

Decoding the *Leviathan*: Doing the History of Ideas through Images, 1651–1714

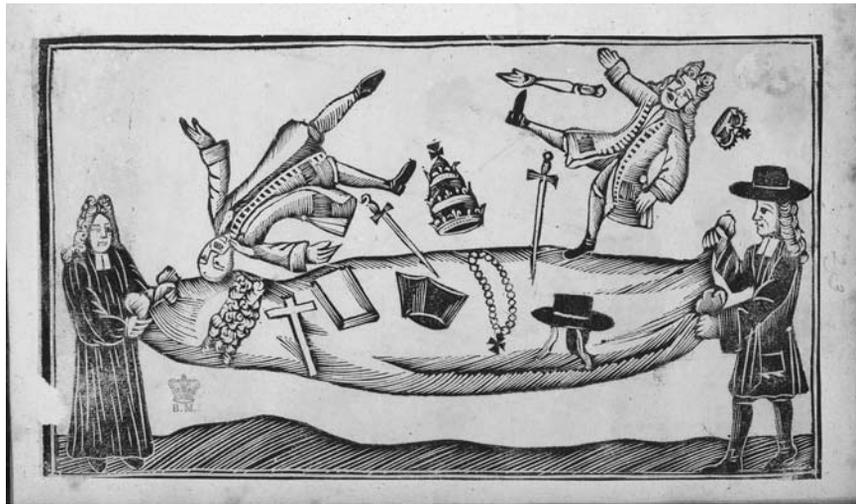
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I

Prompted by the state trial of Henry Sacheverell, a print depicting an English clergyman and a layman tossing the enemies of the church in a blanket encapsulates commonplace contemporary satire on religious politics.¹ (Fig. 13.1) The meaning of the print is not obvious to the modern eye: however, by careful unpacking of the diverse iconological components it is possible to tease out some possibilities. By contextualising it within the visual vocabulary and the linguistic discourses of the period it is clear the print offers commentary on the persistent ecclesiological disputes of the long seventeenth century. The notable visual vocabulary includes a falling sceptre, sword and crown belonging to the toppling right-hand figure – here intended to depict Louis XIV – all icons which usually signified aspects of civil and religious sovereignty. Also significant are the papal triple-crown, rosary, sword and cross of the inverted left-hand figure: here the depictions represent the standard devices of deviant ‘popery’. Combined with these stock representations of proper and improper civil and ecclesiastical authority are a Jesuit’s cap and a cardinal’s hat, plus an untitled book (presumably either a Mass book or possibly the Bible). The two men holding the blanket, but clearly propelling the tumbling figures, represent on the left an Anglican churchman (the wig, black coat and collar-bands are commonly found in contemporary prints depicting Anglican churchmen, usually of a high-church identity) and on the right a layman – possibly of low church or dissenting allegiance. Without any textual key (in itself an unusual aspect of this print), it is difficult to ascribe very precise local meaning but in more general terms it is indisputable that the print is hostile to ‘popery’ – this may be precisely targeted at the absolutist projects of Roman Catholic France, but it also may reflect upon the domestic rather than Continental ambitions of religious politicians.

There is much we cannot immediately ‘read’ in this print. The depictions of various aspects of the dress of the figures had very specific meaning

13.1 Woodcut of a clergyman and a layman tossing enemies of the church in a blanket (BM Satires 1559).



for eighteenth-century viewers. In particular, the forms of clerical and lay dress would repay careful examination: the variety of hats and collar-bands betrays not only differences between Roman Catholic and Protestant commitments but more precisely varieties of confessional identity within the Protestant community. By paying attention to the representations of ecclesiastical, religious and ecclesiological issues over the second half of the seventeenth century, it will be possible to outline the visual vocabulary involved in the attack on the constitution of the Anglican Church. As will be argued, the most powerful fusillade in this campaign was the engraved title-page to Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651), which quite deliberately both drew on, and radically adjusted, the commonplace iconology – swords, crosiers, crowns, mitres, thunder, clerical men, military arms (drums, standards, spears) – to suggest a unambiguous resolution to the destructive conflict between church and state.

Too long ago, Roy Porter raised questions about the relationship between ideas and images in the eighteenth century which remain pertinent today for historians attempting to engage with visual sources as devices for exploring the history of ideas. In reviewing volumes drawn from the collection of the Department of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum he inquired, 'was the visual no less potent than the verbal as a weapon in the battle for minds?'² Other discussions of the 'authority' of graphic art have also suggested that the visual was a means (oftentimes in partnership with text) in 'informing, persuading and causing certain behaviour'.³ There is a clear historiographical tradition which recognised that such visual artefacts reflected, refracted and shaped public opinion: by the eighteenth century the genre was a recognised weapon of public controversy.⁴ In the period there were hundreds (and, eventually over the course of the eighteenth century, thousands) of cheap prints, reproduced in large numbers, and sold commercially: the metropolis was both site of production (and probably consumption).⁵ The debate about

the significance of these sources as material for exploring public culture has been furthered by Vic Gatrell in the exploration of a corpus of some 20,000 prints published between the 1770s and 1830s. The majority of these, combining satire and lurid caricature, used the grotesque to expose bourgeois moral respectability. Earlier studies established the value of religious images to the diffusion of popular Protestant piety in the early modern period.⁶ The historiography of the Renaissance emblem has explored the intellectual meaning and function of images in elite and, to a lesser extent, public European cultures in the period. The Continental emblem tradition was also widely available to seventeenth-century English readers and audiences.⁷ These works provided a foundational visual language for the expression of more localised and contingent claims.⁸ The historiography of these, while avoiding engaging with political reception, has provided a set of analytically valuable resources for decoding or 'reading' the intellectual intentions of many prints.

