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WHAT REALLY HAPPENED AT THE WHITEHALL DEBATES? A NEW SOURCE*

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ABSTRACT. *A variant transcription of one of the Whitehall Debates has been identified among the Clarke papers. Located in volume 16 of the Worcester MSS, it records the latter part of the longest debate, on 14 December 1648, concerning the Second Agreement of the People. The fair copy of this debate by army secretary William Clarke (in volume 65 of the Worcester MSS) was previously believed to be the only surviving record. The new source provides additional text, clarifies obscure passages, and is generally easier to understand. Historians now have the advantage of another account of the meeting, which reveals its importance more fully. Although the Levellers' Agreement was never to be implemented, the Whitehall Debates took place between Pride's Purge and the trial and execution of Charles I. The variant therefore sheds new light on the thinking of the army command and its advisers both religious and lay at this time of unprecedented constitutional crisis. It also provides the first documentary evidence that the army debates at Putney (1647) and Whitehall (1648–9) were not recorded by Clarke alone, but by a team of at least three secretaries.*

I

In 1662, not long after the Restoration, Sir William Clarke, secretary to the Council of the Army from 1647 to 1649, began the great work of transcription to which we owe our knowledge of the Putney and Whitehall Debates. The fact that he was free to do so just two years after the change of regime testifies to his instinct not only for self-preservation, but also for being in the right place at the right time: there is evidence to suggest that he had stood on the scaffold at the execution of Charles I and that the king spoke directly to him.[1] Death would

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[1] G. E. Aylmer, 'Introduction', in G. E. Aylmer, ed., *Parliament, the Civil War and the conquest and administration of Scotland: Sir William Clarke manuscripts in Worcester College, Oxford (1640–1664)* (Brighton, 1979), pp. 10–11 and n. 5; L. Le Clair, 'The survival of the manuscript', in M. Mendle, ed., *The Putney Debates: the army, the Levellers, and the English state* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 19–35, at p. 30; F. Henderson, ed., *The Clarke papers: further selections from the papers of William Clarke*, Camden 5th ser., 27 (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 2, 380.

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catch up with Clarke four years later, when he was mortally wounded in a sea battle off Harwich, but in the meantime he had seized the opportunity to copy out, in his regular, graceful hand, some of the records amassed by him during the Civil War and Interregnum periods. The preservation of his collection of papers in the library of Worcester College, Oxford, and their rediscovery by Sir Charles Firth in the late nineteenth century is the stuff of legend, which has caught the imagination of historians ever since.[2]

At meetings of the General Council of the Army held in Putney late in 1647, radical reformers, called 'Levellers' as a term of opprobrium, agitated for a written constitution, which they published in November as *An agreement of the people*.[3] A little over a year later, another version of this constitution was the subject of the Whitehall Debates. These, too, were conducted under the aegis of the General Council, though in the meantime its composition had changed, so that it no longer included members of the rank and file but was restricted to officers. In his edition of the Clarke papers, the first to be published, Firth included both sets of debates, though he paid more attention to those at Putney, considering them to 'illustrate in the most striking manner the political views of the soldiers, the dissensions which arose amongst them, and the character of the Army leaders'.[4] The next edition of the manuscripts, produced by A. S. P. Woodhouse in 1938, focused far more sharply on Putney and Whitehall. Whereas Firth had 'creamed' the entire collection for his four-volume edition, to use Lesley Le Clair's apt term,[5] Woodhouse confined his attention to the debates and related documents, and gave them the designation of the Putney and Whitehall Debates, by which they then became known.[6] He re-edited these manuscripts[7] and published them under the title *Puritanism and liberty*: an indication not only of prevailing political concerns in the decade before the Second World War but also of the extent to which the new century was inclined to favour the Levellers and their Agreement as forerunners of the modern democratic process. While Woodhouse's interpretation has been subject to careful revision, interest in the Leveller movement has continued to increase.[8]

[2] Clarke papers, Worcester College, Oxford (hereafter Worcester MSS); C. H. Firth, ed., *The Clarke papers: selections from the papers of William Clarke*, Camden Society n.s. (4 vols., London, 1891–1901), XLIX, Preface; Le Clair, 'Survival', pp. 20–2; M. Mendle, 'Introduction', in Mendle, ed., *Putney Debates*, pp. 1–15.

[3] *An agreement of the people for a firme and present peace, upon grounds of common-right and freedom* (London, 1647).

[4] Firth, ed., *Clarke papers*, XLIX, Preface, p. x.

[5] Le Clair, 'Survival', p. 21.

[6] A. S. P. Woodhouse, ed., *Puritanism and liberty: being the army debates from the Clarke manuscripts with supplementary documents* (London, 1938).

[7] Mendle, 'Introduction', pp. 3–4; F. Henderson, 'Reading, and writing, the text of the Putney Debates', in Mendle, ed., *Putney Debates*, pp. 36–50, esp. pp. 49–50.

[8] Mendle, 'Introduction', pp. 7–9; W. Lamont, 'Puritanism, liberty and the Putney Debates', in Mendle, ed., *Putney Debates*, pp. 241–55; B. Worden, 'The Levellers in history and memory, 1660–1960', in ibid., pp. 256–82; P. Baker and E. Vernon, eds., *The* Agreements of the people, *the Levellers and the constitutional crisis of the English revolution* (New York, NY, 2012).

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Among Clarke's manuscripts, a previously unremarked document has been identified, illuminating the constitutional crisis that immediately preceded the Interregnum of 1649–60. The new source is a variant transcription of the debate at Whitehall on 14 December 1648: the first to be taken down, as far as we know, and much the longest to survive. At almost 20,000 words, Clarke's account is likely to include the whole day's proceedings; the new version, nearly 7,000 words long, covers the latter part of the meeting. It is by someone other than Clarke: possibly Thomas Wragge, who is known to have been a member of the army secretariat at this time, and it includes a fragment in a third hand.[9] The Whitehall Debates have been somewhat overshadowed by those conducted at Putney a little over a year before. Clarke's transcripts of Putney are easier to follow; those for Whitehall, despite being no less legible, are in rather more impenetrable prose. The variant transcript makes the task of interpretation considerably easier. It provides additional text, clarifies obscure passages, and is generally simpler to understand. As a result, historians have the advantage of an additional account of the meeting, and one that reveals its importance more fully. Both the political and the religious connotations of hitherto unfathomable arguments are made plain. The speech by John Goodwin, for example, leader of an extremely influential London congregation, extolling the unmatchable glories of Old Testament Israel in support of liberty of conscience, can at last be read without the problems caused by illegible words in Clarke's fair copy. The reply by the more conservative Philip Nye, also a divine, who supported the restraint of false worship by the civil magistrate, is similarly transformed from an unintelligible mishmash into a canny defence of intolerance as a public good.

