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Introduction

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Introduction

Paula Barros, Anne Dunan-Page and Laurence Lux-Sterritt

- 1 The six articles presented in this issue began life as papers delivered to the Eighth Triennial Conference of the International John Bunyan Society, convened at Aix-Marseille University in July 2016. They form a companion volume to issue 22 of *Bunyan Studies* (2018), which focused on the reception of John Bunyan's and George Herbert's works.¹ The articles gathered here reflect the questions placed at the heart of the conference. How were "dissenting voices", either individual or communal, heard and projected in Britain and on the continent, and what dialogues took place between different denominations and confessions? "Dissenting voices" are here understood fairly broadly to be those emanating from the three major seventeenth-century Protestant denominations (Baptist, Congregational, Presbyterian) whose ministers refused to conform to the 1662 Act of Uniformity,² but they also encompass those emerging from a larger tradition that includes revolutionary sectarian movements, such as Diggers and Levellers, the subject of Laurent Currelly's article below. As we shall see, questions of naming and labelling various Protestants or Puritan groups or denominations assumed vital importance in the struggle over cultural representations.³ The period covered spans some fifty years, from the late 1640s to the mid-1690s, and each article reveals the vitality of seventeenth-century dissenting culture, and explores its relationships to a larger milieu. The collection also reflects *Études Épistémè's* recent interest in the history of religion in early modern Europe, as testified by issues on the dating of the Reformation, on the language of dissent, and on religious melancholy.⁴
- 2 When the time came, in 2018, to devise a title for the present collection, a *festschrift* in honour of Margaret Spufford had just been edited by Trevor Dean, Glyn Parry and Edward Vallance.⁵ It seemed appropriate, given Spufford's influence upon seventeenth-century French *anglicistes* writing their doctoral theses in the 1990s, to gesture towards what is arguably Spufford's best-known collection in France, namely *The World of Rural Dissenters, 1520-1725*. This was published by Cambridge University Press in 1995, the year when Michael W. Watts completed the second volume of *The Dissenters*, covering the first half of the nineteenth century.⁶ Spufford's collection made a fresh contribution to debates about popular religious culture, especially concerning the way in which individual believers, no

matter how humble, connected to a bigger “world”. The debate was one that Spufford herself had entered some twenty years earlier with her study *Contrasting Communities: English Villagers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (1974), inspired by Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie’s work. This was two years before Carlo Ginzburg’s *Il formaggio e i virmi*, swiftly reviewed by Robert Muchembled in France,⁷ gave *microstoria* its popularity.⁸ Ginzburg’s original *cosmo* was translated as *cosmos* in English, and *univers* in French, not quite the same as the more grounded and earthly *world* that Spufford typically favoured, although Muchembled had earlier preferred to evoke “*Le monde mental d’un meunier du XVI^e siècle*”.⁹

- 3 A full-length study of the legacy of early modern British historians in France has yet to be written, and our evocation of Spufford’s seminal work in the title of this volume is more a general homage to the school she inspired than a methodological endorsement of her special blend of social and economic history, attention to local archives, village life and the lived experience of religion. As the editors of her *festchrift* remind us in a timely manner, Margaret Spufford had encompassed all these sources and approaches well before the various “turns” of contemporary scholarship had taken place, be they “archival”, “spatial”, “emotional” or “material”.¹⁰ Our modest ambition is to continue the expansion of Spufford’s “world” in the wake of the many studies of dissenting life and culture that have appeared during the last twenty-five years.
- 4 It would be a daunting task to survey such a formidable body of work, but we can observe several trends, during the last decade or so, to which the following articles are particularly indebted. The vigour of current interest in dissenting studies is revealed by the recent activities of international research networks, such as EMOdIR (Early Modern Religious Dissents and Radicalism) and Dissenting Experience.¹¹ Scholarly presses have recognised this strength of interest and have responded. Alongside standard editions of dissenting texts, and a long-standing interest in collective volumes developed from conferences at what was formerly Dr Williams’s Centre for Dissenting Studies, Oxford University Press has now commissioned the multi-volume *Oxford History of Protestant Dissenting Traditions*.¹² Routledge has recently inaugurated a partnership with EMOdIR for a series espousing the purposes of that network, namely “to examine the early modern discursive constructions of religious dissent and the socio-cultural practices of radical movements and religious minorities transcending traditional historiographical boundaries (notably national and/or confessional)”. The same decade after 2000 also saw the completion of editorial projects on a grand scale, such as the *Minutes of the Westminster Assembly of Divines*, and Roger Morrice’s *Entring Book*.¹³
- 5 Some of the articles assembled here adopt the methods of intellectual history, arguably a neglected aspect of seventeenth-century dissenting culture. They focus on theology, philosophy, or heterodoxy, currents of interest also flowing in major critical editions, such as the *Collected Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, under the general editorship of David Norbrook¹⁴, and in continuing work on the radical politics of the Civil War.¹⁵ This interest in the intellectual roots of dissenting movements and their legacies, both political and cultural, is indebted to the continuing project on dissenting academies that has transformed our vision of dissenting education.¹⁶
- 6 In addition to intellectual history, literary study of the dissenters’ “textual culture”, to borrow Tessa Whitehouse’s title,¹⁷ has alerted us to the rich network of cultural promoters recently explored in Isabel Rivers’s magisterial *Vanity Fair and the Celestial City: Dissenting, Methodist, and Evangelical Culture in England, 1720-1800* (2018). They include