A study of the history of concepts and ideas using iconographical sources and graphic art is a challenging project. Traditionally attempts to explore periods of intellectual change, like that of the Enlightenment, have been resolutely textual. Many recent major monographs have neglected the dimension of pictorial sources: this is a missed opportunity as accounts of the history of public communication in the pre-modern world suggest that communities were adept at creating collective meaning out of a 'multimedia' of texts, images and oral exchange. One of the recent significant attempts to explore the coexistence and interaction of ideas, texts and images has established how processes of 'iconicity' reified key historical concepts into a form of symbolic power. Such iconicity simplified, embodied and emotionalised core and contested political and religious values.⁹ Contemporaries assumed that it was possible to visualise ideas: emblematic design for print dissemination was a way of representing 'universal ideas' and 'abstract ideas and qualities'. Such images were calculated to 'please and instruct'; indeed the 'pencil of the painter, like the pen of the philosopher, ought to be always directed by reason and good sense'.¹⁰

Considerable attention has established the intimacies between 'Revolution' and cheap print in the French context. Jeremy Popkin has suggested that such images were 'not simply a translation of some other discourse into visual symbols' but an independent form of public discourse.¹¹ These texts might be incitement to action as well as depictions of events. Such material combined visual representation with textual 'explanations' to anchor abstract ideas in concrete and recognisable pictorial forms. Other studies suggest that visual representation of abstract political principle was a means for explaining and disseminating ideas to a large audience. Allegorical representation was a means of 'telling a story' about political power, connecting 'reality' to discourse.¹² Other studies suggest that the visualisation of abstract concepts was powerfully contested in Protestant and Catholic cultures – languages of liberty of thought, religious superstition and idolatry were predominant.¹³

II

This essay will explore the visual representations of contested religious institutions and values in the English context between 1651 and 1714.¹⁴ Arguably, over this half-century public culture shifted from one dominated by a stern (Protestant) confessional identity to a political environment which legally recognised the existence of an 'enlightened' diversity. The nexus between religion, public life and the state was in transition – one of the key motors of change after the regicide was the evolving relationship between the 'rights' of civil society and those of the Christian church. This debate had a powerful European dimension.¹⁵ The battle took place not simply in the world of ideas and the republic of letters, but had profound and direct political manifestations in the contested legal establishment of toleration after 1689. The suspension of Convocation after 1717, which destroyed the institutional and national political foundations of the established church, was one intellectual consequence of the forms of radical Erastianism articulated by Hobbes and Harrington in the 1650s. It is only because the political function of the church is taken so lightly that it has been ignored.¹⁶ Exploring the ubiquity and persistence of these issues in the visual culture of the period may be an effective way of re-establishing their significance.

The war of ideas between these different and incommensurable visions (brutally conducted in public discourse, in scribal exchange and in the interstices of every parish church and coffee house) saw many of the orthodox assumptions of the political and religious mainstream (about the confessional state, the authority of the church, the origins of political power, and the nature of doctrinal truth) challenged and contested. Underpinning these changes was a more fundamental shift, arguably crystallised by Hobbes's project of 'thinking politically' about religion. For Hobbes, and a body of later thinkers, the ambition was to challenge traditional assumptions about the function of religion in society and its relationship with the political community (rather than contesting a particular form of Christian confession). Here Hobbes was a key and persistently important figure: the account of natural religion developed in Chapter 12 of *Leviathan*, combined with the sociological position on the conventional nature of faith and of belief, provided a repertoire for understanding the status of religious institutions within contemporary society. It was Hobbes's achievement to insist that elements of public religion, irrespective of confessional brand (doctrine, scripture, language, ceremony, ritual, dress, office), were human artefacts designed and evolved by historical convention with specific self-interested instrumentalities in mind. The radical figures of the English Enlightenment importantly exploited this Hobbist claim about the fundamentally human origins of religion.¹⁷ The visual sources explored here suggest that this dimension to the public debate about the nature of religion was significant and persistent.

Hobbes's critique of orthodox public religion was evident in what Noel Malcolm has called 'perhaps the most famous visual image in the history

of modern political philosophy'.¹⁸ The engraved title-page to Hobbes's *Leviathan* was a powerful image (see Fig. 13.2), but it was also an obscure one – as Keith Brown succinctly commented, 'which is the correct way to read it?'¹⁹ For many historians, it seems that the title-page was successful at capturing the nub of the argument of the text. The confident emblem established a 'highly rationalistic, anti-ecclesiastical work'.²⁰ Much of the existing scholarship has either regarded it as an attempt to capture the core ideas of the work, or as a purely aesthetic artistic exercise. There have been serious discussions of the contributions of the artist, Abraham Bosse; of the powerful representation of sovereignty; of the differences between the draft manuscript and print versions; the specific content of the type of churches, and broader issues of design.²¹ Reading meaning in the title-page is a minor scholarly industry. There is broad agreement that the print underscores Hobbes's conception of a dominant and radical sovereignty encompassing civil and ecclesiastical jurisdictions. Much attention has been devoted to the significance of the composite figure: the looming 'Leviathan' is made up of all sorts of figures – gentlemen, women, priests in a skull cap and Geneva bands, workmen and soldiers.²²

The title-page was a powerful and enduring intervention in this public debate after 1650. Other studies have contextualised the image in both the background visual vocabulary of the emblem books and the engravings included in Hobbes's other works. For example, Maurice Goldsmith's discussion of the earlier engravings in *De Cive* and other texts established the close parallels with Otto van Veen's Horatian emblems (1612).²³ By dissecting the title-page into its constituent visual elements (preliminary to engaging with its meaning), it is possible to construct a repertoire of visual statements with which subsequent prints resonated. This will provide an outline for how the broader intellectual themes were handled in visual form. Prominent were questions about the jurisdictional and spiritual power of the church; about clerical intolerance and persecution; and the religious origins of civil war – all addressed and articulated by means of the visual arrangement of a core set of icons. As will be discussed, prints with swords, mitres, crosiers, triple crowns, drums, weapons, churches, thunder, castles and a variety of clerical figures were contrived to comment on these primary themes.

The visual elements of the title-page to *Leviathan* present the consensual origins of a unitary civil sovereignty, but for our purposes the two sets of panels left and right on the lower half are also significant. Here the elements of civil and ecclesiastical power and authority are contrasted in facing columns which echo the sword and the crosier wielded in the sovereign's left and right hands. Representing civil and religious institutions (and functions) the 'Castle' is ranged against, and contrasted with, the 'Church'. These oppositions offer a preliminary means for decoding the images, and invoke the discussion in the text regarding the contest between civil sovereignty offering 'protection' to the community, and religious institutions proffering soteriological competence. The second tier, establishing the contrast between crown and

13.2 Hobbes, *Leviathan* (London, 1651), engraved title-page.



mitre, deliberately exploits a set of simple icons which would have been very familiar to most readers or viewers from their repeated and ubiquitous use in emblem books. Commonly – see, for example, Goodyere's *The mirrour of maiestie* (1618), Emblem 1 – the mitre and crown are represented side by side on the altar of good government, 'marshal'd equal' explicitly not 'dis-rankt'.

