerose's work is not the only such statement from this period; another is provided by Hart himself, with his 1633 *Diet of the Diseased*. This large work set out both to offer an exhaustive guide to proper diet and to deal with a host of medical curiosities and controversies that had come to Hart's attention, from dreams and sleepwalking to love potions and the weapon salve. Though not an error book as such, it deals with many of the same issues as Primerose's *Popular Errours*, and offers a similarly comprehensive statement of Galenic medical orthodoxy. Yet Hart felt no compunctions about inserting the bulk of his 'Discourse of the lawlesse intrusion of Parsons & Vicars', a work argued almost entirely from biblical, theological and canon law sources and devoted primarily to the *religious* failings incumbent in those who took up the dual vocation, into the body of this larger work. Within the context of the *Diet*, Hart's attack on priest-physicians can be seen as just one, albeit particularly

---

<sup>120</sup> Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. C2.

telling, aspect of a thoroughgoing and thoroughly worked out conservative worldview that drew little firm distinction between bad medicine and bad religion.

Even Edward Poeton's work may offer a similar model, if 'The Urinall Crackt in the carriage' is viewed within the context of his 'Medical Treatises' as a whole, which may well be how Poeton originally intended for them to be read, given the rapid succession in which he seems to have produced them and the references he makes between the different texts. Within this context, Poeton's uroscopy treatise can be seen as one section within a large general work which deals with multiple issues related to medicine, but which is again highly conscious of the kind of links between medical and religious concerns that made the priest-physician issue so meaningful. By far the longest treatise is devoted to midwifery, an area in which the requirements of medicine became particularly closely intertwined with those of religion, in a time of appallingly high infant mortality. Poeton's opening survey of the qualities required in a midwife focuses entirely on the religious and moral, stressing humility, temperance, mercy towards the poor, and that 'first its requisite that shee have the feare of god'.<sup>121</sup> He relates a set of articles expected of sworn midwives, stressing the need to neither use nor allow magical or popish practices during delivery, and to ensure that the child was baptised into the Church of England.<sup>122</sup>

But again, Poeton depicts the commonwealth as facing a tide of practitioners who did not meet these standards, bemoaning 'the miseries of som unmercifull woemen, who usurp the office or calling of Midwives, for such being ill permitted to practice without examination or oathe, doe onely what they list', and the fact that they 'are promiscuously permitted to practice, to the hurt and prejudice of many a poore woman, and tender infant.'<sup>123</sup> The robbing of legitimate practitioners, such as Poeton's own wife, of their rightful economic interests, a disastrous undermining of proper medical care and a general spread of disorderly behaviour were all rooted in a disregard for what were essentially religious standards of practice.

---

<sup>121</sup> Sloane 1954, ff. 5v-7v.

<sup>122</sup> Sloane 1954, ff. 7v-8v. Poeton depicts his midwife character as reading these articles from her licence, although such licences in fact tended only to offer a perfunctory statement of the bearer's good character and religious conformity (Forbes, 'Regulation of English Midwives in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries'. p. 242). However, Poeton's articles are very similar to the oath to be made by midwives to their bishop recorded in Richard Garnet, *The Book of Oaths* (London: W. Lee, M. Walbancke, D. Pakeman and G. Bedle, 1649) sig. N5v-N8v.

<sup>123</sup> Sloane 1954, ff. 7-7v, 9.



But Poeton's proposed solutions did not involve radical reform. Instead, he called for the Bishops to exercise their existing licensing powers more diligently and forcefully, and for orthodox physicians to be given a greater role in this licensing. This is very similar to Primerose's approach to the declining standards he perceived among physicians themselves. For Primerose, the desperate state of the medical profession was in no small part the fault of the universities, who in granting degrees 'are too carelesse, denying them to few or none'. Similarly, the College of Physicians had proved far too uncritically willing to accept new theories that undermined the Galenic basis of proper medical theory and practice. But Primerose emphatically did not seek to replace, or even structurally reform these institutions. Instead, he urged them to exert their authority more forcefully, and return to the precepts 'wisely ordained by our Ancestours'.<sup>124</sup> Though these authors perceived an urgent need for reform in a multitude of areas, they shared an intensely conservative, highly idealising view of how this reform should be achieved; one that accorded ideally with an outlook shaped equally by humanistic Galenism and reformed Protestantism, both of which emphasised restoration of and adherence to canonical ancient texts as the route to correct apprehension of their respective subjects.

It is possible to detect the outlines of a similar approach in these authors' attitudes towards the church, and this too probably influenced the differences of tone apparent in the works of the 1630s, when compared to those of the previous two decades. A particularly striking example can be found in the final work of that most vociferous critic of priest-physicians, Hart's *Diet*. Although this work reproduces much of Hart's earlier 'Discourse' unchanged, there is one particularly interesting addition. This is a marginal reference to a sermon preached by the Bishop of Peterborough at Northampton in 1631, in which he instructed

That ministers therefore are not to meddle with other callings. They are not then (saith hee) to meddle with Galen & Hippocrates, which he there proved both learnedly and religiously, by the weightinesse of the calling, and paines therein to be imploied. And as there was there a great deale of good counsell for the clergie, so I hope he will have a care to see all faults and abuses reformed<sup>125</sup>

---

<sup>124</sup> Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. B5v-B6.

<sup>125</sup> Hart, *Diet*, sig. Mmm2v.

This injunction, and Hart's effusive and hopeful praise for it, might not seem particularly remarkable but for the identity of the bishop in question: William Piers, who had succeeded Thomas Dove in 1630. Later, as Bishop of Bath and Wells, Piers was to acquire a fearsome reputation as one of 'the most extreme of the Laudians' for his rigorous enforcement of ceremonial conformity and suppression of puritan lectures.<sup>126</sup> His policies in Peterborough foreshadowed this programme, as Piers vigorously enforced many of the ceremonial requirements which had been largely dropped after the conformist reversals of the early 1620s, and proscribed several 'factious' ministers from preaching at the lecture in Kettering, which was sponsored by Hart's patron Edward Montague and had in fact generally been notable for its moderate tone.<sup>127</sup>

Yet Hart's reference is not the only sign of attempted co-operation between Piers and the Montague circle. While Piers was anxious to silence those puritans he considered 'factious', he was happy to allow the lecture at Kettering to continue, and for Montague's clerical clients Joseph Bentham and William Spencer to preach there regularly.<sup>128</sup> This may seem surprising, given that Montague had led the opposition to the conformist reforms of the Jacobean period and was the driving force behind the attempts then to prosecute Sir John Lambe for his efforts to enforce conformity; an agenda which Hart seems to have crafted much of his earlier work to support. Why would this group now seek accord with a man who was imposing his agenda with an even greater rigidity than Lambe had?

Part of the answer probably lies in Piers's apparent credal Calvinism; his opposition to priest-physicians was likely rooted in theological concerns similar to those of Hart, giving the latter good reason to hope that the new bishop's desire to finally effect reform on the issue was genuine.<sup>129</sup> Yet the limits of this explanation are demonstrated by the fact that most of Montague's clients continued to conform under Piers's various successors during the 1630s, all of whom seem to have shared Piers's

---

<sup>126</sup> Margaret Stieg, *Laud's Laboratory: The Diocese of Bath and Wells in the Early Seventeenth Century* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1982) p. 34.

<sup>127</sup> Fielding, 'Conformists, Puritans and the Church Courts', pp. 102, 150-151.

<sup>128</sup> Fielding, 'Conformists, Puritans and the Church Courts', pp. 151, 210. The restrictions on the lecture's personnel were routinely flouted, and one of Piers's successors had suppressed it by 1637.

<sup>129</sup> Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, pp. 74-5, 203-4.

conformist rigour but not his Calvinist credentials.<sup>130</sup> At least as important as doctrine in prompting this change of approach was probably the changed relationship between the outlook of the Montague circle and the circumstances within which they found themselves.

Montague's parliamentary activism of the early 1620s, Hart's veiled attacks on the conformist church court regime and Robert Bolton's decrying of the growing infestation of church and commonwealth with bribery, simony and flattery, all reflected a position of puritan power. The godly faction had dominated local government for decades and perceived King James to be broadly sympathetic towards their agenda.<sup>131</sup> But it was also a position of insecurity in the face of the takeover of the diocesan authorities by a group of churchmen whose rigorous enforcement of conformity departed markedly from the Jacobean norm and impinged upon long established local traditions; these were essentially therefore regarded as illegitimate usurpers of an established godly order. Vociferously challenging such authorities was perfectly consistent with the moderate strain of puritanism, with its emphasis on social and religious order, which characterised Montague and his circle and is so evident in the work of James Hart.

But when the same strand of conformists who had been seen by puritans as interlopers in Peterborough during the previous three decades now came to control much of the hierarchy of the Church of England, the same conservative outlook which had previously driven the Montague circle to oppose the conformists in Peterborough now compelled them to seek co-operation with them. Joseph Bentham now urged fellow puritans, both from the pulpit and in print, to conform and uphold order and unity within the church.<sup>132</sup> Montague himself became estranged from his fellow Northamptonshire puritans over his prompt and vocal support for the forced loan.<sup>133</sup>

---

<sup>130</sup> A notable exception here is William Spencer, a hitherto moderate alienated by the re-issue of the Book of Sports and presented for nonconformity by 1634 (Fielding, 'Conformists, Puritans and the Church Courts', pp. 124, 130, 151-2, 200, 210).

<sup>131</sup> Bolton, *Two Sermons*, sig. B (preached in 1621).

<sup>132</sup> Bentham, *Societie of the Saints*, sig. F2v, see also *Christian Conflict*, sig. S4v; Tom Webster, *Godly Clergy in Early Stuart England: The Caroline Puritan Movement c. 1620-1643* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) pp. 224-6. Similar sentiments were expressed during the same period by Edward Reynolds, former minister of Hart's home parish of All Saints, Northampton and a leader among Northamptonshire's moderate godly, in a sermon before Bishop Francis Dee: *A Sermon Touching the Peace and Edification Of the Church* (London: Robert Bostocke, 1638) sig. B2-B3, C-C4, E4v-F.

<sup>133</sup> Richard Cust, *The Forced Loan and English Politics 1626-1628* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987) pp. 110-11.

Piers's decision to preach against priest-physicians during his visitation sermon at Northampton may therefore have represented a conscious attempt to reciprocate such co-operation, reaching out to these moderate puritans for whom, as we have seen, the matter was one of considerable concern.

But any willingness among the Montague circle to co-operate with the diocesan authorities did not represent a softening of attitudes towards what Bentham described as the 'malignant spirits' of Laudianism.<sup>134</sup> Indeed, it stemmed from exactly the same highly polarised worldview which was so important in shaping their intense opposition to church reform. As Peter Lake has shown, this emphasis on binary opposition led such moderate puritans to appropriate ethical norms and the virtues of moderation for what they presented as a distinctively puritan agenda, which was nonetheless seen as coterminous with the interests of church and commonwealth as a whole. Disorder, on the other hand, was a quality that they ascribed firmly to their ungodly enemies; Bolton and Bentham's defence of the godly completely whitewashed the accusations of nonconformity that were so central to the anti-puritan case by the 1630s.<sup>135</sup>

This approach was perhaps spelt out most clearly by Edward Bagshaw, a moderate puritan lawyer of Northamptonshire who had been tutored by Bolton at Oxford, when he came to produce an edition of the works of his friend and former master. Bagshaw opened this with a brief biography of Bolton intended as a rebuttal of the Laudian attack on Calvinism, with Bolton's orthodoxy as his chief line of defence. 'Such a generall scorne hath this degenerate age put upon the wayes of GOD', Bagshaw complained, 'that the name of Puritan which is truly and properly the name of the proud heresie of Novatus, or else of the vile sect of the Anabaptists, is for want of seeking redresse by our Ecclesiastical Laws, become the honourable nickname of the best and holiest men'. This was demonstrated by Bolton, whose 'doctrine was never drawne into question either for error or schisme: so studious was hee ever of the unity and peace of the Church of England which hee dearely loved that none could justly quarrell with him, but Papists and other Sectaries, as also others that

---

<sup>134</sup> Bentham, *Christian Conflict*, sig. A7v.

<sup>135</sup> Lake, 'The Godly and their Enemies', pp. 154-7, 182.

were corrupted with error or evill life.’<sup>136</sup> Bagshaw was ultimately to face censure from Archbishop Laud for his criticisms of church reform, but like his mentor Bolton he was never willing to countenance any undermining of the hierarchy of the church. Indeed, Bagshaw remained unwavering in his support for episcopacy throughout the period, and at the outbreak of civil war he followed Montague and Bentham into the Royalist camp.<sup>137</sup>

The outlooks of men such as Bagshaw and Bentham chime very closely with what we have seen to be the implications of Cotta and Hart’s works during this period; the godly were by definition bastions of order and orthodoxy in all fields, which their opponents were seeking to undermine at every turn. All of these authors drew such a violent cleavage through the social world that it was extremely difficult for them to countenance a quality - nonconformity - which they had placed firmly on the wrong side of it. This led them to try to avoid the impression of promoting conflict with senior conformists, and to seek to try and effect reform through the legitimately available channels, which necessitated co-operation with such officials, as can be seen in Hart’s appeal to Piers. Identifying common ground with the bishop on the issue of priest-physicians allowed him to mitigate the implications of his original assault on the conformists, which he had otherwise left largely unchanged and with its wider implications fully in tact. It also signalled a practical willingness to compromise and co-operate with them where common ground could be found.

Something of a similar approach can be detected in the work of Edward Poeton. Despite his often trenchant tone and Calvinistic arguments, Poeton invokes none other than Archbishop Laud himself to rebut claims that turning to medical practice was a response to clerical poverty, crediting him with offering an effective solution: ‘Our most revered Archbishop of Canterbury, his grace, made it knowne at his provinciallyl visitation’, that such ministers should appeal to his vicar general from whom they ‘shoulde not onely have hearing, but shoulde also receive remedie, by his graces power and authoritie.’<sup>138</sup> Poeton may also have seen scope for co-operation

---

<sup>136</sup> Robert Bolton, *Mr Boltons Last and Learned Worke of the Foure last Things...Together with the Life and death of the Authour* (London: George Miller for Edward Bagshaw, 1632) sig. b3v, C3-C3v; Fielding, ‘Conformists, Puritans and the Church Courts’, p. 213.

<sup>137</sup> P. R. N. Carter, ‘Bagshaw, Edward (1589/90-1662)’, *ODNB*, 3, p. 246.

<sup>138</sup> Sloane 1954, f. 155v.

within his own diocese. The reference to Brian's 'late' *Pisse-Prophet* suggests Poeton's treatise appeared shortly after that work's publication in 1637. Brian Duppa succeeded Richard Mountague as Bishop of Chichester (and to the rectory of Petworth) the following year, so it is hard to know which of them Poeton produced his work under. But it is interesting to note that, in Julian Davies's estimation at least, Duppa 'had good Calvinist credentials', perhaps holding a similar doctrinal outlook to Piers, although Duppa combined this with a more cautious approach to church government.<sup>139</sup> Did this lead Poeton to believe that Duppa and those around him might be open to his arguments?

Perhaps so, but even if the anti-Calvinist standard bearer Mountague was still in place at Chichester when Poeton wrote, it is possible that Poeton saw an opportunity to find common ground and bring about some reform on the priest-physician issue. Mountague's 1631 articles are notable for their pronounced hostility towards unlicensed healers: 'What Physitian or Chirurgion is in your Parish unlicensed, and being not a Doctor of Physicke, in either of the Universities, doth practise Physicke', he enquires, 'And what ignorant persons have left their trade, and taken upon them to professe physicke, or Chirurgery; and who be they that so abuse the people?'<sup>140</sup> Licensing physicians was a normal part of a bishop's responsibilities, and a privilege which a staunch conformist such as Mountague might be expected to uphold jealously. Yet his article stands out for its particularly trenchant tone. Laud's metropolitical visitation articles of 1635, otherwise heavily influenced by Mountague's, dropped such enquiries altogether.<sup>141</sup> Another of Mountague's articles condemns any minister who engage in trades contrary 'to the honour of his calling'; readers could be forgiven for taking the two articles together as condemning the activities of priest-physicians, or at least those of them who were unlicensed.<sup>142</sup>

So either Mountague or Duppa may have offered Poeton some hope on this issue, although if this was the case then the content of 'The Urinall Crackt in the

---

<sup>139</sup> Julian Davies, *The Caroline Captivity of the Church: Charles I and the Remoulding of Anglicanism 1625-1641* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992) p. 99; I. M. Green, *The Re-Establishment of the Church of England 1660-1663* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978) pp. 24, 92; Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, p. 207.

<sup>140</sup> *Articles...diocese of Chichester*, sig. B4.

<sup>141</sup> Fletcher, *County Community*, p. 81. For further comparison see Piers's *Articles to be Enquired Of, in the second Triennial Visitation, of the Right Reverend Father in God, William, Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells* (London: Miles Flesher, 1636) sig. C4.

<sup>142</sup> *Articles...diocese of Chichester*, sig. Bv.

carriage' might suggest that he underestimated the importance of sacerdotalism in conformist thinking, and Mountague's unwillingness to tolerate those who spoke 'slandrous and reproachfull words' against their minister 'to the scandal of his vocation'.<sup>143</sup> He may also have overestimated the degree to which conformist readers in general would have concerned themselves with the finer points of his treatise, rather than simply dismissing it as a godly attack-piece. This might further explain why he later seems to have sought to disassociate himself from the treatise.

So does Primerose's apparent tone of ambivalence towards the priest-physician issue, and his avoidance of any explicit invocation of the doctrine of callings, likewise represent an attempt to avoid open confrontation with, and perhaps even facilitate co-operation with, the conformist authorities? Again, we are forced here to try and infer what we can from the actions of his protégé Robert Wittie, in rather different circumstances; although it should be remembered that, even if Wittie was to some degree pursuing his own agenda, it still offers an example of the use to which moderate Calvinist physicians were seeking to put such arguments. During his attempts to organise opposition to priest-physicians in the 1670s, Wittie appealed to the Archbishop of York, Richard Sterne, a former chaplain to Laud. After meeting Wittie and hearing his arguments, Sterne promised Wittie 'he will regulate, looking on it as a thing very reasonable to be done'.<sup>144</sup> But Wittie's appeal to the Archbishop, and his decision to conform to the Church of England after the restoration, should not be mistaken for enthusiasm for the state of the restoration church. In fact, his renewed opposition to priest-physicians was probably itself a statement of wider dissatisfaction, as can be read between the lines of the same letter in which he describes the meeting with Sterne: 'we observe that almost all the divinity are stepping in to practice for lucre sake while we have seemed to be asleep.'<sup>145</sup>

Primerose's decision to attack the priest-physician John Evans with his *Antimoniall Cup twice cast* may also be telling. Whereas Richard Napier, for example, had been a generally respectable figure on friendly terms with prominent conformists, Evans was a man notorious for his debauched lifestyle. Evans's protégé William Lilly later recounted their first meeting: 'he having been drunk the Night before, was upon

---

<sup>143</sup> *Articles...diocesse of Chichester*, sig. B3.

<sup>144</sup> Sloane 1393, f. 15.

<sup>145</sup> Sloane 1393, f. 15v.

his Bed, if it be lawful to call that a Bed, whereon he lay'. Lilly noted Evans's skill in astrology, but described how 'for Money he would willingly give contrary Judgments, was much addicted to Debauchery, and then very abusive and quarrelsome, seldom without a black Eye'.<sup>146</sup>

Evans seems to have been a perfectly willing ceremonial conformist, albeit perhaps more for reasons of self-preservation than ideological principle; he was at least perfectly happy to wear the surplice, as Lilly describes.<sup>147</sup> Nevertheless, by the time Primerose penned his attack Evans had suffered a stern and public rebuke by the church hierarchy, having been detained by the court of high commission in 1635. Archbishop Laud, 'much displeased' with Evans's conduct, had ordered all remaining copies of the pamphlet advertising his antimonial cups, *The Universall Medicine*, to be seized and destroyed. Evans was eventually discharged under a promise of ceasing to practise medicine, which he quickly broke.<sup>148</sup> His disorderly practices and lifestyle could stand, in Calvinist minds, as a testament to the consequences of his highly unorthodox approach to the clerical office, and of a shift away from the Calvinist focus on devoted preaching and towards an emphasis on works that was being overseen by the conformist hierarchy. But an attack on him could hardly be taken for a direct assault on this hierarchy itself. Primerose in fact only briefly remarks on Evans's status as minister, and devotes very little of his treatise to religious arguments about callings or the role of the ministry.<sup>149</sup> Yet given Primerose's Calvinist background, together with his complaints on these subjects in *Popular Errours*, it seems highly improbable that these factors were incidental to his loathing of Evans. Indeed, when the *Antimoniall Cup* was restored to its originally intended place as an appendix to the earlier work, this context became easily apparent without Primerose having to restate his arguments, given especially that Evans himself freely advertised and traded upon his own clerical status.<sup>150</sup>

It may seem obvious, in a sense, that authors who set themselves, their profession and their co-religionists up as bulwarks of social, political and

---

<sup>146</sup> Lilly, *Life and Times*, sig. B11.

<sup>147</sup> Lilly, *Life and Times*, sig. B11v.

<sup>148</sup> *Annals*, 5-12 June 1635 (III.2, p. 420), 3 April 1637 (III.2, p. 444).

<sup>149</sup> Primerose, *Antimoniall Cup*, sig. C.

<sup>150</sup> Evans, *Universall Medicine*, sig. ¶v, A8v.



ecclesiastical order and orthodoxy would be at pains not to appear to be seeking to undermine these things themselves. This further complicates any attempt to straightforwardly substitute religious for economic factors in interpreting the anti-quack literature of the early Stuart period. Instead, the church reforms of the period should be regarded as a critical element in the context within which these works and the outlook they expressed were developed, and which drove these authors to publish. Images of a land about to be submerged beneath a sea of quackery and attendant chaos may seem like absurd, hysterical special pleading, until the connections that were drawn between narrowly medical questions and issues of far wider and more pressing concern to godly opinion are understood.

Such an interpretation is obviously harder to illustrate in concrete terms than narrower explanations based on economic challenges or direct protest. But it can be brought into clearer relief by focussing on an issue with which all of these authors were concerned, often to the point of obsession: demonology. This subject was crucial in underpinning the patterns of binary opposition that characterise these works and so much of early modern thought, particularly in the construction and maintenance of concepts of order and orthodoxy. The next chapter, therefore, will focus on the demonological thinking of all of these authors, and how it intersected with and underwrote the arguments and concerns discussed in this and the previous chapter.

### Witchcraft, Magical Healing and Medical Demonology

The intense interest shown by its various authors in the subjects of witchcraft, magic and demonology represents one of the most striking features of early Stuart anti-quack literature. For two of these authors, John Cotta and Edward Poeton, this interest was so strong that it ultimately led them to produce their own full-length demonological treatises. This is not necessarily surprising, given the widespread deployment of occult techniques by irregular medical practitioners, as described in chapter one. Keith Thomas notes that the contemporary clerical campaign against cunning folk ‘obviously coincided with the interests of the clergy as a professional class. In the cunning man the godly minister could hardly fail to recognise a powerful rival to his own pastoral dominion.’<sup>1</sup> But the rivalry such magical practitioners posed to the medical profession was, if anything, even more obvious, so if this interpretation of clerical demonology is accepted then it becomes extremely tempting to see anti-quack authors’ concern with occult matters as a manifestation of parallel concerns on the part of learned physicians. Such practitioners also appeared to offer anti-quack authors relatively safe targets, for in their attack on them, as Lucinda McCray Beier observes, they ‘could rely on the combined support of organised medicine, the state and the church’.<sup>2</sup>

Such arguments point us back towards a ‘protectionist’ interpretation of early Stuart anti-quack literature, again tending to suggest that these authors were motivated primarily by the threat of economic competition. But if, as I have argued across the two preceding chapters, these authors’ attacks on irregular practitioners were fostered at least as much by religious concerns, then it would surely be perverse to assume that such concerns were marginalised when they came to deal with as innately theological a topic as demonology. Over the following chapter, therefore, I will seek to explore how far some of the issues already discussed in fact helped to shape these authors’ treatments of the subjects of magic and witchcraft. For example, by looking at how these authors connected the issue of witchcraft with that of priest-physicians, I hope to

---

<sup>1</sup> Thomas, *Religion*, p. 314.

<sup>2</sup> Beier, *Sufferers and Healers*, p. 46.

demonstrate how they used this association to illustrate the interlinked nature of the various disruptive forces that they believed were seeking to usurp orthodox thought and proper order during this period. These forces, within the kinds of thought patterns that historians, led by Stuart Clark, have shown to have been so pervasive in early modern thinking, could be perceived and presented as different aspects of a general inversionary threat to the godly commonwealth. By emphasising the diabolical nature of the activities of irregular practitioners, and arguing for this on the basis of widely shared assumptions about natural philosophy, these authors could lay these connections out clearly before their readership, and fully reconcile both the professional concerns and the religious preoccupations that moved them to write.