educationalists, printers, publishers, booksellers and translators. Such in-depth studies parallel the concomitant development of critical texts, such as the forthcoming collaborative edition of Richard Baxter's *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, or the edition of his correspondence, using a wealth of archival sources.¹⁸ This archival turn in dissenting studies is also represented in recent attention to the Dissenters' church records and church books that has revealed an untapped source of dissenting prose.¹⁹ Within that range of material, ego-documents, correspondence, personal papers and published (or unpublished) autobiographies and diaries have gained a special place under the influence of such works as Kathleen Lynch's *Protestant Autobiography in the Seventeenth-Century Anglophone World*, published in 2012.²⁰ Lynch has drawn attention to a wide transatlantic network, but also to the way conversion – a key concept in the Protestant *ordo salutis* – should be seen both as an intensely personal, and as an ecclesiological and communal religious experience. This is revealed most notably through the performance of conversion narratives in dissenting churches: narratives have much to teach us once we realise they should not be dismissed as predominantly formulaic, repetitive and heavily redacted documents.

- 7 Recent studies have begun to explore the interplay between the personal and communal lives of seventeenth-century believers: the private and collective experience of religion in the lives of both laity and ministers. While monographs and collective essays continue to appear devoted to individual ministerial figures such as Richard Baxter, John Bunyan,²¹ Oliver Heywood²² and John Owen,²³ together with new editions of their works and editions of Church records,²⁴ there have also been transatlantic studies of the laity and the pastoral relationships between congregations and their ministers, as well as work on the sociology or indeed anthropology of dissent.²⁵ This has led to various discussions of the dissenting experience of lived religion, devotion and emotion that have paid attention to places of worship and the relationship between domestic and public devotions, as Bill Sheils recalls below.²⁶
- 8 We begin our own contribution to these continuing debates with Elspeth Graham's study of early modern mobility, at the same time "anxiety producing" and "generative". Graham reminds us of the importance of place for Protestants, from mainstream Calvinist clergymen to Quakers, but she also emphasises the centrality of place in autobiographical writings by such authors as Anna Trapnel, Richard Norwood, John Bunyan and George Fox. It is the same attention to place that informs Bill Sheil's study of Oliver Heywood's domestic devotion at a time when Nonconformists had to adjust to a new mode of worship in the 1690s. As the previous generation of Dissenters passed away, the task of adapting to new circumstances proved challenging: controversies flared up in relation to a variety of theological or pastoral issues, and Sheils demonstrates that more attention should also be paid to the move from clandestine worship in enclosed, domestic spaces (or outdoors) at the Restoration, to public worship in newly-built, post-Toleration chapels. In other words, believers had to adapt from *receiving* the ministers in their homes to *going out* (again) to hear them, going through radically different experiences of their identity (as "communities" or "congregations") in the process, and having to renegotiate their sense of public and private devotions and of how both should be conducted inside and outside the home.²⁷ This, in turn, altered the relationship between ministers and their congregations – an area still under investigation.²⁸
- 9 Moving away from spatial and material experiences of nonconformity, the next two chapters, by David Parry and N. H. Keeble, focus on nonconformist theology and more