Rex and *sacerdos* work in partnership ‘for common-weales doe tottering stand’ unless ‘under-propt ... by the mutuall hand of *King* and *Priest*, by God and humane lawes’. Similarly, Emblem 29 of the same work, instead of opposing castle and church, draws them into one image as a ‘Castle of *Christs* truth’: here orthodoxy and power are bound together in a very distinct way from that presented in Hobbes’s image.²⁴ The next tier ranges the cannon (representing the possibilities of war) against Jove’s thunderbolts. Below that, representations of a variety of military arms (muskets, a drum and sticks, flags, swords, cannon and *fascies*) are arraigned against a curious set of trident, two-pronged forks and bull’s horns, which invoke the scholastic ‘jargon’ Hobbes described in Book 4 of *Leviathan*.²⁵ Here the detail underscores the polemical purchase of the battle betwixt the ‘spiritual’ and the ‘temporal’ (see the labels on the middle fork). The final tier contrasts a very detailed description of a battle, with a presentation of a clerical disputation (the participants are all dressed in clerical bonnets and gowns – one holds a book) to present a further point of the text: that the conduct of theological dispute was often the cause of war.

Reading this title-page is fiendishly complex: it is entirely possible that one can make different points by reading vertically or horizontally. The left-hand side of the image arranges a set of six key components of civil sovereignty under the sword held in the hand of the Leviathan – the castle signifying stronghold; the coronet signifying honour and order; the canon as the instrument of power; the military arrangement establishing a pattern of successful dominance and protection; and the pitched battle defining the final form of arbitration of order. This left hand describes the instruments of civil order and the capacities wielded by the sovereign. The right-hand side (under the crosier) outlines the equivalent components of ‘spiritual’ sovereignty (commonly claimed either by the papacy or the *de jure divino* assertions of the Church of England, the Presbyterians and the Independents). Hobbes’s bold claim, made most provocatively in Chapter 42, is that the civil sovereign holds power here, too. So the Leviathan has control of the church, the ecclesiastical officers, the rights of excommunication (here represented in the thunderbolts or ‘*Fulmen excommunicationis*’ of chapter 42) and thereby over the definition of doctrine and theological truth.²⁶ The thrust of the image (if read from side to side) is to contrast civil with spiritual powers and jurisdictions. Given Hobbes’s assertion that the distinction between spiritual and temporal was ‘but two words brought into the world, to make men see double’, it is also to condemn such duality.²⁷ It is evident that the contemporary understanding of the title-page relied on a deep context of assumptions about how these matters were usually represented.

The Protestant portrayal of the relationship between civil and ecclesiastical sovereignty which Hobbes redesigned could be traced back to the powerful and persisting image of Henry VIII on the Holbein woodcut title-page of the 1539 Great Bible. Here, while the Royal Supremacy established a jurisdictional authority to the civil crown, there was an evident commitment to a duality between *regnum* and *sacerdotium*. Monarchy might be a nursing father to the

true religion but a non-papal apostolic succession still preserved a *sacerdos* in the church which might *in extremis* act independently of an heretic civil sovereignty. One contemporary print, the title-page to Francis Quarles's *The Shepherds Oracles* (1645) by William Marshall, portrayed Charles I in armour – sword in right hand, sceptre in left – protecting the tree of true religion from assault by a nefarious crew of conspiring Jesuits and tub preachers, some of whom are in the process of lopping off the branches of piety (obedience and good works) while others undermine the roots of the tree. Importantly Charles is portrayed as being assisted by a Protestant clergyman (in full clerical garb) watering the tree.²⁸ Significantly, a further sword, held in a heavenly hand intervenes to support the regal endeavour.

The authority of the *Leviathan* title-page operated against this traditional iconography. The meaning of prints (for example, title-pages of bibles) containing combinations of crowns, swords, sceptres and altars derived from their staple presence in early modern emblem books. Many examples present king and priest working together in the pursuit of godliness – the presentation of crown and mitre on an equal grounding on the altar has already been noted. But there are many further examples from emblem books – and it is important to recall that these books were ubiquitous over our period, frequently reprinted and adjusted to the times. Many of these emblems reinforced the providential understanding of royal government and its correct use of the sword and sceptre 'to punish and protect'. Hobbes's title-page would have been read in the light of these types of visual arguments.

With only limited space to explore representations of the regal sword as an instrument of godly and providential government, it is worth examining the dominant examples. Emblem 12 of Goodyere's *The mirror of majestie*, 'Patriae et Deo et', composed of an armoured heavenly arm holding an erect sword on an altar, suggested that a country mobilised to the 'cause of God' might use the sword to establish 'Heav'ns high Justice'. The accompanying explanatory text invoked a theological vocabulary of prayer, sanctity and sacrifice to legitimate the exercise of the sword. Unlike the *Leviathan* title-page, the use of these swords was legitimated by a grant from heaven. A number of emblems outline the civil function of the sword as 'that Authoritie, which keeps in awe our Countries Enemies', underscoring that victories so achieved 'doth onely from the pow'rfull hand of God-Almightie, come'. Some emblems show sword and coronet cooperating to ensure the civil polity punished error and rewarded (godly) virtue. The sophistication of these emblematic commentaries and visual presentations was evident in the elaborate combinations of images of sceptres, maces and crowns. Emblems reinforced that the 'great law giver' (God) delivered both the 'naked sword' and mace for 'dreadful vengeance' and to establish 'safety' as well as 'awe': a 'zeale for true *Religion*' underpinned such princely command. Other emblems bluntly insisted that all earthly kingdoms were disposed by God: the 'greatest earthly monarch hath no power, to keepe his throne one minute of an houre ... if God will give it to another man'.²⁹

