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Elegies and Commemorative Verse in Honour of Charles the Martyr, 1649–60

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After the *Eikon Basilike*, the most popular royalist literary responses to the regicide of January 1649 were the elegies and commemorative poems, large numbers of which were published between 1649 and 1652.¹ Much excellent work has been undertaken recently on the 'king's book', but apart from the work of Lois Potter, little attention has been paid to elegies as an historical source. Most writing on royalist literary culture is undertaken from the perspective of literary criticism and in relation to parliamentarian and republic literature.² I approach this material as an historian of the cult of 'Charles the martyr', to discover what this material tells us about perceptions of Charles, the origins of the civil wars and the reasons for their defeat current amongst royalists in the months after the regicide. This eulogistic material also throws light upon the creation of the cult and the extent to which that was not only under way before the regicide, but also reflected in other forms of polemic such as the commemorative sermon.

Like so many aspects of the cult, the typologies found in the post-regicide elegies are to be found in royalist literature before the death of the king. John Cleveland had set the tone as early as 1644 in his commemorative poem on Laud, and Abraham Cowley's unfinished epic poem of 1642–43, designed to celebrate an expected royalist victory which never occurred, breaks off with a lengthy eulogy on the death of Falkland at the battle of Newbury in September 1643.³ The edition of the *Eikon Basilike* published in mid-March 1649 contained a dedicatory poem and an epitaph, and in the same month Henry King, Bishop of Chichester, published *A Deepe Groan Fetch'd at the Funerall of that Incomparable and Glorious Monarch, Charles the First*,⁴ soon joined by *An Elegy upon the Most Incomparable K. Charls the I.* Also in March appeared a collection of elegies and epigrams in English, French and Latin entitled

Vaticinium Votivum. This has been attributed to George Wither, but the ascription is unlikely since he was a Puritan and parliamentarian who wrote in favour of the republic. It is far more likely that *Vaticinium Votivum* is an anonymous collection of elegies collected from several authors, as was a further collection of eight pieces published anonymously in June 1649 under the title *Monumentum Regale*. This included a reprinting of King's *A Deepe Groan*, and others have been attributed, probably falsely, to John Cleveland, although he did publish *Majestas Intemerata. Or, the immortality of the King*. In late March, early April appeared *Regale Lectum Miseriae* by John Quarles (the son of the better known Francis Quarles), who had fought for the king in the civil war. In Flanders at the end of 1648 he wrote *Fons Lachrymarum; Or a fountain of tears*, dedicated to the Prince of Wales, which was probably being published immediately before the regicide, preceding *Regale Lectum Miseriae*.⁵

John Draper argues that the royalist elegy declined after 1650–51, partly owing to the response of the republican authorities to this concerted literary attack on their rule. However, whilst it is true that the majority of these works belong to the first two to three years of the 1650s, they did continue to appear, and were reprinted throughout the decade and after the Restoration.⁶ In 1661 Owen Felltham published *An Epitaph to the Eternal Memory of Charles the First*, in which he refers to Charles as 'Christ the second'. This was printed in an edition of Felltham's *Resolves*, although it was probably in circulation some years earlier.⁷ The previous year Thomas Forde had published *Virtus Rediviva*, a prose celebration of Charles, with which were printed three elegies on the royal martyr, including two written to commemorate the fasts of 1657 and 1658, and a poem celebrating Charles II's entry into London in 1660. Explaining the eight years' delay before writing an elegy on Charles' death, he claims that 'he who well would write thine elegy / Must take an ages time to study thee',⁸ and Laura Lunger Knoppers, in discussing Jacobite uses of the martyr, demonstrates the extent to which typologies created in the 1640s and 1650s were reused in the early eighteenth century.⁹ There was even a play published in 1649, *The Famous Tragedie of King Charles I Basely Butchered*, which covered the period between the siege of Colchester and the king's death. In it Fairfax is portrayed as the honourable and moderate man outwitted by the Machiavellian Cromwell who is seen seducing Lambert's wife whilst Charles goes to his death. As Susan Wiseman has observed, the play was part of the continuing attempt by both royalists and republicans to come to terms with and articulate the momentous events of January 1649.¹⁰ Another favoured device of the royalist

literary assault on the republic was the satirical litany. Both Robert Herrick and John Cleveland produced them during the 1640s, and a number of anonymous examples survive from the republic.¹¹ These had the advantage of being offensive to the enemy both in content and in form, for the litany was part of the ordered liturgy of the church retained in *The Book of Common Prayer*, but excluded from the *Directory* and anathema to more advanced Puritans.

Such commemorative literature reveals that under the impact of defeat and regicide a number of consistent ideas emerged to explain the position of Charles, the reasons for the civil wars and the nature of the opposition. Many of these views were current before the king's death, but now became consolidated. As such they constitute a cult ideology which will appear in its most obvious public form in the fast-day sermons after 1660. The elegies take up and use themes found in the *Eikon Basilike*, in Salmasius, Cowley, and the commemorative sermons concerning the nature of monarchy, the war and the defeat of the king. As such the elegies, sermons and the king's book speak to each other in the first years of the republic, sharing and acknowledging themes and ideas. As Henry King says of the dead Charles,

Thy better parts
Lives in despite of death, and will endure
Kept safe in thy unpatterned portraiture.¹²

'In serenissimae majestatis regiae' claims that if we would see Charles after his death

Then look
Upon his resurrection, his book:
In this he lives to us; his parts are here
All encompassed in the best character.¹³

For the author of 'Caroli', the king's book becomes part of a political manifesto justifying the royalist cause, 'His book, his life, his death, will henceforth be / The Church of England's best apology'.¹⁴