specifically on the writings of John Bunyan and their engagement with such notions as free grace and moralism. Parry develops a cross-confessional analysis of Bunyan and Pascal, of Calvinism and Jansenism, and their respective emphasis on Augustinian predestination, a topic that has begun to attract more scholarly attention in England.²⁹ Keeble adopts another comparative approach by considering Bunyan as a staunch advocate of an Independent ecclesiology whose insistence on free grace could be seen as verging towards antinomianism, and comparing him with Baxter, the Presbyterian minister whose “commitment to a more inclusive (or, in contemporary terminology, comprehensive) national church was combined with, and articulated through, rationalist and moralistic theological emphases, and a liberal disinclination to limit orthodoxy any more than necessary”. Such diverging opinions of grace and justification, nurtured during these two authors’ very different experiences of the Civil War, conditioned their responses to education and latitudinarian polemics, just as they influenced the writings of their respective autobiographies.

- 10 While comparing Bunyan and Baxter, Keeble alerts us to the meaning of labels and names. Baxter was charged with “Romanism, Arminianism and moralism”. He, in turn, called Bunyan “an unlearned Antinomian-Anabaptist”, while recognising in him an “honest godly man” – not a “heretic”. Such “heretics” are the subject of the last two articles in the collection. Laurent Currelly explores the way Parliamentary and Royalist newspapers presented Diggers and Ranters during the late 1640s, and considers how the representation of such radical sects shaped popular political opinion within a wide readership. The fluidity of names given to various radical groups (levellers, adamites, antinomians...) betrays the heresiographers’ fondness for taxonomy, but should not be mistaken for denominational confusion. Such names were designed to highlight the social, political and religious danger of radicalism, while ensuring that lurid tales of fornicating heretics would sell newspapers. Questions of definition and category are also at the core of Diego Lucci’s article on the 1690s Trinitarian controversy. He shows how Matthew Tindal and John Toland were indebted to Lockean empiricism and anti-Trinitarian sources; his argument is that both were Deist thinkers, even though Toland, unlike Tindal, never claimed such a title for himself.
- 11 This collection therefore looks back to the work of the last decade and forward to the new priorities and opportunities that are emerging. The current development of digital editions and participatory transcription projects offers much scope for securing accurate editions of dissenting writings and documents, many of them still in manuscript. We also continue the work of exploring the Dissenters’ cultural and intellectual legacies, their political contributions, their cultural representations and the way they lived their religion: their mental “world” in the Spuffordian sense of the term. We also hope to contribute to a reconstruction of the dissenters’ shared history of struggle, persecution and toleration, as a means to better understand their contribution, over some four hundred years, to the development of religious pluralism and toleration to which contemporary society is so deeply indebted.