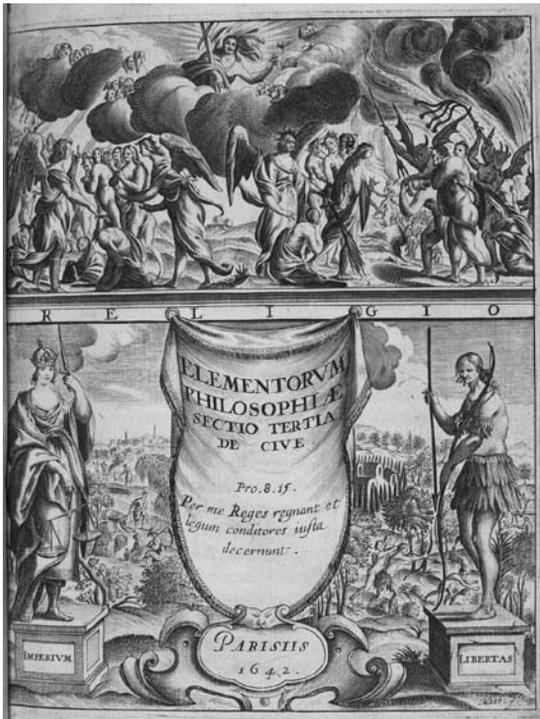
An even more dramatic visual resonance with *Leviathan* was evident in the classic works of Wither and Burton. One presents the reader with a standing crowned king holding an erect sword in his right hand and an open book in his left; in the background a landscape composed of a rural and urban scene populated by standing and mounted groups. Such a king 'seekes not only how to keepe in awe his people, by those meanes that rightful are; but doth himselfe become a Law'. As an effect of 'God's immediate blessing' such men exercised 'Kingly vertues' to ensure all 'false religion, schisme, and ignorance' was expelled from the polity.³⁰ The heavenly *telos* of human politics and society was also reinforced: Figure 13.3, 'Sic transit gloria mundi', presents icons of civil and ecclesiastical power – triple crowns, cardinals' hats, swords, sceptres, maces, crowns and coronets – all swirling in billowing smoke and fire. This builds on another emblem which pictures a naked man either ascending to heaven or falling to earth against a background of a rural and mountainous scene. Beneath him scattered in the foreground are swords, maces, sceptres, clerical headgear (the papal triple crown and the episcopal mitre) and crowns and coronets.

The commentary underscores the false lustre of earthly glories – 'what poor things are Mitres, sceptres, crowns' compared with the 'blessed station' of salvation. There is an immediate contrast between the disordered array and the 'order' of the title-page to *Leviathan*.³¹ Viewers of the latter, of course, may not have examined the emblem books at all, but it seems that the evident resonances between the iconic components of his title-page and the background wallpaper of usage of swords, crowns and sceptres will have established the innovation of his position.

Emblematic treatments of the sword also resonate with the *Leviathan* title-page. Swords on altars, wielded from the heavens, broken and sheathed, were a staple of the emblem books. Concord might be represented by rusting armour and swords, or as devices describing the pagan persecution of Christians.³² A common theme invoked the sword as an instrument of divine righteousness and justice – 'The law is given to direct; the sword, to punish and protect'.³³ The disembodied sword-bearing arm from heaven was a ubiquitous feature of seventeenth-century political prints, establishing providential intervention at moments like 1689. This iconicity of the sword is best illustrated in the

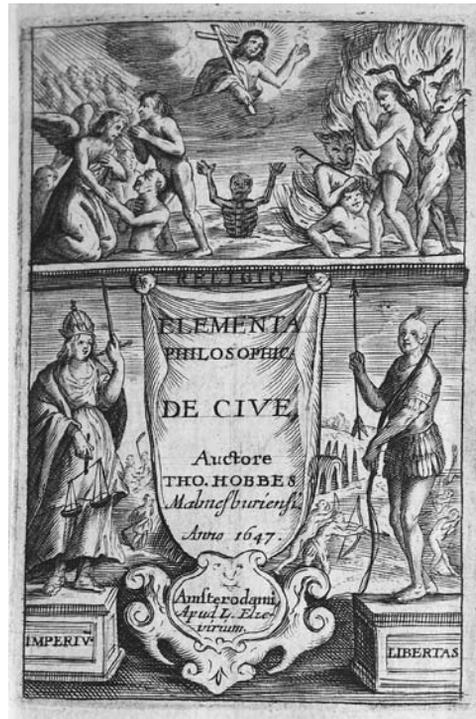


13.3 'Sic transit Gloria mundi', from R. B., *Choice emblems, divine and moral, antient and modern* (6th edn, London, 1732), p. 198.



13.4 Hobbes, *Elementorum philosophiae, sectio tertia, de cive* (Paris, 1642), engraved title-page.

13.5 Hobbes, *Elementorum philosophiae, sectio tertia, de cive* (Amsterdam, 1647), engraved title-page.



emblem of Damocles' sword 'in fortis suae contemptores' in Whitney's work. Here the crimped sword hanging from the clouds, point vertically downwards, represented a form of divine judgement made under the determining influence of 'heaven alone'. Subsequent adaptation of this particular crimped form into a 'flaming' sword often wielded by an angel (Michael), implying a providentially inspired punishment of the ungodly, was manifest in prints to be discussed below. That Hobbes was very aware of this trope can be seen in his adaptation of the emblem in his *Philosophicall Rudiments*: not only was he familiar with the traditional emblems but adapted them to his purpose.

We have some supporting evidence which enables reasonable speculation about how these sorts of prints were read against the context of the more commonplace images. Very often the meaning of a particular iteration of an image was derived from variation, either minor or more significant, from commonplace expectation of its iconicity. Radical transformation of meaning might be achieved by subtle adjustment. That Hobbes was attentive to this process is evident from the earlier attempts at capturing in visual form the intellectual essence of his ideas. As others have explored in detail, the major intellectual development between *De Cive* and *Leviathan* was also manifest in the very different title-pages. The first version of *De Cive* published in Paris 1642 and the initial Amsterdam edition of 1647 exemplify the difficulty of the process of making the icons correspond to sections of the text.³⁴ (Figs 13.4 and 13.5) The structural design of the first version established a clear hierarchy

of authority: the figures left and right (*Libertas* and *Imperium*) are subordinate to *Religio*. There is much to say about the visual vocabulary of civil order here: *Imperium* is represented as woman with a crown, holding a vertical sword and the scales of justice; *libertas* is presented in the guise of a 'savage' American Indian armed with bow and spear. The left and right backgrounds reinforce the scene of cultivated agriculture and distant city against the raw state of nature where primitive huts are stockaded against predators (human and animal).

The top panel imagines the circumstances of the Last Judgement. Absences are images of ecclesiastical authority or institutions. The central theological figure is a heavenly Christ bearing the Cross (symbol of his salvific sacrifice) and surrounded by angels. Directly beneath, an avenging angel administering the flaming sword of providence divides the damned and the saved. On the right, those who have been tempted are whipped by winged demons into hell. On the left, winged angels gather the saved to ascend to heaven. A cruder version found in the first Amsterdam edition of 1647, more explicitly presents the Last Judgement with a disinterred skeleton rising from the earth, as the damned are consumed by flames and the saved irradiated by divine light: the bodily resurrection possibly reflected Hobbes's own mortalist beliefs. Subsequent editions had a much less complex title-page, also used in *Philosophicall Rudiments*, composed of three figures – in the central and dominant position a haloed Christ holding the cross and burning heart (emblem of sacred love) and, at his feet to the left and right, figures of Liberty and a crowned regal figure holding a sceptre. (Fig. 13.6) The downwards radiance of God connects Christ to the crowned sovereign and Liberty. The structure of political power and authority represented here exploits the traditional icons of religion, dominion and liberty: the title-page of *Leviathan* resolved the tensions of this earlier articulation of Hobbes's thought. In the final title-page – there is no theology, only jurisdiction – religion is reduced to the political. The biblical quote (Job 41.24), translated as 'there is no power over earth that compares to him', makes the point precisely.