What the *Eikon Basilike* did, according to the eulogists, was to underline the fact that Charles, unlike his enemies, would never be forgotten: 'thou . . . triumphest more by thine all-conquering quill'.¹⁵ His life and death would confirm his place in the pantheon of heroes and martyrs, yet the existence of 'that incomparable book' made that remembrance doubly sure. As John Quarles puts it,

His glory shall survive with fame, when they
 Shall lie forgotten in a heap of clay
 That were the authors of his death.¹⁶

This assurance was something the defeated royalists could cling to; however much the rebels tried to wipe out his name they could not invade the memory of his loyal followers. In 'The requiem or libertie of an imprisoned royalist', the captive glories in the fact that whilst his body is confined, his memory is free:

What, though I cannot see my King
 Either in his person or his coin,
 Yet contemplation is a thing
 Which renders what I have not mine;
 My King from me what adamant can part,
 When I can wear engraven on my heart . . .
 And though rebellion may my body bind,
 My King can only captivate my mind . . .
 And though immured, yet I can chirp and sing
 Disgrace to rebels, glory to my King.¹⁷

This attitude echoes Richard Lovelace's captivity poem of 1642, 'To Althea, from prison', and in a phrase which calls to mind a theme from the masque, Henry King in *A Deepe Groan* compares the very name of Charles to a refreshing and medicinal herb, reflection on which revives the senses;

Meantime the loyal eye
 Shall pay her tribute to thy memory.
 Thy aromatic name shall feast our sore,
 'Bove balmy spikenards fragrant redolence.¹⁸

Yet here is one of a number of paradoxes found in the elegies. If Charles is to be remembered as a saint, martyr and hero, then the instruments of that martyrdom cannot be ignored. In excoriating the regicides the authors wished to blot them out, yet as the cause and the means of the triumph of Charles they could not be forgotten.¹⁹

This ambiguity is found throughout the elegies, perhaps most obviously in the common claim that mere words cannot convey the horror and grief felt by the writer when contemplating Charles' fate.

The author of 'Caroli' ponders whether he is capable of writing of the regicide:

I come, but come with trembling, lest I prove
Th' unequal greet of Semele and Jove.
As she was too obscure, and he too bright,
My themes too heavy, and my pen too light . . .
And can I
Who want myself, write him an elegy?²⁰

Thomas Forde begs the muse to help him 'weep or sigh an elegy'. After all, Charles himself had spoken through his 'rare portraiture', and,

In such a strain,
Our wits are useless, and endeavours vain.
Silence and admiration fit me best,
Let other try to write, I'll weep the rest.²¹

Yet a stunned silence was to be far from the actual reaction of these eulogists. Despite their disclaimers, they were to be very noisy in condemnation and celebration. Yet many must have been aware of the tensions evident in their work. How to describe the indescribable, think the unthinkable? How to craft language into an acceptable memorial, and how to be simultaneously prostrate with grief, ravished by the contemplation of Charles' heavenly virtues, and full of hatred for his enemies and ready for vengeance in the cause of Charles II? The author of 'Memoriae sacrum optimi maximi Caroli I' acknowledged these problems,

My dwindling-dwarf-like-fancy swells not big,
Nor knows to wear a borrowed periwig
Of metaphors, nor from Parnassus rise
To ransack far-fetched phrases from the skies;
Since all those piddling epithets are too brief,
Great Charles, to show thy glory, or my grief.²²

Lois Potter has discussed the problem these authors faced, not just in finding appropriate language, but in avoiding the charge of being weak and effeminate in their grief. She reminds us that women were often used as a literary device to signify hysterical grief or swooning horror:

reactions the royalists may have felt were not 'manly' enough to be ascribed directly.²³ Another device was to concentrate on evoking the reader's sympathy by focusing on the patient suffering of Charles and the courage with which he faced his predicament. As the author of the play *The Famous Tragedie* puts it,

He that can read the play and yet forbear
For his late murdered Lord, to shed a tear,
Hath a heart framed of adamant and may
Pass for an atheist the Reformed way.²⁴

As such the elegies reflect a theme running through all cult literature, namely the epideictic technique of evoking the reader's sympathy and identification with the central character, rather than discussing the events and issues which brought that individual into crisis. A dispassionate discussion of the causes of the civil wars or Charles' downfall was probably impossible for most people caught up in those events. Certainly it was impossible in cult literature, as it required a level of detachment incompatible with the ideological conviction that Charles was a virtuous and saintly prince, whose enemies were all black-hearted villains.

Yet some reason had to be given for the downfall of the monarchy, and here the elegies echo explanations found in the few printed commemorative sermons of the 1650s; namely that the wars were caused by the sins of the people and the ambition of the rebels.²⁵ Such an explanation absolves Charles from any responsibility; he is merely the victim, almost passive apart from his resolution not to give in to the rebellion.