The Whitehall Debates took place after weeks of meetings in which Leveller representatives, along with members of other interest groups and delegates from the General Council of the Army, had thrashed out a reworked version of their *Agreement of the people* (often referred to as the Second Agreement, in order to distinguish it from the original). A few days after Pride's Purge had forcibly sequestered all those members of parliament who supported further negotiations with Charles I, the Second Agreement was set before the General Council and debated afresh, concurrently with the commencement of proceedings against the king. In revised form, it was passed by the council on 15 January 1649, and presented to parliament the day the king's trial began.[10] The Second Agreement was never implemented, though its ghostly presence can be detected in the legislation of the Interregnum,[11] but the Whitehall Debates themselves are a precious record of the preoccupations of the army leaders,

[9] Worcester MSS, 16, fos. 53r–[54]v, 56r–[60]r.

[10] *A petition from His Excellency Thomas Lord Fairfax and the General Councel of Officers of the Army to … parliament … concerning the draught of an Agreement of the people* (London, 1649).

[11] B. Taft, 'The Council of Officers' *Agreement of the people*, 1648/9', *Historical Journal*, 28 (1985), pp. 169–85, at p. 185; D. L. Smith, 'The *Agreements of the people* and the constitutions of the Interregnum governments', in Baker and Vernon, eds., *Agreements*, pp. 239–61.

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their clerical and lay advisers, and the Levellers, at this time of unprecedented change. The meetings were chaired in the main by General Sir Thomas Fairfax, commander in chief of the New Model Army. Oliver Cromwell rarely attended;[12] in his absence, Commissary General Henry Ireton, the army's 'leading intellectual', as Ian Gentles has called him, and an extremely forceful presence, dominated the debates.[13] The most vocal Leveller, John Lilburne, appears to have taken for granted that the General Council's job was merely to ratify the Agreement before its presentation to parliament, but this was by no means Ireton's intention. From what we know, the Agreement was debated in detail; certainly, the meeting of 14 December spent the entire day on a single clause. Disgusted at what he considered to be the commanders' breach of faith, Lilburne abandoned the debates, though the prior understanding he thought he had with Ireton is open to doubt,[14] and his departure should perhaps be seen instead as an early sign that the Levellers' influence was finally on the wane.

The evidence that three clerks were in attendance on 14 December 1648 – and therefore, by inference, at the other meetings, whether at Putney, as Frances Henderson has proposed,[15] or at Whitehall – confirms again how greatly contemporaries valued debate. By its very existence, the variant transcript testifies to the importance accorded to the creation of what Phil Withington has pertinently described as 'conversational moments in which all speakers could use their discretion no matter their relative power and status'.[16] Debate was seen as the means of attaining a higher truth than could otherwise be reached; it was therefore essential as a basis of consensual governance. Recent studies on the parliaments of the earlier seventeenth century have revealed how highly classical rhetoric was regarded, and how extensively its tropes were used by speakers, adding greatly to our understanding of the process of debate as they envisioned it.[17] In this connection, the development of improved recording techniques became vital. Inquiries into note taking and information gathering in the early modern period have shown that, while in

[12] Worcester MSS, 16, fo. 64r; 65, fo. 134r–v.

[13] I. Gentles, 'The New Model Army and the constitutional crisis of the late 1640s', in Baker and Vernon, eds., *Agreements*, pp. 139–62, at p. 141.

[14] J. Lilburne, *The legall fundamentall liberties of the people of England* (London, 1649), p. 35; B. Taft, 'From Reading to Whitehall: Henry Ireton's journey', in Mendle, ed., *Putney Debates*, pp. 175–93; idem, 'Voting lists of the Council of Officers, December 1648', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 52 (1979), pp. 138–54, esp. pp. 140–5; idem, 'The Council of Officers' *Agreement*', passim; I. Gentles, *The New Model Army in England, Ireland and Scotland, 1645–1653* (Oxford and Cambridge, MA, 1992), pp. 289ff.

[15] Henderson, 'Reading Putney', esp. pp. 46–8.

[16] P. Withington, 'Public discourse, corporate citizenship, and state formation in early modern England', *American Historical Review*, 112 (2007), pp. 1016–38, at p. 1028.

[17] M. Peltonen, *Classical humanism and republicanism in English political thought* (Cambridge, 1995); Withington, 'Public discourse', esp. pp. 1016–28; C. R. Kyle, *Theater of state: parliament and political culture in early Stuart England* (Stanford, CA, 2012); M. Peltonen, *Rhetoric, politics and popularity in pre-revolutionary England* (Cambridge, 2013); Le Clair, 'Survival', pp. 19–20.

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England shorthand methods were devised in the late sixteenth century for purposes of encryption and for recording sermons, their expansion in the early seventeenth was stimulated by the desire to preserve a record of parliamentary proceedings.[18] At that stage of their evolution, these methods required the presence of at least two, and preferably three, stenographers in order to capture the spoken word verbatim.[19] Because the new Whitehall source places two secretaries in addition to Clarke at the debate on 14 December, it demonstrates how seriously the army commanders took their deliberations on the Agreement. Concluding the meeting, Ireton referred to it as a 'Court': strong evidence of its status in his eyes.[20] Chris Kyle has represented the parliaments of the early Stuart period as a 'theater of state'.[21] The Whitehall Debates, like Putney before them, were a theatre of revolution.

II

The variant transcript is bound in volume 16 of the Clarke papers, a vast cache of documents, most of them still uncatalogued.[22] The variant is thus located at a considerable distance from Clarke's fair copies of the debates, which are in volume 65. Volume 16 also contains other material relating to the Whitehall Debates, however: minutes of meetings, summaries of conclusions reached, lists of attendees, the voting lists identified by Barbara Taft, and a manuscript draft of the Second Agreement. Among these documents is the variant transcript. Rounded and heavily inked, but workmanlike, the hand in which it is almost entirely written is quite unlike the spare elegance of Clarke's, yet not unfamiliar. It occurs throughout the volume in other documents, most notably the draft of the Second Agreement, which Henderson suggests may be Wragge's work.[23] Confusingly, and exceptionally in Volume 16, the new source is separated into

[18] A. M. Blair, *Too much to know: managing scholarly information before the modern age* (New Haven, MI, and London, 2010), pp. 69, 115; A. Hunt, *The art of hearing: English preachers and their audiences, 1590–1640* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 139–47; Henderson, 'Reading Putney', p. 40. See also F. de Vivo, *Information and communication in Venice: rethinking early modern politics* (Oxford, 2007).

[19] Henderson, 'Reading Putney', passim; Hunt, *Art of hearing*, p. 146; M. Mendle, 'News and the pamphlet culture of mid-seventeenth-century England', in B. Dooley and S. A. Baron, eds., *The politics of information in early modern Europe* (London, 2001), pp. 57–79, at p. 65.