NOTES

1. Paula Barros, Anne Dunan-Page and W. R. Owens (eds.), *Circulation, Appropriation*, Translation: George Herbert and John Bunyan, *Bunyan Studies: A Journal of Reformation and Nonconformist Culture*, 22, Dec. 2018.
2. See N. H. Keeble (ed.), *“Settling the Peace of the Church”: 1662 Revisited*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014.
3. See Mark Burden, “What Did the Dissenters Call Themselves?”, “Dissenting Experience” (2015), <https://dissent.hypotheses.org/blog/4-what-did-seventeenth-century-dissenters-call-themselves-mark-burden>
4. Numbers 32, 31, and 28, respectively, <https://journals.openedition.org/episteme/1794>, <https://journals.openedition.org/episteme/1506>, <https://journals.openedition.org/episteme/742>
5. Trevor Dean, Glyn Parry and Edward Vallance (eds.), *Faith, Place and People in Early Modern England. Essays in Honour of Margaret Spufford*, Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 2018.
6. The third volume, *The Crisis and Conscience of Nonconformity*, appeared in 2015.
7. See for instance, Robert Muchembled, review, “Carlo Ginzburg, *Il formaggio e i vermi. Il cosmo di un mugnaio del 500. Le fromage et les vers. Le monde mental d’un meunier du XVI^e siècle*”, *Revue du Nord*, 234, 1977, p. 430-431.
8. Jacques Revel contributed significantly to the work of importing microhistory into France. See for instance, “L’histoire au ras du sol”, preface to the French edition of Giovanni Levi, *Le Pouvoir au village. Histoire d’un exorciste dans le Piémont du XVII^e siècle*, trans. Monique Aymard, Paris, Gallimard, 1989; Jacques Revel (ed.), *Jeux d’échelles: La micro-analyse à l’expérience*, Paris, Gallimard, Le Seuil, 1996.
9. For various national traditions, see Sigurdur Gylfi Magnússon and István M. Szijártó, *What is Microhistory? Theory and Practice*, London and New York, Routledge, 2013.
10. Trevor Dean, Glyn Parry and Edward Vallance, “Introduction”, in *Faith, Place and People*, *op. cit.*, p. 1-14.
11. <https://emodir.hypotheses.org/>, <https://dissent.hypotheses.org/>
12. The volume covering “The Post-Reformation Era, c.1559-c.1689”, edited by John Coffey is due to appear in 2019. One should also mention Robert Pope (ed.), *T&T Clark Companion to Nonconformity*, London, Bloomsbury, 2013.
13. *The Minutes and Papers of the Westminster Assembly, 1643-1652*, ed. Chad Van Dixhoorn, 5 vols, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012; *The Entering Book of Roger Morrice*, ed. Mark Goldie, 7 vols, Woodbridge, Boydell, 2007-2009, and *Roger Morrice and the Puritan Whigs: The Entering Book, 1677-1691*, Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 2016; *The Puritans on Independence: The First Examination, Defence, and Second Examination*, ed. Polly Ha, with Jonathan D. Moore and Edda Frankot, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2017.
14. Reid Barbour and David Norbrook (eds.), *Volume I: The Translation of Lucretius*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011; Elizabeth Clarke, David Norbrook and Jane Stevenson (eds.), *Volume II: Theological Writings and Translations*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2018. On orthodoxy and heterodoxy, see for instance Lionel Laborie, *Enlightening Enthusiasm: Prophecy and Religious Experience in Early Eighteenth-Century England*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2015. For Presbyterianism, see Polly Ha, *English Presbyterianism, 1590-1640*, Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 2011. For the Dissenters and the Bible, see Scott Mandelbrote and Michael Ledger-Lomas (eds.), *Dissent and the Bible in Britain, c. 1650-1950*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013. Finally, for the cultural world of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Dissenters, see Felicity James and Ian

Inkster (eds.), *Religious Dissent and the Aikin-Barbould Circle, 1740–1860*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011.

15. Hunter Powell, *The Crisis of British Protestantism: Church Power in the Puritan Revolution, 1638–1644*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2015; Matthew C. Bingham, *Orthodox Radicals. Baptist Identity in the English Revolution*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2019.

16. <http://www.qmulreligionandliterature.co.uk/research/the-dissenting-academies-project/>. *A History of the Dissenting Academies in the British Isles, 1660–1860*, ed. Isabel Rivers (with Mark Burden as assistant editor) will be published by Cambridge University Press. See further Burden's *A Biographical Dictionary of Tutors at the Dissenters' Private Academies, 1660–1729* (2013), <http://www.qmulreligionandliterature.co.uk/online-publications/a-biographical-dictionary/> and Robert Strivens, *Philippe Doddridge and the Shaping of Evangelical Dissent*, London, Routledge, 2015.

17. Tessa Whitehouse, *The Textual Culture of English Protestant Dissent, 1720–1800*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2015.

18. *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, forthcoming with Oxford University Press, is edited by N. H. Keeble, John Coffey, Tim Cooper and Tom Charlton. The Richard Baxter Correspondence project is led by Johanna Harris and Alison Searle. See also the recent catalogue by Alan Argent, *The Richard Baxter Treatises: A Catalogue and Guide*, Woodbridge, Boydell & Brewer, 2018.