That Charles' cause is just was taken for granted, yet it was necessary to counter the Puritan belief that worldly success denotes God's approval. Three methods were employed to achieve this. In *Regale Lectum Miseriae*, John Quarles has Charles declare:

God knows my cause was just
And yet he laid my armies in the dust.
Shall I repine because I daily see
My foes prevail, and triumph over me?
No, no, I will not, they shall live to die,
When I shall die to live and glorify
The general in heaven, within whose tent
I hope to rest, where time will ne'er be spent.²⁶

In other words, the royalists' defeat was the necessary preliminary to the glorification of Charles, an explanation only possible with the benefit of hindsight, when history is read backwards from some climactic event such as the regicide. As Forde puts it in addressing Charles, 'spite of the sword and axe, you found a way / To win the field, although you lost the day'.²⁷

The second method was to point out the logical fallacy within the Puritan theory of success, namely that it only works when one's own side is triumphant. As Sir George Lisle says to Fairfax at Colchester,

Fortune hath favoured thee I do confess . . . but that proves not the justness of thy cause. For by the same rule Ottoman may boast, the partial deities favour him the most.²⁸

In these elegies and plays the royalists attempt to wring victory out of defeat by placing Charles in the Christian tradition of heroic death. Charles gains his life by losing it; 'they shall live to die, when I shall die to live'. As such he stands in the gospel and Catholic tradition which sees this life as the preparation for the next, as a vale of tears through which it is necessary to pass before receiving one's reward. This was a constant theme of the cult. Owen Felltham states that the martyr's crown is Charles' only,

When by a noble Christian fortitude
He has serenely triumphed o'er all rude
And barbarous indignities that men
(Inspired from Hell) could act by hand or pen.²⁹

Indeed, John Quarles suggests that he was too good a king to remain on earth, and that heaven was jealous for his company.³⁰ The author of *The Famous Tragedie* turns this idea to cynical account when Cromwell – portrayed as an ambitious, calculating and ruthless rebel – muses that in killing Charles he is doing heaven a favour, for,

He is fitter far for to converse with saints and seraphim than with erroneous . . . and ambitious mortals, and twere a sin (a grand one) for to deter the hopes celestial have for to enjoy his presence.³¹

As such the defeat and Charles' subsequent reception in heaven are not an obstacle, but rather a confirmation that his cause is just and will win

through in the end. As Henry King puts it, 'Thy sweetness conquered the sharp test'.³²

However, for those royalists left behind the future was not so rosy, and the eulogists knew that in contrasting the present state of England with a supposed golden age of peace and prosperity before the wars they would strike a responsive chord in their audience. The comparison was even more effective in that it was over a decade since the beginning of the Bishops' Wars. The memory of Ship Money, the personal rule and Laudian controversies in the church had faded and seemed trifling when compared to the upheavals and suffering which had followed. Nostalgia and a yearning for 'normalcy' made many happy to forget the problems of the personal rule and to believe that England had been peaceful and happy under a wise prince before the rebellion had turned the world upside down. Yet if England was so happy, and if Charles was such a good, wise and 'glorious' prince, why was there a civil war? Why did this golden age end in blood, and why was so great a prince defeated in battle, publicly tried, and executed by his own people? In answering these questions the royalists constructed a historiography which not only absolved Charles from any responsibility, but also helped them come to terms with their defeat.

For them, this golden age was disrupted by the ambition of evil men, who, manipulating and misleading the people, sought power for themselves under the pretext of securing liberty and true religion. The whole design against Charles and the state was described as 'A crime Leviathan / Infidel wickedness, without the Pale'.³³ The people were misled because of a surfeit of leisure and security granted them by the benevolent rule of Charles, which made them decadent, arrogant and sinful. This combination of the people's sins and the ambition of evil men brought civil war to England and resulted in the murder of the king. This historiography also confirmed the royalists' sense of hope, because if the republic were based on sin, then eventually God would act to destroy it and restore the true rulers. After the Restoration this was to become the official view, repeated in many fast-day sermons. Its weakness was that a significant proportion of the population had a different memory of Charles' rule and the reasons for the civil war. This divergence of historical memory, and the fact that royalist historiography could not discuss the origins of the wars dispassionately, may help explain the eventual failure of the cult.

For the eulogists and preachers of the 1650s, however, there was no doubt as to the causes of the rebellion. Henry King was sure that even in 1640 the Puritan faction in the Commons was intent on rebellion.

Having denied the king the right to dissolve parliament without their consent, they went on to gain control of the militia;

This done, the unkennelled crew of lawless men
Led by Watkins, Pennington and Venn,
Did with confused noise the court invade;
Then all dissenters in both Houses bayed.
At which the King amazed is forced to fly,
The whilst your mouths laid on maintain the cry.

The king, surprised and disconcerted by an unforeseen rebellion, is obliged to run before his enemies, and Henry King maintains the hunting theme, which emphasizes Charles' vulnerability and innocence before the implacable hatred of his pursuers,

The royal game dislodged and under chase,
Your hot pursuit dogs him from place to place . . .
The mountain partridge or the chased roe
Might now for emblems his fortune go.³⁴

The author of *An Elegie on the Meekest of Men, the Most Glorious of Princes, the Most Constant of Martyrs, Charles the I* sees the link between the mob and those men who controlled it;

His first affliction from rude tumult came,
From them the fuel, but elsewhere the flame,
Their trunk and boughs build the instructed pile
But worse men light and fan the flames the while.³⁵

The plot is made easier because of the ignorance of the mob, who can be primed against church and king without knowing the reason why, or understanding either the slogans they are being taught or the real motives of their teachers. Yet ultimately it could only be the sinful nature of the people that turned them against their prince, since the eulogists are convinced that the people could have no legitimate grievances. In *The Famous Tragedie*, Sir Charles Lucas is adamant that 'Britain's Charles, his peoples sins did kill'.³⁶ And in *A Penitential Ode for the Death of King Charls*, the grieving cavalier goes one better, and blames himself. In a manner reminiscent of counter-reformation piety he confesses to the dead Charles, 'Say not the Commons, nor the army, / City, nor judges; only I did harm thee.' Warming to his theme, he makes the

point that if the sins of the nation brought Charles to his death, then each individual is guilty:

Though Pontius Bradshaw did in judgement sit,
 And Cook dress hell-bred sophistry with wit,
 To drain the blood,
 Of Charles the good
 And strike the royal heart,
 Not by evidence but art.
 These were but the fire and wood! But who did bring?
 Or where's the lamb for a burnt-offering?
 Let every penitent loyalist now cry,
 'Twas sinful England! But most sinful I.³⁷

Most eulogists refrained from such radical introspection and were content to blame the mob and the perfidious faction who controlled it to further their ambitions. For, like the preachers, the eulogists were convinced that from the beginning of the troubles the rebels had conceived the rebellion in its entirety. They emphasized that, compared to other outrages perpetrated against kings, this deeply laid design was without parallel. Thus, 'Raviliack's was but undergraduate sin / And Goury here a pupil assassin'.³⁸ The parliamentary campaign of 1640–42, the civil wars, the trial and execution of the king and the establishment of the republic, were all carefully planned from the beginning.