In the second half of this chapter I will discuss how all of the anti-quack authors of this period sought to use the issue of witchcraft to address pressing ideological challenges; both from within the sphere of medicine itself, in the form of Paracelsianism, and from the religious and political spheres in the forms of both anti-Calvinism within the Church of England, and the external threat posed by Roman Catholicism. Before turning to these broader questions, however, I want to focus on those two properly demonological treatises directly within the remit of this study: Cotta's *Triall of Witch-craft* and Poeton's manuscript 'winnowing of white witchcraft', outlining in particular how their reasoning illustrates the true targets and motives for their work, and how, once again, these were heavily influenced by particular local pressures.

## I

John Cotta has sometimes been seen as a relatively 'enlightened' voice amongst early modern demonologists, even being included in a selection of 'English Sceptics' focussed upon within one recent print-on-demand publication, in the illustrious company of Reginald Scot, Charles Darwin, Richard Dawkins and Derren Brown.<sup>3</sup> But actually reading *The Triall of Witch-craft* in fact reveals what can initially seem like a bewildering mixture of scepticism and credulity. Cotta dismisses the swimming test, for example, along with other popular counter-magical techniques such as the scratching of witches or the burning of bewitched cattle as lawless, vulgar

---

<sup>3</sup> *English Sceptics, Including: Richard Dawkins, Derren Brown, Nicholas Humphrey, Reginald Scot, Ian Rowland, Charles Darwin, John Cotta, Arthur C. Clarke* (Richardson: Hephaestus Books, 2011); Kocher, *Science and Religion*, p. 142.

superstitions. He also maintains the impossibility of the devil transforming witches into the shapes of animals or causing objects to exist in more than one place at the same time, or of witches and sorcerers being able to raise the dead.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, however, he upholds the ability of the devil to rapidly transport witches between distant places, and the ability of the bewitched during their fits to describe what the witch responsible is doing at that same moment, even when they are far removed from one another.<sup>5</sup> Over the course of the treatise, he draws upon sources running the full gamut of demonological opinion, from the stark scepticism of Reginald Scot and Johann Weyer right through to the prurient persecuting zeal of the *Malleus Maleficarum*.<sup>6</sup>

Such apparent contradictions led R. Trevor Davies to offer a rather less charitable assessment of Cotta as a ‘reculer pour mieux sauter tactician’, prepared in the face of growing scepticism to abandon ‘a few minor items of faith in order to concentrate greater strength upon the larger ones’.<sup>7</sup> Beier goes even further, asserting that the arguments put forward by Cotta and his fellow anti-quacks in fact ‘contributed to the escalation of the English witchcraze.’<sup>8</sup> But depictions of Cotta as either a rational sceptic or a credulous witch-monger both rather miss the point of his work, within which the various different judgments he offers on different phenomena in fact reflect a remarkably consistent approach.

Peter Elmer identifies the central purpose of the *Triall of Witchcraft* as being ‘to use the contemporary debate on the attributes of witches and demons as a viable tool with which to probe the boundaries of contemporary scientific and philosophical thinking.’<sup>9</sup> Cotta sought to apply the principles of orthodox Aristotelian natural philosophy in which, as a university-trained physician, he was heavily steeped, to the various instances and accounts of demonic activity which he had encountered both within books and in his own practice. He did so on the basis of two core assumptions, shared by the overwhelming majority of contemporary natural philosophers and demonologists. The first of these was that the devil, together with the witches he

---

<sup>4</sup> Cotta, *Triall*, sig. O4v-Qv, F, E4v, F3.

<sup>5</sup> Cotta, *Triall*, sig. F3v-F4, Qv.

<sup>6</sup> Cotta, *Triall*, sig. Kv,L2v, Iv.

<sup>7</sup> R. Trevor Davies, *Four Centuries of Witch-Beliefs: With special reference to the Great Rebellion* (London: Methuen & Co, 1947) p. 96.

<sup>8</sup> Beier, *Sufferers and Healers*, p. 46.

<sup>9</sup> *ODNB*, 13, p. 579.

sometimes chose to work through, could operate only within the bounds of nature, performing preternatural wonders rather than truly supernatural miracles: ‘doth hee not, nor is able to rule or commaund over generall Nature, or infringe or alter her inviolable decrees...For nature is nothing els but the ordinary power of God in all things created, among which the Divell being a creature, is contained.’<sup>10</sup> Any acts performed by witches or demons that appeared to breach these ‘inviolable decrees’ therefore had to be illusory, ‘seeming and juggling transmutations’, of which the devil was a master.<sup>11</sup>

But even setting aside illusory wonders, the sphere of demonic activity remained potentially enormous, partly because of the second of Cotta’s two key assumptions: that there existed occult or hidden virtues within nature, the effects of which were manifest to the senses, but the causes of which lay beyond the bounds of human understanding. Examples included the reaction of iron to the lodestone or, in medicine, the spread of contagion or the operation of purges.<sup>12</sup> The appeal of such subjects to hermeticists and neo-platonists was obvious, but they were also a matter of intense interest to orthodox thinkers such as the great French Galenist Jean Fernel, whose work on the subject, *Abditis de rerum causis*, exerted a powerful influence upon Cotta’s work.<sup>13</sup>

Not only did Cotta uphold the existence of occult causes, but he stressed that man’s inability to properly comprehend these qualities was inescapable, as his ‘understanding Soule is depressed, and imprisoned in this life by the body...and cannot extend or inlarge itself further unto any portion of knowledge, then thorow the narrow windowes, closures, parts and organs of the body’; in this, as in most respects, his thinking was thoroughly orthodox. The devil and other spirits however, ‘being of a more subtile essence, and free from the burden and incumbrance of an earthly tabernacle or prison’, were able to ‘spaciously compasse the whole and universall body of the sublunarie or inferiour world’.<sup>14</sup> This elevated measure of dexterity and understanding, not to mention the experience gained during thousands of years of

---

<sup>10</sup> Cotta, *Triall*, sig. Fv; Stuart Clark, ‘Demons and disease: the disenchantment of the sick (1500-1700)’, in Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra, Hilary Marland and Hans de Waardt (eds), *Illness and Healing Alternatives in Western Europe* (London: Routledge, 1997) pp. 38-58. p. 38.

<sup>11</sup> Cotta, *Triall*, sig. Fv.

<sup>12</sup> Clark, ‘Demons and disease’, pp. 42-4.

<sup>13</sup> *ODNB*, 13, p. 579; Cotta, *Triall*, sig. I2.

<sup>14</sup> Cotta, *Triall*, sig. D4v; Elmer, ‘Medicine, religion and the puritan revolution’, p. 18.

observation, allowed the devil to manipulate hidden qualities within nature to strike human beings with disease and other afflictions; although this was still possible only where permitted by God, in order to ‘deceive those wicked’ or ‘quicken and stirre up the godly and holy man’.<sup>15</sup>

Upon this basis, Cotta set out to interrogate the boundaries of demonic power. The devil cannot truly change witches’ bodily shapes because this is an act of creation, proper only to God and not creatures. Similarly the devil cannot cause objects to exist in two different places at once, simply ‘because it is impossible in nature’ to do so.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, the devil’s ability to manipulate the elements made transvection of witches perfectly possible, as was demonstrated by the numerous instances of such transportation described in the Bible; as King James himself had earlier observed, there was little reason why Satan should not be able to perform merely that which a strong wind was capable of effecting. Likewise, the Devil’s ability ‘to transmit and send unto, or into men unrequired, and without their desire or assent, secret powers, force, knowledge, illuminations and supernaturall revelations’ made it possible for the bewitched to perceive the distant actions of their tormentors.<sup>17</sup> Cotta applies similar standards to popular counter-magical beliefs; the swimming test is invalid because ‘the ordinarie nature of things senselesse and voide of reason’, such as water, ‘doth not distinguish one person from another, vertue from vice, a good man from an evill man’.<sup>18</sup>

The way in which Cotta applies his natural philosophical conceptions to the issue of demonic power is striking in its critical rigour. But in these conceptions themselves, and indeed most of the conclusions he draws from them, Cotta is fairly typical of contemporary intellectuals. In fact, this material primarily represents a framework within which Cotta can advance the real main thrust of his treatise, which is a consideration of how, once an act is accepted as possible, an observer can

---

<sup>15</sup> Cotta, *Triall*, sig. Ev. See also William Perkins, *A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft* (Cambridge: Cantrel Legge, 1610) sig. ¶5v; Richard Bernard, *A Guide to Grand-Jury Men* (London: Felix Kingston for Ed. Blackmore, 1627) sig. A11-B3.

<sup>16</sup> Cotta, *Triall*, sig. E4v.

<sup>17</sup> Cotta, *Triall*, sig. F4-F4v, Q2; James VI, *Dæmonologie, in forme of a Dialogue* (Edinburgh: Robert waldegrave, 1597) sig. F3v; see also William Drage, *Daimonomegia. A Small Treatise of Sickneses and Diseases from Witchcraft, and Supernatural Causes* (London: J. Dover, 1665) sig. A4v.

<sup>18</sup> Cotta, *Triall*, sig. P.

distinguish between demonic and occult, but natural, causation.<sup>19</sup> The difficulties here were obvious: if the actions of devils themselves were ultimately natural, but it was also accepted that there were inexplicable but entirely non-demonic forces at work within nature, how could the presence of demonic power in disease be reliably discerned - especially given that God's reasons for allowing both natural and demonic afflictions to proceed, to punish or test the afflicted, were essentially the same? For Cotta, the answer again lay in natural philosophy, or rather a mastery of its workings sufficient to distinguish between demonic and natural operations on the basis of the effects they produced:

the nature & power of Spirits is unknowne unto man (as things supernaturall) and can be, and is no otherwise knowne, but by examining the workes issuing from thence, and comparing them a right with that which is naturall (because man in his Reason and understanding cannot discern that which is truely transcending his Nature, other wise, then by observing how far it exceedeth that which is according to Nature:)... Although therefore the subject of Witch-craft requires a greater measure of knowledge to discern that which is therein really, and truely supernaturall, from that which in nature oft-times hath a very great likenesse, and a deceivable similitude therewith: yet is the way unto knowledge, the common high way which conduceth unto all other knowledge whatsoever.<sup>20</sup>

Identifying just when the devil 'doth juggingly seem to do those things which Nature doth justly challenge, not as his, but as her owne' was no easy task, but it was always possible, because 'it is impossible that the finger or power of the Divell should bee in any malady, but such a cause must needes produce some effect like it selfe'.<sup>21</sup> If 'in the likenesse and similitude of a disease, the working of a supernatural power doth hide it selfe, having no cause or possibility in nature', or 'naturall remedies or meanes according unto Art and due discretion applyed, doe extraordinarily or miraculously either lose their manifest inevitable nature, use, and operation, or else produce effects and consequences, against or above their nature', then supernatural involvement could be diagnosed.<sup>22</sup> However, such 'deepe and mysticall contingents' were far beyond the grasp of the unlearned, and so it was for the learned physician 'properly and by

---

<sup>19</sup> Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997) pp. 190-1.

<sup>20</sup> Cotta, *Triall*, sig. D3v.

<sup>21</sup> Cotta, *Triall*, sig. L2.

<sup>22</sup> Cotta, *Triall*, sig. K3v.

himself' to 'alone enter into the due consideration & examination of diseases...whether naturally or supernaturally inferred.'<sup>23</sup>

It is above all this cautious approach to the identification of bewitchment that has earned Cotta his reputation, in some quarters, as a relatively enlightened thinker; it is certainly difficult to reconcile with Beier's judgement that his work 'contributed to the escalation of the English witchcraze.' Cotta's approach in fact led him to emphatically reject what he regarded as vulgar hysteria over the threat of witchcraft and the violent, irrational responses this could provoke: 'without allowance of any law, or respect of common civilitie, every private, rash and turbulent person, upon his own surmise of a Witch, dare barbarously undertake by uncivill force, and lawlesse violence, to cast poore people bound into the water...for their owne vaine and foolish lusts.'<sup>24</sup>

However, Cotta's scepticism, even in this regard, was sharply limited. He firmly upheld not only the reality of witchcraft, but the possibility and indeed necessity of prosecuting its practitioners, seeing 'no cause or reason, why judicious, wary & wise practice and prooffe...should not equally, in case of Witch-craft, as in all other cases of judgement & inquisitions...confound the guilty.'<sup>25</sup> Cotta wanted to dampen down what he regarded as baseless witchcraft accusations, but it is nevertheless clear that he hoped his work would assist in successful identification and prosecution of the truly guilty. And although he places considerably greater emphasis on the former than many other witchcraft writers, his cautions against popular hysteria are again fairly typical of contemporary demonological works.<sup>26</sup>

To turn now to the question of *why* Cotta wrote *The Triall of Witch-craft*, and what he was trying to achieve with it, the above interpretation of his arguments immediately suggests some possible answers. The first is that Cotta was seeking to actively influence the proceedings of actual witchcraft prosecutions, in a more cautious and measured, if ultimately no less punitive direction. Northamptonshire and its neighbouring counties had witnessed a number of high profile witch-trials over the

---

<sup>23</sup> Cotta, *Triall*, sig. L, L2.

<sup>24</sup> Cotta, *Triall*, sig. 4.

<sup>25</sup> Cotta, *Triall*, sig. O2v-O3.

<sup>26</sup> James VI, *Dæmonologie*, sig. L3v-L4; Bernard, *Guide*, sig. B10; John Gaule, *Select Cases of Conscience Touching Witches and Witchcrafts* (London: W. Wilson for Richard Clutterbuck, 1646) sig. F-F2v.



years preceding the publication of *The Triall of Witch-craft*, including a famous prosecution at Northampton itself in 1612, which resulted in five executions, as described in a contemporary pamphlet.<sup>27</sup> Cotta took a keen interest in these local cases, attending proceedings himself as well as reading the pamphlet literature, including the lengthy account of the famous trial of the three witches of Warboys in Huntingdonshire, accused of bewitching the five daughters of Robert Throckmorton between 1589 and 1593.<sup>28</sup>

Within this context, Cotta's trenchant attack on the swimming test is particularly striking, given that the first known use of this ordeal in England took place during the Northampton trials. It was employed again at the trial of two women convicted in Bedfordshire the following year, and likewise described in a subsequent pamphlet.<sup>29</sup> The author of the Northampton pamphlet had been ambivalent towards the test's validity, admitting that there is 'neither evident prooffe in nature, nor revelation from heaven to assure us thereof', but he suggested that 'it may bee, that God hath appointed (for a supernaturall signe of the monstrous impiety of Witches) that the Element of water should refuse to receive them in her bosome, that have shaken from them the sacred water of Baptisme'.<sup>30</sup> Cotta is contemptuous of such reasoning, asking 'why should not Bread and Wine, being elements in that Sacrament of the Eucharist' likewise 'flye away from the throates, mouthes, and teeth of Witches?'<sup>31</sup>

So it is possible to interpret Cotta's attack on the swimming test as a criticism of the recent proceedings in his home town. But there may have been more going on here than a simple concern for due legal process. Peter Elmer has suggested that Cotta may in fact have been expressing the views of the local puritan gentry circle with which he was, as we have seen, intimately connected.<sup>32</sup> The presence of witchcraft within an early modern community was often regarded as symptomatic of moral and political failure on the part of the authorities; the ability to suppress demonic

---

<sup>27</sup> *The Witches of Northamptonshire* (London: Thomas Purfoot for Arthur Johnson, 1612); see also BL, Sloane MS 972, ff. 7-7v.

<sup>28</sup> *The most strange and admirable discoverie of the three Witches of Warboys* (London: Thomas Man and John Winnington, 1593); Cotta, *Triall*, sig. N4, L3.

<sup>29</sup> *Witches Apprehended, Examined and Executed, for notable villanies by them committed both by Land and Water* (London: Edward Marchant, 1613 sig. C2-C3; James Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness: Witchcraft in England 1550-1750* (London: Penguin, 1996) p. 99.

<sup>30</sup> *Witches of Northamptonshire*, sig. C2-C2v.

<sup>31</sup> Cotta, *Triall*, sig. P2v.

<sup>32</sup> Elmer, 'Politics of Witchcraft', pp. 107-8.

activities, most clearly exemplified in the belief that witches lost their powers in the presence of the godly magistrate, therefore represented a crucial test of political legitimacy.<sup>33</sup> But as described above in chapter two, the secular authorities in Northamptonshire had been dominated by puritans for decades. This elite regarded their county as a model godly community; it therefore ‘seemed incongruent to give credence to claims of witchcraft which, by their very nature, tended to undermine this image’.<sup>34</sup> Cotta’s intense concern with social order has already been described, but within this context it was not malefic witches that raised the spectre of social breakdown, but the ‘multitudes of swarmes of deceived Vulgars’ who ‘continually and violently obtrude their phantasticall sominations’.<sup>35</sup> Those who deployed methods such as the swimming test were guilty not only of ‘manifest robbing of God of his due prayse and glory’ through their supersitious deployment of ‘a miracle of the Divell’, but also of ‘uncivill force, and lawlesse violence’; their acts were both impious, and a needless, rebellious usurpation of a responsibility that the local authorities were perfectly well equipped to fulfil.<sup>36</sup>

Leading figures among Northamptonshire’s puritan gentry, such as Sir Richard Knightley, consequently themselves developed a sceptical attitude towards witchcraft accusations.<sup>37</sup> Such accusations were particularly dangerous at a time when a rival conformist faction was attempting to use its control of the ecclesiastical authorities to undermine the position of this godly elite. Cotta’s cautious attitude and criticisms of the methods by which local suspects had been apprehended can therefore be read as a defence of the same elements whose interests he had upheld in the *Short Discoverie* four years earlier.<sup>38</sup> Such a defence required him to marry his apparent scepticism about specific trials themselves to a staunch upholding of the reality of

---

<sup>33</sup> Elmer, ‘Politics of Witchcraft’, pp. 104-5; Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, p. 552.

<sup>34</sup> Elmer, ‘Politics of Witchcraft’, p. 108.

<sup>35</sup> Cotta, *Triall*, sig. P4v.

<sup>36</sup> Cotta, *Triall*, sig. Q, P4, Q4v.

<sup>37</sup> Elmer, ‘Politics of Witchcraft’, p. 107.

<sup>38</sup> Precedent here is provided by the puritan clergyman George Gifford’s broadly sceptical *Discourse of the subtill Practises of Devilles by Witches and Sorcerers* and *Dialogue concerning Witches and Witchcraftes*. These may have been partly intended as a defence of the puritan authorities of Gifford’s home town of Maldon in Essex, who were facing challenges to their position during this period with which witchcraft accusations became involved (Elmer, ‘Politics of Witchcraft’, p. 107; Alan Macfarlane, ‘A Tudor Anthropologist: George Gifford’s *Discourse* and *Dialogue*’, in Sydney Anglo (ed.), *The Damned Art: Essays in the Literature of Witchcraft* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977) pp. 140-155. pp. 141-2, 154.)

witchcraft in general, without which the whole basis for this legitimisation of puritan authority would collapse.

Beyond this simple defensiveness, however, Cotta may also have been actively seeking to promote himself and his sponsors as representatives of fashionable thought amongst the Jacobean intellectual and judicial elite. Most significantly in this respect, *The Triall of Witch-craft* expounds a view of witch prosecution broadly consistent with that which by then appeared to be held by James I himself. James's reputation for witch-hunting has traditionally been fierce, based primarily on an intense bout of prosecutions he presided over in Scotland during the 1590s, in response to a supposed plot to take his life through witchcraft. This was then compounded by the publication of James's draconian *Dæmonologie* and the passage of a new, more severe Witchcraft Act in 1604, shortly after he assumed the English throne.

However, it has long been recognised that English witchcraft prosecutions in fact declined during James's reign, and he has come to be seen as having later moderated the views he expressed in his earlier treatise.<sup>39</sup> James has nevertheless maintained his inquisitorial reputation, but this has been given a more sceptical hue, drawing on the personal role he seems to have played in uncovering feigned bewitchments and fraudulent accusations, such as those of Anne Gunter in 1605 and John Smith in 1616; the latter led to nine executions in Leicester before James interrogated the boy and dispatched him to Archbishop Abbott, who established that his claims were false.<sup>40</sup>

There is little evidence that James ever moved away from his belief in the reality of witchcraft and demonic pacts, as expressed in his *Dæmonologie*, but he does seem to have grown increasingly sceptical of particular accusations and wary of both popular and judicial credulity.<sup>41</sup> This is an approach with which Cotta's general

---

<sup>39</sup> C. L'Estrange Ewen, *Witch Hunting and Witch Trials: The Indictments for Witchcraft from the Records of 1373 Assizes held for the Home Circuit A. D. 1559-1736* (New York: Lincoln MacVeigh, The Dial Press, 1929) pp. x-xii.

<sup>40</sup> James Sharpe, *The Bewitching of Anne Gunter: A Horrible and true story of football, witchcraft, murder and the King of England* (London: Profile, 1999) p. 180; *Instruments of Darkness*, p. 49.

<sup>41</sup> Stephen Pumfrey, 'Potts, plots and politics: James I's *Daemonologie* and *The Wonderfull Discoverie of Witches*', in Robert Poole (ed.), *The Lancashire Witches: Histories and Stories* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002) pp. 22-41. pp. 23, 31, 36. The evidence here is somewhat contradictory, and Stuart Clark has argued that 'the King was not significantly more shrewd in the

outlook clearly chimes closely. To a certain extent, this may have been coincidental, James seeking to use the issue of witchcraft to legitimise his authority at the national level in a similar way to that in which Northamptonshire's puritan gentry may have been using it at the local level. But it is likely that Cotta was also consciously seeking to associate his viewpoint with that of the crown. James's sceptical interventions in witchcraft cases provided a rich source of gossip at court, which must have spread amongst the judiciary, and by the time of his death he had developed a 'reputation among his contemporaries as an exploder of false accusations of witchcraft...equal to his reputation as a demonologist.'<sup>42</sup>

Stephen Pumfrey has convincingly argued that Thomas Potts's famous account of the apprehension and execution of ten witches from the Pendle Hill area, *The Wonderfull Discoverie of witches in the countie of Lancaster*, was 'carefully crafted to secure James I's favour', and designed to show how the judges involved, who also commissioned the treatise, 'had perfectly executed his policy on witchcraft'. While constructing his work around the *Dæmonologie*, Potts responded to perceived changes in James's outlook by emphasising that text's brief warning against condemning the innocent, and describing how the judges exposed a fraudulent set of accusations arising in nearby Samlesbury, orchestrated by a Catholic priest, thereby showing a level of discrimination that only further emphasised the security of the Pendle convictions themselves. The enterprise was apparently a success, as both the two judges involved and Potts himself enjoyed successful subsequent careers.<sup>43</sup>

Tellingly, Cotta refers approvingly to the Lancashire convictions, proved 'by the testimonies beyond exception of witnesses'.<sup>44</sup> His own work was clearly not modelled on the *Dæmonologie* to anything like the extent that Potts's was; most obviously, Cotta dismisses the swimming test, which James had recommended using the very logic, based on baptism, that Cotta ridiculed.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, Cotta seems to be placing his work within the same ideological territory as that which James was

1610s, than in the 1590s', and that he had already manifested a sceptical streak before becoming King of England - while afterwards he found new channels to pursue the ideological objectives for which demonology had earlier served as a tool ('King James's *Dæmonologie*: Witchcraft and Kingship', in Anglo (ed.), *The Damned Art*, pp. 156-181. Quote at p. 163.) The key issue here, however, is how James's outlook was *perceived* in elite circles.

<sup>42</sup> MacDonald, *Witchcraft and Hysteria*, p. 1-li; Sharpe, *Bewitching of Anne Gunter*, p. 178.

<sup>43</sup> Pumfrey, 'Potts, plots and politics', pp. 23, 31, 38-9; Thomas Potts, *The Wonderfull Discoverie of witches in the Countie of Lancaster* (London: W. Stansby for John Barnes, 1613) sig. Z3-Z3v.

<sup>44</sup> Cotta, *Triall*, sig. Nv.

<sup>45</sup> James VI, *Dæmonologie*, sig. L4v-M.

now perceived to occupy, and which had thus become widely accepted in court circles. As well as advancing his own intellectual credibility, this may have represented another step in stressing the common outlook and shared concerns that existed between Cotta's Northamptonshire gentry circles and the King.