[20] Worcester MSS, 65, fo. 127r; 16, fo. [60]r. Because of concerns regarding the emendations of Firth and Woodhouse, I have thought it advisable to transliterate quotations from the manuscripts as conservatively as possible. Even expanded contractions are therefore indicated by means of square brackets and other interpolations (including introduced punctuation) have been kept to a minimum. On the rare occasions when italic type has been deemed essential for purposes of clarification, it is indicated in the footnote.

[21] Kyle, *Theater of state*, p. 7.

[22] Le Claire, 'Survival', p. 21. The inventory to the microfilm edition remains the most comprehensive overall guide to their contents: Aylmer, 'Introduction', pp. 35–45.

[23] Worcester MSS, 16, fos. 31r–[35]r; F. Henderson, 'Drafting the Officers' *Agreement of the people*, 1648–49: a reappraisal', in Baker and Vernon, eds., *Agreements*, pp. 163–94, at p. 164.

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two sections by a single interleaved sheet (written, incidentally, in the same 'third hand' as the variant's fragment).[24] Like the single folio inserted in the middle, the beginning of the second section of the variant is numbered on the upper right recto, which in this volume generally, though not invariably, indicates the start of a new document, and may help to explain why the variant remained unidentified for so long. It cannot have stayed entirely hidden, though: in an intriguing footnote to his published transcription of the debate on 14 December, Firth referred to 'a second version' of a speech by the Leveller spokesman, John Wildman, and collated Clarke's version with it.[25] Firth's changes match the variant, but he appears to have made no further use of it, as he might have been expected to do, in order to elucidate other problematic passages,[26] and as far as I know it has not been mentioned since.

Firth thought that Clarke had made his fair copy of the debates from his own shorthand record, which apparently he then destroyed. Current scholarship supports this hypothesis, but not the underlying assumption that Clarke laboured alone. Faced with sorting through an enormous collection, and bent upon bringing as much of it as he could to public notice, Firth had no reason to question whether Clarke had in fact worked by himself at Putney and Whitehall; but the idea of a solitary beleaguered secretary, struggling to keep up with the debaters as best he could, persisted. The criticisms that Firth offered of Clarke's inadequacies for the task, and the extensive emendations which he, and Woodhouse after him, made to their published editions of the Clarke papers,[27] were based on this assumption. It has been pointed out that both scholars took every care,[28] but the fact remains that many of their interventions were excessive and unwarranted. Continued use of the printed editions, particularly Firth's, embedded them, complete with editorial additions, in scholarly consciousness, despite their considerable faults. Only in the last ten years or so has the idea that Clarke worked by himself been challenged. A groundbreaking study of his shorthand in its seventeenth-century context indicates that, in keeping with contemporary practice, there ought to have been at least two, if not three, secretaries working together.[29] The variant transcript provides the first documentary evidence that this was indeed the case, with

[24] Worcester MSS, 16, fo. 55r–v.

[25] Firth, ed., *Clarke papers*, LIV, p. 131 and note a.

[26] Firth made no apparent use of the variant, for example, to clarify Wildman's earlier speech, whose beginning he described as 'hopelessly confused': ibid., pp. 120–1, and p. 120, note a.

[27] Firth, ed., *Clarke papers*, XLIX, Preface, p. lxxvi; Woodhouse, ed., *Puritanism and liberty*, Introduction, pp. 11–13. Firth's identification of some (though by no means all) of his alterations to the text of the debate at Whitehall on 14 Dec. 1648 can be found in his footnotes: Firth, ed., *Clarke papers*, LIV, pp. 71–132.

[28] Le Clair, 'Survival', p. 22; Mendle, 'Introduction', p. 4 n. 11.

[29] Henderson, 'Reading Putney', pp. 46–8.

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consequences for the way in which historians are to view the authority of Clarke's accounts of Putney and Whitehall.

It has been convincingly argued, moreover, that Clarke's fair copies would probably have drawn on longhand transcriptions by each clerk of his own shorthand notes.[30] The new source appears to be such a longhand transcription. It is more roughly and more densely written than Clarke's fair copy. The lines are crowded on the page and the debaters are distinguished by their initials rather than their names.[31] These characteristics point to its having been an earlier stage in the slow and painstaking process of transforming shorthand notes into a readable record. Because it contains almost no corrections, it is likely to be the product of earlier drafts, rather than having been made directly from shorthand notes. An interim document such as this is rare in the Clarke papers[32] and, in terms of the Putney and Whitehall Debates, unique.

The debate at Whitehall on 14 December 1648 has been hailed as a key contribution to the contemporary controversy on liberty of conscience.[33] As well as Fairfax, Ireton and a substantial complement of officers, the debate was attended by a considerable number of civilian participants, the Leveller delegates among them, and numerous divines.[34] The presence of the ministers is likely to have been demanded by the section of the Second Agreement tabled at the meeting. This was the so-called 'first reserve', by means of which any power over religious offenders was to be withheld from the magistrate. At least, this had been the Levellers' intention; but, as the Second Agreement was now under consideration all over again by the General Council, the topic was reopened. Thus laid before the meeting was the problem of whether or not the freedom of individuals to worship as they chose should be subject to civil authority.[35] With this, the stage was cleared for one of the most remarkable set pieces of a controversy that had been raging for years. For a long time, W. K. Jordan's monumental study of religious

[30] Ibid., pp. 39–48.

[31] In all cases, these initials match with the full names given by Clarke.

[32] Henderson, 'Reading Putney', pp. 46–7.

[33] W. K. Jordan, *The development of religious toleration in England* (4 vols., London, 1932–40), III, pp. 119–31; H. N. Brailsford, *The Levellers and the English revolution* (London, 1961), ch. 19; Gentles, *New Model Army*, pp. 285–94; J. Coffey, *John Goodwin and the puritan revolution: religion and intellectual change in seventeenth-century England* (Woodbridge, 2006), ch. 6.

[34] Worcester MSS, 16, fos. 28r–[29]r; Gentles, *New Model Army*, p. 287. Calculations vary as to the exact numbers. In the attendance list, the names of four officers (Col. Tichborne; Lieut. Cols. Salmon, Gosse, and Cooke) are repeated, which may be one cause of the confusion; further, though he spoke, Richard Overton's name does not appear. The names of the officers are printed in Firth's table of attendees (but it is not without errors), while Gentles lists the civilian attendees and identifies many of them: Firth, ed., *Clarke papers*, LIV, App. D; Taft, 'Voting lists', p. 139 n. 7; Gentles, *New Model Army*, p. 522 n. 123. There may also have been anonymous observers present: see Taft, 'The Council of Officers' *Agreement*', p. 174.

[35] R. Foxley, 'Freedom of conscience and the *Agreements of the people*', in Baker and Vernon, eds., *Agreements*, pp. 117–38.