Thus identified as hypocritical and unreliable, the rebels' arguments are dismissed, because however plausible individual assertions may appear, such reasonableness only masks the desire to tear down the fabric of the state and set themselves up in power. Charles himself makes this point in his letter to his son at the end of *Eikon Basilike*, where he warns the Prince of Wales that the call for reformation in the church is only an excuse to pull down the hierarchy of the state. This view dispenses with the need to engage with, and refute, the rebels' programme, just as the emphasis on national sins and ambitious factions exonerates Charles from any responsibility for the civil war or the defeat of the royalists.

These attitudes and arguments accompanied a deeply felt sense of hierarchy and fear of social upheaval. Henry King identifies the fall of Charles with the fall of property. The fear of religious radicalism has been suggested as an important factor in the creation of a royalist party in 1641–42 and in the change of attitude towards the king after 1646. Certainly any understanding of royalist attitudes must include the pro-

found anxiety many felt at the way the social hierarchy was breaking down in the face of rebellion and high taxation. Yet in 1649 all the eulogists could do was stand amazed at the spectacle of their king being so profanely treated by his inferiors. Quarles, perhaps referring to the fact that Charles refused to remove his hat before the High Court of Justice, exclaims:

Good God, what times are these, when subjects dare
Presume to make their sovereign stand bare;
And when they sent him from their new made place
Of justice, basely spit upon his face.³⁹

In *Fons Lachrymarum* he refers to 'A brain-sick multitude, a rabble of all religions',⁴⁰ made up of individuals who are only happy if they can 'rail and reverently bawl / Against grave bishops and their pious king'.⁴¹ The whole hierarchy of civilized values has been thrown into the melting pot, for,

If a black-smith, or a tinker can
Hammer out treason, he's a zealous man.
Or if a learned cobbler will be sure
To stitch it close, oh he's a Christian pure!⁴²

Others refer to peasant leaders of the past, such as Wat Tyler and Jack Cade, not only to damn the present rebels by association, but also to frighten the reader by conjuring up images of wild and all-consuming peasant violence.⁴³ Thus the rebels are 'dung-hill tyrants', engaged in 'rude tumults', and treason not only goes unpunished but rules the roost. As the author of 'Caroli' observed, 'Does not the judge and law too for a need / The stirrup hold, whilst treason mounts the saddle'.⁴⁴ This refers not only to the spurious show of legality attending the regicide, but also the familiar theme of the reversal of roles; the master obliged to attend the servant.

This fear of social radicalism and the revolution of traditional values is linked to a belief that unleashing the mob will result in the overthrow not only of the social hierarchy but the whole course of nature, based as it is on the balanced operation of the hierarchy of powers. The author of 'On the execrable murder of Charles the first', carried away by grief, exclaims that, 'Charles' tragedy doth portend / Earth's dissolution and the world's just end'.⁴⁵ Others, whilst not looking for the end of the world, clearly see in the regicide the threat of anarchy. The author of

'On the martyrdom of his late Majesty' sees both church and state shaking under the impact of the executioner's axe, which is laid to society's roots, thus 'that building must expect to fall whose prop is turned to dust'.⁴⁶ In 'An elegie on the best of men and meekest of martyrs, Charles the I' the author sees the innocent royal blood dripping into the earth causing such a reaction that, 'the frame of nature shrinks again / Into a shuffling chaos'.⁴⁷ For the death of the king 'Voided all forms, left but privations / In church and state; inverting every right'.⁴⁸

All will be devoured by the monster of rebellion, and as the Fronde came to be represented by a python, so the forces of popular sovereignty unleashed against church and state are called by John Quarles the 'many-headed monster' of the people, and by Thomas Forde a hydra-headed monster which boasts of its power and justifies its presence by asserting democratic ideas of popular sovereignty and the subordination of kings to the people.⁴⁹ Quarles has his democratic monster declare that in a state where

our welfare is the supreme law . . . I'd suffer all to preach
And sow sedition, everyone shall be
At least a saint, and preach upon a tree.⁵⁰

In this democratic confusion all order, divine and human, is sacrificed and, in an image reminiscent of Hobbes's state of nature, the only law is the greed and lust of each individual pitted against all others.⁵¹

Having discussed what the eulogists say about the nature of the tragedy they have experienced, it is now appropriate to look at what they say about Charles himself. If, as the eulogists have already asserted, the civil wars and regicide were the product of national sins and the ruthless ambition of evil men, then Charles emerges as a figure untainted by any fault or responsibility. Charles' innocence is absolute, as the author of 'Caroli' puts it, 'Simeon the Stylite in his pillar / Might live more strict, but not more innocent'.⁵² In none of the elegies is there any hint that Charles' policies as king were flawed, or his leadership of the royalist war effort in any way mistaken. In fact, some of the writers claim that Charles' great virtues proved his undoing. The author of *Two Elegies* reflects that Charles'