Indeed, Cotta and like-minded local puritans may have felt a particular need to illustrate this shared caution towards witchcraft accusations precisely because enthusiastic support *for* some such accusations amongst the godly had become a source of concern for the authorities early in James's reign. James had taken the English throne amidst the fallout from the Mary Glover case in London; Glover's fits, which she attributed to bewitchment by Elizabeth Jackson, and her subsequent dispossession by a group of puritan preachers had, in Michael MacDonald's words, 'captured the attention of London's leading citizens, enraged the church hierarchy and alarmed the government'.<sup>46</sup> It came on the back of a prolonged controversy during the 1590s over dispossessions performed by the puritan preacher John Darrell. These rituals, along with the exorcisms performed by Catholic missionaries which they had been developed in response to, were seen by the Church of England's authorities, particularly Bishop Richard Bancroft of London, as dangerous propaganda weapons aimed at undermining their own positions.<sup>47</sup>

The College of Physicians was divided over Glover's claims, with Cotta's puritan predecessor in the assault on irregular medical practice, Francis Herring, testifying in support of them.<sup>48</sup> Cotta's views on witchcraft, however, appear to chime more closely with those of one of the physicians who testified in Jackson's defence, Edward Jorden. He attributed Glover's fits to hysteria, defending his position shortly afterwards in his famous *Briefe Discourse of a Disease called the Suffocation of the Mother*. Whilst not denying that 'there may be both possessions by the Divell and obsessions and witchcraft, &c', Jorden insisted that these were now very rare, and so advised his readers 'to be very circumspect in pronouncing of a possession: both

---

<sup>46</sup> MacDonald (ed.), *Witchcraft and Hysteria*, p. x.

<sup>47</sup> MacDonald (ed.), *Witchcraft and Hysteria*, pp. xix-xxii.

<sup>48</sup> MacDonald (ed.), *Witchcraft and Hysteria*, pp. xiv-xv.

because the impostures be many, and the effects of naturall diseases strange to such as have not looked throughly into them.<sup>49</sup>

Jorden's work was presented to James during his progress to London, and may have helped shape the more sceptical approach he adopted as King of England; certainly it impressed him enough to ensure that Jorden was called for again during Anne Gunter's apparent bewitchment two years later.<sup>50</sup> MacDonald also sees Jorden's work as having 'probably encouraged medical sceptics', among whom he includes Cotta, 'to advance their cause'.<sup>51</sup> But Cotta's 'scepticism' was in fact far more limited than Jorden's. For example, Jorden essentially dismisses magical curation as efficacious only in so far as it affects the imagination, a position influenced by his Paracelsian sympathies; by contrast the ardent Galenist Cotta firmly upholds the power of the Devil to work actual physical cures through such superstitious means.<sup>52</sup> So rather than trying to advance the 'sceptical' cause *per se*, Cotta was probably trying to distance the moderate puritanism of his own circle from the disorderly excesses which were perceived to have been generated by earlier witchcraft cases, and to stress that popular credulity was not intrinsically reflective of puritan thought.

All of the various circumstances outlined above probably helped to prompt and shape Cotta's production of *The Triall of Witch-craft*. But given that most of these have been primarily religious and political in character, it does rather raise the question of how far this work can be seen as a distinctively *medical* demonology at all, in anything other than the most general sense, as opposed to simply a fairly typical demonological work that happened to be written by a medical man. The *Triall* does condemn magical healers, cunning folk, astrologers and the like, although not at much greater length than the works of contemporary clerical authors; similarly, Cotta's intense concern with natural philosophy was not untypical of early modern demonological thought.<sup>53</sup> And while much of the treatise is devoted to discussing how illnesses caused by witchcraft can be identified, Cotta has far less to say about how

---

<sup>49</sup> Edward Jorden, *A Briefe Discourse of a Disease called the Suffocation of the Mother* (London: John Windet, 1603) sig. A3.

<sup>50</sup> MacDonald (ed.), *Witchcraft and Hysteria*, pp. xxiv, xlvi.

<sup>51</sup> MacDonald (ed.), *Witchcraft and Hysteria*, p. li.

<sup>52</sup> Jorden, *Suffocation of the Mother*, sig. G4v-H; Cotta, *Triall*, sig. I-12v.

<sup>53</sup> Cotta, *Triall*, sig. 12v-13; Perkins, *Discourse of the Damned Art*, sig. L7v-L8v; Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, pp. 152-4.

they might be cured, other than to admonish against the impious remedies of cunning folk.<sup>54</sup>

However, this reluctance to arm readers with advice on curation reflects one fairly obvious sense in which *The Triall of Witch-craft* can be seen as advancing the particular concerns of the medical profession; in its strong urging for a central role for the ‘learned, judicious, and prudent Physician’, in the identification of bewitchment. Cotta insists that it is necessary that the physician ‘finde those that neede herein advice, truly and constantly obedient unto good reason, temperate and discrete’, which is to say that he expected the same submission to the authority of the physician from those involved in potential bewitchments as he did from any of his other patients and their families.<sup>55</sup> Here again, Cotta’s work is reminiscent of that of Jorden, who asked why ‘should we not prefer the judgements of Phisitions in a question concerning the actions and passions of mans bodie...before our own conceits’.<sup>56</sup>

Jorden had particular cause to advance this position, given the humiliating treatment he had suffered at the hands of Judge Edmund Anderson during the trial of Elizabeth Jackson. When questioned by Anderson as to the nature of Mary Glover’s illness, Jorden could provide only vague and evasive responses, leading Anderson to dismiss the physician’s testimony: ‘if you tell me neither a Naturall cause of it, nor a naturall remedy, I will tell you, that it is not naturall’.<sup>57</sup> This provoked a barbed response from Jorden in his *Briefe Discourse*, which mocked ‘the unlearned and rash conceit of divers...who are apt to make every thing a supernaturall worke which they do not understand, proportioning the bounds of nature unto their own capacities’.<sup>58</sup> His key point was that whereas the likes of Anderson were willing to attribute any disorder that did not have an apparent natural cause to witchcraft, in fact witchcraft should only be diagnosed when positive signs of demonic involvement were manifest: ‘there must be some Character or note of a supernaturall power in these cases...or else we have no cause but to thinke them naturall’.<sup>59</sup>

---

<sup>54</sup> Cotta, *Triall*, sig. I2v.

<sup>55</sup> Cotta, *Triall*, sig. L2v.

<sup>56</sup> Jorden, *Suffocation of the Mother*, sig. A2v.

<sup>57</sup> MacDonald (ed.), *Witchcraft and Hysteria*, p. xvli.

<sup>58</sup> Jorden, *Suffocation of the Mother*, sig. A3; see similar sentiments in Drage, *Daimonomageia*, sig. C2v.

<sup>59</sup> Jorden, *Suffocation of the Mother*, sig. B3.

This was the same basic logic that informed Cotta's emphasis on occult natural causes, and his insistence that demonic power 'must needs produce some effect like it selfe' in the afflicted, and it elevated the physician to a central position within witchcraft accusations, as a positive identifier of supernatural affliction rather than a mere eliminator of obvious natural alternatives.<sup>60</sup> Cotta may have had Jorden's treatment in mind while writing *The Triall of Witch-craft*, but Anderson's attitudes were probably shared fairly widely; Anderson himself had presided over numerous other witch trials, and despite Jorden's apparent aspersions seems to have been generally acknowledged as an expert on the subject.<sup>61</sup> Cotta was probably therefore responding to a wider problem, but in doing so, again, he was not simply seeking to improve evidentiary standards in witch trials. It has already been noted how the ability to suppress witchcraft, that ultimate emblem of chaos and disorder, played a key role in legitimising the power of magistrates. What better way was there then for Cotta, as a physician seeking to elevate the status of his own profession and reinforce its boundaries against interlopers, to do so than by setting up the physician as a necessary and central figure in the apprehension of witches?

Obviously, such an argument suited the professional interests of ambitious physicians. But Cotta was in fact putting it to broader use. By claiming this role for himself and his fellow professionals, Cotta was also consciously identifying the proper authorities in medicine, the learned physicians, with those in politics and religion: the King, the puritan gentry of Northamptonshire, and the Church of England, within which he regarded moderate puritans such as himself as part of the mainstream. This in turn allowed Cotta to associate the targets of his hostility with each other, whether they be witches themselves, ignorant and excessive persecutors of witchcraft, irregular medical practitioners, or agents of social and political disorder in general. As in the *Short Discoverie*, the medical, religious and political concerns Cotta was putting forward were essentially inseparable, each serving to reinforce the other.

## II

---

<sup>60</sup> Cotta, *Triall*, sig. L2.

<sup>61</sup> MacDonald (ed.), *Witchcraft and Hysteria*, p. xvi.



Cotta's conflation of medical and religious concerns is perhaps clearest in his treatment of healing witches, 'Wisemen and Wisewomen', where the restraint he exercises in his treatment of malefic witches is abandoned entirely. Such practitioners were, he insisted, 'at this day swarming in this kingdom', people resorting to them with 'uncontroled liberty & license' despite the fact that their cures were performed by the devil 'for a reservation of the body by him cured, unto a greater and further mischief in time to succede.'<sup>62</sup> Cotta even relates without question a tale from the *Malleus Maleficarum* of a German witch who supposedly cured all forms of disease 'so farre beyond all power or course of Art and Nature, and with such facility, that all use of the Art of Physicke, or of Physicions was altogether (for a time) neglected and forsaken'.<sup>63</sup>

Extreme hostility towards cunning folk and other magical healers was typical of early modern English demonology, not least within the works of sceptical authors such as Reginald Scot and George Gifford. Most fully shared Cotta's view of their ubiquity, the demonic nature of their powers, and the use the devil made of them in ensnaring the souls of their hapless clients; as William Perkins put it, 'the bad Witch hurt him, the good healeth him; but the truth is, the latter hath done him a thousand fold more harme.'<sup>64</sup> But for Cotta the problem went beyond those healers who performed obviously magical cures on the basis of what was assumed to be an explicit demonic pact. Other healers, he warned, secreted their diabolical assistance: 'As it is not obscure, that some men under the colour of Astrology have practised Magicke and Sorcery; so is it no lesse evident, that many others, under the pretense of advising and counselling in Physicke of curation or prognostication of diseases, have likewise exercised the same divelish practice.'<sup>65</sup> But even these represented only the tip of the iceberg, for Cotta saw witchcraft as being at work in all cures achieved through means that did not conform to the ordinary rules of orthodox natural philosophy. Such means could only 'produce effects and consequences, against or above their nature' through diabolical assistance, and their successful use could therefore only take place on the basis of an at least implicit demonic pact.<sup>66</sup>

---

<sup>62</sup> Cotta, *Triall*, I2v.

<sup>63</sup> Cotta, *Triall*, Iv.

<sup>64</sup> Scot, *Discoverie*, p. 7; Gifford, *Dialogue*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>65</sup> Cotta, *Triall*, sig. I.

<sup>66</sup> Cotta, *Triall*, sig. K3v.

Cotta conceded that some who proffered *apparent* cures of this kind were mere ‘impostors’ who knew their claims to be false, although he stressed that such deception was in itself a ‘foule sinne’. These charlatans deprived the sick ‘of the use of due remedies and meanes which God hath made & blessed unto men’, i.e. those of the physicians, and led them away from the pious self-examination with which this ought to be accompanied, ultimately leading them to ‘forsake God’.<sup>67</sup> But Cotta also stressed that the Devil would often subtly insert himself within the work of these impostors, giving efficacy to their bogus means precisely in order to lead people away from God in this way. He therefore warned that ‘nothing doth more hood-winke the through discovery of Sorcerers, then remissenesse and omission of inquisition, and castigation of Impostors, out of whose leaven (no doubt) but diligent animadversion, might oft-times boulte out many a subtill and concealed Witch.’<sup>68</sup>

Cotta’s implication here is clear: all practitioners who offered any type of healing other than by the approved means of learned physic, even if no demonic magic was obviously involved, ought to be suspected of witchcraft and apprehended and interrogated accordingly. If their unwarranted means produced successful results, that offered proof of demonic involvement. So Cotta was in fact identifying the whole array of irregular practitioners with which his *Short Discoverie* had dealt, with witchcraft.

Like so many of the arguments put forward by the anti-quack authors of this period, when this equation of quackery with witchcraft is viewed outside of its wider context it is easy to dismiss it as a piece of cynical hyperbole, driven by professional jealousy. Some contemporaries probably did see it as exactly that. But others recognised it as consistent with orthodox assumptions about natural philosophy and demonic agency; indeed, similar arguments were put forward in the same year by the clerical demonologist Alexander Roberts, who insisted that ‘whosoever endeavouroth to bring that thing to passe, by pretending naturall meanes, which exceedeth the power of Nature...must of necessity have this faculty communicated by some combination and inter league with the divell.’<sup>69</sup> The Italian physician and Dominican friar Scipio Mercurio had earlier argued that just by treating patients irregular practitioners were

---

<sup>67</sup> Cotta, *Triall*, sig. I3v, K3.

<sup>68</sup> Cotta, *Triall*, sig. K3.

<sup>69</sup> Alexander Roberts, *A Treatise of Witchcraft* (London: N. O. for Samuel Man, 1616) sig. L3-L3v.

committing a mortal sin, and forfeiting their souls.<sup>70</sup> The belief that learned, Galenic medicine accorded with natural philosophy was critical for the physicians in securing support for their claimed status and privileges, particularly from among the clergy. Cotta could therefore exploit this line of argument confident that further clerical supporters, at least among the godly, would raise their voices in his support.<sup>71</sup>

Most prominent among those who did offer such support, approving of and assimilating Cotta's arguments, was the puritan clergyman and prolific religious author Richard Bernard, whose 1627 witchcraft treatise *A Guide to Grand-Jury Men* drew heavily upon both the *Short Discoverie* and the *Triall of Witch-craft*. Following Cotta, Bernard stressed that 'there is a very great likenesse...betweene some diseases naturall, and those that be really and truly supernaturall, comming by the Divell and Witchery', and that sufferers therefore required 'the judgement of some skilfull Physician to helpe to discerne, and to make a cleere difference betweene the one and the other'.<sup>72</sup> Bernard, like Cotta, appears to strike a moderate tone on the subject of malefic witchcraft, urging his readers to first consider natural explanations 'lest they suspect their neighbours unjustly'.<sup>73</sup> But when it came to those who 'professe to cure diseases, but by such meanes, as have no reason in the worke of nature to doe the cure, nor hath by any ordinance of God from his Word any such operation to heale the infirmitie', Bernard fully grasped and endorsed the uncompromising implications of Cotta's arguments, spelling them out forcefully: 'such remedies must be diabolical, and the practisers either Witches already, by their implicit faith, or the next doore to Witches'. He goes on to stress that this not only included those who heal explicitly through spells and charms, but also 'such as D. Cotta a Physician reckons up...Empericks, Quacksalvers, Ephemerides masters, wandring Chirurgions, and such like.'<sup>74</sup>

In speculating on why Bernard found Cotta's arguments appealing, it may be relevant to note that he too was a moderate and generally conformable puritan, who wrote strongly in defence of the Church of England and against the separatists with

---

<sup>70</sup> Gentilcore, *Healers and Healing*, p. 59.

<sup>71</sup> Harley, 'Medical Metaphors', p. 414.

<sup>72</sup> Bernard, *Guide*, sig. B4-B12v (quote at B11).

<sup>73</sup> Bernard, *Guide*, sig. B10.

<sup>74</sup> Bernard, *Guide*, sig. E11-E11v.

whom, in his younger years, he had associated.<sup>75</sup> If, as I have suggested, the broader connotations of Cotta's work spoke clearly to moderate puritan and Calvinist opinion, he would have been well placed to appreciate this. But regardless of why he took them up, Bernard's powerful restatement of Cotta's arguments gave them both clerical legitimacy and widespread dissemination. The *Guide to Grand-Jury Men* has been described as perhaps the single most important English work of demonology, and the strength of its influence can be detected in the 1630 edition of Michael Dalton's enormously influential handbook for JPs and magistrates, *The Countrey Justice*. This dealt with the issue of witchcraft at more than double the length of the previous edition, drawing most of its advice on establishing proof in such cases from Bernard's *Guide*.<sup>76</sup>

Bernard's use of Cotta's work therefore offers an interesting example of the ongoing dialogue between medical and clerical demonology, and it is of little surprise that the *Guide to Grand-Jury Men* was itself, in turn, to influence readers from within the medical profession. In particular, it seems to have heavily influenced the second full length demonological treatise that falls within the remit of the present study, Edward Poeton's 'The winnowing of white witchcraft'.<sup>77</sup> Though it remains unpublished in print, this is a source that has been noted by numerous historians, Keith Thomas characterising it as an 'excellent account of the activities of a seventeenth-century wizard, seen through the eyes of a contemporary medical practitioner'.<sup>78</sup> But it has been subjected to little detailed investigation, and so Thomas's assumption that the treatise primarily deals with the kind of village wizards or cunning folk that were the main targets of contemporary clerical demonologists has gone largely unchallenged.<sup>79</sup>

Indeed, this assumption is eminently reasonable. Poeton does single out 'cunning men and woemen' for condemnation, and his description of the activities of

---

<sup>75</sup> Richard L. Greaves, 'Bernard, Richard (*bap.* 1568, *d.* 1642)', *ODNB*, 5, pp. 437-40.

<sup>76</sup> Michael Dalton, *The Countrey Justice, Conteyning the practise of the Justice of the Peace out of their sessions* (London: Society of Stationers, 1618) sig. Yv-Y2; *Countrey Justice*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition (London: John More, 1630) sig. Aa7-Aa8 (Dalton was also heavily influenced, in both the above editions, by Potts's *Wonderfull Discoverie*); Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness*, pp. 82, 94; Davies, *Four Centuries of Witch-Beliefs*, p. 105.

<sup>77</sup> Sloane 1954, f. 189.

<sup>78</sup> Thomas, *Religion*, p. 252.

<sup>79</sup> An exception here is Harley, 'James Hart of Northampton', p. 364.

a white witch notes their specialism in identifying bewitchment and lists numerous techniques used by such practitioners, such as the ritual of the sieve and shears and the identification of malefic witches through the use of a glass in which the suspect would supposedly appear.<sup>80</sup> Within the three-way dialogue into which the treatise is structured, it is clear that these are the type of practitioners to which the peasant antagonist Gregory Groshead, ‘a greate reporter unto cunning men and woemen’ has been resorting. He initially defends such practitioners in his thick, perhaps comically exaggerated dialect: ‘No chud vayne zee, zum o your vine vizichians, doo tha cuntry zo much good in enny won thing’.<sup>81</sup> This is to the horror of the other two characters, the godly clergyman Dr Dreadnought and the physician Phylomathes, who proceed to convince Gregory that such practitioners were in fact agents of the Devil.

So cunning folk were quite obviously *among* Poeton’s ‘white witches’. But it is equally clear that, following Bernard and Cotta, he was applying this term to a far wider range of practitioners:

God worketh now by ordinary meanes: In regarde whereof it is meet, that a physition be furnished with a compotent measure of knowledge...which to attayne, requires long and diligent studye, with manifold experience, conjoynd with a carefull observation of all passages and operations. Now these things considered, whence (think you) shoulde these illiterate Ideots, get that profusenes of knowledg...Can this be done without some complication with Sathan?<sup>82</sup>

He goes on to add that all diseases ‘are cured either by meanes naturall, or by power supernaturall: If by meanes naturall then are such as are learned, judicious, experienced, to be sought unto’, but ‘if cures be affected by Supernaturall power: either it must be from god who is able to doe all things...Or els from sathan’.<sup>83</sup> But like most English Protestant thinkers, Poeton held to the view that true miracles, performed by God, had been granted as instruments for the establishment of the early church and had long since ceased. It therefore followed that such healing could in fact

---

<sup>80</sup> Sloane 1954, ff. 164, 174v, 176.

<sup>81</sup> Sloane 1954, f. 170v.

<sup>82</sup> Sloane 1954, f. 166v.

<sup>83</sup> Sloane 1954, f. 190v.

only be performed through the power of the devil.<sup>84</sup> So any cures achieved on any basis other than that of learned physic had to be the products of witchcraft.

In the light of such sentiments, both Cotta and Poeton's witchcraft treatises can be seen as fully congruent with their earlier anti-quack works, and in many ways as extensions of their attacks on irregular medical practice. But, as I have outlined in the two previous chapters, Cotta and Poeton's attacks on quackery were not aimed at all irregular healers equally, but in fact reflected a particular concern with one type of practitioner: priest-physicians. The question therefore arises of how far this is carried over into their demonologies. Perhaps unsurprisingly, both are reluctant to directly and explicitly accuse members of the clergy of witchcraft, but Cotta did include enough barbed remarks touching upon the subject to convince William Lilly that the *Triall* was an oblique attack on Richard Napier.<sup>85</sup> In particular, Cotta describes how a certain type of impostor would 'under an holy pretense...maketh God the Author of his unholy prestigation, and slandereth God unto his face.'<sup>86</sup> The meaning of such remarks would have been particularly clear to those familiar with the *Short Discoverie*, and in the *Triall* they sit alongside fierce condemnations of the sorcerous abuse of astrology and of supposed angelic consultations, activities for which Napier was notorious.<sup>87</sup> As will be discussed in the next section, Cotta also makes a number of points about natural philosophy and medical theory that were heavily bound up with the priest-physician issue. So while they are perhaps less prominent targets in the *Triall* than they were in the *Short Discoverie*, priest-physicians remained a matter of considerable concern in the later text, and it is worth restating that they represented a problem that was closely bound up with other issues addressed by Cotta in the *Triall*, such as the political position of Northamptonshire's puritan gentry.

When we turn to 'The winnowing of white witchcraft', however, the issue is rather more straightforward: Poeton's work is primarily a direct continuation of the attack on priest-physicians put forward in his previous treatise, 'The Urinall Crackt in the carriage'. This is clearly evident in perhaps the most striking feature of the

---

<sup>84</sup> Sloane 1954, f. 166; Scot, *Discoverie*, p. 89; Thomas, *Religion*, pp. 126, 146-7. Cotta is slightly more equivocal on this point, but stresses that miracles could only be administered by 'holy men, Prophets and Apostles manifestly called of God' for 'the glory of God, and the benefite of his people, not unto any private end' (*Triall*, sig. G2-G2v).

<sup>85</sup> Lilly, *Life and Times*, sig. D3.

<sup>86</sup> Cotta, *Triall*, sig. I3.

<sup>87</sup> Cotta, *Triall*, sig. G3v.

‘winnowing’ among demonological tracts: its continuing fixation with the subject of uroscopy. Poeton repeatedly emphasises that offering ‘the manifesting of all malladyes...upon the bare inspection of a carryed urine’, was ‘a thing by any lawfull art impossible to be effected’, and therefore ‘a sure signe of a white witch’.<sup>88</sup> While unusual, this need not in itself necessarily have been inconsistent with a typical demonological assault on cunning folk, as such practitioners did make widespread use of uroscopy. But Poeton had already noted in ‘The Urinall Crackt in the carriage’ that it was priest-physicians who were ‘the maine props, of that pernicious practice of pisportage’.<sup>89</sup> He refers obliquely to the earlier treatise at the beginning of the ‘winnowing’, Dr Dreadnought thanking Phylomathes for the account he had bestowed ‘at our last conference’ on ‘urines uncertaynties’, and he clearly expected his new work to be read in the light of its predecessor.<sup>90</sup>

Within this context, numerous remarks in the ‘winnowing’ emerge as thinly veiled but biting condemnations of priest-physicians and the formalist religious outlook with which they tended to be associated. Poeton stresses that ‘many hypocrites and Hellhounds make as fayre a show of sanctitye as the best of gods servants can doe’, and that idolatrous priest and prophets often hid their ‘spirituall wickednes’ behind apparent displays of the highest outward religiosity. He illustrates this point with the biblical example of the ‘the outward zeale of the prophetts of Baal: who cut themselves with knyves and lancers’ but were nevertheless ‘slaves of the devill’, before noting that in the present day Satan will still exhort his followers towards ‘sacrilegious prophanations of the moste sacred name and worde of god’, to receive the sacraments and give advice and charitable assistance to the poor; by this means many ‘have thought themselves (by theis their courses) to be rapt up into heaven: when alas (poore soules) they were (even headlong) hurried into hell.’<sup>91</sup>

Poeton’s later treatise can therefore be seen as entirely consistent with, indeed in some senses as an intensification of its predecessor. But this consistency in itself raises some awkward questions. In the previous chapter, I suggested that ‘The Urinall Crackt in the carriage’ may have been met with a hostile response, leading Poeton to

---

<sup>88</sup> Sloane 1954, ff. 163, 170; see also ff. 165, 166, 176v, 179v.

<sup>89</sup> Sloane 1954, f. 157.

<sup>90</sup> Sloane 1954, f. 164.