III

Hobbes's radical Erastianism, drawing on commonplaces about the jurisdiction of the civil sovereign, collapsed religion into the business of the state. The



13.6 Hobbes, *Philosophicall Rudiments* (London, 1651), engraved title-page by Robert Vaughan.

challenge of the *Leviathan* title-page continued to resonate against subsequent presentations of the variety of *de jure divino* accounts of the Royal Supremacy. As the politics of religion, after the Restoration, became intense, so too were ecclesiological issues made visually evident in political prints. The successive crises that challenged the Anglican settlement in church and state saw greater recourse to polemical and party-driven forms of public communication. This political turbulence was shaped by the anxieties of Protestant conscience clashing with the prerogatives of divine-right kingship tainted by popish inclination. The title-page of *Leviathan* proposed order where contention reigned. The major antidote to disorder focused on remedying the destructive political effects of 'popery'. Especially in Book 4 of *Leviathan*, Hobbes excoriated as the 'Kingdom of Darkness' any claim to clerical independence which erected 'a ghostly authority against the civil'. Pretences to inspiration, false claims of conscience, ambitious 'unpleasing priests', irrespective of religious confession, were unacceptable. For Hobbes, then, 'popery' was a tool of political analysis rather than theological description. All forms of clericalism were destructive to good order. Here Hobbes outlined a change in discourse that dominated the second half of the seventeenth century – which may explain the persistent appeal of his work over that period.

As many historians have established the 'fear of popery' and the wiles of the Antichrist dominated public politics into the eighteenth century. 'Popery' became a capacious term. This complexity of attitude towards the church and churchmen was captured in the political prints of the period. Again, as with the stock images of swords, crowns and sceptres, the iconicity of the church was present in the emblems which offered unambiguous representations of orthodox religious practice. Emblem 33 of R.B.'s *Choice emblems* presents (in Old Testament garb) a 'reverend priest' before the altar in the 'Holy vestments' and 'robes of Righteousness'; with 'purified hands' and incense burning, the text accompanying the image reinforces the sanctification and holy gifts of the 'priest or prelate' of 'God's Church' – precisely the sort of sacerdotal claims Hobbes refuted. A further example, 'The Gospel thankfully embrace; for God vouchsafed us his Grace', portrays the black-coated clergyman in his pulpit preaching to the laity. The accompanying text reinforces clerical authority as the channel and voice of God: in times of persecution the laity might hear the word of God 'in private and obscured rooms' but now it was 'divulg'd in every Village ... thro' all our goodly Temples every day'.³⁵ This orthodox model of the pious relationship between churchman and laity was reproduced in, for example, handbooks such as Lancelot Addison's *An introduction to the sacraments* (1686) or in more ephemeral forms such as the series of bookplates produced for Thomas Bray's early eighteenth-century Parochial Libraries initiative, which represent the Anglican priest receiving sacred illumination from the heavens (backed up by the library of sacred learning).

These godly representations were increasingly contested. The conspiratorial and murderous Jesuit became a stock figure in many polemical prints. 'The wolf preaching' (1689) extends this anti-popish idiom (the wolfish preacher

has a cardinal's hat on his back; in the background an altar to the Virgin with lighted candles) to vilify Protestant clergy (Milton's 'churchwolves'). The wolf in sheep's clothing was a commonplace Protestant trope – but was now turned against the Protestant church. Indeed, it was the thrust of Hobbes's argument in Book IV of *Leviathan* that the 'Kingdom of Darkness' was found in all churches. Later critics such as Toland and Tindal had no doubt that priestcraft was just as prevalent within the Church of England and other Protestant confessions as it was in the Roman communion. As the crisis over the potential persecution by a popish successor worsened after 1679, the accusation that ministers of the established church were 'popishly' infected became a common charge in Whig prints. It was only a short step to argue that all churchmen were agents of priestcraft.

The critics of clerical interference were not only Whig. A fine example is a Tory print from 1682, *Britannia mourning the execution of Charles I*, condemning the actions of dissenting churchmen – the Janus figure on the right-hand side, half puritan, half Jesuit (as the accompanying text explains 'Rome and Geneva in epitome'), encouraged by a demon with one cloven foot trampling on the Bible (again the clerical garb is key – seventeenth-century viewers would undoubtedly have been attuned to reading the confessional significance of the detail). (Fig. 13.7) Like many of those discussed in this chapter this print reworked the same stock of images to its own purpose. Here the flaming 'avenging' sword in the heavens providentially monitors the distant battle. While *Britannia* (irradiated by the eye of godly providence) sits weeping, at her feet lie all the symbols of good government – the crown, coronet, mitre, sceptre and crosier; *magna charta* is abandoned, the royal coat of arms reversed and a bloody axe (a common icon for the regicide) is evident too. The cathedral building in the foreground is prominent, but ruined in one corner (in the distance another church is on fire). Again the contrast with Hobbes's image is stark – it also suggests that Hobbes's remedies were still appropriate. Such intellectual traditions were not effective in the world of ideas alone, but had significant impact on ecclesiastical politics.



13.7 'Britannia mourning the execution of Charles I', frontispiece to J. Nalson, *An impartial collection* (London, 1682).