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toleration, which included this controversy, reigned supreme, and may even, as John Coffey suggests, have intimidated scholars from pursuing the subject further.[36] Like Woodhouse, however, Jordan was inevitably the product of his age in his approach, leading him to privilege toleration as a precursor of modern liberalism. The work both of Coffey and of Alexandra Walsham provides a corrective to this position. Walsham in particular has argued that intolerance was the contemporary ideal, and that permitting deviation in religious beliefs was seen not only as a temporary measure, but also, while it continued, as a threat to political stability.[37]

If Walsham is right – and she makes a persuasive case – the army leaders were in even more of a quandary than has hitherto been supposed. Sects had proliferated in the 1640s; partly as a result of the recruitment policy of Oliver Cromwell, the New Model Army especially was a hotbed of religious extremism. Freedom to worship as they chose was the cause for which many soldiers believed the civil wars had been fought. '[T]hat's preferr[e]d by vs before life', as an unnamed speaker would declare at Whitehall on 14 December: given the participants' experience of battle, it can have been no idle boast.[38] For the commanders, though, the need to settle the nation had to override personal inclinations.[39] Cromwell in particular expressed sympathy for freedom of worship, but even he had his limits;[40] in any case, the prevailing circumstances made the prospect of unlimited religious toleration insupportable.

The various positions taken by the speakers at Whitehall on 14 December had evolved during a bitter pamphlet war that followed the publication of *An apologeticall narration* in January 1644 and was to continue well into the 1650s.[41] This plea, by the Independent (or Congregationalist) minority of the Westminster Assembly of Divines against its Presbyterian majority, seeking toleration of their gathered churches in the new ecclesiastical structure which parliament was to establish on the assembly's advice, provoked numerous tracts in response. Like its authors, most defenders of *An apologeticall narration* sought toleration only for their own beliefs, but some, most prominently

[36] J. Coffey, 'The toleration controversy during the English revolution', in C. Durston and J. Maltby, eds., *Religion in revolutionary England* (Manchester, 2006), pp. 42–68, at p. 42.

[37] J. Coffey, *Persecution and toleration in Protestant England, 1558–1689* (Harlow and New York, NY, 2000); A. Walsham, *Charitable hatred: tolerance and intolerance in England, 1500–1700* (Manchester and New York, NY, 2006), esp. pp. 6–13, 232ff; Coffey, 'Toleration controversy', passim.

[38] Worcester MSS, 65, fo. 113v.

[39] Gentles, 'Constitutional crisis', p. 148.

[40] Coffey, 'Toleration controversy', p. 51.

[41] T. Goodwin, P. Nye, S. Simpson, J. Burroughs, and W. Bridge, *An apologeticall narration* (London, 1643/4); C. Polizzotto, 'Liberty of conscience and the Whitehall Debates of 1648–1649', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 26 (1975), pp. 69–82; idem, 'The campaign against *The humble proposals* of 1652', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 38 (1987), pp. 569–81; B. S. Capp, *England's culture wars: puritan reformation and its enemies in the Interregnum, 1649–1660* (Oxford, 2012).

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Roger Williams and, later, John Goodwin, argued for complete liberty of conscience for all. Goodwin was among the veterans of the controversy to be present at the debate on 14 December, as was Philip Nye, who had been one of the authors of *An apologeticall narration*. Both spoke repeatedly and to effect, as did Hugh Peters, the longest serving of a number of army chaplains there.[42] If the rapidly multiplying sectarian interests of the time could be said to have had a single spokesperson on the day, it was undoubtedly another Independent divine, the radical Joshua Sprigge, who brought an explicitly millennarian perspective to the gathering: 'God is in the K[ing]dome & hee is growing vppe and men shall nott bee able to hinder him, so that heere's all the Question that I conceive can bee made, & all that is concern[e]d in itt, whether you will declare yo[u]r Goodwill or noe to Jesus Christ.'[43]

These men were all divines; but it would be wrong to assume that they contributed more to the discussion than the laypersons present. Both Levellers and officers made intense and passionate arguments, whether in favour of complete religious freedom or in defence of more limited toleration. Even among those who supported vesting some degree of ecclesiastical authority in the hands of the civil magistrate, however, there was disagreement as to what should be its extent. The dispute began as soon as the first reserve was read aloud.[44] Modifications, and then outright changes, began to be suggested, which were pursued with increasing urgency and vociferousness as speech followed speech. Future regicide, Colonel (later Major General) Thomas Harrison had twice pointed out that 'wee are nott yett resolued vppon a Question'[45] before Fairfax roused himself to make a rare intervention from the chair. 'Now is only to dispute the Question', he announced abstractedly, to be smartly rebuked by Philip Nye, who requested, 'That yo[u]r Lo[rdshi]ppe would bee pleased to *state* the Question.'[46] Six short speeches more, and the debate threatened to descend into chaos. 'All. Calling for the Question'[47] was Clarke's terse notation of the cacophony that evidently followed an admonition from a much-tried Ireton to the Levellers: 'I should bee as free as any Man to haue a Catch of his owne Agreement, There was little Difference in those that drew this vppe.'[48] For the General Council, which prided itself on conducting its business in accordance with accepted rules of order,[49] the situation was a rebuke in itself.

In an atmosphere alive with tension, amid dark references to shipwreck and the risk of ruin,[50] it was Ireton who drove the meeting forward. As speaker followed speaker, he took on all comers, clashing not only with Lilburne but

[42] Coffey, *John Goodwin*, chs. 4–5; C. H. Firth, *Cromwell's army* (London, 1921), p. 322; Gentles, *New Model Army*, p. 522 n. 123.
[43] Worcester MSS, 65, fo. 112r.
[44] Worcester MSS, 65, fo. 108r.
[45] Worcester MSS, 65, fos. 116r, 114r.
[46] Worcester MSS, 65, fo. 116v (my italics).
[47] Worcester MSS, 65, fo. 117v.
[48] Worcester MSS, 65, fo. 117v (underlined in original).
[49] Worcester MSS, 65, fo. 109v; 16, fo. [29]v.
[50] Worcester MSS, 65, fos. 111v, 117r, 119v.