<sup>91</sup> Sloane 1954, ff. 186, 187.

try and distance himself from the treatise. So why would he then go on to produce another treatise which, to anyone familiar with that earlier work, was clearly aimed at the same target, and levelled even more serious accusations? If ‘The Urinall Crackt in the carriage’ was written in the hope of engendering some degree of co-operation with the Arminian circle in Petworth centred on Richard Mountague, it would appear to have failed; so why would Poeton then thoroughly repackage his views, but in such a manner that he cannot seriously have hoped that supporters of Mountague would have been either blind to, or any more receptive to? It clearly seems unlikely that ‘The winnowing of white witchcraft’ represented a further attempt to seek co-operation with these staunch conformists; but if they had been the only people perturbed by his previous treatise, and he was not willing to soften his views to appease them, why not just put forward a straightforward defence of the previous work, or else simply let the matter drop?

This question cannot be answered without adding further speculation upon what is already a speculative account of the earlier manuscript’s reception. If Poeton conceived of all four ‘Medical Treatises’ together, perhaps he was just unwilling to abandon the project in the face of criticism. But another possible answer may be indicated by the example of James Hart’s ‘Discourse of the lawlesse intrusion of Parsons & Vicars’, refused a licence several years before the rise of Laudianism, which reminds us that attacking a substantial body of clergymen was always an enterprise with the potential to cause controversy beyond the ranks of thoroughgoing conformists. In particular, there was a danger that it could be misread as a general anti-clerical screed and, when these criticisms of the clergy were combined with its heavily Calvinistic overtones, a statement of nonconformist sentiment. These were in fact the precise opposite sentiments to those which authors such as Hart were actually trying to express. Perhaps ‘The Urinall Crackt in the carriage’, in the increasingly tense religious atmosphere of the later 1630s, was misconstrued - or perhaps misrepresented by conformist supporters of Bishops Mountague and Duppa - in just such a way.

If this were the case, the ‘winnowing’ may have represented an attempt by Poeton to simultaneously uphold his opposition to priest-physicians, but also dispel any imputations of anti-clericalism or nonconformity that may have been directed towards him on the basis of this, stressing that his opposition to such practitioners was in fact rooted in religious orthodoxy and respect for the office of the clergy. This



emphasis is apparent throughout the ‘winnowing’, not least in Poeton’s profuse use of Biblical quotations; but it is above all clear in his decision to put forward most of his arguments through the character of Dr Dreadnought, the model of a learned godly clergyman. Using this device also allows Poeton to further advance his own Calvinistic vision of the role of the clergy, with Dr Dreadnought telling Gregory that ‘it is (and ought to be) much respected of mee, who am your pastor...to have a speciall care of your soule, knowing that I must geve an accounte unto god for the same’; Poeton noting marginally that ‘Pastors ought to have care of the soules of such as are committed to their charge’.<sup>92</sup> Comments such as this, fairly innocuous in themselves, become loaded with additional meaning when read in the context of his previous treatise; Dr Dreadnought’s compliment to Phylomathes on his earlier discourse on urines can be read as an attempt to retrospectively impose a fictional seal of clerical approval on that work, and imply that its intended meaning would be clear to those thinkers who were of orthodox religion.

The ‘winnowing’ also explicitly restates Poeton’s opposition to the dual vocation, although from the less contentious angle of stressing the inappropriateness of physicians interfering in spiritual matters: ‘this mans sickness is in his soule’, Phylomathes insists of Gregory, ‘and phisick which he needeth is spirituall, which you (Mr Dr) are better able (by far) than my self to administer’.<sup>93</sup> Indeed the physician Phylomathes, who is explicitly identified with the author, plays an auxiliary role throughout, offering Dr Dreadnought his approval and agreement and only stepping in when the discussion turns to occult matters, in which the clergyman piously disavows any interest; asked by Gregory how people are first drawn into demonic pacts, Dr Dreadnought insists he has little idea, ‘neither do I long or labour to understand it.’<sup>94</sup> Phylomathes’ subsequent confession to youthful dabbling in magic may seem to undermine Poeton’s assertion of his own orthodoxy, but in fact it allows him to emphasise his own experience of conversion to right religion, worked by God, something ‘seldom seen. for it is just with god, to geve such over into the handes of Sathan, (as doe forsake the guidance of his worde, and run a whooring after wicked

---

<sup>92</sup> Sloane 1954, f. 168v.

<sup>93</sup> Sloane 1954, f. 169.

<sup>94</sup> Sloane 1954, ff. 177v-178.

inventions).<sup>95</sup> Similar autobiographical accounts of such conversions appear in the works of several clerical demonologists.<sup>96</sup>

All of this is highly speculative. But one thing is clear: ‘The winnowing of white witchcraft’ is a work within which the boundary between demonology and anti-quackery became completely eroded. It therefore represented the culmination of a process of conflation between these genres which was already strongly evident in the work of Cotta, and can also be traced through the work of both the clerical demonologist Richard Bernard and the anti-quack physicians James Hart and James Primerose. The figure of the priest-physician, and the bounds of what was possible within nature, were crucial issues to all of them. But these were closely connected with fierce contemporary disputes about medical theory, which come to particular prominence in the approaches to demonology adopted by the medical writers. Most of these centred around the radical ideas and treatments associated with Paracelsianism. Many of John Cotta’s remarks on natural philosophy, particularly those regarding the appropriate bounds of human knowledge, can be read as a response to these ideas; so too can the discussions of witchcraft in the works of later anti-quack authors such as Hart and Primerose, who shared Cotta’s staunchly conservative Galenist approach to medical theory and practice.

### III

While anti-quack authors throughout this period were united in their loathing of Paracelsus, it is possible to detect a distinct shift in emphasis in their line of attack. Francis Herring was as vituperative as any towards ‘that brain-sicke Germaine, that notorious Sophister, and Impostor of the World’, and the ‘incredible insolencie and impudencie, the intollerable vanitie and follie, the ridiculous and childish crakings and vantings’ to be found in his work.<sup>97</sup> But while assertions of Paracelsus’ ignorance and insanity survived into subsequent anti-quack works, their authors increasingly came to focus on another accusation that had been prominent in Thomas Erastus’s famous

---

<sup>95</sup> Sloane 1954, ff. 179-187v (quote at 187v).

<sup>96</sup> See e.g. Thomas Cooper, *The Mystery of Witch-Craft* (London : Nicholas Okes, 1617) sig. D2v-D3; ‘A Detection of the Imposture of Mr V. G.: his pretended gift of healing’, BL, Sloane MS 1926, ff. 1-10. f. 7v.

<sup>97</sup> Herring, *Modest Defence*, sig. F4; ‘discovery of certaine Strategems’, sig. F2v.

assault on the Swiss reformer, but of which Herring had made little: that Paracelsus was entangled with the devil.<sup>98</sup> James Hart insisted that Paracelsus ‘was addicted to diabolicall magicke’, Edward Poeton that he was ‘a very witch’.<sup>99</sup> Primerose complained that Paracelsus’ method of curing ‘spares neither spirits, nor words, nor conjuring tricks, for he teaches that diseases ought to be cured by any art whatsoever, whether by the help of Devils, or of naturall meanes...For indeed Paracelsus was a Magician’.<sup>100</sup>

Such claims carried obvious rhetorical value, but they also reflected genuine concerns among their authors over various aspects of Paracelsian epistemology. Most obviously, Paracelsus’s thought was indeed heavily influenced by natural magic. This need not in itself have necessarily marked him out as a witch or a sorcerer, even in the eyes of his most staunchly orthodox Aristotelian critics. Hart was happy to acknowledge ‘that many excellent and rare conclusions are by that called naturall magicke, or wisdom brought to passe.’ Just as most authors of the period, whatever their philosophical outlook, accepted the existence of occult qualities within nature, so too they accepted that these could be legitimately manipulated by the magician. The problem was, as Hart continued, ‘that this same hath often proved a stalking horse to cover a great deale of cacomagickall impiety’, the devil often cunningly inserting himself into the activities of impious magicians, and seducing them into drawing upon demonic power.<sup>101</sup>

That this had occurred in the case of Paracelsus was clear, not least in his affirmation of the belief propounded by earlier neo-Platonists, such as Cornelius Agrippa, in benevolent demons that could assist mankind. Paracelsus envisaged these creatures, which included folkloric beings such as dwarfs and kobolds, as incorruptible hybrids of spirit, human and animal, appointed by God to teach and correct mankind.<sup>102</sup> But to orthodox critics such creatures could in fact only be malevolent demons, for as Cotta observed, ‘all Spirits that doe suffer themselves to be enquired at are evill Spirits, and therefore Divels; because Almighty God hath here

---

<sup>98</sup> Pagel, *Paracelsus*, pp. 311-333.

<sup>99</sup> Hart, *Diet*, sig. Hhh2v; BL, Sloane 1954, f. 189.

<sup>100</sup> Primerose, *Popular Errors*, sig. D5.

<sup>101</sup> Hart, *Diet*, sig. Iii2v-Iii3; Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, pp. 220-227.

<sup>102</sup> Charles Webster, *From Paracelsus to Newton: Magic and the Making of Modern Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) pp. 79, 83-4; Philip Ball, *The Devil’s Doctor: Paracelsus and the World of Renaissance Magic and Science* (London: Arrow, 2007) pp. 313-21.

expressely forbidden the enquiring at any other Spirit beside himselfe: and therefore good and holy Spirits will not, nor can not disobey the commandement of God'.<sup>103</sup>

A further problematic issue was the general attitude of Paracelsus and his followers towards the subject of witchcraft itself. Paracelsus has been described as an 'enigmatic witness on the question of witchcraft and demonic magic', but the general thrust of his thinking was towards a reduction of the scope for direct demonic intervention in sublunary affairs, with evil spirits seen to be more at work in infusing mankind with evil thoughts and knowledge of the malevolent arts.<sup>104</sup> He ascribed much of the witch's actual harming ability to the power of imagination, which he saw as a psychic force capable of causing physical affliction in those targeted by it without any demonic involvement. Indeed, Paracelsus questioned altogether the idea that witches' powers derived from demonic pacts, instead regarding them as something essentially acquired by heredity.<sup>105</sup> Hart clearly interpreted these views as an attack on the reality of witchcraft and demonic power, not to mention a further means by which actual demonic agency could be veiled, and thereby reek unchecked havoc:

if imagination do all, our witches & wizards are mere ignorant fooles, let them but turn Paracelsists, and by their strong imagination they may bring any mischiefe to pass which they had pruposed, and not be liable to the law. What neede they be so much beholden to the divell, as to sell themselves to be his slaves, if these operations may so easily be effected. But if this should come to passe, then the Divel would have nothing to doe.<sup>106</sup>

Similar concerns in all likelihood helped to shape the fierce upholding of the reality of witchcraft, together with its direct basis in demonic power and the demonic pact, that is ever-present in Cotta's work, despite his limited scepticism towards specific instances.<sup>107</sup>

The tendency among Paracelsians to explain apparent bewitchment in naturalistic terms led them to attempt to treat such conditions in much the same terms, and when combined with their interest in natural magic, neo-platonism and hermeticism this presented implications that horrified their orthodox critics. John

---

<sup>103</sup> Cotta, *Triall*, sig. G3v.

<sup>104</sup> Webster, *Paracelsus to Newton*, pp. 80-81.

<sup>105</sup> Webster, *Paracelsus to Newton*, pp. 81-3.

<sup>106</sup> Hart, *Diet*, sig. Fff4v; Elmer, 'Medicine, religion and the puritan revolution', p. 19.

<sup>107</sup> Cotta, *Triall*, sig. Ev-E2.

Cotta's view that certain qualities within nature lay permanently beyond human understanding has already been described, but it was also his belief that merely to seek knowledge of such subjects was in itself an act of gross impiety, demonstrating an 'impatience of those bounds which God hath set to limit the curiosity of man.'<sup>108</sup> Cotta returns to this point repeatedly during his discussion of natural philosophy in *The Triall of Witch-craft*, stressing that 'The knowledge which is given to Angels, is onely knowne to God and Angels. The knowledge which is given to man, is knowne by man, limited, measured and confined', and that 'the nature & power of Spirits is unknowne unto man...his Reason and understanding cannot discern that which is truly transcending his Nature'.<sup>109</sup>

For Cotta this was both a point of crucial theological significance, and a critical check on the disruptive forces that he saw as constantly mustering to overthrow the godly order. Without these limits on human knowledge, if people were allowed 'alwaies smooth, assured, certaine and infallible wayes unto satisfaction of their wants' then they would simply 'forget God', as 'there would never be any use of Patience, Temperance, or dependence upon the divine providence; and consequently, little acknowledgement, and lesse worship and adoration of our Creator'. If all was possible to man, 'then were our lust a lawe, and man in no power but in his owne, in no awe, in no lawe, in no rule'. So God 'hath subjected vaine man, and made his pride subject to infinite creatures, limits, restraints, coertions, thereby to teach him true wisdome, piety, trust, dependance, worship, and adoration of his all-restraining & all-limiting unlimited power'.<sup>110</sup> Given that only spirits could transcend these limits, and only evil spirits would break God's commands against revealing such knowledge to man, the implications for humans who pursued such knowledge were clear: 'to undertake those things which are out of their owne knowledge, and solely and properly in the knowledge of Spirits and Divels, doth manifestly prove in the performance, their interest, societie, and contract with Spirits and Divels, which is Sorcery and Witch-craft.'<sup>111</sup>

Cotta's thinking here is very closely bound up with his views on the effecting of cures through baseless means; both represented attempts to breach the natural

---

<sup>108</sup> Cotta, *Triall*, sig. B4v.

<sup>109</sup> Cotta, *Triall*, sig. B, D3v.

<sup>110</sup> Cotta, *Triall*, sig. D2v-D3.

<sup>111</sup> Cotta, *Triall*, sig. G3v-G4.

order, and therefore were at least implicit appeals for demonic assistance. But it equally recalls the work of William Perkins, who had earlier warned that ‘when a man resteth not satisfied with the measure of inward gifts received, as of knowledge, wit, understanding, memorie and such like, but aspires to search out such things as God would have kept secret’, he would be ‘mooved to attempt the cursed art of Magicke and witchcraft, as a way to get further knowledge in matters secret and not reveiled’.<sup>112</sup>

Indeed, both authors approaches were in this, as in most respects, thoroughly typical of contemporary scholastic orthodoxy, which firmly separated study of the material world from that of the spiritual. While knowledge of the former, it was believed, could be reconstructed through reason and study, this was seen as unrelated to the pursuit of knowledge of God and the workings of his providence, or of religious salvation and the nature of the soul, none of which could be in any way apprehended by scientific means.<sup>113</sup> This separation of natural philosophical and religious concerns was of particular significance to Galenic physicians, given the pagan origins and materialistic implications of the system of natural philosophy to which they adhered.

But Paracelsus and his followers, unencumbered by such concerns, tended to blur the division between body and soul, and to question the limits on human knowledge inherent within it. Following in the neo-platonic and hermetic traditions, they saw matter as suffused with spiritual properties, and held that all the operations of nature, spiritual and material, were discoverable to the pious investigator, who had the potential ‘to rival the devil in his understanding of the secrets of nature.’<sup>114</sup> This belief led to a far keener interest in the soul and its functions amongst Paracelsians than most Galenic physicians held to be proper, most obviously manifested in the tendency of the former to offer natural explanations and remedies for bewitchment.

Galenists such as Cotta saw even demonic illness as a consequence of essentially natural processes subjected to preternatural manipulation; the devil might disturb the humours or animal spirits of the body, create blockages in organs or nerves, or simply make suggestions to the sufferer’s imagination. The use of natural

---

<sup>112</sup> Perkins, *Discourse of the Damned Art*, sig. A6; Elmer, ‘Medicine, religion and the puritan revolution’, p. 18.

<sup>113</sup> Elmer, ‘Medicine, religion and the puritan revolution’, p. 17; Kocher, ‘Science and Religion’. pp. 64-5.

<sup>114</sup> Elmer, ‘Medicine, Medical Reform and the Puritan Revolution’, p. 295.

means was not therefore dismissed, but in the face of the devil's ability to manipulate the workings of nature in ways incomprehensible to man, in order to perpetuate disease and pervert or nullify the workings of cures, the orthodox view was that in most cases natural cures alone would not suffice. In these instances only spiritual aid, properly administered by the clergy, could offer succour.<sup>115</sup> English witchcraft narratives are replete with examples of physicians diagnosing bewitchment and consequently recusing themselves from further therapeutic involvement; the doctor who advised Robert Throckmorton that 'he should not strive any more therewith by phisicke' for 'he verily thought there was some kinde of sorcerie & witchcraft wrought towards his childe' being fairly typical.<sup>116</sup> The same outlook informs Cotta's reluctance to offer advice on the cure, rather than the mere identification, of such conditions.

Paracelsians, by contrast, were ready and willing to prescribe natural remedies in such circumstances. This was in itself an irreligious violation of the limits to human curiosity so emphasised by Cotta; but it led to yet further impieties in the form of the remedies such practitioners deployed. For the 'natural' basis of these cures was often only apparent if the broader general conception of nature adopted by hermetic thinkers was itself first accepted. In fact, such means often seemed little different from the counter-magical charms and amulets of superstitious folklore, towards which Paracelsus had indeed been highly sympathetic. Paracelsians saw substances such as coral, which they often prescribed as a cure for fascination, as possessing wondrous hidden natural qualities; but in this case, the staunchly Aristotelian Hart could only wonder at 'what vertue can proceed out of so solid a body, to encounter with so subtle and venomous a vapor.'<sup>117</sup> Lacking a demonstrable basis in orthodox natural philosophy, such cures were at best false and at worst a further demonstration of the diabolical proclivities of the Paracelsians.

Controversy therefore raged over many popular cures promoted by Paracelsian practitioners during this period, with the anti-quack authors here discussed often being

---

<sup>115</sup> Clark, 'Demons and disease', pp. 38-9, 45.

<sup>116</sup> *Witches of Warboys*, sig. B2; Sharpe, *Bewitching of Anne Gunter*, p. 7. Throckmorton also consulted William Butler, but ignored his naturalistic diagnosis; Butler's Paracelsian leanings are noted above in chapter 1.

<sup>117</sup> Hart, *Diet*, sig. Fff2v; Elmer, 'Medicine, Medical Reform and the Puritan Revolution', pp. 295-297.

at the forefront of the opposition to them. Again, an early precedent can be found in the work of Francis Herring, who attacked the use of amulets made from arsenic as a preservative against the plague, insisting that these were superstitious and ‘so farre from doing anie good...that they are verie dangerous and hurtfull, if not pernicious to those that weare them.’<sup>118</sup> This provoked a robust response from Peter Turner, a licentiate of the College of Physicians and ardent advocate of Paracelsus, who he upheld as ‘absolutely the most learnedst chemicall writer and worker that ever wrote’.<sup>119</sup> For Turner it was ‘very evident both by experience and reason, that things outwardly applyed have action, and worke into the body by communicating their spirituall qualities...to the spirites of our bodyes’; he ascribed the effectiveness of these amulets to their containing ‘the spirits of golde’, which ‘hath that incredible and admirable operation in preserving of our spirits from infection’.<sup>120</sup>

Herring however, in his response to Turner, scoffed at such reasoning: ‘if this wonderfull worke of preservation proceed from gold and his spirits’, he asked, ‘why doe you not rather counsell men to weare about their necks...a double Ducate or a plate of Golde, seeing therein must needs be greater quantity of spirits, more neerely and firmly united then in Arsenicke?’ Indeed, he insisted, one of London’s leading refiners had informed him ‘That there was as much Golde in Arsenicke as in a Rat.’ Herring was conscious of the fact that Turner’s identification of arsenic with gold was alchemical in nature, but to him this only made it even more worthy of derision: ‘I suppose there is farre lesse therein, than in the golden dreame of the Philosophers stone, whereunto many have fallen being rich, and awaked out of the same starke beggars.’ But this was all ultimately beside the point, since ‘among all the vertues and effects of Gold’, he had ‘never heard that reckoned, that it should preserve the wearers thereof from Plague and Poison.’<sup>121</sup> Herring accepted the existence of occult operations in nature, but these could not operate in a manner contrary to known reason: ‘I thinke it a notorious fault, redounding greatly to the reproach of our Art, if

---

<sup>118</sup> Francis Herring, *Certaine Rules, Directions, or Advertisements for this time of Pestillential Contagion* (London: William Jones, 1603) sig. B3v, B2.

<sup>119</sup> Peter Turner, *The Opinion of Peter Turner Doct: in Physicke, concerning Amulets or Plague Cakes* (London: Edward Blount, 1603) sig. B2v.

<sup>120</sup> Turner, *Opinion*, sig. A4v, B2v.

<sup>121</sup> Herring, *Modest Defence*, sig. F2v-F3.



we run still to hidden causes, when manifest reason may easily end the controversie.<sup>122</sup>

This foreshadows John Cotta's views on how demonic activity can be distinguished from occult natural functions in cases of disease, and Herring's interest in such matters is clear from his involvement in the Mary Glover case. But while he notes that such amulets were 'superstitious', and that the devil 'doth concurre and cooperate with them', here as in the rest of his anti-quack writing Herring actually has little to say on the issues of witchcraft and magic beyond such vague implications.<sup>123</sup> In part, this may reflect a desire not to be seen as immoderate in his attack on Turner, given the latter's status as a licentiate of the college. Herring insisted that his original pamphlet had not been aimed at Turner, a 'grave Physician, whom I reverence for divers good respects', and towards whom he bore 'no more grudge, malice, or envie, then my selfe: though I have beene of late discourteously and hardly intreated'.<sup>124</sup>

However, when Cotta himself came to take up the cudgels against another Paracelsian practitioner, Francis Anthony, he was subject to no such restraints. The College of Physicians had pursued Anthony for years, fining and imprisoning him three times, amongst the charges being that his *aurum potabile* had caused the death of a clergyman.<sup>125</sup> Anthony's supplying of *aurum potabile* to the priest-physician John Markes, and the personal slight Cotta felt he had suffered at both men's hands, has already been described, and gave Cotta further incentive to pull no punches.

But the extravagant claims Anthony made for his remedy also represented a particular provocation to Cotta's intensely orthodox views on natural philosophy. Following Turner, Anthony argued for the effectiveness of his remedy on the grounds that 'the highest and most powerfull excellencie of Medicines is in Mettals' and that 'amongst all Mettals gold hath the prerogative, concerning the Physicall use of Medicine', *aurum potabile* containing 'the pure substance of Gold'. But what particularly horrified Cotta was Anthony's claim that *aurum potabile* was therefore 'a Generall or universall Medicine' which, if it could not necessarily cure all diseases, could certainly remedy all those 'proceeding of inward causes within the body, such

---

<sup>122</sup> Herring, *Modest Defence*, sig. C2.

<sup>123</sup> Herring, *Modest Defence*, sig. G2.

<sup>124</sup> Herring, *Modest Defence*, sig. Gv.

<sup>125</sup> Goodall, *Royal College of Physicians*, sig. Yy3-Yy4.

as, for the most part, be all Maladies whereupon all Rationall Physitions are exercised'.<sup>126</sup>

Such panaceas were a classic feature of Paracelsian thought, reflecting its roots in the alchemical pursuit of the elixir of life, and Cotta pointedly brackets *aurum potabile* with the philosopher's stone in his *Short Discoverie*.<sup>127</sup> For him, such remedies epitomised the impious disregard of Paracelsians for the proper limits of human knowledge and the divinely appointed order of nature, because they rendered all other remedies redundant, whereas 'God hath created nothing in vaine nor needlessly'. *Aurum potabile* could therefore 'exclude no one thing created whatsoever from a particular goodnes and use, contayned in it selfe and not in another', and through his 'excessive and unreasonable extolling' of 'so foule a monster, out of order and rule of all things created by God', Anthony was guilty of 'slanderous derogation...from all other blessed remedies, unto which God their Creator hath given their severall distinct specifical vertue'.<sup>128</sup>

But as with all means whose supposed effects broke the bounds of what was ordinarily possible within nature, the implications if *aurum potabile* was used successfully to effect cures were even darker, since any medicine that was 'the same ever in all diseases not variable therein, not failing or immutable' was clearly 'exempt from the course, order and nature of sublunarie things' and therefore 'a diabolicall and inchaunted medicine'.<sup>129</sup> The convergence of quackery, disorder, irreligion and witchcraft was again therefore demonstrated for Cotta by the claims made for *aurum potabile*, and made all the clearer through its use by the priest-physician John Markes, who abandoned his clerical duties in order to 'rob God of his magnificate' and 'pervert sicke men from religion'.<sup>130</sup>

James Hart similarly mocked *aurum potabile* as a 'counterfeit Panacea', classing it as a counterpart to the philosopher's stone and 'many other such hyperbolicall medicines, exhibited by the Paracelsians', and drawing attention to its use by priest-physicians.<sup>131</sup> James Primerose weighed in too, attacking 'that selfe-love' through which purveyors of *aurum potabile* 'extoll their owne medicines...and

---

<sup>126</sup> Anthony, *Apologie*, sig. ¶, A, A2v.