Saint-like mercies were
So great, they did remit that needful fear
Subjects should show unto their king.⁵³

Yet even this implied criticism is immediately countered by claiming that Charles rivalled in valour and wisdom both Caesar and Solomon,

and he
By the comparison can no loser be
If we but cast piety in the scale
And patient sufferance, King Charles must prevail.⁵⁴

We have already encountered the suggestion that Charles was too saintly a character to remain long on earth. He is identified with the Man of Sorrows, a king unjustly burdened with the sins of his people. He is described as having 'saint-like mercies', and some eulogists, hoping to bring the reader closer to the scene of martyrdom, put heart-rending speeches into Charles' mouth, establishing his loss and sadness. John Quarles has Charles address God in *Regale Lectum Miserae*, where he asks,

Was ever grief like mine?
Was ever heart so sad? Was ever any
So destitute of joy, that had so many
As I have had?

Quarles goes on to say that despite these manifold afflictions, Charles remained constant to his virtuous self, through self-discipline and constancy. Echoing the Neostoics, Quarles asserts that,

He was a king not only over land
But over passion, for he could command
His royal self.⁵⁵

This theme of self-mastery is evident in the *Eikon Basilike*, and bears witness to 'a heaven-channeled mind',⁵⁶ which allows Charles to be wise, just, chaste, merciful, courageous and devout, but principally gave him that intangible aura of majesty which enabled him to subdue discord by his mere presence. Thomas Forde states that the glory of Charles as he enters heaven puts all former heroes into the shade;

Thou art all wonder, and thy brighter story
Casts an eclipse upon the blazing glory
Of former ages; all their worthies, now
(By thee outdone) do blush, and wonder how

They lost the day beclouded with a night
Of silence, rising from thy greater light.⁵⁷

This theme, so familiar from the masques of the 1630s, is employed when considering the king's trial to contrast the turbulence of the rebels with the recollected equanimity of Charles. On being brought to the bar,

Like a sun he shined
Amongst those gloomy clouds which had combined
Themselves together, plotting to disgrace
His orient lustre and impaled his face . . .
But he whose patience could admit no date
Conquered their envies and subdued their hate.⁵⁸

Beyond this stoic self-mastery and majestic equanimity, most of the elegies review the list of Charles' virtues, almost like a catechism. Charles is the best of men and the best of kings, a loving husband and father, a paragon of all the traditional virtues which, in another echo of the masque, illuminate the land. His piety was beyond reproach, his whole reign had a priestly quality about it, and 'His crown contained a mitre'.⁵⁹ In contrast, regicide has destroyed the health of the land, and the author of *Chronostichon* sees the fall of the axe as rendering Britain blind.

Yet again there is a paradox in all this adulation; for if Charles was such a paragon of virtues, why did he inspire such distrust and end his days on a scaffold? The same paradox, noted in looking at Charles' rule, was, according to the eulogists, an expression of his virtuous self. They, like the preachers, did not often confront these paradoxes head on; indeed they could not without undermining the whole foundation of Charles' radical innocence. What they could do was to present Charles as a type of innocent suffering in the hope that all those who had shared something of his trials in the civil wars would identify with him. He could also be presented as the good king sacrificed for the sins of his people; a people blinded to his greatness and virtue by their sins. Here again we encounter the identification of Charles with the godly kings of the Old Testament (David, Solomon and Josiah), and with that most singular and controversial aspect of the cult, the Christ-like parallel.

Henry King, having stated that the death of Charles calls to mind the murder of King Josiah, nevertheless feels that some apology has to be given for these biblical parallels, and declares:

O pardon me that but from Holy Writ
 Our loss allows no parallel to it.
 Nor call it bold presumption that I dare
 Charles with the best of Judah's kings compare.
 The virtues of whose life did I prefer
 The text acquits me for no flatterer.
 For he like David perfect in his trust,
 Was never stained like him, with blood or lust.⁶⁰

Charles is more virtuous than David, more devout and constant than Solomon, more zealous than either Jehosaphat or Hezekiah and more patient than Job. His restoration of St Paul's is compared to Josiah's restoration of the Temple and 'Must (if no other) be his monument'.⁶¹ In surpassing the Old Testament kings in piety and wisdom, Charles can have only one biblical parallel, Christ himself. In Felltham's famous phrase, 'Here Charles the first, and Christ the second lies'.⁶² The parallel drawn between the Passion of Christ and the death of Charles was made in the very first days after the regicide. Within weeks of Charles' death, Dr Lotius, in a speech before Charles II on behalf of the consistory of The Hague, declared that Charles had walked in the footsteps of Christ and the protomartyr Stephen, particularly in forgiving his enemies and praying for his persecutors on the scaffold. The point was taken up by John Quarles in *Regale Lectum Miseriae*, and sermons by Henry Leslie and Richard Watson also drew the Christ-Charles parallels without ambiguity.⁶³ Henry King, in *A Deepe Groan*, refers to the day of execution as 'Good Friday wretchedly transcrib'd', and 'Pilate's consent is Bradshaw's sentence here; / The Judgement Hall's removed to Westminster'.⁶⁴

Throughout the elegies references to Christ's Passion recur in connection with Charles. The Scots, for their 'selling' of Charles to the English parliament in 1647, are 'compared with Iscariot',⁶⁵ and later in the same elegy King refers to 'Pilate Bradshaw with his pack of Jews'.⁶⁶ The author of 'A pentiential ode for the death of King Charls' refers to 'Pontius Bradshaw' sitting in judgment on Charles,⁶⁷ and Owen Felltham believes that the regicides went even further than the Sanhedrin, in that they could claim ignorance of Christ's real identity, whereas the regicides were in no doubt as to whom they were killing,

When Herod, Judas, Pilate and the Jews
 Scots, Cromwell, Bradshaw and the shag-haired mews

Had quite out-acted, and by their damn'd cry
Of injured justice, lessened Crucifie.⁶⁸

Like Christ, Charles is radically innocent, yet he does not flinch from giving himself up for his people, and the trial and execution are likened to a

passion-tragedy

His Saviours person none could act, but he
Behold what Scribes are here, what Pharisees! . . .
Whitehall must be, lately his palace, now his Calvary.⁶⁹

However, it was the author of 'Caroli' who set out the full Christ-Charles parallel in full,

Now Charles the king, and as good a king too,
Being Christ's adopted self, was both to do
And suffer like him.