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with Sprigge, and also with, among others, Leveller delegate Richard Overton (another contributor to the toleration controversy),[51] Colonel Nathaniel Rich, who like Harrison later leaned towards Fifth Monarchist views, and Harrison himself. His brief loss of temper with Lilburne notwithstanding, Ireton maintained for the most part an outwardly collected demeanour, steadily shepherding along a disparate and recalcitrant flock. He spoke more often, and at much greater length, than anyone else, demonstrating an impressive command of the issues involved. In his addresses, he strove to distinguish magisterial power to compel people to worship in a particular fashion from the power simply to restrain them from false worship, in order to ascertain whether, as he considered unlikely, anyone present would wish to argue for a compulsive power. His eventual statement of the question – in the form that would become the heading of the variant transcript – was a triumph of single-minded determination, and it carried the meeting.[52]

III

The title of the variant transcript reads as follows: 'Whether ye Magistrate haue or ought to haue ye power of restrayneing men by penaltyes or otherwise from ye profession or practise of any thinge ye evill or good whereoff relates to God onely.'[53] The new source thus joins the existing record precisely at the moment when the question to be debated had finally been settled upon. Prior to that, we have only Clarke's fair copy to tell us what happened; thereafter, the variant transcript marches alongside it. Providing an alternative, and in some instances a superior account of the rest of the meeting, the variant makes possible a fuller understanding of the crucial remaining hours. From this stage onwards, the participants were free to concentrate on what most critically divided them: whether or not the civil magistrate should restrain religious offenders from false worship.[54]

After his statement of the question in the form that would prove definitive, Ireton's next speech directed his hearers to the Old Testament evidence regarding the duties of magistrates to restrain false worship. The first four Commandments, he argued, together with the practices of the kings of Israel and Judah in punishing blasphemy, heresy, and idolatry were proof that present-day magistrates must do the same.[55] The path was thus cleared for a discussion that would occupy the debaters for the rest of the meeting. Face to face, instead of pursuing each other at one remove through the press, they examined the Old Testament precedents for the civil restraint of blasphemers, heretics, and idolaters in order to determine if they were still in force or had

[51] [R. Overton,] *The araignement of Mr. Persecvtion* ([London,] 1645); idem, *An arrow against all tyrants* ([London,] 1646).

[52] Worcester MSS, 65, fo. 120r; 16, fo. 53r.

[53] The variant substitutes 'ye power' for Clarke's 'any power': Worcester MSS, 16, fo. 53r; 65, fo. 120r.

[54] Polizzotto, 'Liberty of conscience', pp. 78–9.

[55] Worcester MSS, 65, fos. 120r–121r; 16, fo. 53r–v.

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been abrogated by the coming of Christ.[56] It was this discussion which would move John Goodwin to his passionate defence of 'the loueliness [i.e. loveliness] of the Type' of Canaan and of 'Gods designe in itt', which was, he maintained, to provide Christians with a paradigm of perfect holiness, both of the kingdom of heaven and of the church on earth, and not with a mandate to compromise liberty of conscience.[57]

Even for the part of the day's debate that it covers, the variant is not quite as full as Clarke's transcription. Immediately after Ireton stated the question in what would prove to be its final form, Colonel Harrison made an interjection that is omitted; and Nye's equally brief comment, on a point of order, is also left out.[58] The speech assigned by Clarke to Wildman, and beginning 'I suppose the Gentleman that spoke last mistakes the Question', is unascribed in the variant.[59] The variant, further, omits some of the grace notes Clarke was able to include. Ireton's 'I shall desire butt a Worde or two', as he began yet another intervention, has an almost apologetic tone to it.[60] Similarly, 'I would offer this to the Consideration of our worthy friends that are here', Dr Parker's way of introducing an excoriating attack on Ireton, was clearly intended to soften the forthcoming blow.[61]

Parker, whose views align him with John Goodwin, was responding to Ireton's argument in the same speech that, 'if the thinge were morally & p[er]petually evill', then the civil magistrate's duty to exercise his divinely ordained restrictive power remained unchanged since the Old Testament.[62] '[W]ee know itt was of morall Right, That noe man should kill his owne sonne', Parker objected.

> Abraham had an Injunction to the contrary. God may give out Injunctions [according] to his owne will & pleasure, face to face, to any p[ar]ticuler p[er]son, and to bee obeyed by that p[ar]ticuler p[er]son, . . . as itt is of Morall right I should preserve my Childe, and doe him all the good I can doe, yett because God did com[m]and a contrary thinge itt was practised, soe on the other side if God will com[m]and thinges to bee done they doe nott conclude all successors of Magistrates that are in the same power[.][63]

The importance of small courtesies in a debate involving many forceful exchanges is highlighted by their absence in the variant. Working at speed, the secretaries must constantly have been obliged to make rapid, if not instantaneous, decisions as to what could be left out.[64] In the case of the variant,

[56] Polizzotto, 'Liberty of conscience', pp. 81–2.
[57] Worcester MSS, 65, fo. 122r; 16, fo. [54]v.
[58] Worcester MSS, 65, fos. 120r, 121r; 16, fo. 53r–v.
[59] Worcester MSS, 65, fo. 122v; 16, fo. 56r.
[60] Worcester MSS, 65, fo. 123r; 16, fo. 56v.
[61] Worcester MSS, 65, fo. 124r; 16, fo. [57]r.
[62] Worcester MSS, 65, fo. 123v; 16, fo. [57]r.
[63] Worcester MSS, 65, fo. 124r; 16, fo. [57]v.
[64] For techniques the clerks are likely to have used in order to produce as accurate a record as contemporary shorthand systems allowed, see Henderson, 'Reading Putney', p. 48.

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these decisions can work to the historian's advantage. The word 'according', added in parenthesis in the above quotation, comes from the variant.[65] It makes Parker's argument easier to understand, as does a passage earlier in the same speech that is not to be found in Clarke.[66]

Other clauses appearing only in the variant also serve to clarify the protagonists' intent. Ireton's first address after his successful definition of the question has one such addition. His initial reference in Clarke's fair copy to the first four Commandments as being matters of religion, 'the fault or nonp[er]formeance wherof relates to God only',[67] is altered and expanded in the variant to read: 'ye fault or p[er]formance whereoff relates to God, ye offence if a man doe not obserue relates to God onely'.[68] Goodwin's subsequent assertion, as recorded by Clarke, that 'if you looke into the State of all Nations that the power that is putt into the hands of Kinges & princes is moulded & fashioned by the people',[69] is more easily understood in the variant, where it becomes: 'if you looke into ye State of all Nations *you will finde*, That ye power yt is put into ye hands of Kings & princes is Molded & fashioned by ye people'.[70]

A speech made later in the day by the Baptist minister, Thomas Collier, likewise benefits from expansion in the variant. Collier was warning Ireton of the danger inherent in his argument from the Old Testament. This was nothing less than the subversion of the whole project upon which they were engaged. If 'the Law of the Jewes' were still in force, Collier argued, 'I shall then thus inferre, That the Magistrate hath his power from Divine Institution, and soe hath his power from God, and nott from the Agreement of the people.'[71] This would be catastrophic for a meeting whose rationale was the drafting of a new constitution, a consequence spelled out more clearly in the variant transcript of Collier's speech: 'then I shall thus inferre, That ye Magistrate hath his power from devine Institution and soe takes his power from God, & not from ye Agreem[en]t of ye people, for they [i.e. the Israelites under the Old Testament] had their Magistracy from God, & not from ye people'.[72] Significant differences from Clarke occur with individual words as well. Ireton's summary of his opponents' contention that the 'punish[me]nt of death or such other punishments' under the Old Testament 'did butt allude to Excom[m]unication vnto the time of the Gospell'[73] makes more sense in the variant, which replaces 'vnto' with 'vnd[e]r'.[74] Ireton's sensitivity to complex biblical arguments is also better demonstrated by another substitution in the same speech. Instead of

[65] Worcester MSS, 16, fo. [57]v.
[66] Worcester MSS, 16, fo. [57]v; 65, fo. 124r.
[67] Worcester MSS, 65, fo. 120r.
[68] Worcester MSS, 16, fo. 53r.
[69] Worcester MSS, 65, fo. 122r.
[70] Worcester MSS, 16, fo. [54]v (my italics).
[71] Worcester MSS, 65, fo. 124v.
[72] Worcester MSS, 16, fo. [58]r. Although Collier's speech is clearer in the variant, it is by no means 'exceptionally confused' in Clarke's version, as Firth maintained in justification of his extensive alterations to it. Firth's comment suggests that he was less at ease with religious arguments: Firth, ed., *Clarke papers*, LIV, p. 126, note c.
[73] Worcester MSS, 65, fo. 120v.
[74] Worcester MSS, 16, fo. 53r.