<sup>127</sup> Cotta, *Short Discoverie*, sig. Fv.

<sup>128</sup> *Cotta contra Antonium*, sig. A3, A4v.

<sup>129</sup> *Cotta contra Antonium*, sig. B.

<sup>130</sup> *Cotta contra Antonium*, sig. G4v, I2v.

<sup>131</sup> Hart, *Anatomie*, sig. B, S3v, R.

preferre them before all others. For they are not sparing in promising great things, going about to perswade us that they will work miracles'.<sup>132</sup>

But Primerose reserved the greater part of his ire for another 'universal medicine' that was also, not coincidentally, peddled by a priest-physician: the antimonial cup of John Evans. Evans was another disciple of 'that Orientall Star of Naturall, Spagiricall, and Magneticall light and knowledge, Theophrastus Paracelsus', and he explained his cup's operation in typically Paracelsian terms. Wine or ale warmed in the cup would 'magnetically extracteth to, and expelleth from the Stomack whatsoever within the whole body of man, it found to be offensive to Nature, or contrarie to the health and good constitution of the body'.<sup>133</sup> For antimony, Evans claimed, contained within itself 'the power and vertue of all Minerals', and could therefore cure 'all contagious and infectious diseases', even syphilis and the plague.<sup>134</sup>

Primerose in his response restated the addiction of Paracelsus to the magical arts, and pointed out the dangers antimony in fact presented, being 'so contrary to our nature' that even small amounts would 'offer great violence to the intralls'. But his chief focus was on dismissing Evans's claim that his cup was universally efficacious, ridiculing the idea that it could cure conditions such as leprosy or falling sickness: 'Alchymists have that property, to extoll things to the skies, but when they are come to tryall, they are found false, or else lose their vertues in other folkes hands'.<sup>135</sup>

Contentious though all of these remedies were, the disputes over them pale beside the controversy that raged during the 1630s over what Keith Thomas describes as the 'supreme example of a magical cure justified by the neo-platonist belief in occult influences and sympathies': the weapon-salve.<sup>136</sup> This was an ointment that could cure wounds, its proponents claimed, through application to the weapon that had caused them; by 1658, according to Sir Kenelm Digby, there was 'scarce any Country-Barber but knows it'.<sup>137</sup> There was some disagreement as to whether the

---

<sup>132</sup> Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. P4.

<sup>133</sup> Evans, *Universall Medicine*, sig. A8, A3.

<sup>134</sup> Evans, *Universall Medicine*, sig. A4v.

<sup>135</sup> Primerose, *Antimoniall Cup*, sig. C2v, A3v-A4, D, C4.

<sup>136</sup> Thomas, *Religion*, p. 225.

<sup>137</sup> Kenelm Digby, *A Late Discourse Made in a Solemne Assembly of Nobles and Learned Men at Montpellier in France*, translated by R. White (London: R. Lowndes and T. Davies, 1658) sig. A12v.

salve had actually been invented by Paracelsus himself, but most agreed that he had at least popularised it.<sup>138</sup> The standard recipe in fact came from the pseudo-Paracelsian *Archidoxes of Magic*, its key ingredients being moss taken from the skull of a man who had died violently, ideally a hanged thief, together with human blood, flesh and fat.<sup>139</sup> Later recipes added a grisly array of additional ingredients, from baked worms and pigs brains to the fat of a boar or bear killed while mating.<sup>140</sup>

Significantly, the initiative in attacking the weapon salve in England was taken not by physicians but by members of the clergy, Richard Bernard using his *Guide to Grand-Jury Men* to argue, ‘both by reason and divinity’, that the salve was ‘Witcherie’.<sup>141</sup> The issue was then taken up at far greater length by the Buckinghamshire parson William Foster in his 1631 *Sponge to wipe away the Weapon-Salve*, a work primarily conceived as an attack on Robert Fludd, who had promoted the salve during the previous decade in debates with Marin Marsenne and Pierre Gassendi.<sup>142</sup> To Foster, as a staunch adherent to orthodox Aristotelian natural philosophy, it was obvious that the salve breached the limits of what was naturally possible, primarily because it did not involve the application of active to passive agents: ‘Whatsoever workes naturally, workes either by corporall or virtual contact.’ While the latter did allow for sympathetic action, this could only be achieved over a limited distance, as demonstrated by the effect of the lodestone, yet Fludd argued that the salve could be effective over a distance of thirty or even sixty miles, regardless of intervening objects.<sup>143</sup>

Foster anyway dismissed the idea that there could be a sympathetic relationship between a wound and a weapon, which ‘is an hard insensible substance voyd of all affection and pathy’.<sup>144</sup> As for the argument proffered by Fludd that the salve worked by reuniting the vital spirits of the blood congealed on the weapon with those of the wounded party, Foster insisted that there were no such spirits in the shed

<sup>138</sup> William Foster, *Hoplocrisma-Spongus: Or, A Sponge to wipe away the Weapon-Salve* (London: Thomas Cotes for John Grove, 1631); Hart, *Diet*, sig. Gggv.

<sup>139</sup> Lauren Kassell, ‘Magic, Alchemy and the Medical Economy in early Modern England: The Case of Robert Fludd’s Magneticall Medicine’, in Mark S. R. Jenner and Patrick Wallis (eds), *Medicine and the Market in England and Its Colonies, c.1450-c.1850* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) pp. 88-107. p. 94.

<sup>140</sup> Foster, *Sponge*, sig. I3v.

<sup>141</sup> Bernard, *Guide*, sig. G-Gv, E11.

<sup>142</sup> Kassell, ‘Magic, Alchemy and the Medical Economy’, p. 91.

<sup>143</sup> Foster, *Sponge*, sig. C3-C3v, G4, H2v (quote at C3).

<sup>144</sup> Foster, *Sponge*, sig. E3.

blood, as ‘then one man should have infinite soules. So many drops of blood, so many soules or spirits’.<sup>145</sup> Given the impossibility within nature of the operations claimed for the weapon salve, it was obvious to Foster that ‘the cures done by it are not lawfull, but prestigious, magicall and diabolicall’, and that there was therefore ‘a kind of superstition, and compact with the Divell in the use of it.’<sup>146</sup> This was equally evident from the diabolical practices of its likely originator Paracelsus and great exponent Fludd, together with the many superstitious rituals that surrounded the collection of its ingredients and the method of their application.<sup>147</sup>

Fludd quickly responded to these charges, condemning both Foster and the orthodox scholastic assumptions upon which his work rested: ‘will these false judges of Gods actions presume to condemne them, and attribute them unto the devill, because they are secret and unknowne to them? Will they censure things, which are so farre beyond their reach?’<sup>148</sup> He insisted that ‘all goodnesse, and therefore each healing property belongeth unto God the Creatour of all things, and not to any vile creature, much lesse unto the Divell’, before striking directly at the weakest spot in Foster’s heathen-derived orthodox natural philosophy: ‘Did not Galen in the like manner raile and scoffe at Christ and his Disciples, for their curing so strangely at distance...because he could not cure spiritually at distance; but onely grossley and by an immediate contact’.<sup>149</sup> Fludd also made considerable play on the fact that Foster was the son of a surgeon, suggesting that his treatise was a product of skulduggery on the part of the Barber-Surgeons Company.<sup>150</sup>

Foster himself, however, argued his case on the bases of theology and general natural philosophy, pleading respect for the boundaries of his profession in leaving specifically medical issues ‘to learned Physitians, skilfull Chyrurgions, and expert Pharmacopolists.’<sup>151</sup> James Hart, James Primerose and Edward Poeton were all happy to oblige, although they all deployed essentially the same key arguments as Foster, rejecting the possibility of sympathetic operations in such cases. Hart responded

<sup>145</sup> Foster, *Sponge*, sig. F2.

<sup>146</sup> Foster, *Sponge*, sig. C3, D4v.

<sup>147</sup> Foster, *Sponge*, sig. D3-D4, G3-G3v, D4v-E.

<sup>148</sup> Robert Fludd, *Doctor Fludds Answer unto M. Foster or, the Squesing of Parson Fosters Sponge* (London: Nathanael Butter, 1631) sig. Q3v.

<sup>149</sup> Fludd, *Answer*, sig. R3v.

<sup>150</sup> Fludd, *Answer*, sig. R-Rv. Foster’s father had himself been pursued by the College of Physicians in 1606 for selling ‘a powder for the Green-sickness’ (Goodall, *College of Physicians*, sig. Aaa2).

<sup>151</sup> Foster, *Sponge*, sig. C-Cv.

directly to Fludd's *Answer*, noting that Fludd 'would have us quite abandon and abdicate all heathen Philosophie', with the intention that 'we be not tied to the ordinary operation of agents and patients, but adhere to Paracelsus and his followers, and beleve their mysticall, miraculous, if not cacomagicall manner of curing'.<sup>152</sup> He likewise dismissed Fludd's assertion that all healing had to come from God on the standard demonological grounds that Satan would often transform himself 'into an angell of light' as 'a farre more efficacious meanes to delude the simpler sort'.<sup>153</sup>

Primerose noted the recourse by defenders of the weapon-salve to the neo-platonic concept of the *anima mundi* to explain its operation; for him this was no more than 'the Divell, who is called Prince of the world.'<sup>154</sup> Poeton likewise affirmed that 'Sathan, was the prime Author of this Supernaturall Art'.<sup>155</sup> Both these authors, however, strike an equivocal note on the status of those who used the salve. According to classical demonological theory, any who chose to make use of a diabolical remedy, as patient or practitioner, were entering into an implicit demonic pact; an assertion Foster maintains in relation to the weapon-salve.<sup>156</sup> But Poeton draws back on this point, acknowledging that 'sundry honest, weldisposed, conscionable christians, make use thereof', and insisting he would not 'dare say that such are witches'.<sup>157</sup> Primerose likewise appears to backtrack here, claiming to 'rather thinke this manner of curing is false than magicall, because many follow it, which are very farre from that impious and detestable crime.'<sup>158</sup>

But this apparent ambivalence should be taken with a pinch of salt. Fludd claimed to know of at least a thousand cures performed by the salve, many of them by or upon members of the gentry. This made it a potentially dangerous subject upon which to base indiscriminate accusations of witchcraft, and Fludd's response to Foster dwelled much on the intemperate tone of the parson's treatise.<sup>159</sup> Even Hart, though he was unwilling to mitigate his judgement on the diabolical nature of the salve, was careful to stress that he recognised 'that many who both use this weapon-salve, and many other unwarrantable, are perswaded of the lawfulnessse of the same' and that he

---

<sup>152</sup> Hart, *Diet*, sig. Hhh2v.

<sup>153</sup> 2 Corinthians 11; Hart, *Diet*, Gggv-Ggg2v.

<sup>154</sup> Primerose, *Popular Erroures*, sig. Dd6, Ee2.

<sup>155</sup> Sloane 1954, f. 189v.

<sup>156</sup> Foster, *Sponge*, sig. D4v.

<sup>157</sup> Sloane 1954, ff. 189.

<sup>158</sup> Primerose, *Popular Erroures*, sig. Ee2.

<sup>159</sup> Fludd, *Answer*, sig. R2v, P2v-Q2v, A3.

did not ‘thinke so uncharitably of all such persons, as have through ignorance used either this, or some other cures of like kind, which is the cause I take this paines to acquaint them with the truth’.<sup>160</sup>

#### IV

Regardless of their nervousness over this point, it is clear that religious objections were central to the criticisms of the weapon-salve put forward by all of these authors, medical and clerical. Indeed, these were inseparable from their objections rooted in natural philosophy; the fact that the salve breached the laws of natural philosophy was itself proof that it breached those of religion. But these arguments may also once again point towards an element of religious partisanship. Fludd certainly seems to have believed this to be the case, bemoaning ‘the captious disposition of some precisions, or rather pure seeming persons, which have no beliefe in the occult or hidden operations, either of medicines, or any thing else, which is made manifest in these latter dayes: because, say they, miracles are ceased’.<sup>161</sup> The conformist Fludd clearly seems to have regarded Foster’s attack as an expression of puritanical sentiments. As chaplain to the future royalist martyr Robert Dormer, earl of Carnarvon, to whom the *Sponge* is dedicated, Foster may seem an unlikely standard-bearer for the godly; nevertheless, he has been identified as a Calvinist, and the *Sponge* both quotes Calvin himself, and puts forward an outlook on vocations and the role of the minister in dealing with illness that is strongly Calvinistic in tone, and reminiscent of Cotta and Hart’s earlier work.<sup>162</sup> Foster’s - and Bernard’s - attack on the weapon-salve are consistent with a tradition of hostility to panaceas and supposedly painless cures among learned godly ministers: ‘as in bodily cures, so in spirituall’, noted the puritan Thomas Taylor, ‘the more sense of paine, the better it is to be liked.’<sup>163</sup>

With senior anti-Calvinist churchmen then in the process of redefining doctrinal Calvinism as puritanism, Foster’s apparent doctrinal preferences may have

---

<sup>160</sup> Hart, *Diet*, sig. Hhh4.

<sup>161</sup> Fludd, *Answer*, sig. Q3v.

<sup>162</sup> Elmer, ‘Medicine, religion, and the puritan revolution’, p. 12; Foster, *Sponge*, sig. A2, D-Dv, Cv-C2; Harley, ‘James Hart of Northampton’, p. 363, n. 8.

<sup>163</sup> Thomas Taylor, *The Principles of Christian Practice* (London: R. Y. for J. Bartlet, 1635) sig. Bb8v; Harley, ‘Medical Metaphors’, p. 417.

been all Fludd needed to imply that he was an agent of puritan turbulence.<sup>164</sup> James Hart, on the other hand, certainly was a puritan, and his decision to enter into Fludd and Foster's fierce and controversial debate becomes considerably more comprehensible if an element of partisan religious dispute is seen as being at play; though he disclaims any personal stake in the feud, his treatment of the issue reads as an obvious defence of Foster against Fludd's *Answer*, and as noted he continues to argue in largely religious terms, similarly citing Calvin himself in doing so.<sup>165</sup>

Similar factors may have influenced both Primerose and Poeton's subsequent contributions to the debate, as well as the earlier remarks of the puritan Bernard. On the other hand Kenelm Digby, that other great advocate for the weapon-salve who claimed to have been actively promoting such sympathetic cures since the early 1620s, was for most of his life a Roman Catholic, though he was engaged during this period in a brief sojourn within the Church of England. It is clear from the unwillingness of critics to fully condemn those who actually *used* the weapon salve that this was not, in itself, a symbol of religious allegiance; indeed, most users probably gave little consideration to the intellectual basis upon which the cure operated. However, it does seem possible to detect the outlines of a divergence among those who *did* theorise about the salve's operation, which reflected the doctrinal differences that were increasingly dividing the Church of England.

In fact, this seems to reflect just one aspect of a particular hostility to the challenge to orthodox, scholastic natural philosophy posed by Paracelsianism nurtured by many English Calvinists. This has often been obscured by the enthusiasm for Paracelsianism - and curriculum reform in general - displayed by the radical sects during the Civil War, which has led Charles Webster, for example, to assert that the works of Paracelsus were 'thoroughly congenial to a puritan audience'.<sup>166</sup> But this assertion has been challenged by Peter Elmer, who argues that 'among the most intransigent opponents of the new medicine were the adherents to orthodox "puritanism" who zealously defended the traditional scientific and medical values of

---

<sup>164</sup> Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>165</sup> Hart, *Diet*, sig. Ggg, Ggg3.

<sup>166</sup> Webster, *Great Instauration*, p. 281.



the seventeenth century.’<sup>167</sup> David Harley similarly concludes that ‘English Calvinists detested Paracelsus’.<sup>168</sup>

This antipathy is perhaps illustrated most clearly in the work of the Presbyterian clergyman Thomas Hall, famous for his defence of the traditional university curriculum against the attack of the interregnum medical and religious radical (and later sceptical witchcraft writer) John Webster. Hall upheld the worth of classically-derived philosophy, while firmly subordinating it to theological concerns, in pursuit of which philosophy could be of only marginal relevance.<sup>169</sup> Paracelsus was condemned as ‘a Libertine, a Drunkard, a man of little learning’.<sup>170</sup> Hall saw himself, quite reasonably, as standing in the tradition of such godly luminaries as William Perkins, John Preston and Richard Greenham; indeed, his outlook was thoroughly consistent with that of Calvin himself, who strongly endorsed established classical learning, rejecting Martin Luther’s concerns over its atheistic nature.<sup>171</sup>

It was this outlook, combined with the influence of Erastus, which produced the deep hostility that many English Calvinists clearly did feel towards Paracelsus. However, Elmer and Harley perhaps overstate the degree to which godly opinion was united on this point, and this can rather serve to create the impression that the intense enthusiasm for Paracelsianism found amongst the radical sects of the interregnum erupted almost spontaneously after 1640. But as Peter Lake, following Patrick Collinson has observed, ‘all roads from the lollards to the “radical dissenters” of the 1640s and 1650s...must run through, not under or by, puritanism.’<sup>172</sup> As this was true in religion, so it can be seen to have been true, to some extent at least, in regard to medicine; for among the more radical sections of godly opinion, intense enthusiasm for Paracelsus can be observed long before the 1640s, and not just among the separatist fringe. Peter Turner, for example, was himself a prominent radical puritan activist, who as a member of the 1584-5 parliament had introduced a bill to replace the Elizabethan church settlement and the Book of Common Prayer with a

---

<sup>167</sup> Elmer, ‘Medicine, Medical Reform and the Puritan Revolution’, p. iii.

<sup>168</sup> Harley, ‘James Hart of Northampton’, p. 363.

<sup>169</sup> Thomas Hall, *Vindiciae Literarum, The Schools Guarded* (London: W. H. for Nathanael Webb & William Grantham, 1655) sig. D7, E2v.

<sup>170</sup> Quoted in Elmer, ‘Medicine, Medical Reform and the Puritan Revolution’, p. 137.

<sup>171</sup> Elmer, ‘Medicine, Medical Reform and the Puritan Revolution’, p. 191; Andrew Wear, ‘Religious beliefs and medicine in early modern England’, in Hilary Marland and Margaret Pelling (eds), *The task of healing: Medicine, religion and gender in England and the Netherlands 1450-1800* (Erasmus: Rotterdam, 1996) pp. 145-169. p. 157.

<sup>172</sup> Lake, ‘boxmaker’s revenge’, p. 408.

Presbyterian discipline and Genevan style of worship.<sup>173</sup> Likewise Thomas Mouffet and Thomas Penny, the two leading English Paracelsians of the Elizabethan period, were both ardent puritans, Mouffet famously launching an intemperate attack on the College of Physicians for its supposed Papist sympathies.<sup>174</sup>

By contrast, the centre of gravity for Calvinist attacks on Paracelsus, even before the Civil War, lay within the more conservative wing of the movement, uniting moderate puritans and those Calvinists whose moderate, episcopalian leanings placed them outside of the ranks of the godly. Among the latter was Thomas Fuller, a future royalist army chaplain and close associate of the Montagues of Boughton, who attacked Paracelsus as ‘an inebriate and a cheat’, and for his lack of learning, unorthodox religion and magical inclinations; his arguments heavily influenced Thomas Hall’s later critique.<sup>175</sup> Hall was also joined in his attack by other mid-century moderate puritans such as Robert Wittie, for whom Paracelsus ‘seemed slightly to regard God and his Ordinances’, and Richard Baxter, who condemned Paracelsus as ‘a drunken conjuror, who had converse with Devils’.<sup>176</sup> Their arguments were entirely consistent with those of their early Stuart predecessors such as James Hart and James Primerose, who can likewise, as we have seen, be identified with a moderate Calvinist outlook. Staunch support for Galenism may have represented the pre-Civil War puritan mainstream in medical matters, just as moderation and conformability represented its religious mainstream; but it seems clear that no thoroughgoing consensus existed, in medicine any more than in religion.

So support for Galenism and the orthodox, scholastic learning with which it was bound up was not universal among Calvinists. And of course, support for such learning was not, by any stretch of the imagination, limited to Calvinists. But it may nevertheless remain the case that just as the godly felt that religious orthodoxy was coming under threat from new strands of conformist thought during the early Stuart period, so those moderate Calvinists who *did* associate godliness with scholastic

---

<sup>173</sup> G. Lewis, ‘Turner, Peter (1542-1614)’, *ODNB*, 55, pp. 652-3. p. 652.

<sup>174</sup> D. E. Allan, ‘Penny, Thomas (c.1530-1589)’, *ODNB*, 43, pp. 597-8. p. 598; Frances Dawborn, ‘New Light on Dr Thomas Moffet: The Triple Roles of an Early Modern Physician, Client, and Patronage Broker’, *Medical History*, 47 (2003) 3-22. p. 8; Houliston, ‘Sleepers Awake’, p. 240.

<sup>175</sup> Elmer, ‘Medicine, Medical Reform and the Puritan Revolution’, pp. 136-7.

<sup>176</sup> Robert Wittie, *Pyrologia Mimica, Or, An Answer to Hydrologia Chymica of William Sympson* (London: T. N. for J. Martyn, 1669) sig. R8; Elmer, ‘Medicine, Medical Reform and the Puritan Revolution’. p. 191.

orthodoxy may also have identified a threat to established natural philosophy as emerging from within the conformist movement. Robert Fludd's work offered one prominent example of this, but the key figures here were the priest-physicians, who they had already identified as exponents of the worst excesses of conformist divinity. The great enthusiasm for Paracelsianism, neo-platonism and hermeticism among the ranks of the priest-physicians is obvious, whether it be in John Markes and John Evans's promotion of chemical panaceas, Thomas Tymme's translation of the work of Joseph Du Chesne, or Richard Napier's enthusiastic deployment of amulets and similar devices. Napier probably also acted as tutor to the young Kenelm Digby, thereby helping to shape his unorthodox views on medicine.<sup>177</sup> Simon Harward was likewise a neo-platonist, while Nicholas Gyer may well have shared his friend Reginald Scot's intense interest in natural magic.<sup>178</sup>

That so many priest-physicians were enthusiastic devotees of Paracelsianism and hermeticism is no coincidence. As described above, Paracelsus and his followers envisaged themselves as advocating a specifically Christian approach to healing. They emphasised the scriptures as a source of knowledge of nature, together with direct study of the natural world itself, but they also envisaged the ability to heal as essentially a divine gift with which pious practitioners were directly infused by God. This contrasted with the traditional Galenist view that it was physic, rather than the actual physician himself, that represented God's gift in this respect: 'the most high from heaven hath created physick', Primerose argued, but 'if any physician, whether a good man, or bad, know well the nature of remedies and diseases, and administer every thing discreetly...a happy event is to be hoped for, and God is wont to blesse such meanes, in regard of the covenant which he hath made with nature'.<sup>179</sup> As Cotta had asserted in the *Triall of Witch-craft*, 'the common benefit of nature, is not onely vouchsafed unto all wicked men, but even unto Divels themselves.'<sup>180</sup>

The concept of the priest-physician was therefore more than congruent with Paracelsian thinking, but it in fact represented the realisation of a far more ancient hermetic ideal. Enthusiasts traced this back through the work of the pioneering renaissance neo-platonist and priest-physician Marsilio Ficino to the healing miracles

---

<sup>177</sup> Michael Foster, 'Digby, Sir Kenelm (1603-1665)', *ODNB*, 16, 152-8. p. 152.

<sup>178</sup> Harley, 'James Hart of Northampton', p. 363.

<sup>179</sup> Primerose, *Popular Errours*, sig. E4; Elmer, 'Medicine, religion, and the puritan revolution', p. 16.