19. See for instance, *An Inventory of Puritan and Dissenting Records, 1640–1714* (2016), eds. Mark Burden, Michael Davies, Anne Dunan-Page and Joel Halcomb, <http://www.qmulreligionandliterature.co.uk/online-publications/dissenting-records/>; M. Davies, A. Dunan-Page and J. Halcomb, *Church Life: Pastors, Congregations, and the Experience of Dissent in Seventeenth-Century England*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2019. See also the New England Hidden Histories project based at the Congregational Library in Boston, <https://www.newenglandbeginnings.org/>

20. A particular noteworthy example is the edition of the diary of Thomas Larkham by Susan Hardman Moore, *The Diary of Thomas Larkham, 1647–1669*, Church of England Record Society 17, Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 2011.

21. Michael Davies and W. R. Owens (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of John Bunyan*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2018.

22. Samuel S. Thomas, *Creating Communities in Restoration England: Parish and Congregation in Oliver Heywood's Halifax*, Leiden, Brill, 2013.

23. Crawford Gribben, *John Owen and English Puritanism: Experiences of Defeat*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016.

24. *The Church Book of Bunyan Independent Church*, edited by Michael Davies, is forthcoming with Oxford University Press.

25. Francis J. Bremer, *Lay Empowerment and the Development of Puritanism*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015; Rachel Adcock, *Baptist Women's Writing in Revolutionary Culture, 1640–1680*, London, Routledge, 2015; Kristianna Polder, *Matrimony in the True Church: The Seventeenth-Century Quaker Marriage Approbation Discipline*, London, Routledge, 2015; Anne Dunan-Page, *L'Expérience puritaine. Vies et récits de dissidents (XVII^e–XVIII^e siècle)*, Paris, Cerf, 2017; M. Davies, A. Dunan-Page and J. Halcomb, *Church Life*, op. cit.

26. Andrew Spicer and Sarah Hamilton (eds.), *Defining the Holy: Sacred Space in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2005; Jessica Martin and Alec Ryrie (eds.), *Private and Domestic Devotion in Early Modern Britain*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2012; Nathalie Mears and Alec Ryrie (eds.), *Worship and the Parish Church in Early Modern Britain*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2013. For studies of lived religion in the early modern period, see David D. Hall (ed.), *Lived Religion in America: Towards a History of Practice*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1997; Alec Ryrie, *Being Protestant in Reformation England*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013; Laurence Croq and David Garrioch (eds.), *La Religion vécue. Les laïcs dans l'Europe moderne*, Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2013; Sari Katajala-Peltomaa and Raisa Maria Toivo (eds.), *Lived Religion and the Long Reformation in*

Northern Europe c.1300–1700, Leiden, Brill, 2016; Laurence Lux-Sterritt, *English Benedictine Nuns in Exile in the Seventeenth Century: Living Spirituality*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2017. For studies of religion and emotional culture, see John Coffey (ed.), *Heart Religion: Evangelical Piety in England and Ireland, 1690–1850*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016; Alec Ryrie and Tom Schwanda (eds.), *Puritanism and Emotions in the Early Modern World*, Houndsmill, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016; Barbara Rosenwein, “Les émotions des puritains sont-elles genrées (Nouvelle-Angleterre, milieu XVII^e siècle)?”, trans. Paula Barros, *Clio. Femmes, Genre, Histoire*, 47, 2018, p. 67-91; A. Dunan-Page, *L’Expérience puritaine*, op. cit., p. 199-221; Paula Barros, “De la ‘sobre intemperance’ divine à la sanctification des passions humaines: émotion et spiritualité dans l’Angleterre du premier XVII^e siècle”, in Chrystel Bernat and Frédéric Gabriel (eds.), *Émotions de Dieu. Attributions et appropriations chrétiennes (XVI^e-XVIII^e siècle)*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2019, p. 321-342.

27. See J. Martin and A. Ryrie (eds.), *Private and Domestic Devotion*, op. cit.

28. See M. Davies, A. Dunan-Page and J. Halcomb (eds.), *Church Life*, op. cit.

29. Thomas Palmer, *Jansenism and England: Moral Rigorism Across the Confessions*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2018.

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Companion to Bunyan (Cambridge University Press, 2010), *Roger L'Estrange and the Making of Restoration Culture* (Ashgate, 2008, with Beth Lynch), and *L'Expérience puritaine. Vies et récits de dissidents* (Cerf, 2017). She is currently co-editing the correspondence of Sir Thomas Browne for a new edition of his *Complete Works* (forthcoming, Oxford University Press).

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