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'I shall butt apply one Reason to shew the inconveniencie of this Answer [vpon] those Grounds that wee give from Scripture',[75] as Clarke has it, where 'inconveniencie' strikes a calculating note, the variant has 'insufficiencie', a less Machiavellian reading.[76] Goodwin's argument that matters of false worship are too complicated to be discerned by the light of nature, but may only 'bee driven out by much meditation, or Discourse, or inference',[77] suggests an error by Clarke; the variant gives us 'deuis[e]d [i.e. devised] out'.[78]

Wildman's condemnation of the idea that 'the Magistrate should act to his Conscience, destroy & kill all men that would nott come to such a worshippe as hee had',[79] is clumsy in comparison with the variant, where he condemns the idea that 'ye Magistrate should *according* to his conscience destroy & Kill all men yt would not come to such a Worshippe as hee had'.[80] (The word 'act' may have been a mistake on Clarke's part in his transcription from shorthand.) In his last speech of the day, moreover, Wildman was recorded by Clarke as having referred to 'a new seeming Question'.[81] In the light of Ireton's unopposed definition of the question some time before, this may be regarded as unlikely. The variant has Wildman declaring instead that a disquieting exception to his party's position has been put forward by their adversaries: that is, 'a new saueing [i.e. saving] made'.[82] (This was the speech to which Firth made some alterations that match with the variant.)[83]

The variant makes a notable contribution, furthermore, to our understanding of key addresses by Goodwin and Nye, who were at odds over the restrictive power of the magistrate in relation to religious offenders.[84] Goodwin's moving plea on behalf of the typical nature of Old Testament Canaan is appreciably enhanced. The variant gives us two words that are illegible in Clarke's fair copy and confirms one other previously in doubt. Contending, against Ireton, that the punishment of idolatry by the kings of Israel and Judah could provide no precedent for the civil restraint of religious offenders at the present day, Goodwin maintained that Old Testament Canaan had been typical in its every aspect. As the variant has it, his statement reads in part:

there is a p[ar]ticular & speciall Reason why ye Magistrates vnd[e]r ye Law [i.e. the Old Testament] should bee invested w[i]th such a power in Matters of Religion, & yt reason being wanting vnd[e]r ye new Testam[en]t ye Consideration it will not hold it will not paralell heere, The reason is this wee know ye Land of Canaan & indeede all things in it not onely those yt were preistly sacredotically [sic], but ye land & nation & people was Typycall of Churches & of ye Churches of Christ vnd[e]r ye

[75] Worcester MSS, 65, fo. 120v. Clarke's version has no preposition following 'Answer'; 'vpon' is supplied from the variant: Worcester MSS, 16, fo. 53v.

[76] Worcester MSS, 16, fo. 53v. One of Lilburne's epithets for Ireton was 'the cunningest of Machiavilians [sic]': *Legall fundamentall liberties*, p. 35.

[77] Worcester MSS, 65, fo. 121r.

[78] Worcester MSS, 16, fo. [54]r.

[79] Worcester MSS, 65, fo. 123r.

[80] Worcester MSS, 16, fo. 56r–v (my italics).

[81] Worcester MSS, 65, fo. 126v.

[82] Worcester MSS, 16, fo. [59]v.

[83] Firth, ed., *Clarke papers*, LIV, p. 131.

[84] Polizzotto, 'Liberty of conscience', p. 79.

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Gospell, of ye puritie of them & holiness of them & Canaan of ye Kingdome of heaven as wee all Gen[er]ally know There was a Necessity yt land beeing a Type of p[er]fect holiness of ye Kingdome of heaven, yt there should bee Lawes & Ordinances of yt nature w[hi]ch should keepe all things as pure & free for Worshippe as possibly Might bee, otherwise ye Visage ye Loueliness of ye Type would haue bin defac't [i.e. defaced] it would not haue fullfilled Gods designe in it.[85]

A number of words in this passage differ from Clarke's version, though without altering the meaning. The variant substitutes 'p[ar]ticular' for Clarke's 'peculiar', 'wanting' for 'chang[e]d' and 'fulfilled' for 'answer[e]d'.[86] Clarke may have been hesitant about 'chang[e]d'. Underlining was a convention he used in order to indicate uncertainty about the accuracy of a transcription.[87]

The value of the variant in supplying the words 'preistly sacredotically', both indecipherable in Clarke's fair copy (and both there underlined), is considerable.[88] These words emphasize even more clearly that Goodwin, like Roger Williams before him, was making a case for the entire state of Israel – 'land & nation & people' – and not just its religious aspects, having been intended by God to foreshadow the church of Christ both on earth and in heaven. There was therefore 'a Necessity', as he put it, that worship should be kept pure, or the loveliness of the type would have been defaced, and Canaan would not have fulfilled God's design. While acknowledging the first word, 'preistly', to be illegible, in his edition of the Clarke papers Firth essayed a reading of the second, which he transcribed as 'poetically'.[89] It is evident from the passage quoted above, however, that this was an error. Far from straying into the realm of literary tropes to justify his position, Goodwin was grounding his argument firmly on biblical typology.

It is equally pleasing to find confirmation of Clarke's 'visage' (or 'Visage', as the variant has it).[90] Firth queried this term, but resisted replacing it with 'virtue', as he was inclined to do, because 'Goodwin might perhaps have been intending a play upon words.'[91] In view of the vital importance of typology to Goodwin's stance on liberty of conscience, it is doubtful that his exposition of the type of Canaan would have been anything other than intensely serious. Woodhouse was correct in saying that

If one was to escape the conclusion which the Old Testament enforced in a particular issue (as, for example, the question of the magistrate's power in religion), it could be only by an appeal to the New Testament, with an elaborate argument tending to prove that Israel was 'typical', that its law (or some part of its law) was abrogated by the appearance of Christ, who was the 'antitype', and that Israel furnished, therefore, no literal model for life under the Gospel.[92]

[85] Worcester MSS, 16, fo. [54]r–v.
[86] Worcester MSS, 65, fos. 121v–122r.
[87] Henderson, 'Reading Putney', p. 38.
[88] Worcester MSS, 65, fo. 121v.
[89] Firth, ed., *Clarke papers*, LIV, p. 117 and note a.
[90] Worcester MSS, 65, fo. 122r.
[91] Firth, ed., *Clarke papers*, LIV, p. 117, note c.
[92] Woodhouse, ed., *Puritanism and liberty*, Introduction, pp. 40–1.