<sup>180</sup> Cotta, *Triall*, sig. P.

of Christ and the apostles, and before that the activities of the ancient Persian, Chaldean and Egyptian priests - and ultimately the mythical figures of Orpheus and Hermes Trismegistus himself. It was later to re-emerge in the work of radical interregnum preacher-physicians such as John Webster and Henry Pinnell.<sup>181</sup> Orthodox critics were clearly aware of this tradition within which priest-physicians placed themselves; we have seen how Primerose singled out their use of the example of Ficino to justify their practice. Though he dismissed the great neo-platonist as 'more wittie than learned in Physick' and lacking 'any depth of knowledge in that art', he must nevertheless have been aware of the serious threat to the orthodox physicians incumbent in priest-physicians' appeal to this model.<sup>182</sup>

By adopting Paracelsian and hermetic ideas, priest-physicians were promoting a medical philosophy that not only rendered the learning of Galenic physicians redundant, but in fact undermined the whole concept of an autonomous medical profession able to claim a learned status equal to that of the clergy. If healing was conceived as the product of a gnostic relationship with God, based primarily on piety and scriptural knowledge, then the priest-physicians could claim greater authority and legitimacy in their practise of medicine than the orthodox physicians themselves. Priest-physicians therefore had the potential to offer a realistic and coherent alternative to the theory, practice and personnel of the medical profession. Such ideas were again to reach their full expression in the hands of the radicals of the 1640s and 50s, notably in Gabriel Plattes's *Macaria*, where 'the parson of every parish is a good physician, and doth execute both functions'.<sup>183</sup> But the threat was also implicit in the work of those priest-physicians, predominantly from the conformist wing of the church, active during the pre-Civil War decades.<sup>184</sup>

So professional factors were obviously at play in the opposition of these Galenist authors to Paracelsianism and, in particular, its deployment by priest-physicians. But these factors were in fact fruits of the same poisonous tree as gave rise to the religious failings these same critics recognised in such practitioners: their lack of concern for callings and the clerical function, and their use of illegitimate and

---

<sup>181</sup> Frances A. Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991) pp. 62-83; Pagel, *Paracelsus*, p. 222.

<sup>182</sup> Primerose, *Popular Erroures*, sig. C3.

<sup>183</sup> Quoted in Webster, *Great Instauration*, p. 259.

<sup>184</sup> Quoted in Webster, *Great Instauration*, p. 259.

impious means. All were rooted in a lack of regard for the most fundamental laws of nature and philosophy, i.e. the division between knowledge of body and soul and the limits of legitimate natural philosophical enquiry. It was lack of respect for these same boundaries that constituted the very essence of witchcraft.

## V

For the authors here discussed therefore, Paracelsian and hermetic ideas offered a tangible example of the interconnected nature of the array of threats they saw as bearing down upon the godly commonwealth, whether they be in the form of quackery, witchcraft, religious heterodoxy or social disorder. The figure of the priest-physician offered a highly visible manifestation of this interconnectedness, and so it is hardly surprising that such practitioners figure so prominently in these works. However, in the two preceding chapters I have argued that opposition to priest-physicians was further, and crucially, connected to another phenomenon: the rise of anti-Calvinist doctrine and the accompanying strict enforcement of ceremonial conformity within the Church of England. Calvinist authors could use the figure of the priest-physician to critique the new form of conformist divinity spreading through the Church not just because many of the individual practitioners concerned could be identified with that wing of the Church, but because they could present the activities of priest-physicians as a natural extension of the conformist emphasis on good works and ceremony at the expense of preaching.

So where does these authors' obsession with demonology fit into this? As has been described, many priest-physicians did use an array of practices that were widely regarded as suspect, if not downright diabolical; and the most prominent of these, Richard Napier, was also particularly hostile to puritanism. But to really succeed as religious polemic, accusations of diabolism against such figures had to key in to wider suspicions about the practices and beliefs of the emerging Arminian movement in general. Obviously, no conformist divines publically (or, in all likelihood, privately) condoned witchcraft or diabolism, and few would have approved of some of Napier's more eccentric pursuits, such as angelic consultation - although some, most prominently William Laud himself, were certainly enthusiastic about astrology.<sup>185</sup> So

---

<sup>185</sup> Thomas, *Religion*, p. 438.

exactly what, if anything, in broader anti-Calvinist divinity were these authors trying to tap into here?

The anti-Calvinist party had become embroiled in some controversies which had, in the eyes of its critics at least, left it somewhat suspect on these issues. Particularly significant was the case of John Lambe, astrologer-physician and adviser to the royal favourite, the Duke of Buckingham. After initially consulting Lambe in 1622 over the mental illness of his brother, suspected to have resulted from sorcery, Buckingham had quickly taken the astrologer into his patronage, having a rape conviction against him quashed the following year. But as Buckingham's unpopularity grew, so Lambe came to be seen as what Malcolm Gaskill describes as 'a living effigy' of the duke, and a malevolent influence upon the court.<sup>186</sup> Buckingham's impeachment proceedings in 1626 were informed by reports that he had drawn on Lambe's diabolical powers to gain the favour of the King; at one stage these proceedings were interrupted by a freak storm on the Thames, believed by many to be a tempest sorcerously raised by the duke's wizard.<sup>187</sup>

Popular rage towards Lambe finally came to a head in 1628, when he was beaten to death by a gang accusing him as a 'Witch, Devil, the Duke's Conjuror'.<sup>188</sup> This event was soon celebrated in a pamphlet, *A briefe description of the notorious life of John Lambe*, as well as numerous popular ballads and rhymes.<sup>189</sup> At a time when critics of royal policies still tended to direct their objections towards 'evil counsellors' rather than the monarch himself, Lambe epitomised the diabolical forces that were promoting reform within the Church.<sup>190</sup> His example became intertwined with that of Buckingham himself, and his sorcerous methods could be seen by godly critics as according fully with the duke's conformist sympathies; even though William Laud himself, while acting as Buckingham's chaplain, had actually warned the duke against seeking potentially sorcerous means with which to treat his brother's condition.

---

<sup>186</sup> Malcolm Gaskill, 'Witchcraft, Politics, and Memory in Seventeenth-Century England', *The Historical Journal*, 50 (2007) 289-308. p. 294.

<sup>187</sup> Davies, *Four Centuries of Witch Beliefs*, pp. 118-9.

<sup>188</sup> Quoted in Gaskill, 'Witchcraft, Politics, and Memory', p. 294.

<sup>189</sup> Gaskill, 'Witchcraft, Politics, and Memory', p. 295.

<sup>190</sup> Richard Cust and Ann Hughes, 'Introduction: after Revisionism', in Cust and Hughes (ed.), *Conflict in Early Stuart England: Studies in Religion and Politics 1603-1642* (Harlow: Longman, 1989), pp. 6-40. p. 20.

The taint left on the conformists by this association with Lambe proved enduring. Thomas Stirry's pamphlet of 1641, *A Rot amongst the Bishops*, carried an engraving showing the ship of 'The Church & Commonwealth of England' being steered into hell by Laud, Bishop Matthew Wren of Norwich and 'Dr Lamb'.<sup>191</sup> Even as late as 1653, when Anne Bodenham, who claimed to have been Lambe's maidservant, was tried and executed for witchcraft, Lambe's example persisted as an emblem of the supposed corruption and superstition of the years of Arminian ascendancy.<sup>192</sup> It is therefore telling that Edward Poeton opens 'The winnowing of white witchcraft', penned with the Laudian regime at its zenith, by informing his readers that it was 'much to be lamented to consider how many friends and favourers, that late lewde man (who was intituled) Dr Lamb founde: oh, was hee not resorted unto (and consulted with) by many persons, of no meane esteem in this world: yet was hee none other than a very witch.'<sup>193</sup>

Poeton may also have used this treatise to comment obliquely on another, broader controversy over witchcraft with which the church authorities had become embroiled. I have suggested Poeton's vehement denunciation of the cunning folk who 'swarmeth in every countye and corner', while doubtless an expression of genuine sentiment, acted primarily as a vehicle for his assault on priest-physicians.<sup>194</sup> But it can also be read as an implied critique of Bishop Richard Mountague's removal of enquiries about the practice of popular magic from his 1634 articles of visitation for Chichester.<sup>195</sup> In fact, such enquiries had been dropped in most dioceses by 1640, a movement which can be seen as indicative of a more relaxed approach towards the issue of witchcraft on the part of the authorities. This is most evident in the marked slackening of witchcraft prosecutions during the period of Laudianism's rise and ascendancy. Only thirty-nine cases of witchcraft are known to have come before the home circuit of the assizes during the entirety of the 1620s and 30s; this compares to a total of 294 during the peak period of the 1580s and 90s.<sup>196</sup>

---

<sup>191</sup> Thomas Stirry, *A Rot Amongst the Bishops, or, A Terrible Tempest in the Sea of Canterbury* (London: R.O. & G.D., 1641) sig. A3v; Helen Pierce, 'Anti-Episcopacy and Graphic Satire in England, 1640-1645', *Historical Journal*, 47 (2004) 809-848. pp. 824-5.

<sup>192</sup> Gaskill, 'Witchcraft, Politics, and Memory', pp. 301-306.

<sup>193</sup> Sloane 1954, f. 163.

<sup>194</sup> Sloane 1954, f. 164v.

<sup>195</sup> Davies, *Popular Magic*, p. 18.

<sup>196</sup> Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness*, p. 108.

In the past, some historians have used this drop-off in prosecutions, together with the fact that most English demonologists were puritan clergymen, to argue that witch-prosecution in England was essentially a by-product of puritanism.<sup>197</sup> This is an overstatement, overlooking the sceptical impulses that the Protestant emphasis on providence, divine sovereignty and the passing of miracles could give rise to, as is perhaps best demonstrated in the work of the puritan minister George Gifford. It may well be that the decline in prosecutions during the pre-Civil War decades resulted primarily from the kind of political factors referred to above in the discussion of Cotta's *Triall*, rather than ideological scepticism *per se*, the absence of demonic activity testifying to the authority of the government of Charles I.<sup>198</sup>

Nevertheless, something of a cleavage over this issue does seem to have opened up between the different factions within the Church during this period, and a renewed interest in witch-hunting constituted one element within the puritan backlash of the 1640s; its greatest expression coming in the trials associated with Matthew Hopkins in the puritan heartlands of Essex and East Anglia. Many of the places Hopkins visited had earlier incurred the wrath of Bishop Wren during his militant campaign to enforce conformity, while many were also visited by the iconoclast William Dowsing; witch-hunting may have combined with his activities in a drive to fully expunge Laudian innovation.<sup>199</sup> In this context, it would not have been unnatural for puritan critics to see the impious pursuits of priest-physicians as a further product of a general tolerance for the demonic arts on the part of the Laudian regime, and to view the campaign against such individuals as part of a broader drive to resist the innovations of the 1630s, even if priest-physicians themselves in fact represented a far more longstanding problem.

So there were a few widely publicised strands that critics could use to directly tie the anti-Calvinist party within the Church of England itself to the issue of witchcraft, and Poeton at least seems to have tried to tap into these. But these strands would hardly seem to constitute a convincing basis for a thoroughgoing identification of the two phenomena, even to a hostile observer. In fact, the core basis for the identification of Arminianism (and the 'avant garde' conformity that preceded it) with witchcraft was, in a sense, parasitical upon the key equivalence which permeated the

---

<sup>197</sup> See for example Davies, *Four Centuries of Witch Beliefs*, p. 73.

<sup>198</sup> Elmer, 'Politics of Witchcraft', p. 108.

<sup>199</sup> Elmer, 'Politics of Witchcraft', p. 109.



thinking of critics of church reform: that between Arminianism and Catholicism. This in turn made Arminianism intrinsically identifiable with witchcraft, because the association of Catholicism with witchcraft was a commonplace among Elizabethan and early Stuart Protestants, to the point where ‘conjurer’ had become a synonym for a Catholic priest.<sup>200</sup> For Richard Bernard, it was obvious that ‘Sorcery is the practice of that Whore, the Romish Synagogue’, while Henry Holland was equally clear that the ‘monkes, the friers, and all of the shaven ministerie’ bore the ‘brandes of sorcery, witchcraft, idolatrie, and all impietie in their handes and foreheads’.<sup>201</sup>

The most obvious expression of this godly judgement upon the Roman Church was, of course, the routine identification of the Pope with antichrist, presiding over, as Peter Lake puts it, ‘an anti-religion, a perfectly symmetrical negative image of true Christianity’ dedicated to ‘inverting and perverting the values of true religion.’<sup>202</sup> Entirely uncoincidentally, this corresponded exactly with the view of witchcraft widely shared among the learned; both were pseudo-monarchies under the rule of Satan, whose ministers, whether they be priests or wizards, were devoted to administering perverted sacraments and leading people into damnation.<sup>203</sup> Both therefore offered diabolical edifices against which the true church and godly commonwealth could define itself.

This structural identification presupposed, English Protestants pointed to numerous features of Catholic belief and ceremony as evidence of Papist sorcery. In particular, the array of protective and healing objects, rituals and other intercessionary agents offered by the Church of Rome - its saints, relics, images, exorcisms, shrines, holy waters and so forth - were identified as superstitious and idolatrous. The mass itself became the supreme act of conjuration, ‘nothing better to be esteemed than the verses of the sorcerer or enchanter’, according to John Hooper.<sup>204</sup> More radical Protestants identified formal prayers as mere charms and incantations, and dismissed the churching of women, consecration and confirmation as idolatrous rituals, Thomas Becon describing the latter as ‘plain sorcery, devilry, witchcraft, juggling,

---

<sup>200</sup> Thomas, *Religion*, p. 78; Scot, *Discoverie*, p. 252.

<sup>201</sup> Bernard, *Guide*, sig. E12; Holland, *Treatise*, sig. B1.

<sup>202</sup> Peter Lake, ‘Anti-popery: the Structure of a Prejudice’, in Cust and Hughes (ed.), *Conflict in early Stuart England*, pp. 72-106. p. 73.

<sup>203</sup> Perkins, *Discourse of the Damned Art*, sig. ¶3-¶3v; Sloane 1954, f. 172; Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, p. 87.

<sup>204</sup> Quoted in Thomas, *Religion*, p. 61.

legerdemain, and all that naught is'.<sup>205</sup> Given the general Protestant view that miracles, if they had not ceased altogether, could by no means be automatically called upon through rituals and objects, any efficacy these aspects of Catholic worship possessed could only be explained by demonic power. Indeed, for the most radical Protestants, almost all formal ceremony came to be equated with sorcery. Alongside all of these objections, Protestant critics could point to the Catholic origins of many of the charms deployed by cunning folk and other popular magical healers as evidence of the sorcerous nature of that church's prayers and rituals.<sup>206</sup>

However, there was never anything approaching consensus over these issues within the Church of England. Confirmation, churching and set prayers survived, albeit in somewhat changed forms, and for some nonconformists the Elizabethan prayer book itself remained a work of witchcraft.<sup>207</sup> A central element within the Arminian programme was a return to greater and more elaborate ceremonial and sacrament, typified by a new emphasis on consecration, omitted from the Elizabethan Prayer Book, and on the intrinsically justifying nature of baptism.<sup>208</sup> When combined with the shift away from Calvinist predestinarianism and the retreat from the identification of the Papacy with antichrist, this appeared to puritans to provide ample evidence of the Popish - and diabolical - nature of the reforms being imposed upon the Church.

This view of a crypto-papist infiltration became enmeshed with persisting conspiracy theories over 'Popish plots', pointing to the increasing prominence of Catholics at court, under the protection of Queen Henrietta Maria, and growing numbers of Catholic recusants and missionaries within the country.<sup>209</sup> As noted in chapter two, such conspiracy theories were already spreading in Northampton during the first decade of the seventeenth century, with conformist officials such as Sir John Lambe, Robert Butler and David Owen all falling victim to accusations of papist sympathies.<sup>210</sup> By the early 1640s the terms 'Arminianism' and 'Popery' were being

---

<sup>205</sup> Thomas, *Religion*, pp. 58-70 (Becon quote at p. 64).

<sup>206</sup> Thomas, *Religion*, pp. 210-212.

<sup>207</sup> Thomas, *Religion*, p. 79.

<sup>208</sup> Thomas, *Religion*, pp. 66-7; Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, p. 52.

<sup>209</sup> Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, p. 227.

<sup>210</sup> Fielding, 'Conformists, Puritans and the Church Courts', pp. 60-61.

used virtually interchangeably, John Pym decrying the reforms of the 1630s as ‘innovations to prepare us to Poperie’.<sup>211</sup>

This association of Arminianism with Catholicism, together with the shared enthusiasm for ceremony upon which it was partly based, inevitably led to the former movement being further identified in godly opinion with witchcraft, with which Catholicism was seen as inseparably bound and of which these ceremonies were obvious trappings. In the parliament of 1628 Sir John Eliot urged his fellow M.P.s to oppose the reforms of the Arminians by ‘restricting their ceremonies, by abolishing their sorceries’.<sup>212</sup> The Lambe affair itself played into this: Buckingham’s Arminian leanings seemed even more disturbing given that both his wife and his mother - who had herself been accused both of witchcraft and of carrying on an affair with Lambe - were Catholics. This stigma survived into the 1650s, when Anne Bodenham was accused of being ‘much adicted to Popery, and to Papistical fancies that she commonly observed.’<sup>213</sup>

For godly critics, therefore, Arminianism, Catholicism and witchcraft were inseparably bound up with one another. Again, for those writing from the point of view of a physician, and who inserted quackery too into this diabolical mix, priest-physicians represented the ultimate embodiment of it. While this was obvious in such practitioners’ enthusiasm for magic, astrology and alchemy, it was equally apparent in the parallels between the type of ministry they offered and the Catholic conception of the office of the priest, with its array of resources for spiritual healing. The miraculous nature of many of these, cures achieved through relics, images and shrines, offered Calvinist critics ample proof of the demonic origins of such healing. To their critics, priest-physicians’ claims that their responsibility for the souls of their parishioners made them qualified to care for their bodies too simply made no sense in terms of either Calvinist theology or Aristotelian natural philosophy. The fact that so many priest-physicians made such extensive use of occult means, and performed cures which did not conform to the ordinary laws of nature, represented at least an implicit claim on their part to be able to dispense miraculous cures on an intercessionary basis.

---

<sup>211</sup> Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, p. 243-4, 236-7 (Pym quote at p. 237).

<sup>212</sup> Quoted in Davies, *Four Centuries of Witch-Beliefs*, pp. 119-20.

<sup>213</sup> Edward Bower, *Doctor Lamb Revived, or, Witchcraft condemn'd in Anne Bodenham* (London: T.W. for Richard Best and John Place, 1653) sig. B; Gaskill, ‘Witchcraft, Politics, and Memory’, pp. 301-306.

Such claims could be seen as further reflected in the general sacramental - and sacerdotal - thrust of their religious preferences.

The identification of anti-Calvinist, formalist elements within the Church of England with Catholicism was therefore extremely important for Calvinist anti-quack writers, allowing them to use the example of priest-physicians to pin suspicions of demonism upon their ecclesiastical enemies. But it was equally the case that identifying witchcraft as present within the practices of priest-physicians allowed these authors to emphasise the crypto-Catholic nature of their ministry, and that of their allies within the church. Indeed, for these authors, witchcraft and Catholicism represented more or less the same thing. Both represented the ultimate inversionary threat, the embodiment of the kind of chaos and perversity that would result if the social order so emphasised by John Cotta and James Hart were allowed to break down.

It is this point, ultimately, that is key to understanding why all of these authors showed such an intense interest in demonology. As 1 Samuel 15:23 told them, 'rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft'. All forces of disorder, usurpers of the proper hierarchy in religion, politics and medicine - and of established philosophical knowledge and structures - could ultimately be identified with witchcraft and as agents of Satan. This did offer these authors a powerful rhetorical tool, but it was nonetheless rooted in genuine belief; a product of what Patrick Collinson has described as the 'piebald mentality' of early seventeenth century puritans, which led them to see the world in terms of absolute antipathy between godly and ungodly, and to quite naturally bundle together all of the disparate elements that they found at one of these extremes or the other.<sup>214</sup>

The distinctive contribution of these authors was to bring the medical matters that they faced every day in their work into the centre of this mix; along, perhaps, with a particularly intense social conservatism characteristic of the moderate strand of godly thought to which most of them seem to have adhered. But the basic structures into which they placed these were widely shared, as were the concerns that primarily motivated them to publish. Rather than as a parallel enterprise, these authors probably

---

<sup>214</sup> Patrick Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religious and Cultural change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988) pp. 146-7.

regarded their works, both on witchcraft and on quackery in general, as part of the same project as that of contemporary clerical demonologists.

### Conclusion

At the beginning of this study, I outlined two differing sets of interpretations of the anti-quack literature of early Stuart England advanced by historians over recent years, and tried to locate these within more wide ranging historiographical debates. One school, heavily influenced by the concept of the 'medical marketplace', has stressed economic factors as motives behind these works; another, in part reacting against the tendency of the medical marketplace to obscure religious and moral factors within medical provision, has highlighted the role of the religious concerns and objectives of anti-quack authors. What I hope to have illustrated over the intervening chapters is that both of these interpretations have validity, and that both economic and religious factors should in fact be seen as being prominently at work within most of these texts.

But these factors should not be regarded as working in parallel with one another. Instead, they were thoroughly intertwined and mutually justifying - indeed ultimately inseparable - within an ideological framework that almost compulsively drew intrinsic connections between apparently disparate threats. Even trying to apportion relative weight to motives rooted in commercial self-interest on the one hand and religious conviction on the other is ultimately futile; these works and the arguments they put forward fully reflected both, at almost every turn. At the centre of this framework was the Calvinist doctrine of callings, as elaborated in the work of William Perkins, which implied a godly imperative to uphold and defend one's own profession, and the income it provided, against interlopers. This was a particularly urgent task for physicians, given the elevated religious role assigned to their profession not just by they themselves, but also by prominent puritan theologians such as Perkins and Robert Bolton.

In this sense, irregular medical practitioners represented a religious threat to the commonwealth, in considerable part, precisely *because* they represented an economic threat to the physicians. But this fundamental impiety at the heart of irregular medical practice was everywhere reflected in the activities of the physicians' rivals, most obviously in their enthusiasm for the occult arts of magic, astrology and alchemy. These merely represented the most obvious fruits of empirics' entanglement with Satan, and it was to the devil himself that anti-quack authors ultimately traced back all the evils which they took up their pens against, and the activities of all their targets.

Such claims may read like improbable special pleading to modern eyes, and surely did to some contemporaries too, but these authors could point to numerous issues of pressing concern to their profession in order to illustrate these connections in concrete terms. One of these was Paracelsianism, the subject of the greatest medical controversies of the period. It was no coincidence for these authors that Paracelsus both urged the overthrow of Galenic physic and the learned physicians who practised upon the basis of it, and advocated the use of an array of what they regarded as magical and diabolical techniques, while himself leading, they maintained, a dissolute and ungodly life. This was a combination that learned physicians saw as constantly mirrored in the lives of the irregular practitioners by whom they found themselves surrounded.

But these connections were most obvious in the careers of those men who sought to undermine not just one, but *both* of the two callings seen by anti-quack authors and Calvinist clergymen as elevated above all others: the priest-physicians. These were living embodiments of the inevitable convergence between disorder and heterodoxy in both medicine and religion. This was obvious in their breaches of social order through their violation of calling and abdication of pastoral responsibility; in their departure from religious orthodoxy through their anti-Calvinist sympathies and the Catholic overtones of their practices; in their attack upon medical order and orthodoxy through their enthusiasm for Paracelsianism and undermining of the position of learned physicians; and in their rejection of orthodox learning in general, apparent in their deployment of techniques which breached the limits of what was accepted as possible within contemporary concepts of natural philosophy. The latter, for their critics, represented an implicit appeal for the assistance of Satan, who thus emerged again at the root of all of the violations of which priest-physicians were guilty. No wonder, then, that clerical practitioners occupied a place of such extraordinary prominence within the anti-quack works from this period.

So the ideological framework within which these anti-quack authors were writing, and which made their arguments viable, can be closely identified with that 'piebald mentality' described by Patrick Collinson, himself drawing upon the work of Stuart Clark, as so prevalent within the thinking of seventeenth century puritans. However, I have also tentatively sought to argue that these works may be further distinctive in reflecting a particular strand of religious opinion. The intensely

conservative nature of their arguments, and their obsession with order and orthodoxy in all fields, seems to correlate extremely closely with the strain of moderate godly thought to which most of them can be identified, admittedly with greatly varying degrees of certainty, as having adhered. All puritans and Calvinists stressed the need to maintain social and political order. But for highly conservative, moderate puritans of the type exemplified by Edward Montague and his circle, this need became an overriding imperative to which other doctrinal concerns and religious obligations could and had to be subordinated. For anti-quack authors of a similar mindset this meant, for example, that even the Christian obligation to perform charity could offer little defence against charges of breach of calling.