Charles was to walk in the same footsteps as Christ, and wear the same crown of thorns, the very crown he is seen holding in Marshall's famous frontispiece to the *Eikon Basilike*. When abused he did not retaliate or abuse his enemies, but accepted his lot so that he might 'take up / His Saviours cross, and pledge him in his cup'. Having

Liv'd o'er our Saviour's Sermon on the Mount,
And did all Christian precepts so reduce
That's life the doctrine was, his death the use;
Posterity will say, he should have died
No other death than by being crucified.
And there renownest epochs will be
Great Charles his death, next Christ's nativity.⁷⁰

Here we are confronted with another paradox: Charles' reputation as a martyr can only be achieved by his death, and only through the failure of his earthly career can his divine qualities be revealed. In this respect Charles conforms to the traditional Christian economy of martyrdom; giving up one's life to save it, with death as the gateway to greater life. It was a paradox Charles himself appeared to recognize, particularly in referring to parliament's promise to make him a glorious king, and the eulogists were quick to underline the point that the fury of the rebels

only succeeded in revealing more clearly Charles' Christ-like qualities. As the author of 'Caroli' puts it, 'The stones they hurled at him, with intent / To crush his fame, have proved his monument'.⁷¹

Whilst the acceptance of suffering may be a commonplace of Christian martyrology, there is a sense of predestination in some of the eulogists. Charles' virtues are so excellent, his enemies so vile, and the sins of the nation so great, that his martyrdom becomes a foregone conclusion. We have already noted the author of *Caroli* observing that it was unfortunate that Charles was not crucified, thus making the parallel with Christ even more obvious, and John Quarles has Charles refer to death as 'my longed for hour . . . I long to throw this burden down, that presses me below'.⁷² *Monumentum regale* contains a number of elegies which feature Charles welcoming death, and the authors use it as the medium through which Charles' virtues can shine. Indeed, weeping at his death is called 'the treason of our eyes', for 'Our sun did only set, that he might rise'. Death, and his agents, are forgiven for killing Charles; their 'courtious knife' was the instrument which released Charles from the 'great injury of life'.⁷³ By subsuming the actual killing into the image of the saint and martyr, and by insisting on reading the circumstances of Charles' death exclusively from the perspective of the 'glorious martyr', the eulogists are able to make even the executioner serve the cult. Charles receives his due not, as Milton would say, as punishment for his crimes and failings as a king, but as a reward for his sanctity and constancy, which leads him inevitably to a martyrs crown.

In conclusion, the eulogists present three alternatives for the future. Initially there is apotheosis: the dead Charles is now beyond all earthly sorrow, and, as a glorious saint in heaven, he can rest from his labours. The author of 'An elegie upon King Charles the First' records Charles' apotheosis thus,

And thus his soul, of this her triumph proved,
Broke, like a flash of lightning, through the cloud
Of flesh and blood; and from the highest line
Of humane virtue, passed to the divine.⁷⁴

Thomas Forde, in 'The second anniversary on Charls the First, 1658', boasts that,

Here is a saint more great, more true than ere
Came from the triple crown, or holy chair.
We need no further for example look,

Than unto thee, thou art the only book;
Thou art the best of texts.⁷⁵

The second conclusion was to contrast the glory of Charles in heaven with the sorrows of his subjects left on earth. This was an effective propaganda ploy to use in 1649 when many people were yearning for a return to normality and settled government. The author of 'Caroli' compared the present state of England to that of Egypt assaulted by plagues in the Book of Exodus. But whereas Egypt only had to deal with plagues of locust, and hail storms, England had to contend with 'frogs and lice, and Independents too'.⁷⁶

A third way of coping with the regicide was to reflect upon the inevitable vengeance which would fall on the rebels; a vengeance to be poured out by God and Charles' supporters. At its heart was the Old Testament concept of blood-guilt – the conviction that Charles' innocent blood called out for vengeance. In his second dream on Charles' death, John Quarles has him declare to the rebels,

Be well assured that every drop which parts
Out of my veins shall cleave into your hearts
Like tangling bird-lime which will hold you fast,
And vengeance too shall find you out at last.

God's 'all-surveying eye' can see what the rebels have done and for that they will be punished; wherever they flee and whatever they do, the guilt of their actions in spilling innocent blood will pursue them.⁷⁷

Here we see the juxtaposition of resignation and revenge which Milton found so objectionable in the *Eikon Basilike*; the suggestion that Charles' saint-like qualities were merely weapons with which to attack his enemies, and that all the comments about meekness, forgiveness and virtues were just a smoke-screen to hide the concrete political motives of hatred for the republic and the desire for revenge. The author of *A Coffin for King Charles* has the dead king himself assert the juxtaposition of his own glory in heaven and the inevitability of vengeance;

Singing with angels, near the throne
Of the Almighty Three,
I sit, and know perdition
(Base Cromwell) waits on thee.⁷⁸

Many eulogists look from the dead father to the living son, 'as may exhale the vapours from our eyes'.⁷⁹ He is the hope of the future, and one must channel one's grief into working for his restoration. Henry King calls this hope 'an antidote for grief', and

all our just arrears
Of grief for Charles his death cannot be done
In better pay, than to enthrone his son.⁸⁰

The author of *Two Elegies* takes this further by arguing that just as the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church, so out of the spilt blood of Charles will spring a restored and strengthened monarchy.