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Instead of making a play on words, Goodwin is more likely to have been alluding to an earlier, no less eloquent typological exposition by Roger Williams. The decade's most outspoken advocate of liberty of conscience, Roger Williams was also, and not coincidentally, the foremost exponent of typology. In *The blovdy tenent, of persecution, for cause of conscience*, published in 1644, he had explained the nature of the correspondence between Old Testament Israel and its antitype in language Goodwin would echo at Whitehall. '[A]s in a glasse', Williams had written, 'as in water, face answereth to face, so doth the face of typicall *Israel* to the face of the *Antitype*, between whom ... there is an admirable consent and harmony'.[93]

The speech by Philip Nye, backing Ireton with different arguments, undergoes a dramatic transformation in the variant.[94] No longer garbled and largely unintelligible, it becomes an astute and calculated response to the radicals' argument that religious authority should not be entrusted to the civil magistrate. In the variant, it is recognizably the crucial speech Ireton would praise, later in the debate, as 'a rationall satisfaction to Men why such a thinge might bee entrusted'.[95] Nye spoke immediately after Goodwin's address extolling the typical nature of Old Testament Canaan. He referred to that argument only in order to set it aside – 'as in relac[i]on to ye Jewes, wee doe not beleeve yt all yt was there was Typicall, but much were Morall, Judiciall' – and concentrated on making a case against Goodwin's last assertion.[96] Bringing his speech to a close, Goodwin had contended that the people, in whose gift the authority of the magistrate ultimately resided, could not entrust him with a restrictive power in matters of religion because they did not possess it themselves.[97] Nye, responding, argued that they could.

The case Nye built was disarmingly simple. He opened by accepting Goodwin's premise that the magistrate's power depended on the people, agreeing with him that 'ye fundamentall principle of a com[m]onwealth (to begin where you [i.e. Goodwin] were pleased to put in ye last does not lye in ye Magisteriall power but in ye Legislatiue power'.[98] If so, Nye went on,

> if it lie in ye people ... then whether it doe not lie in ye power of ye people to consid[e]r any thinge yt may Tend to ye publique weale, & publique good & make a Law for it to giue a power[.] Whatsoeu[er] a company of people gathered together

[93] [R. Williams,] *The blovdy tenent, of persecution, for cause of conscience* (London, 1644), p. 209. For Williams, as for Goodwin, the earthly antitype of Old Testament Israel was the (gathered) churches of Christ under the Gospel. See ibid., p. 206, where he refers to 'the *unparallel'd* state of that *typicall Land* and people of the Iewes ... having no *Antitype* but the *Churches* of *Christ Iesus*. 'Goodwin's use of 'parallel' in the quotation also echoes this passage from Williams.

[94] Worcester MSS, 16, fos. [54]v–56r; 65, fo. 122r–v. This speech by Nye is bifurcated in the variant by the interleaved document on fo. 55r–v.

[95] Worcester MSS, 16, fo. 56v; 65, fo. 123v.

[96] Worcester MSS, 16, fo. [54]v; 65, fo. 122r.

[97] Worcester MSS, 16, fo. [54]v; 65, fo. 122r.

[98] Worcester MSS, 16, fo. 56r; 65, fo. 122v. There is no closing bracket in the original.

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may iudge tending to ye publique good of ye Com[m]on weale they haue a Liberty soe longe as it is not Sinfull They may put this in ye Magisteriall power to attend[.][99]

Thus far, no one present would have disagreed. They had come together, after all, on precisely this basis: that the power to determine the authority of the civil magistrate lay with the people. But Nye proceeded to turn Goodwin's argument on its head by defining matters of religion as matters of public benefit, which brought them within the people's remit. He propounded, as his next principle, 'That ye things of o[u]r God they are those w[hi]ch are of publique good & publique Conc[er]nm[en]t, & among all other comforts of life I looke vpon this as one, as well as my house, foode, or Rayment.' The people, possessing legislative power, were therefore entitled to define the extent of religious freedom, and to instruct the civil magistrate accordingly. As Nye put it, 'whether may not a Companie conclude together, & set downe in a Com[m]on wealth to doe what may bee done in a Lawfull way for ye p[re]scribing & settinge of ye Boundaryes of this good'.[100]

In conclusion, Nye reminded his hearers that the consequences for a commonwealth of leaving sins unpunished, rather than legislating to prohibit them, could be dire: 'for such things God will plague a Nation, & Judge a Nation'.[101] This final passage is as clear in Clarke as in the variant, minor divergences notwithstanding.[102] The critical differences occur earlier. In Clarke's fair copy, Nye introduced his speech by saying, 'The Arguments to abate what the Com[m]issary Gen[er]all said are many'.[103] It is a troubling choice of verb, and one that the difficulties of interpretation imposed by anomalies in the rest of Clarke's version of the speech made it impossible to resolve. Even in its mildest connotation of 'mitigate', 'abate' implied that Nye's intention was to qualify, or possibly indeed to oppose, what Ireton had said. In the variant, however, 'abate' is replaced with 'abett'.[104] In its contemporary sense of 'uphold', 'abet' is a much more plausible reading, Nye's support of Ireton elsewhere on the day being seldom less than wholehearted.

Whether Clarke misheard Nye, or made a slip in transcribing his shorthand notes, this evident error was the harbinger of others. Clarke would appear somehow to have misinterpreted 'magisterial' as 'ministerial', substituting the

[99] Worcester MSS, 16, fo. 56r; 65, fo. 122v.

[100] Worcester MSS, 16, fo. 56r; 65, fo. 122v.

[101] Worcester MSS, 16, fo. 56r; 65, fo. 122v.

[102] The most notable of these minor divergences is that Clarke's version substitutes 'an Edict' (underlined in original) for 'a right' in the passage: 'I doe not goe about to say, yt a Magistrate as if hee had a right from heaven should oppose this.' Worcester MSS, 16, fo. 56r; 65, fo. 122v.

[103] Worcester MSS, 65, fo. 122r.

[104] Worcester MSS, 16, fol. [54]v. For another example of 'abett' in the same hand, see the manuscript version of the Second Agreement bound earlier in the volume: Worcester MSS, 16, fo. [32]r. See also [J. Lilburne], *Foundations of freedom; or an agreement of the people* (London, 1648), p. 7.