This brings us back to the second set of historiographical controversies outlined at the beginning of this study: those concerning the ‘puritanism-science hypothesis’, and the related, but much more wide-ranging disputes over the relative conservatism or radicalism of early Stuart puritanism in general, which have dominated debates about the religious history of this period over the last few decades. Clearly, these works do illustrate *a* puritan conservatism, in medicine and natural philosophy as in other fields, and seriously undermine the more sweeping claims made for ‘the puritan movement’ as an engine of scientific innovation. They are difficult to reconcile with claims such as those of Charles Webster that Paracelsianism ‘was thoroughly congenial to a puritan audience’, and at best sit awkwardly with his observation that ‘the rise of the scientific movement correlates closely with the growth in strength of the puritan party’.<sup>1</sup>

Peter Elmer, as has been outlined, himself deployed several of these works in rebutting these points of Webster and other advocates of the ‘puritanism-science hypothesis’, arguing instead that it was Hart’s robust conservatism that demonstrated the ‘true nature of the puritan zeal for medical reform’.<sup>2</sup> By invoking Nicholas Tyacke, Elmer implies that this can be seen as one aspect of a general pre-Civil War puritan conservatism, and the analysis of the outlook behind these works that I have offered can obviously be taken as supporting such an assertion. But Elmer may himself go too far in applying this characterisation to puritanism in general before 1640. James Hart, in particular, was part of a puritan circle whose intense moderation

---

<sup>1</sup> Webster, *Great Instauration*, pp. 281, 503.

<sup>2</sup> Elmer, ‘Medicine, religion and the puritan revolution’, p. 15.



was *not* entirely typical of their godly neighbours, from whom they became increasingly estranged. On the other hand, as we have seen, the more radical wing of English puritanism did provide some of the leading early promoters of Paracelsian medicine in England; men such as Thomas Mouffet, Thomas Penny and Peter Turner. On the very farthest fringes of the puritan movement, among the likes of Henoeh Clapham and James Forrester, even that hallmark of godly resistance to quackery, opposition to priest-physicians, began to break down, while numerous lay puritans were willing to employ the services of men such as Richard Napier. While the radical ideas of Elizabethan luminaries such as Mouffet and Penny may have been pushed further towards the margins of godly thought during the early Stuart period, it does nevertheless seem that the roots of Civil War radicalism in medicine, as in other fields, are discernable within the ranks of pre-war puritanism.<sup>3</sup>

So while the conservatism of men such as John Cotta, James Hart and James Primerose can be identified as inseparable from their godly religious preoccupations, it is probably safest to assume that they particularly reflect the thinking of one strand of moderate puritan and evangelical Calvinist thought, albeit perhaps the dominant strand before 1640, rather than that of the entire puritan movement. Furthermore, they must be read, to some extent at least, as a particular response to the circumstances and pressures faced by Cotta and Hart in Jacobean Northampton, and by their successors writing under Laudianism. This led them to particularly emphasise their own conservatism and orthodoxy and to seek to identify disorder and nonconformity firmly with their conformist opponents within the church. The impression that puritans were bastions of the existing order and that their rivals were agents of innovation was one which these authors consciously and deliberately set out to cultivate, but it cannot be accepted at face value, any more than can theological works from this period by moderate puritan clergymen such as Joseph Bentham, which sought to completely whitewash the nonconformity of their more radical co-religionists.

The anti-quack literature of the early Stuart period does therefore serve to undermine any broad notions of puritanism as an innately progressive force, in medicine and science or in politics and society in general; not only because it represents a body of intensely conservative work written mostly by men who

---

<sup>3</sup> Harley, 'Medical Metaphors', pp. 434-5.

manifested puritan or evangelical Calvinist sympathies, but also because the conservative impulses it contains are intimately related to and reflective of these religious sympathies. But these works are less convincing as evidence for puritanism in general as an innately conservative force in any of these fields. They are too closely identifiable with a particular strand of godly thinking, developed under a particular set of religious and medical circumstances, for any such broad conclusions about ‘puritanism’ to be drawn from them.

After 1640, the seeds of interest in medical reform among early Stuart puritans gave rise to an explosion of enthusiasm for new ideas, particularly among the radicals and sectaries, together with a torrent of vernacular medical literature within which these ideas were expounded. But the extent to which this represented some sort of generational shift within puritanism should not be overstated, as others continued to uphold the moderate, conservative strain of godly thought and the virulent hostility to all these innovations that inspired the works of their anti-quack predecessors. This strain now became increasingly identifiable with the presbyterian faction, as we have already seen in Thomas Hall’s attacks on John Webster’s ideas for curriculum reform, and in the hostility to Paracelsianism and priest-physicians that Robert Wittie carried right through to the restoration period. To these can be added that most celebrated voice of Civil War and restoration presbyterianism, Richard Baxter, who denounced the ‘drunken conjuror’ Paracelsus and was anxious to explain away his own early excursions into the practice of medicine.<sup>4</sup>

The College of Physicians itself was steered through much of the interregnum, and along its accustomed conservative course, by two presbyterian presidents: John Clarke (1645-9) and Edward Alston (1655-66). Interestingly, the oration at the funeral of Alston’s daughter was given by Edward Reynolds, a scion of Northamptonshire moderate puritanism and former minister to James Hart at All Saints, Northampton (as well as restoration Bishop of Norwich).<sup>5</sup> Another collegiate physician and

---

<sup>4</sup> Richard Baxter, *The Autobiography of Richard Baxter, being the Reliquiæ Baxterianæ*, ed. J. M. Lloyd Thomas (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1931) p. 78; Elmer, ‘Medicine, Medical Reform and the Puritan Revolution’, p. 191.

<sup>5</sup> William Birken, ‘The Puritan connexions of Sir Edward Alston, President of the Royal College of Physicians 1655-1666’, *Medical History*, 18 (1974) 370-374. p. 372.

presbyterian, Jonathan Goddard, took the lead in attacking the physicians' irregular rivals during this period, condemning Nicholas Culpeper as a 'foul mouth'd scribler'.<sup>6</sup>

But while these men were advancing old arguments in accordance with a long-standing ideological tradition, the circumstances within which they were working had, of course, changed radically. It was now the sects, rather than the hitherto conformists, who represented the overriding threats to the presbyterian ideal of order within the commonwealth. But the essential nature of the threat presented remained fundamentally the same. Just as men such as Baxter were to accuse Quakers of being agents of the papists (and ultimately of the devil himself), so it was not lost on them that the sectaries were advocating Paracelsianism and natural magic and, in the cases of men such as John Webster and Henry Pinnell, taking up the dual vocation just as their crypto-papist predecessors had done before the outbreak of war.<sup>7</sup>

The relationship between medicine and religion in England was to undergo further radical change after the restoration in 1660. The ejection of puritan ministers from the Church of England shattered many of those godly illusions about unity, order and orthodoxy in church and commonwealth that had survived the traumas of the interregnum, helping to render much of the worldview that had inspired the anti-quack literature of the early Stuart period obsolete. Religious healing now became a key tool of the embattled dissenters, and not just among radicals such as the Quakers, although the miracle cures they claimed offered perhaps the most spectacular examples. Presbyterians too offered healing fasts for the mentally ill, rituals reminiscent of those dispossessions led by earlier puritan enthusiasts such as John Darrell which seem to have so discomfited early Stuart moderates such as John Cotta. This was in the face of Anglican insistence that such illnesses were natural conditions, and that the spiritual physic offered by dissenters was mere enthusiasm, if not diabolism.<sup>8</sup> The most prominent example of this use of irregular healing as a tool of dissent may be provided by Valentine Greatrakes, the Irish gentleman and former soldier in

---

<sup>6</sup> Elmer, 'Medicine, religion and the puritan revolution', pp. 33-4.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Elmer, "'Saints or sorcerers": Quakerism, demonology and the decline of witchcraft in seventeenth-century England' in Jonathan Barry, Marianne Hester and Gareth Roberts (eds), *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Studies in culture and belief* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) pp. 145-179. p. 148. See also Donald Lupton, *The Quacking Mountebanke, Or The Jesuite turn'd Quaker* (London: E. B., 1655) sig. A2v.

<sup>8</sup> David Harley, 'Mental illness, magical medicine and the Devil in northern England, 1650-1700', in French & Wear, *medical revolution of the seventeenth century*, pp. 114-144. pp. 119-121; MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam*, p. 228; Jenner, 'Quackery and Enthusiasm', p. 326.

Cromwell's army whose touching for the king's evil and other conditions has been identified by Keith Thomas as 'a veiled sectarian protest against the Restoration and the miraculous powers claimed by Charles II'.<sup>9</sup>

But the earlier conservative approach still did not disappear altogether among puritans. It remained apparent in Robert Wittie's continuing attempts to organise opposition to priest-physicians in the 1670s, which seem to have been met with some enthusiasm, as well as his continuing attacks on both Paracelsianism and the Quakers.<sup>10</sup> It can also be detected in Richard Baxter's insistence during this period that mental illness was a natural condition to be treated with physic, and his warnings against religious enthusiasm in its treatment, which he too saw as potentially opening the door to diabolism.<sup>11</sup> But both of these men were puritans clinging on to old illusions of order and unity, and the terms under which these could be achieved; Wittie chose to conform to the restoration Church of England, while Baxter continued to nurture the belief that this could be replaced by a more comprehensive settlement. Their outlook was becoming increasingly untenable, and was only to become more so as the hegemony of learned Galenism continued to crumble in the face of empirical medicine, and the physicians lost their ability to regulate other practitioners after the Rose Case in 1704.

And yet, not only did anti-quackery continue to thrive as a literary genre during the restoration period but, as Mark Jenner has convincingly laid out, its arguments continued to be profoundly influenced by religious factors.<sup>12</sup> But the dramatic events of the preceding two decades brought about a marked shift in who deployed these arguments and how. While most puritans now had to come to terms with the impossibility of a united church and commonwealth reformed along the lines they desired, the one group of people who could continue to entertain such hopes, however improbable they may ultimately have proven, were those who can by this point be safely termed as Anglicans. In their hands, the long-standing association of religious sectarianism with irregular medical practice was combined with the events of the interregnum, together with the new political realities of the restoration, to create

---

<sup>9</sup> Thomas, *Religion*, pp. 240-2; Elmer, 'Politics of Witchcraft', pp. 112-3.

<sup>10</sup> BL, Sloane 1393, f. 14.

<sup>11</sup> Harley, 'Mental illness, magical medicine and the Devil', pp. 119-20.

<sup>12</sup> Jenner, 'Quackery and Enthusiasm', p. 313.

the impression of an intrinsic link between puritan dissent and quackery. Such a link remained firmly rooted in the assumption that disorder in one sphere would inevitably spill over into others, and that agents of disorder necessarily sought to overthrow order in all of these spheres.

This was perhaps spelt out most clearly in the work of Nathaniel Hodges, a candidate and future censor of the College of Physicians. In dedicating his *Vindiciæ Medicinæ* to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Hodges insisted that there was ‘such a Sympathy’ between the clergy and the profession of physic,

that they necessarily partake of the Infelicity and Prosperity happening to each other; and thence it was, that when the REVEREND CLERGY (during the late Rebellion) suffered according to their sworn enemies implacable Fury, the professors of PHYSICK also by the prevailing Invasion of Emperickes shared in the common Calamity<sup>13</sup>

Hodges added that the members of his own profession ‘most heartily wish that the CHURCH may never fall again into the hands of Empericall Divines who as rudely treated peoples Souls, as the present Quacks in Physick do their Bodies’, but lamented that ‘the condition of Physick and Physicians is very little bettered, as if it were to be quite excluded from the benefits of the PUBLICK DELIVERANCE’. Implicit in this continued disorder in the medical sphere was a continuing threat to the established church: ‘Such it seems is the boldness both of our common Emperickes and upstart Pseudochymists, that they presume to entertain as great hopes of their prevailing over all ACADEMICKS, as the CHURCHES Enemies impatiently expect a Revolution’.<sup>14</sup> Similar associations can be detected in the works of Anglican clergyman, such as the future nonjuring Bishop George Hickes. In 1680, he preached that the puritans’ ‘error concerning the extemporary spirit of Prayer hath been the cause of much mischief to the Church...nay it hath made these Spiritual Mountebanks not only disuse the Lords prayer it self, but forbid the use of it as Superstitious, Idolatrous and a Papistical charm’.<sup>15</sup>

Jenner has detailed how these associations were to come to the fore again during the 1720s, with the controversy over the *Febrifugum Magnum* of John

---

<sup>13</sup> Nathaniel Hodges, *Vindiciæ Medicinæ & Medicorum: Or An Apology for the Profession and Professors of Physick* (London: John Field, 1665) sig. A3-A3v.

<sup>14</sup> Hodges, *Vindiciæ Medicinæ*, sig. A3v-A4.

<sup>15</sup> George Hickes, *The Spirit of Enthusiasm Exorcised* (London: Walter Kettelby, 1680) sig. Gv.

Hancocke. Within this book Hancocke, a low-church clergyman who sought comprehension for presbyterians and defended occasional conformity, argued that drinking cold water could cure all fevers and even the plague itself.<sup>16</sup> Hancocke's critics were quick to connect his medical arguments with his religious outlook; the physician James Gardner observed that 'there is in Physick, as well as in Matters Theological, what we call a Zeal without Knowledge'.<sup>17</sup> Gardner's complaints were framed firmly within this assumed connection between the religious enthusiasm of dissenters and quackery: 'Should any Enthusiast fancy himself gifted, and dare to mount a Pulpit...the Clergy immediately stand upon their guard...'Tis Physick alone that is invaded by all'.<sup>18</sup>

So the influence of, and the desire to influence, religious arguments remained strong in post-restoration anti-quack literature, as did the sense that the spread of quackery held serious wider connotations for order in church and commonwealth; 'quack' remained a label that could be readily used to attack ones ecclesiastical opponents. But these attacks were now being directed in the opposite direction to those of the early Stuart period, and much of their content had changed. Most obviously, the figure of the priest-physician largely disappears from them; despite the fact that, at least if Robert Wittie's complaints are to be believed, such practitioners were still as ubiquitous as ever. Perhaps the most important anti-quack work of the restoration period is Christopher Merrett's *Short View of the Frauds and Abuses Committed by Apothecaries*. Merrett, a prominent natural philosopher and librarian to the College of Physicians, echoes John Cotta in decrying 'the multitude of Empirics swarming in every Corner', and attacking an array of 'Pseudochymists, and other Mountebanks' alongside the principal targets identified in his title. But he makes no mention whatsoever of Cotta's 'grand and most common offenders', the priest-physicians.<sup>19</sup>

Controversy over the combining of the clerical and medical professions clearly did not disappear altogether. Fifty years after Wittie's efforts to organise opposition to priest-physicians, John Hancocke remained conscious that his clerical status could be

---

<sup>16</sup> Jenner, 'Quackery and Enthusiasm', pp. 313-5.

<sup>17</sup> James Gardner, *Remarks on the Reverend Dr. Hancocke's Febrifugum Magnum* (London: W. Meadows, 1723) sig. Bv.

<sup>18</sup> Gardner, *Remarks*, sig. A3.

<sup>19</sup> Christopher Merrett, *A Short View of the Frauds and Abuses Committed by Apothecaries* (London: James Allestry, 1669) sig. E4v.

held against him by his critics, acknowledging that ‘it is a little out of my Way to write in Physick’, but insisting that ‘if any of the Profession [of physic], that censure me for this, will write a good Book in Divinity or Morality...I shall not think they intrude upon my Profession’.<sup>20</sup> James Gardner did indeed reference Hancocke’s clerical status, bracketing his activities with, for example, Edward Massey’s preaching against smallpox inoculation.<sup>21</sup> But Gardner aimed his criticisms at specific individuals and the ineptitude of their medical activities; he does not launch a general attack on the practice of medicine by clergymen, and makes no reference to issues such as the doctrine of callings or pastoral neglect. ‘Enthusiasm’, in religion and medicine, may have become a major point of partisan religious controversy during this period, but the priest-physician issue, in this respect, seems to have rather lost its charge, probably because it was no longer so closely identifiable with a particular section of religious opinion.

Religion clearly remained a crucial factor within late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century anti-quack literature, but the nature of such religious concerns, and the ways in which they shaped these works, had changed considerably. The same is true of the more narrowly medical and professional factors at play. As the unbending conservative Galenism of the early Stuart authors became increasingly untenable, anti-quack writers such as Merrett, in particular, now urged physicians to embrace experiment and new scientific ideas in their struggle with the apothecaries: ‘within these last few experimental years, the practical part of Physick hath been much improved (as well as Anatomy) especially by such as have put their hands to work’. Despite this, Merrett further insisted that ‘no Art is more capable of enlargement than ours’, and urged his fellow physicians ‘to improve their knowledge so far, that they shall not only be able to leave mankind destitute of no remedy Nature did ever produce; but also restore and settle those Honours ignorant men would usurp, upon the Learned Professors of this Science’.<sup>22</sup>

This represents a sharp break with the strict limits to human understanding emphasised by authors such as Cotta, not to mention their intense scepticism towards innovation. So while restoration anti-quack literature was in many ways consistent

---

<sup>20</sup> John Hancocke, *Febrifugum Magnum: Or, Common Water the Best Cure for Fevers, And probably for the Plague* (London: R. Halsey, 1722) sig. O2v.

<sup>21</sup> Gardner, *Remarks*, sig. B2v-B3.

<sup>22</sup> Merrett, *Short View of the Frauds*, sig. Ev-E2.

with that of the early Stuart period, tending to maintain both its nervous defence of order and hierarchy and its association of threats to these across different fields, it is nonetheless clear that for authors such as Merrett this no longer gave rise to the kind of all-encompassing ideological conservatism, spanning the boundaries of medicine, religion and natural philosophy, that characterised the work of their predecessors. Radical innovation was now seen as acceptable, indeed essential, providing it was pursued by those properly qualified to undertake it. This shift in emphasis is further apparent in the loss of interest among these authors in the subject that had underwritten the sweeping conservative worldview of their predecessors, that of witchcraft; a subject that was in fact enjoying something of a revival of interest in many elite quarters during the early years of the restoration, particularly among dissenters and latitudinarians.<sup>23</sup>

If nothing else, I hope that this study has helped to illustrate how ‘specialist’, professional works must be read firmly within the broader ideological context of their time, and how they can in turn offer valuable insights into developments in other, more widely studied fields during the same period. But this must be done with care, acknowledging that the ways in which ideological factors rooted in different fields of activity influenced the arguments presented, and the ways in which the authors perceived and presented analogies between these fields, were heavily shaped by the particular circumstances in which different texts were produced, and by fine distinctions between the ideological outlooks and social connections of the authors themselves. The various differences and similarities between the early Stuart works and those of the restoration period seem to bear this point out particularly clearly.

Nevertheless, comparison with the restoration literature also helps to bear out the fact that some themes can be identified within the anti-quack literature of the early Stuart period that are more or less perennial, restating the concerns of earlier authors and recurring in later works. Today, anti-quackery remains a thriving literary genre, with a steady stream of books and newspaper articles attacking the predations of homeopaths, herbalists, chiropractors, faith healers and other modern practitioners of ‘alternative’ medicine. It would be absurd to present these modern works as direct descendants of the kind of texts dealt with in this study; modern anti-quack literature

---

<sup>23</sup> Elmer, ‘Politics of Witchcraft’, p. 112.



generally bases its arguments firmly in empirical science, whereas that of the early Stuart period tended to condemn practitioners who were led primarily by observation and experience. The modern medical doctor can arguably trace his or her profession back more securely to the early modern apothecary or ordinary practitioner than to the Galenic physician; on the other hand, any attempts to connect modern alternative medicine with the irregular practitioners of the early modern period have proved, at best, highly problematic.<sup>24</sup>

Nevertheless, there are some important assumptions within the early Stuart literature that do recur in more modern works; in particular, the idea that unorthodoxy in different fields can be bracketed together as essentially representing a single movement, and the suggestion that this common tide of misinformation is in danger of swamping us all, if it has not done so already. The title of one recent work, by the former editor-in-chief of a Catholic newspaper, brackets together ‘conspiracy theories, quack medicine, bogus science and fake history’ as a single inundation of ‘counter-knowledge’, and purports to explain ‘how we surrendered’ to it.<sup>25</sup> Doubtless the author is deploying such sentiments in a less literal, and perhaps more satirical manner than his distant predecessors, but the similarities between the imagery remain striking. Much as circumstances and the outlooks and beliefs they give rise to may change, the need for proponents of orthodoxy to define themselves in opposition to an all-consuming, and to some extent undifferentiated mass of usurpers is unlikely ever to disappear.

---

<sup>24</sup> Cook, *Decline*, p. 263; Porter, *Quacks*, pp. 115-9.

<sup>25</sup> Damian Thompson, *Counter-Knowledge: How we Surrendered to Conspiracy Theories, Quack Medicine, Bogus Science and Fake History* (London: Atlantic Books, 2008).

Bibliography

I. MANUSCRIPTS

*British Library*

Department of Printed Books

- |            |  |
|------------|--|
| C 54. b. 6 | James Hart, 'A Discourse of the lawlesse intrusion of Parsons & Vicars upon the profession of Phisicke with the Absurditie of the same &c' |
|------------|--|

Additional MSS

- |       |  |
|-------|--|
| 57944 | Cookery and medical receipts compiled and owned by Mary Glover |
|-------|--|

Royal MSS

- |        |   |
|--------|---|
| 18 B v | David Owen, 'The Power of Princes and the dutie of Subjectes according to the scripture and the judgment of the auncient fathers for an antidote against the poyson of the late and lewde doctrine of Papistes and Puritanes' |
|--------|---|

Sloane MSS

- |      |   |
|------|---|
| 972  | 'A Brief abstract of the Arraignment of nine Witches at Northampton', etc     |
| 1393 | Papers and letters of Dr Henry Power, etc                                     |
| 1926 | 'A detection of the imposture of Mr V. G. his pretended gift of healing', etc |
| 1954 | Edward Poeton, 'Medical Teatises'   |
| 1965 | Edward Poeton, 'Medical Collections'  |
| 2563 | 'A Just & necessarie Complaint concerning Physicke', etc                      |
| 3822 | Collections by Simon Forman, Richard Napier, William Lilly and Elias Ashmole  |



## II. PRINTED PRIMARY SOURCES

A. T., *A Rich Store-house or Treasury for the Diseased* (London: Thomas Purfoot and Raph Blower, 1596)

‘Annals of the College of Physicians of London from the year 1608 to the year 1647’, typescript, translated by J. Emberry, S. Heathcote and M. Hellings, 4 vols, 1953-57

Anthony, Francis, *The Apologie, or Defence of a Verity heretofore Published concerning a Medicine called Aurum Potabile* (London: John Legatt, 1616)

*Articles to be Enquired Of, in the second Triennial Visitation, of the Right Reverend Father in God, William, Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells* (London: Miles Flesher, 1636)

*Articles to be enquired of, throughout the whole diocese of Chichester* (London: R. Y. for Thomas Bourne, 1631)

Atwel, George, *An Apology, Or, Defence of the Divine Art of Natural Astrologie* (London: Vincent Wing for Samuel Speed, 1660)

Baxter, Richard, *The Autobiography of Richard Baxter, being the Reliquiae Baxterianæ*, ed. J. M. Lloyd Thomas (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1931)

Bentham, Joseph, *The Christian Conflict* (London: G. M. for Philemon Stephens and Christopher Meredith, 1635)

Bernard, Richard, *A Guide to Grand-Jury Men* (London: Felix Kingston for Ed. Blackmore, 1627)

Bolton, Robert, *Instructions for a Right Comforting Afflicted Consciences, with speciall Antidotes against some grievous temptations* (London: Felix Kyngston for Thomas Weaver, 1631)

Bolton, Robert, *Mr Boltons Last and Learned Worke of the Foure last Things...Together with the Life and death of the Authour* (London: George Miller for Edward Bagshaw, 1632)

Bolton, Robert, *Some Generall Directions for a Comfortable Walking with God* (London: Felix Kyngston for Edmund Weaver, 1626)

Bolton, Robert, *Two Sermons Preached at Northampton* (London: George Miller for Edward Bagshaw, 1635)

Bonham, Thomas, *The Chyrurgians Closet: Or, An Antidotarie Chyrurgicall* (London: George Miller for Edward Brewster, 1630)

B[ostocke], R[ichard], *The difference between the auncient physicke and the latter physicke* (London: Robert Walley, 1585)

Bower, Edward, *Doctor Lamb Revived, or, Witchcraft condemn'd in Anne Bodenham* (London: T. W. for Richard Best and John Place, 1653)

Bowne, Peter, *Pseudo-medicorum Anatomia* (London: Augustine Matthews, 1624)

Brian, Thomas, *The Pisse-Prophet, or Certaine Pisse-Pot Lectures* (London: E. P. for R. Thrale, 1637)

Browne, Thomas, *Pseudodoxia Epidemica: Or, Enquiries into very many received Tenents, And commonly presumed Truths* (London: Thomas Harper for Edward Dod, 1646)

Bullein, William, *Bulleins Bulwarke of defence againste all Sicknes, Sorues, and woundes* (London: Jhon Kyngston, 1562)

Burton, Robert, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (Oxford: John Lichfield and James Short for Henry Cripps, 1621)

Burton, Thomas, *Diary of Thomas Burton, Esq.*, ed. John Towill Rutt, 4 vols (London: Henry Colburn, 1828)