One of the most striking features of the political theology underpinning the cult as expressed in these elegies and commemorative verses was that it would allow for no ambiguity. The many paradoxes and evasions exist as a result of a striving to create a closed and all-encompassing system. The historiography of the wars, the character and motives of the regicides, and the question of Charles himself, are all drawn with broad brush strokes which allow no dissension or discussion. Given the circumstances of defeat and exile it was perhaps inevitable that the royalists should have painted such an exaggerated picture of Charles; they were trying to sustain a vision of monarchy and Anglicanism against a republic which seemed to carry all before it. Yet in the longer term this rigidity and exaggeration may have worked against the cult. The further one moves from the events of January 1649 the more the image of Charles, and the political theology sustaining it, is challenged and diluted. Once the external imperatives sustaining the vision of these elegies is removed after 1660 the exaggerated claims made on behalf of Charles, and the historiography surrounding the cult, begin to look increasingly untenable. By the time of the Exclusion Crisis voices are heard for the first time in public questioning the accepted memory of Charles and demanding the abolition of the fast. However, that development was still to come.

Notes

1. The British Library lists about fifty such elegies in its catalogue in English, French, German, and Latin.
2. L. Potter, *Secret Rites and Secret Writing: Royalist Literature, 1641–1660* (Cambridge, CUP, 1989), esp. chapter 5; E.S. Wheeler, 'Eikon Basilike and the Rhetoric of Self-Representation', in T.N. Corns, ed., *The Royal Image: Representations of Charles I* (Cambridge, CUP, 1999), pp. 122–40; K. Sharpe, 'Private

Conscience and Public Duty in the Writings of Charles I', *Historical Journal*, XL (1997), pp. 643–65; J. Loxley, *Royalism and Poetry in the English Civil Wars: the Drawn Sword* (Basingstoke, Macmillan Press – now Palgrave, 1997), pp. 182–3; S.N. Zwicker, *Lines of Authority: Politics and English Literary Culture, 1649–1689* (London, Cornell University Press, 1993), esp. chapter 2; R. Wilcher, 'Crucifixion or Apocalypse?: Refiguring the *Eikon Basilike*', in D.B. Hamilton and R. Strier, eds, *Religion, Literature, and Politics in Post-Reformation England, 1540–1688* (Cambridge, CUP, 1996), pp. 138–60; K. Sharpe, 'The King's Writ: Royal Authors and Royal Authority in Early Modern England', in K. Sharpe and P. Lake, eds, *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England* (Basingstoke, Macmillan Press – now Palgrave, 1994), pp. 117–38; T.N. Corns, *Uncloistered Virtue: English Political Literature, 1640–1660* (Oxford, OUP, 1992), esp. chapter 4; R. Wilcher, 'What was the King's Book for?: The Evolution of *Eikon Basilike*', *Yearbook of English Studies*, XXI (1991), pp. 218–28; R. Helgerson, 'Milton Reads the King's Book: Print, Performance and the Making of a Bourgeois Idol', *Criticism*, XXIX (1987), pp. 1–25; F.F. Madan, *A New Bibliography of the Eikon Basilike of King Charles the First with a Note on the Authorship* (Oxford, Oxford Bibliographical Society, 1950). This is not intended as a definitive bibliography of modern scholarship on the *Eikon Basilike* and elegies, but is, I hope, representative.

3. J. Cleveland, 'On the Archbishop of Canterbury', in *Poems* (1653), p. 60; A. Cowley, *The Civil War*, ed. Allen Pritchard (Toronto, Toronto University Press, 1973).
4. Although the author of King's entry in the *DNB* calls the ascription of this elegy to him 'doubtful'.
5. *Fons Lachrymarum* was reprinted in 1655 and 1677, whilst *Regale Lectum Miseriae* was reprinted three times before the Restoration and again in 1679.
6. Two royalist elegies, replete with the typologies of the 1650s, appeared in 1683, during the Exclusion Crisis, and another in 1709, which re-presented the Christ-Charles parallel. See also L.L. Knoppers, 'Reviving the Martyr King: Charles I as Jacobite Icon', in Corns, ed., *The Royal Image*, pp. 263–87.
7. O. Felltham. *The Poems of Owen Felltham 1604?–1668*, ed. T.L. Pebworth and C.J. Summers (Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1973).
8. T. Forde, *Virtus rediviva* (1660), sig. c5r.
9. Knoppers, 'Reviving the Martyr King', pp. 263–87.
10. S. Wiseman, *Drama and Politics in the English Civil War* (Cambridge, CUP, 1998), pp. 62–80.
11. Examples of this form can be found in Henry Morley's *The King and the Commons: Cavalier and Puritan Songs* (London, 1868); and in W.W. Wilkins, *Political Ballads of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (2 vols, London, 1840).
12. H. King, *A Deepe Groan*, in *Monumentum Regale* (1649), p. 18.
13. 'In serenissimae majestatis regiae', in *Vaticinium Votivum* (1649), p. 90.
14. 'Caroli', in *Monumentum Regale*, p. 23.
15. Forde, 'Second anniversary of Charls the first, 1658.' *Virtus rediviva* (1660), sig. c6v.
16. J. Quarles, *Regale Lectum Miseriae* (1649), p. 41.
17. 'The requiem or libertie of an imprisoned royalist', in *Vaticinium Votivum*, pp. 85–6.