Political conflict, as Hobbes had diagnosed, was driven by false and contested beliefs: churchmen led the laity by the nose to civil war. With much more space and time it would be possible to establish the persistence of the critique of the public role of all types of churchmen in the period. The contested visual culture meant that public audiences were accustomed to seeing the sacred status of clerical figures impugned. This critique of ecclesiastical power and authority was a foundation of 'enlightened' attitudes towards public religion. Certainly by the eighteenth century it became commonplace, if not unexceptionable, to represent clergymen (of all hues) as having worldly desires and self-interested motives: Hogarth's satires of the early 1760s exemplify this brilliantly.³⁶

IV

The world of the print satire from Hobbes to Hogarth commonly saw religion and religious figures as contested, echoing textual discourses that developed profoundly anticlerical critiques of organised religion. The visual dimension of this radical critique of organised and clerical religion is best presented in the engravings designed and commissioned by Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury, to accompany the second edition of his *Characteristicks* (1714). Building on the distinguished scholarship on these prints, this contribution will add to this understanding by contextualising the iconicity of the particular prints. Shaftesbury devoted considerable intellectual labour to thinking about the visual and, indeed, very specific energy to the production of the engravings under discussion. Described by Wind as a patron of art for the 'age of reason', Shaftesbury was ambitious of inscribing the values of toleration and freedom in his work. Since 'art' was best produced at the direction of 'philosophy', and the artist considered a manual executor for philosophical ideas, he took a close personal interest in the design and execution of the prints.³⁷

Surviving sources allow the reconstruction of Shaftesbury's intentions and the iconological ambition of the works.³⁸ We can observe the development, for example, from the first formative thoughts recorded in the margins of a copy of Rider's almanac for 1712, to worked-up commentary on the final prints. Shaftesbury's semiology suggested the images had didactic function to promote truth and virtue. Echoing contemporary art theory, he argued that prints 'instruct us by a more forceable and ready manner than ... speech'.³⁹ This position was explicitly against obscure 'enigmatical' emblems which promoted mystery and superstition in interpretation. This 'enlightened' aesthetic suggested that reading or viewing art was not a simple artistic activity but an intellectual engagement. A 'just design' should explain 'at first view' what point it was intended to establish, a view which implied critical skills in the spectator. Importantly, Shaftesbury was explicitly hostile to traditional forms of religious art, especially inappropriate and violent representations of Christ or God.⁴⁰ Such 'speaking pictures', trusting the readers' ability to comprehend the symbolical meaning, allowed Shaftesbury to claim much for his 'moral

emblems'. The design and action in a print delivered stable meaning to the viewer contrary to the shifting sands of allegorical interpretation.⁴¹

Recovering, historically, this sense of meaning manifest in print is complex but involves reconstructing the readers' capacity for interpreting the relation of iconic components. The scribal 'Instructions' Shaftesbury prepared (for circulation to printers and others) allow unfamiliar readers (past and present) to decode the prints.⁴² In these notes and instructions he revealed forensic attention to detail. It was, for example, important that only the best ink and paper was used for to produce the engravings. Shaftesbury was also concerned that the images were presented with a minimum of other distraction (so for example, there should be no advertisements at the rear of the volumes). All decorations, ornaments and devices should be removed in case they confused the reader: for, as he noted, otherwise 'mysterys will be imagin'd in whatever else should be accidentally added by way of ornament'.⁴³ Very careful instructions were given ensuring there was ample indication of how text and image worked together. 'Referring figures' were to be included to 'signify the volume and page where the explanation of this device and emblem may be descrypted by any ingenious and learn'd eye'. Again he specifically reiterated in his instructions to Gribelin when designing the ornaments 'that there must be nothing added which can possibly make a sense or meaning'. Thus decorative serpents in the frames were to be blotted out; otherwise 'false constructions [were] apt to be made'. Mere decoration might prompt 'a meaning imagined where there is really none'.⁴⁴ The print most relevant to this discussion is the title-page vignette which prefaced *Miscellaneous Reflections*, a history of the origins and progress of religion. (Fig. 13.8) It traces a lineage born in the 'dark abyss' of Egyptian antiquity, progressing through Judeo-Christian time, to a contemporary manifestation in modern 'popery'. As Shaftesbury commented, the print was 'full of mischief and shrewd meaning'. Reflecting the arguments and intellectual context of the written work, this print was a visual equivalent of the discourses about priestcraft produced by contemporaries such as Toland, Tindal and Trenchard. It requires considerable unpacking, but as Shaftesbury commented, 'The progress or procession of the design is from the left to the right, in the same manner as in reading or writing'.⁴⁵

The engraving has three panels – a major central depiction (to be read alongside the other prints gathered in *Characteristicks*) and two emblematic panels composed of three key elements (above and below) which commented both on the central panel and on each other, as well as on the other independent prints. Starting on the left-hand side, the central panel of the print, controversially, presents the origins of religion in Egyptian antiquity. This speculative vision, derived from suggestions Hobbes made in Chapter 12 of *Leviathan* and expanded in subsequent works such as Toland's *Letters to Serena* (1704), had been first proposed in rough notes in the margins and fly-leaves of *Rider's diary*. There, he suggested (starting with the representation of Egypt on a throne) that the origins of religion lay in the fertile mud of the

13.8 Vignette on title-page of vol. 3 of Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks* (2nd edn, London, 1714).

CHARACTERISTICKS.

VOLUME III.

MISCELLANEOUS REFLECTIONS on the preceding Treatises, and other Critical Subjects.

A Notion of the Tablature, or Judgment of HERCULES.



Printed in the Year M.DCC. XIV.

Nile. Thus in the final version a languid river god sits in shallow water at the head of a stream that runs through the plate. Even in this very rough proposal, he made specific reflections: for example, he decided against using the traditional triple-crown to indicate the Roman as it was 'too modern'. Other suggestions such as representing the papacy as 'a set of monkeys' sporting French clerical dress did not survive.⁴⁶ Explicitly working with standard emblematic representations, Shaftesbury made bespoke his intentions – the crocodile drawn at the feet of the river god is meant to have 'a sly oblique and hypocritical look (suitable to the emblematical History of that animal).'⁴⁷

The panel presents the history of religion as a continuous narrative shaped by the entanglement of politics and theology. In the background the sequence from Egyptian pyramid, through Graeco-Roman temple to Gothic cathedral, is reinforced by the triangular design. The main action depicts the *genii* of religion being born (like 'dragon's teeth in the history of Cadmus') in the mud of antiquity and growing to fully armed figures (they bear daggers and swords – as we have already seen, key marks of power) – acquiring wealth and power along the way. Each group of *genii* displays a set of religious idols to worship: each stage of development also sees the initially naked boys clothed in ever more sophisticated dress.⁴⁸ These *genii* fight with their idols as standards, 'flags or ensigns'. The political consequences of the conversion of the *genii* to Christianity is indicated by an armoured Roman legionary bearing a standard which combines Christian and military decoration. There are two further significant foregrounded groups. On the left there is a description of the worship and figures of ancient religion set in 'the midst of a Grove or Wood' intended to represent the 'natural' context of primitive religion. Also included are a woman veiled and a queen enthroned alongside a sphinx, a *systrum*, obelisks with 'hieroglyphick' and cornucopia. This is contrasted with the right-hand group where three figures (a kneeling figure of 'Old Rome', a rather startled Gothic King and an enthroned 'comely matron' holding a large key, symbolic of the power of the church) represent 'modern' religion. The kneeling figure presents the globe to the seated figure of the Church (identified by her crown made up of 'Spires and cupulos of Churches') – at their feet are the profits of this regime 'jewells, medals, sceptres, coronets, ... fasces'. Importantly (recalling the icons on the title-page to *Leviathan*), the canopy of the enthroned figures has decorations of crossed flaming swords and 'the thunder and thunderbolt'.