Caius, John, *A boke, or counseill against the disease commonly called the sweate, or sweatyng sickness* (London: R. Grafton, 1552)

Cooper, Thomas, *The Mystery of Witch-craft* (London: Nicholas Okes, 1617)

Cosin, John, *The Correspondence of John Cosin*, ed. George Ornsby, 2 vols (Durham: Andrews & Co for the Surtees Society, 1869)

Cotta, John, *A Short Discoverie of the Unobserved Dangers of severall sorts of ignorant and unconsiderate Practisers of Physicke in England* (London: William Jones and Richard Boyle, 1612)

Cotta, John, *Cotta contra Antonium: Or, An Ant-Antony* (Oxford: John Lichfield and James Short for Henry Cripps, 1623)

Cotta, John, 'The Poysoning of Sir Euseby Andrew', *Tracts (Rare and Curious Reprints, MS., etc.)*, Relating to Northamptonshire, 2<sup>nd</sup> Series (Northampton: Taylor & Son, 1881)

Cotta, John, *The Triall of Wich-craft, shewing the true and right methode of the Discovery* (London: George Purslowe for Samuel Rand, 1616)

*County of Middlesex. Calendar to the sessions records: new series, volume 2: 1614-15* (1936)

Dawes, Lancelot, *Sermons Preached Upon Severall Occasions* (London: Humphrey Robinson, 1653)

Digby, Kenelm, *A Late Discourse Made in a Solemne Assembly of Nobles and Learned Men at Montpelier in France*, translated by R. White (London: R. Lowndes and T. Davies, 1658)

Downame, George, *Two Sermons, the one Commending the Ministerie in Generall: the other Defending the Office of Bishops in Particular* (London: Felix Kyngston for Matthew Lownes, 1608)

Drage, William, *Daimonomegia. A Small Treatise of Sicknesses and Diseases from Witchcraft, and Supernaturall Causes* (London: J. Dover, 1665)

Du Chesne, Joseph, *The Practise of Chymicall, and Hermeticall Physicke, for the preservation of health*, translated by Thomas Tymme (London: Thomas Creede, 1605)

Duncon, Eleazar, *The Copy of A Letter written by E. D. Doctour of Physicke* (London: Melchisedech Braidwood, 1606)

Elyot, Thomas, *The Castel of Helthe* (1539)

Estwick, Nicolas, *A Learned and Godly Sermon Preached on the XIX. day of December, Anno Dom. MDCXXXI* (London: George Miller, 1633)

Evans, John, *The Universall Medicine: Or the Vertues of the Antimoniall Cup* (London: John Haviland, 1634)

Fletcher, John, *The Differences, causes, and Judgements of Urine* (London: John Legatt, 1623)

Fludd, Robert, *Doctor Fludds Answer unto M. Foster or, the Squensing of Parson Fosters Sponge* (London: Nathanel Butter, 1631)

Foster, William, *Hoplocrisma-Spongus: Or, A Sponge to wipe away the Weapon-Salve* (London: Thomas Cotes for John Grove, 1631)

Forestus, Petrus, *The Arraignment of Urines*, translated and abridged by James Hart (London: G. Eld for Robert Mylbourne, 1623)

Fox, George, *The Journal of George Fox*, ed. Norman Penny, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911)

Gardner, James, *Remarks on the Reverend Dr. Hancocke's Febrifugum Magnum* (London: W. Meadows, 1723)

Garnet, Richard, *The Book of Oaths* (London: W. Lee, M. Walbancke, D. Pakeman and G. Bedle, 1649)

Gaule, John, *Select Cases of Conscience Touching Witches and Witchcrafts* (London: W. Wilson for Richard Clutterbuck, 1646)

Gifford, George, *A Dialogue concerning Witches and Witchcraftes* (London: Oxford University Press for the Shakespeare Association, 1931)

Gifford, George, *A Discourse of the subtile Practises of Devilles by Witches and Sorcerers* (London: Toby Cooke, 1587)

Goodall, Charles, *The Royal College of Physicians of London Founded and Established by Law* (London: M. Flesher for Walter Kettilby, 1684)

Gyer, Nicholas, *The English Phlebotomy: Or, A Method and way of healing by letting of blood* (London: Andrew Mansell, 1592)

Hall, Thomas, *Vindiciæ Literarum, The Schools Guarded* (London: W. H. for Nathanael Webb & William Grantham, 1655)

Hancocke, John, *Febrifugum Magnum: Or, Common Water the Best Cure for Fevers, And probably for the Plague* (London: R. Halsey, 1722)

Hart, James, *KAINIKH, or the Diet of the Diseased* (London: John Beale for Robert Allot)

Hart, James, *The Anatomie of Urines* (London: Richard Field for Robert Mylbourne, 1625)

Harward, Simon, *Harwards Phlebotomy: Or, A Treatise of letting of Bloud* (London: F. Kingston for Simon Waterson, 1601)

Herbert, George, *Herbert's Remains* (London: Timothy Garthwait, 1652)

Herring, Francis, *A Modest Defence of the caveat given to the wearers of poisoned Amulets, as Preservatives from the Plague* (London: Arnold Hatfield for William Jones, 1604)

Herring, Francis, *Certaine Rules, Directions, or Advertisements for this time of Pestilential Contagion* (London: William Jones, 1603)

Hickes, George, *The Spirit of Enthusiasm Exorcised* (London: Walter Kettilby, 1680)

Hodges, Nathaniel, *Vindiciæ Medicinæ & Medicorum: Or An Apology for the Profession and Professors of Physick* (London: John Field, 1665)

I. D., *Salomons Pest-House or Towre-Royall* (London: Thomas Harper and Henry Holland, 1630)

James VI, *Daemonologie, in form of a Dialogue* (Edinburgh: Robert Waldegrave, 1597)

Jorden, Edward, *A Briefe Discourse of a Disease called the Suffocation of the Mother* (London: John Windet, 1603)

Joubert, Laurent, *Popular Errors*, translated by Gregory David de Rocher (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1989)

Lilly, William, *Mr. William Lilly's History of His Life and Times, From the Year 1602, to 1681* (London: J. Roberts, 1715)

Lupton, Donald, *The Quacking Mountebanke, Or The Jesuite turn'd Quaker* (London: E. B., 1655)

Merrett, Christopher, *A Short View of the Frauds and Abuses Committed by Apothecaries* (London: James Allestry, 1669)

Mountague, Richard, *A Gagg for the New Gospell? No: A New Gagg for An Old Goose* (London: Thomas Snodham for Matthew Lownes and William Barret, 1624)

Mountague, Richard, *Apello Caesarem. A Just Appeale from Two Unjust Informers* (London: Matthew Lownes, 1625)

Oberndorff, John, *The Anatomyes of the True Physition, and counterfeit Mountebanke*, translated by Francis Herring (London: Arthur Johnson, 1602)

Owen, David, *Anti-Paræus, or, A Treatise in the Defence of the Royall Right of Kings*, translated by Robert Mossom (York: Stephen Bulkley, 1642)

Owen, David, *Herod and Pilate reconciled: Or, The Concord of Papist and Puritan* (Cambridge: Cantrell Legge, 1610)

Perkins, William, *A salve for a sicke man* (Cambridge: John Legate, 1595)

Perkins, William, *A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft* (Cambridge: Cantrel Legge, 1610)

Perkins, William, *Foure Great Lyers, Striving who shall win the silver Whetstone* (London: Robert Waldegrave, 1585)

Perkins, William, *The Works of that Famous and Worthie Minister of Christ, in the Universitie of Cambridge, M. W. Perkins* (Cambridge: John Legat, 1603)

'Petworth Burials 1559-1876', *Indexed Transcripts of Parish Registers for Petworth*, transcribed by J. Wallis and P. Thompson. CD-ROM. Waterlooville: Parish Register Transcriptions Society, 2005

Potts, Thomas, *The Wonderfull Discoverie of witches in the Countie of Lancaster* (London: W. Stansby for John Barnes, 1613)

Primerose, James, *Exercitationes at Animadversiones in Librum, De Motu Cordis, et Circulatione Sanguinis* (London: William Jones for Nicholas Bourne, 1630)



Primerose, James, *Popular Errours. Or the Errours of the People in Physick*, translated by Robert Wittie (London: W. Wilson for Nicholas Bourne, 1651)

Primerose, James, *The Antimoniall Cup twice cast: Or, A Treatise concerning the Antimoniall Cup, shewing the abuse thereof*, translated by Robert Wittie (London: B.A. and T. Fawcet, 1640)

Reynolds, Edward, *A Sermon Touching the Peace and Edification Of the Church* (London: Robert Bostocke, 1638)

Roberts, Alexander, *A Treatise of Witchcraft* (London: N. O. for Samuel Man, 1616)

Scot, Reginald, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (New York: Dover, 1972)

Scott, Thomas, *Philomythie, Philomythologie. wherein outlandish Birds, Beasts, and Fishes, are taught to speake true English plainely* (London: Francis Constable, 1616)

Securis, John, *A Detection and Querimonie of the daily enormities and abuses committed in physick* (London, 1566)

Shelford, Robert, *Five Pious and Learned Discourses* (Cambridge: Printers to the University, 1635)

Stirry, Thomas, *A Rot Amongst the Bishops, or, A Terrible Tempest in the Sea of Canterbury* (London: R. O. & G. D., 1641)

Taylor, Thomas, *The Principles of Christian Practice* (London: R. Y. for J. Bartlet, 1635)

*The most strange and admirable discoverie of the three Witches of Warboys* (London: Thomas Man and John Winnington, 1593)

*The Witches of Northamptonshire* (London: Thomas Purfoot for Arthur Johnson, 1612)

Turner, Peter, *The Opinion of Peter Turner Doct: in Physicke, concerning Amulets or Plague Cakes* (London: Edward Blount, 1603)

Tymme, Thomas, *A Silver Watch-bell. The sound wherof is able (by the grace of God) to win the most profane worldling, and carelesse liver, if there be but the least spark of grace remaining in him, to become a true Christian indeed, that in the end he may obtaine everlasting salvation* (London: T. C. for William Cotton, 1605)

Tymme, Thomas, *The Chariot of Devotion* (London: G. Eld for Thomas Baylie, 1618)

Wastell, Simon, *A True Christians Daily Delight: Being The Summe of every chapter of the Old and New Testaments* (London: G. Eld and M. Flesher for Robert Mylbourne, 1623)

Wastell, Simon, *Microbiblion, or the Bibles Epitome* (London: Robert Mylbourne, 1629)

*Witches Apprehended, Examined and Executed, for notable villanies by them committed both by Land and Water* (London: Edward Marchant, 1613)

Wittie, Robert, *Pyrologia Mimica, Or, An Answer to Hydrologia Chymica of William Sympson* (London: T. N. for J. Martyn, 1669)

Wittie, Robert, *Scarborough Spaw, or, A Description of the Nature and Vertues of the Spaw at Scarborough in Yorkshire* (London: Charles Tyus and Richard Lambert, 1660)

### III. SECONDARY WORKS

Amundsen, Darrell W., 'Medieval Canon Law on Medical and Surgical Practice by the Clergy', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 52 (1978) 22-44

Anglo, Sydney (ed.), *The Damned Art: Essays in the Literature of Witchcraft* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977)

Aveling, Hugh, *Post Reformation Catholicism in East Yorkshire 1558-1790* (York: East Yorkshire Local History Society, 1960)

Baker, George, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Northampton*, 2 vols (London: J. B. Nichols & Son, 1822-41)

Ball, Philip, *The Devil's Doctor: Paracelsus and the World of Renaissance Magic and Science* (London: Arrow, 2007)

Barry, Jonathan, Marianne Hester and Gareth Roberts (eds), *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Studies in culture and belief* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)

Beier, Lucinda McCray, *Sufferers and Healers: The experience of illness in Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987)

Bickford, J. A. R. and M. E. Bickford, *The Medical Profession in Hull 1400-1900: A Biographical Dictionary* (Hull: Hull City Council, 1983)

Birken, William, 'The Puritan connexions of Sir Edward Alston, President of the Royal College of Physicians 1655-166', *Medical History*, 18 (1974) 370-374

Birken, William Joseph, 'The Royal College of Physicians of London and Its Support of the Parliamentary Cause in the English Civil War', *Journal of British Studies*, 23 (1983) 47-62

- Birken, William, 'The Social Problem of the English Physician in the early Seventeenth Century', *Medical History*, 31 (1987) 201-216
- Bosman-Jeglesma, Henriette A. (ed.), *Petrus Forestus Medicus* (Amsterdam: Stichting AD & L, 1996)
- Brockliss, L. W. B. and Colin Jones, *The Medical World of Early Modern France* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997)
- Capp, Bernard, *Astrology and the Popular Press: English Almanacs 1500-1800* (London: Faber & Faber, 1979)
- Clark, George N., *A History of the Royal College of Physicians of London*, 4 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964)
- Clark, Stuart, 'Inversion, Misrule and the Meaning of Witchcraft', *Past & Present*, 87 (1980) 98-127
- Clark, Stuart (ed.), *Languages of Witchcraft: Narrative, Ideology and Meaning in Early Modern Culture* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2001)
- Clark, Stuart, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997)
- Collinson, Patrick, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988)
- Collinson, Patrick, *The Religion of Protestants: the church in English society 1559-1625* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982)
- Condren, Conal, *Argument and Authority in Early Modern England: The Presupposition of Oaths and Offices* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006)
- Cook, Harold J., 'Against Common Right and Reason: The College of Physicians Versus Dr Thomas Bonham', *American Journal of Legal History*, 29 (1985) 301-22
- Cook, Harold J., 'Good Advice and Little Medicine: The Professional Authority of Early Modern English Physicians', *Journal of British Studies*, 33 (1994) 1-31
- Cook, Harold J., *The Decline of the Old Medical Regime in Stuart London* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986)
- Cope, Esther S., *The Life of a Public Man: Edward, First Baron Montagu of Boughton, 1562-1644* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1981)
- Curth, Louise Hill, *English Almanacs, astrology & popular medicine: 1550-1700* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007)
- Cust, Richard and Ann Hughes (ed.), *Conflict in Early Stuart England: Studies in Religion and Politics 1603-1642* (Harlow: Longman, 1989)

Cust, Richard, *The Forced Loan and English Politics 1626-1628* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987)

Davies, Julian, *The Caroline Captivity of the Church: Charles I and the Remoulding of Anglicanism 1625-1641* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992)

Davies, Owen, *Grimoires: A History of Magic Books* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)

Davies, Owen, *Popular Magic: Cunning-folk in English History* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007)

Davies, R. Trevor, *Four Centuries of Witch-Beliefs: With Special reference to the Great Rebellion* (London: Methuen & Co, 1947)

Davis, Natalie Zemon, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975)

Dawborn, Frances, 'New Light on Dr Thomas Moffet: The Triple Roles of an Early Modern Physician, Client, and Patronage Broker', *Medical History*, 47 (2003) 3-22

Debus, Allen G., *The Chemical Philosophy: Paracelsian Science and Medicine in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, 2 vols (New York: Neale Watson, 1977)

Dunn, P. M., 'Jacob Rueff (1500-1558) of Zurich and *The expert midwife*', *Archive of Diseases in Childhood: Fetal and Neonatal Edition*, 85 (2001)

Durling, Richard J., 'Some unrecorded verses in praise of Robert Fludd and William Harvey', *Medical History*, 8 (1964) 279-281

Durston, Christopher and Jacqueline Eales (ed.), *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560-1700* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996)

Elmer, Peter (ed.), *The Healing Arts: Health, Disease and Society in Europe 1500-1800* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004)

*English Sceptics, Including: Richard Dawkins, Derren Brown, Nicholas Humphrey, Reginald Scot, Ian Rowland, Charles Darwin, John Cotta, Arthur C. Clarke* (Richardson: Hephaestus Books, 2011)

Ewen, C. L'Estrange, *Witch Hunting and Witch Trials: The Indictments for Witchcraft from the Records of 1373 Assizes held for the Home Circuit A. D. 1559-1736* (New York: Lincoln MacVeigh, The Dial Press, 1929)

Fielding, John, 'Opposition to the Personal Rule of Charles I: The Diary of Robert Woodford, 1637-1641', *Historical Journal*, 31 (1988) 769-788

Fincham, Kenneth (ed.), *The Early Stuart Church, 1603-1642* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1993)

Fletcher, Anthony, *A County Community in Peace and War: Sussex 1600-1660* (London: Longman, 1975)

Flood, John L. and David J. Shaw, *Johannes Sinapius (1505-1560): Hellenist and Physician in Germany and Italy* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1997)

Forbes, Thomas R., 'The Regulation of English Midwives in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', *Medical History*, 8 (1964) 235-244

Foster, Joseph, *Alumni Oxonienses: The Members of the University of Oxford, 1500-1714*, 4 vols (Oxford: Parker and Co., 1891)

French, Roger and Andrew Wear (eds), *The medical revolution of the seventeenth century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989)

French, Roger, *William Harvey's natural philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994)

Furdell, Elizabeth Lane (ed.), *Textual Healing: Essays on Medieval and early Modern Medicine* (Leiden: Brill, 2005)

Gaskill, Malcolm, 'Witchcraft, Politics, and Memory in seventeenth-Century England', *The Historical Journal*, 50 (2007) 289-308

Gentilcore, David, *Healers and Healing in Early Modern Italy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998)

Gijswijt-Hofstra, Marijke, Hilary Marland and Hans de Waardt (eds), *Illness and Healing Alternatives in Western Europe* (London: Routledge, 1997)

Green, I. M., *The Re-Establishment of the Church of England 1660-1663* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978)

Grell, Ole Peter and Andrew Cunningham (eds), *Medicine and the Reformation* (London: Routledge, 1993)

Grell, Ole Peter and Andrew Cunningham (eds), *Religio Medici: Medicine and Religion in Seventeenth-Century England* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996)

Guy, John R., 'The Episcopal Licensing of Physicians, Surgeons and Midwives', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 56 (1982) 528-42

Hale, David George, *The Body Politic: A Political Metaphor in Renaissance English Literature* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971)

Harley, David, "'Bred up in the Study of that Faculty": Licensed Physicians in North-West England, 1660-1760', *Medical History*, 38 (1994) 398-420

Harley, David, 'James Hart of Northampton and the Calvinist Critique of Priest-Physicians: an unpublished Polemic of the early 1620s', *Medical History*, 42 (1998) 362-386

Harley, David, 'Medical Metaphors in English Moral Theology, 1560-1660', *Journal of the History of Medicine*, 48 (1993) 396-435

Hill, Christopher, *Change and Continuity in 17<sup>th</sup> Century England* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974)

Hill, Christopher, *Puritanism and Revolution: Studies in Interpretation of the English Revolution of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century* (London: Penguin, 1986)

Houliston, V. H., 'Sleepers Awake: Thomas Moffet's Challenge to the College of Physicians of London, 1584', *Medical History*, 33 (1989) 235-246

Jenner, Mark S. R. and Patrick Wallis (eds), *Medicine and the Market in England and Its Colonies, c.1450-c.1850* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007)

Jones, Richard Foster, *Ancients and Moderns: A Study of the Rise of the Scientific Movement in Seventeenth-Century England* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1965)

Kenyon, G. H., 'Petworth Town & Trades, 1610-1760, Part I', *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, 96 (1958) 35-107

Kocher, Paul H., *Science and Religion in Elizabethan England* (New York: Octagon, 1969)

Lake, Peter, *The boxmaker's revenge: 'Orthodoxy', 'Heterodoxy' and the Politics of the Parish in Early Stuart London* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001)

Lambert, Sheila, 'Richard Montagu, Arminianism and Censorship', *Past & Present*, 124 (1989) 36-98

Lee, Sidney and Leslie Stephen (eds), *Dictionary of National Biography*, 63 vols (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1885-1900)

Longden, Henry Isham, *Northamptonshire and Rutland Clergy from 1500*, 15 vols (Northampton: Archer & Goodman, 1938-42)

MacDonald, Michael, *Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety, and Healing in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981)

MacDonald, Michael (ed.), *Witchcraft and Hysteria in Elizabethan London: Edward Jorden and the Mary Glover Case* (London: Routledge, 1991)

Macfarlane, Alan, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England: A regional and comparative study* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1999)

Maxwell-Stuart, P. G., *Witch Hunters: Professional Prickers, Unwitchers & Witch Finders of the Renaissance* (Stroud: Tempus, 2005)

Marland, Hilary and Margaret Pelling (eds), *The task of healing: Medicine, religion and gender in England and the Netherlands 1450-1800* (Erasmus: Rotterdam, 1996)

Matthew, H. C. G. and Brian Harrison (eds), *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 61 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)

McRae, Andrew, *God speed the plough: The representation of agrarian England, 1500-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)

Milton, Anthony, 'Licensing, Censorship, and Religious Orthodoxy in Early Stuart England', *The Historical Journal*, 41 (1998) 625-651

Munk, William, *The Roll of the Royal College of Physicians of London*, 3 vols (London: Royal College of Physicians, 1878)

Page, William and P. H. Ditchfield (eds), *A History of the County of Berkshire: Volume 4* (1924)

Pagel, Walter, *Paracelsus: An Introduction to Philosophical Medicine in the Era of the Renaissance* (Basel: S. Karger, 1958)

Pelling, Margaret, *Medical Conflicts in Early Modern London: Patronage, Physicians, and Irregular Practitioners, 1550-1640* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2003)

Pierce, Helen, 'Anti-Episcopacy and Graphic Satire in England, 1640-1645', *Historical Journal*, 47 (2004) 809-848

Poole, Robert (ed.), *The Lancashire Witches: Histories and Stories* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002)

Porter, Roy (ed.), *Patients and practitioners: Lay perceptions of medicine in pre-industrial society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985)

Porter, Roy, *Quacks: Fakers & Charlatans in English Medicine* (Stroud: Tempus, 2000)

Raach, John H., *A Directory of English Country Physicians 1603-1643* (London: Dawsons of Pall Mall, 1962)

Raach, John H., 'English Medical Licensing in the Early Seventeenth Century', *Yale Journal of Biology and Medicine*, 16 (1944) 267-288

Roberts, R. S., 'The Personnel and Practice of Medicine in Tudor and Stuart England: Part I. The Provinces', *Medical History*, 6 (1962) 363-382

Roberts, R. S., 'The Personnel and Practice of Medicine in Tudor and Stuart England: Part II. London', *Medical History*, 8 (1964) 217-234

Sharpe, James, *Instruments of Darkness: Witchcraft in England 1550-1750* (London: Penguin, 1996)

Sharpe, James, *The Bewitching of Anne Gunter: A Horrible and true story of football, witchcraft, murder and the King of England* (London: Profile, 1999)

Sharpe, Kevin, *Remapping early modern England: The culture of seventeenth-century politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)

Sharpe, Kevin, *The Personal Rule of Charles I* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992)

Sheils, W. J., *The Puritans in the Diocese of Peterborough 1558-1610* (Northampton: Northamptonshire Record Society, 1979)

Singer, Charles, *A Short History of Anatomy and Physiology from the Greeks to Harvey* (New York: Dover, 1957)

Spurr, John, *English Puritanism, 1603-1689* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998)

Stieg, Margaret, *Laud's Laboratory: The Diocese of Bath and Wells in the early Seventeenth Century* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1982)

Thomas, Keith, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Penguin, 1991)

Thompson, Damian, *Counter-Knowledge: How we Surrendered to Conspiracy Theories, Quack Medicine, Bogus Science and Fake History* (London: Atlantic, 2008)

Tyacke, Nicholas, *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism c. 1590-1640* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987)

Venn, John and J. A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses: a biographical list of all known students, graduates and holders of office at the University of Cambridge from the earliest times to 1900. Part 1; From the earliest times to 1751*, 4 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922)

Wear, Andrew, *Knowledge and Practice in English Medicine, 1550-1680* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)

Webster, Charles, *From Paracelsus to Newton: Magic and the Making of Modern Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982)

Webster, Charles (ed.), *Health, medicine and mortality in the sixteenth century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979)

Webster, Charles, *The Great Instauration: Science, Medicine and Reform 1626-1660* (London: Duckworth, 1975)



Webster, Charles (ed.), *The Intellectual Revolution of the Seventeenth Century* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974)

Webster, Tom, *Godly Clergy in Early Stuart England: The Caroline Puritan Movement c. 1620-1643* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997)

Yates, Frances A., *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991)

#### IV. UNPUBLISHED THESES

Elmer, Peter, 'Medicine, Medical Reform and the Puritan Revolution' (University of Wales, Swansea PhD thesis, 1980)

Fielding, John, 'Conformists, Puritans and the Church Courts: The Diocese of Peterborough, 1603-1642' (University of Birmingham PhD Thesis, 1989)