18. King, *A Deepe Groan*, p. 35.
19. Traditionally the Christian martyr is portrayed with recognized and by the instruments of martyrdom.
20. 'Caroli', pp. 20–1.
21. Forde, *Virtus Rediviva*, sig. c4r & sig. c6v. Forde also uses the contrary device in another elegy in an attempt to underline the subject's dramatic quality. In *The Second Anniversary on Charls the First, 1658* he contends that the grief over Charles' death is so great that it, 'would fill a dumb mans mouth with words': *Virtus Rediviva*, sig. c6r.
22. 'Memoriae sacrum optimi maximi Caroli I', in *Vaticinium Votivum*, p. 52.
23. Potter, *Secret Rites and Secret Writing*, pp. 187–9.
24. *The Famous Tragedie* (1649), sig. a2v.
25. This theme was to be repeated endlessly in the large number of fast-day sermons printed after 1660.
26. Quarles, *Regale Lectum Miseriae*, pp. 25–6.
27. Forde, *Virtus Rediviva*, sig. c6v.
28. *The Famous Tragedie*, p. 10.
29. Felltham, *The Poems*, p. 66.
30. Quarles, *Regale Lectum Miseriae*, p. 41.
31. *The Famous Tragedie*, p. 33.
32. King, *A Deepe Groan*, p. 36. In an important insight into the psychology of Jacobite uses of the cult, Laura Lunger Knoppers has suggested that the resignation ascribed to Charles in his 'solitude and suffering' inhibited effective action in the Stuart cause. Resignation, patient endurance and a waiting upon the workings of providence, whilst traditional Christian virtues, are not the most effective means of achieving victory in a political or military conflict! Knoppers, 'Reviving the Martyr King', p. 264.
33. King, *A Deepe Groan*, p. 33.
34. H. King, *An Elegy* (1649), pp. 7–8.
35. 'An elegie on the meekest of men', in *Monumentum Regale*, p. 14.
36. *The Famous Tragedie*, p. 13.
37. 'A penitential ode for the death of King Charls', in *Vaticinium Votivum*, p. 102.
38. King, *A Deepe Groan*, p. 33.
39. Quarles, *Regale Lectum Miseriae*, p. 43.
40. J. Quarles, *Fons Lachrymarum* (1649), p. 5.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
43. 'An elegie on, the meekest of men', p. 8.
44. 'Caroli', p. 21. This is a paraphrase of a favourite royalist text, Ecclesiastes 10:7. 'I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth'.
45. 'On the execrable murther of Charles the first', in *Vaticinium Votivum*, p. 99.
46. 'On the martyrdom of his late Majesty', in *Vaticinium Votivum*, p. 81.
47. 'An elegie on the best of men and meekest of martyrs, Charles the I', in *Monumentum regale*, p. 43.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
49. Quarles, *Regale Lectum Miseriae*, p. 3; Forde, *Virtus Rediviva*, sig. c4r.
50. Quarles, *Regale Lectum Miseriae*, pp. 4, 8.

51. Both the monsters in *A Famous Tragedy* and in Quarles, *Regale*, are sexually immoral. In *A Famous Tragedy*, Cromwell is seen seducing Lambert's wife whilst the king is executed, whereas Quarles has the personification of rebellion making love, 'in the open air': Quarles, *Regale Lectum Miseriae*, p. 7. As a symbol of anarchy, sexual licence was often employed, since it represents the breakdown of traditional morality and social restraint. It was also used as part of the campaign to blacken the reputation of the republic's leaders and to suggest that Puritan morality was hypocritical.
52. 'Caroli', p. 25.
53. *Two Elegies* (1649), p. 4.
54. *Ibid.*
55. Quarles, *Regale Lectum Miseriae*, p. 48.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 49.
57. Forde, *Virtus Rediviva*, sig. c6r.
58. Quarles, *Regale Lectum Miseriae*, p. 43.
59. 'Caroli', p. 23.
60. King, *An Elegy*, p. 4.
61. *Ibid.*
62. Felltham, *The Poems*, p. 66.
63. H. Leslie, *The Martyrdom of King Charles; Or his conformity with Christ in his suffering* (1649); R. Watson, *Regicidium Judaicum: Or, a discourse, about the Jewes crucifying Christ, their king. With an appendix, or supplement, upon the late murder of our blessed sovereigne Charles the First* (Hague, 1649), p. 23.
64. King, *A Deepe Groan*, pp. 2–3.
65. King, *An Elegy*, p. 14.
66. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
67. 'A penitential ode for the death of King Charls', p. 102.
68. Felltham, *The Poems*, p. 66.
69. 'On the martyrdom of his late Majestie', pp. 78–9.
70. 'Caroli', p. 26.
71. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
72. Quarles, *Regale Lectum Miseriae*, p. 22.
73. 'Caroli', pp. 27–8.
74. 'An elegie upon King Charles the First', in *Monumentum Regale*, p. 42.
75. Forde, *Virtus Rediviva*, sig. c6v.
76. 'Caroli', p. 28.
77. Quarles, *Regale Lectum Miseriae*, pp. 13–14.
78. Wilkins, *Political Ballads*, I, p. 84.
79. Forde, *Virtus Rediviva*, sig. c4v.
80. H. King, 'On the barbarous decollation of King Charls the first', in *Vaticinium Votivum*, p. 104.