The other (less narrative) panels make very clear the intention of the engraving: religion in all historical forms (irrespective of its confessional identity) has been an agent of political disorder. Operating on the same ground as the *Leviathan* title-page, a similar set of icons were redeployed most obviously in the central oval of the top-panel (which was to be contrasted with the same section of the two other engravings). Here the (papal) triple-crown dominates an altar with the sword of judgement and crosier, while on the ground 'lyes tumbling and revers's a ray'd Crown with a sceptre and the magistrates sword in its scabard'. Popery and priestcraft bring disorder,

oppression and war, alluded to in the depiction of a monkey (a common figure of mischief) and a magpie whipping and pecking a donkey and sheep. The bottom left and right figures represent an altar and pulpit with 'whip, rods, a gibbet, Ax, fetters and a torch burning'.⁴⁹ As Shaftesbury noted, 'There may be colours added after the modern kind, with cutlasses, scimitars, or sabres: but no fire arms'. The pulpit signified the 'drum ecclesiastick', a 'modern' instrument of oppression (to be drawn according to 'our own country fashion'). The two harpies 'might have their countenances more rapacious. Tho' as they are they pretty well resemble the fat monks'. Under the dominance of clerical institutions, stupidity, ignorance, poverty, war and confusion prevail. The bottom central oval ('all misery and the modern model') presents this 'Kingdom of darkness' in graphic form (framed by blind figures of Stupidity and Ignorance); a barely moonlit prospect (dramatically framed by a 'dead dark Tree') presents a crumbling cityscape.⁵⁰

This print was meant to be 'read' against not only the textual arguments of the book, but also visually in context with the other title-page vignettes. Importantly, the major contrast was the comparison with the engraving for the first volume, which, as Shaftesbury commented, was 'in opposite distinction and exact contriety to it' in showing how 'happiness [was] derived from the right balance, liberty and the ancient model of religion'. In it, icons of wisdom, harmony, friendship, knowledge, order and happiness were contrived to oppose the figures of disorder and conflict in Figure 8 and the other illustrations to the book. The simplest message can be seen in the two ovals of the top and bottom panels which represent peace and good order in the form of a pedestal supporting a crown, sceptre and *fasces* (with the instruments of civic religion firmly at its base) and an ordered landscape indicating a flourishing community.

V

The evidence of the corpus of English political and religious prints over the second half of the seventeenth century suggests that the relationship between church and state remained a central and difficult concern. The tradition examined here, from Hobbes to Shaftesbury, suggests it was possible for a broad audience to visualise both orthodox and enlightened attitudes towards religion and politics. This visual evidence indicates that ecclesiology remained a constant concern, but that there also appears to have been a pronounced shift from anxieties about the threat of an externally inspired 'popery' to a domestic fear of priestcraft. The proliferation of print satires in the eighteenth century suggests that there was an ever more relentless focus on the personal actions of clerical conduct. The brilliance of Hogarth's polemic in *Enthusiasm delineated* was exceptional only in the quality of its execution. High churchman Jeremy Collier had complained in the 1690s controversy over profanity on the stage about the dangerous consequences of

satirical representations of the church:⁵¹ others rightly suggested that cheap prints had the same impact. As visual representations of pluralism, gluttony, hypocrisy, imposture and deceit became bywords for clerical conduct, so too did the public kudos of the church become corroded. The development of other strategies for challenging the hegemony of the Christian tradition and the history of religion over the eighteenth century are beyond the remit of this chapter, but, in their assertion of a lack of historical distinction between true and the false religion, they developed arguments bitterly contested in the seventeenth century.

Notes

- 1 This is *Satire 1559* in F.G. Stephens, *Catalogue of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum: Political and Personal Satires* (11 vols, London, 1870–1954), vol. 2 (1873), pp. 347–8.
- 2 Roy Porter, 'Seeing the Past', *Past and Present*, 118 (1988), 186–205, at p. 188. See also Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing* (London, 2001).
- 3 W.B. MacGregor, 'The Authority of Prints', *Art History*, 22 (1999), 389–420, at p. 391.
- 4 Dorothy George, *English Political Caricature to 1792* (Oxford, 1959). See also H.M. Atherton, *Political Prints in the Age of Hogarth* (Oxford, 1974).
- 5 Timothy Clayton, *The English Print, 1688–1802* (New Haven, Conn. and London, 1997), pp. 9–10.
- 6 V. Gatrell, *City of Laughter* (London, 2006); T. Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550–1640* (Cambridge, 1991); R.W. Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation* (Cambridge, 1991); Atherton, *Political Prints*, p. 165.
- 7 See Q. Skinner, *Hobbes and Republican Liberty* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 8–11.
- 8 See the online editions at the English Emblem Book Project (<http://emblem-libraries.psu.edu/home.htm>), which includes: F. Quarles, *Emblems, divine and moral, together with Hieroglyphicks of the life of man* (1709); G. Wither, *A collection of Emblemes* (1635); R.B., *Choice emblems, divine and moral, antient and modern* (1732); and G. Whitney, *A Choice of Emblemes* (1586). See also Michael Bath, *Speaking Pictures: English Emblem Books and Renaissance Culture* (London, 1994).
- 9 R. Reichardt and D.L. Cohen, 'Light against Darkness: The Visual Representations of a Central Enlightenment Concept', *Representations*, 61 (1998), 95–148. See also Jeremy D. Popkin, 'Review Essay. Pictures in a Revolution: Recent Publications on Graphic Art in France, 1789–99', *Eighteenth-century Studies*, 24 (1990–91), 251–9.
- 10 G. Richardson, *Iconology* (1779), Preface.
- 11 Popkin, 'Pictures', p. 254.
- 12 Antoine de Baecque, 'The Allegorical Image of France, 1750–1800: A Political Crisis of Representation', *Representations*, 47 (1994), 111–43; L. Hunt 'Hercules and the Radical Image in the French Revolution', *Representations*, 2 (1983), 95–117.