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latter for the former on both occasions when Nye used the term in this speech. Clarke's rendition of Nye's statement regarding the fundamental principle of a commonwealth, already so confused as to be impenetrable, was thus made worse: 'that fundamentall principle of a Com[m]onwealth to act what they are pleased to act in the least doe's nott lie in the Ministeriall power but in the Legislative power'.[105] In the same way, Nye's point that the representatives of a commonwealth could empower the magistrate in matters of public benefit was also lost in Clarke's fair copy, which reads: 'They have a liberty soe longe as itt is nott sinfull they may put this into the Ministeriall power to attend itt.'[106] Above all, the crux of Nye's argument, that the people's representatives could determine the limits of religious freedom, it being a common good, was distorted beyond comprehension. Clarke has it as: 'whether may nott a Company conclude together and sitt downe in a Com[m]onwealth to doe what may bee done in a lawfull way for the p[re]serving & feeding of the bodies to this good'.[107] With 'p[re]serving' instead of 'p[re]scribing', 'feeding' instead of 'settinge', and 'bodies' instead of 'boundaries', this transcription is barely understandable, in contrast to the lucid and internally consistent exposition available in the variant.[108]

These, then, are the major differences between the variant transcription and the fair copy. The short section of the variant that is in another hand begins halfway through the concluding sentence of Dr Parker's speech on Abraham, at the point where he is discussing the preservation of one's child. It continues into the next speech by Mr Gilbert, giving his name, not his initials, and recording all but the last six words, at which point the principal hand resumes.[109] Gilbert spoke in support of Ireton – 'truly I haue this to offer & it will bee much in Complyance w[i]th the C[ommissary] G[enerall]' – and, from what he said in this single address, his views would appear to have been akin to those of Nye.[110] It is probable that Gilbert was a divine: he discoursed with confidence on the ceremonial, judicial, and moral laws of the Old Testament, and their relationship with each other. His speech is hard to follow in Clarke; and the variant, while it offers some alternative readings, does little to dispel the confusion. Leaving aside errors occurring in the transcription of shorthand notes after the debate was over, factors on the day likely to have caused discrepancies between the individual secretaries' records would presumably have included the relative distance of each note taker from the person speaking, and problems caused by unfamiliarity with

[105] Worcester MSS, 65, fo. 122v.
[106] Worcester MSS, 65, fo. 122v.
[107] Worcester MSS, 65, fo. 122v.
[108] Attempting to redeem this passage, even Firth showed signs of strain: '*Nye's argument is clearly* "If a Commonwealth may provide for feeding the bodies of its members may it not provide also for feeding their souls, etc.".' Firth, ed., *Clarke papers*, LIV, p. 119, note a (my italics).
[109] Worcester MSS, 16, fo. [57]v.
[110] Worcester MSS, 16, fo. [57]v; 65, fo. 124r. Woodhouse's attribution of an earlier, anonymous, speech to Gilbert is not convincing: *Puritanism and liberty*, p. 152 and n. 1.

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regional accents.[111] In general, the speeches of the divines, as recorded both in Clarke's fair copy and in the variant, present more obstacles to interpretation than do those of the officers. All three secretaries, it may be assumed, the anonymous authors of the variant as well as William Clarke himself, would have been far more familiar with the voices and speech patterns of the members of the General Council than they were with those of the divines, however many sermons they had attended.

IV

The variant transcript reveals Clarke's account of the debate on 14 December 1648 to have been a conscientious and thorough report of proceedings on an issue of supreme importance. The variant provides a buttress to Clarke's fair copy, defending it against gratuitous emendation. The intrusive nature of the changes that Firth (and later, and more egregiously, Woodhouse) made to Clarke's text in preparing it for publication can no longer be disregarded. By tacit agreement, Woodhouse's edition has generally been set aside in favour of Firth's more austere version, but Firth's remains widely used. A return to the manuscript of the Putney Debates has already been advised;[112] on the basis of the newly identified variant, the same recommendation must be made for Whitehall.

Both Firth and Woodhouse justified their alterations by criticizing – if not, indeed, condemning – the state of the record. It is now clear, however, that there would have been a team of secretaries. Whatever the limitations of their account of proceedings, it was the product of skilled professionals using to effect the best practices of the time. At this stage, it is impossible to be certain of the extent to which they collaborated in transcribing their shorthand notes. The existence of the fragment containing Gilbert's speech, however, tells us that they did. Another hand takes over from the principal hand of the variant, we may conjecture, to fill a gap which has occurred for some reason in the notes of the principal; the principal then resumes his work of transcription as soon as he can, not even waiting for the end of Gilbert's speech to do so. Like Clarke's version, the variant has its repetitions and lacunae, its obvious mistakes and its incomprehensible passages. The same is true of the short passage transcribed by a third recorder. Rather than being ascribed to the individuals concerned, whether speakers or secretaries, these apparent failings should be recognized as the product of the circumstances under which they worked.

The army leaders' awareness of the historic importance of their deliberations led them to ensure that at least some of their discussions should be preserved. We would still not have known the substance of them, however, apart from indirect references in tracts and newsletters, had it not been for the

[111] See Henderson's discussion of the speeches of Colonel Thomas Rainborowe at Putney: 'Reading Putney', p. 48.

[112] Henderson, 'Reading Putney', p. 50.

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comparatively recent development of stenography. As with any new technology, its adoption had been slow. Shorthand took longer for new practitioners than their previous methods of note taking, and they were reluctant to make the change.[113] By the middle of the century, however, techniques were sufficiently well advanced for Michael Mendle to call this period shorthand's 'coming of age'.[114] During the debate on 14 December 1648, not long after his definition of the question in what would be its final form, Ireton interrupted himself with an aside to his audience: '(if any body will take notes of itt in writing they may)'.[115] 'Probably a reference to Clarke's note-taking', Firth thought;[116] but we now know that this is highly improbable. Sadly, the influence of Firth's assumption on subsequent scholarship for many years was compounded by Woodhouse, who changed 'they' to 'he'.[117]

Whatever made Ireton interrupt himself, we can be fairly sure it was not because he suddenly spotted Clarke making notes. The recording of the debate was far from being an impromptu arrangement. Since Ireton's interjection comes just after the commencement of the variant transcript (where it does not appear), he may conceivably have been referring to the second and third clerks, though it seems unlikely that they would have begun their note taking at this late stage. Alternatively, his comment may refer to the presence of other, informal note takers. Recent work on the extent of information gathering in the early modern period suggests that we would do well to be alert to this intriguing possibility.

[113] Kyle, *Theater of state*, p. 69.
[114] Mendle, 'News and the pamphlet culture', p. 63.
[115] Worcester MSS, 65, fo. 120r (brackets in original).
[116] Firth, ed., *Clarke papers*, LIV, p. 113, note a.
[117] Woodhouse, ed., *Puritanism and liberty*, p. 155.

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