- 13 See E.H. Gombrich, 'The Dream of Reason: Symbolism in the French Revolution', *British Journal for Eighteenth-century Studies*, 2 (1979), 187–205, at pp.195, 200; R. Reichardt and H. Kohle, *Visualising the Revolution: Politics and the Pictorial Arts in Late Eighteenth-century France* (London, 2008).
- 14 See Ludmilla Jordanova, 'Image Matters', *Historical Journal*, 51 (2008), 777–91.
- 15 Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650–1750* (Oxford, 2001).
- 16 Justin Champion, "'Religion's Safe, with Priestcraft Is the War": Augustan Anticlericalism and the Legacy of the English Revolution, 1660–1720', *The European Legacy*, 5 (2000), 547–61.
- 17 See J.A.I. Champion, 'An Historical Narration concerning Heresie: Thomas Hobbes, Thomas Barlow, and the Restoration Debate over "Heresy"', *Heresy, Literature, and Politics in Early Modern English Culture*, ed. D. Loewenstein and J. Marshall (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 221–53; id., "'My Kingdom is not of this world": The Politics of Religion after the Revolution', in *The English Revolution, c.1590–1720*, ed. Nicholas Tyacke (Manchester, 2007), pp. 185–202.
- 18 Noel Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes* (Oxford, 2002), p. 200.
- 19 K. Brown 'The artist of the *Leviathan* title-page', *British Library Journal*, 4 (1978), 24–36, at p. 30.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 28
- 21 See Malcolm, *Aspects*, ch. 7.
- 22 M.M. Goldsmith, 'Picturing Hobbes's Politics? The Illustrations to *Philosophicall Rudiments*', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 44 (1981), 232–7; id., 'Hobbes' Ambiguous Politics', *History of Political Thought*, 11 (1990), 639–73, at p. 649. See also Margery Corbett and Ronald Lightbown, *The Comely Frontispiece* (London, Henley and Boston, 1979), pp. 219–21.
- 23 Goldsmith, 'Hobbes' Ambiguous Politics'.
- 24 See *The Emblem Book Project* edition of H. Goodyere, *The mirrour of maiestie*, Emblem 1, 'Rex et sacerdos Dei', p. 2; see also *ibid.*, p. 53.
- 25 The horns and forks are labelled 'Syl/logis/me'; 'Spiritual and temporal'; 'Directe and indirecte'; 'real and intentional'.
- 26 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Book III, ch. 42, p. 279.
- 27 *Leviathan*, ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge, 1996), p. 322.
- 28 John Miller, *Religion in the Popular Prints, 1600–1832* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 91–2.
- 29 Wither, *A collection of Emblemes*; see (in order referred to) Book 4, emblem 30, p. 238; emblem 33, p. 241; emblem 37, p. 245; Book 3, emblem 3, p. 137; Book 4, emblem 15, p. 223; see also Book 2, emblem 5, p. 67.
- 30 Wither, *A Collection*, Book 3, emblem 46, p. 180, presents the divine origins and duties of the godly monarch 'the hearts if kings are in God's hands, and as he lists, he them commands'; it also represents a kneeling king receiving divine illumination in a way later exploited in the frontispiece to *Eikon Basilike* (1649).
- 31 Wither, *A Collection*, Book 1, emblem 32, p. 32; Book 1, emblem 12, p. 12; and Book 2, emblem 36, p. 98; see also R.B., *Choice emblems, divine and moral, antient and modern*, emblem 4, pp. 14–17; emblem 50, pp. 198–201.

- 32 See Whitney, *Choice of Emblemes*, 'Sic probantur', p. 224; 'Importunitas euitanda', p. 192; 'concordia', p. 76; 'fortuna virtutem superans', p. 70.
- 33 Wither, *A collection*, Book 1, p. 3.
- 34 See Hugh Macdonald and M. Hargreaves, *Thomas Hobbes: A Bibliography* (London, 1952), pp. 16–18 and plates iii and iv.
- 35 *Choice of Emblems*, emblem 33, pp. 150–53; Wither, *A collection*, pp. 88–90. It is worth noting that the depiction of this church scene gives excellent detail of the status and character of the laity.
- 36 See B. Krysmanski, 'We see a Ghost: Hogarth's Satire on Methodists and Connoisseurs', *Art Bulletin*, 80 (1998), 292–310.
- 37 Edgar Wind, 'Shaftesbury as a Patron of Art', *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, 2 (1938), 185–8; id., 'Julian the Apostate at Hampton Court', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 3 (1939–40), 127–37 (at pp. 129, 135); F. Paknadel, 'Shaftesbury's Illustrations of Characteristics', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 37 (1974), 290–312; see also J.E. Sweetman, 'Shaftesbury's Last Commission', *Journal of Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 19 (1956), 110–16.
- 38 Sheila O'Connell, 'Lord Shaftesbury in Naples: 1711–13', *The Walpole Society*, 54 (1988), 149–219, reproduces much of the material from PRO 30/24/26/1, 30/24/26/3 and 30/24/26/7.
- 39 De Piles, *The Art of Painting* (London, 1706), p. 61.
- 40 Steegman, 'Shaftesbury's Second Characters', p. 261.
- 41 Rosemary Freeman, *English Emblem Books* (London, 1948), pp. 13–14, 17.
- 42 The 'Instructions' were initially written for Thomas Mickelthwaite, and subsequently sent by Brian Wheelocke via John Darby; PRO 20/24/26, fols 8–10.
- 43 PRO 20/24/26, fol. 10.
- 44 PRO 20/24/26, fols 53–4.
- 45 PRO 20/24/26, fol. 61.
- 46 PRO 30/24/24/13, note on page 3.
- 47 PRO 30/24/26, fol. 62.
- 48 PRO 30/24/24/13: Shaftesbury noted that the 'The Moses-Boy a Fox-skin, y^e rod (not ark) in his left hand the Aegyptian borrowed Jewels carryd away & under his arm the coffer'.
- 49 Shaftesbury deliberately drew attention to contemporary clerical conduct (see PRO 30/24/26, fol. 99): 'the gown must be deep-shaded as to make it known for *Black*: and the shape must be pretty near resemble that of our common church divines'. He noted 'NB These last lines of the paragraph to be left out; in case you give Mr Grib a written copy. The hint by word of mouth is sufficient'.
- 50 B. Rand Life, *Unpublished Letters and Philosophical Regimen of Anthony, Earl of Shaftesbury* (Bristol, 1995), pp. 529–31 (Letter to Mickelthwaite, 3 January 1713).
- 51 See Champion, "'Religion's Safe, with Priestcraft Is the War'", pp. 552–4.

