INTRODUCTION

The life of Robert Woodford, 1606–1654

A biographical sketch of Robert Woodford is just that. Lacking a powerful patron or connections he was an obscure provincial who left a faint trail in official sources, no private correspondence, and no will. The only significant primary materials from which to construct his life (bar the diary) are the autobiographical essays produced by his son, the religious poet Dr Samuel Woodford FRS (1636–1700).[1] The diarist was born at 11 a.m. on Thursday 3 April 1606 at Old, a village eight miles north of Northampton, and was baptized the following Sunday, the only child of Robert (1562–1636) and Jane Woodford (*fl.* 1583–1641).[2] His father, a modest farmer, had made a socially beneficial marriage to Jane Dexter, the daughter of Thomas Dexter, lord of Knightley's Manor, and his wife Ann (née Kinsman). Robert and Jane had been married at neighbouring Draughton on 2 May 1603.[3] It is tempting to attach religious significance to this decision to marry outside the parish: the rector of Old was the obscure Alexander Ibbs, while the rector of Draughton was Thomas Baxter, a man with contacts in the defunct Kettering *classis* who was presented to the Church courts a year after the wedding accused of refusing to wear the

[1]Samuel Woodford left three autobiographical fragments. The first covers the period until 1662 and is printed in L.A. Ferrell, 'An imperfect diary of a life: the 1662 diary of Samuel Woodforde', *Yale University Library Gazette*, 63 (1989), pp. 137–144. Woodford began to write up the remaining two (NCA 9537 and 9494) on 5 September 1678 and they cover the periods until 1690 and 1700. The latter is a copy of the second edition of his *A Paraphrase upon the Psalms of David* (1678). The manuscript autobiographical notes appear in unpaginated sections at the front and the back: F.W. Steer, *The Archives of New College, Oxford: a catalogue compiled by Francis W. Steer* (Oxford, 1974), p. 113.

[2]NCA 9494, section at front; baptismal register for Old. Woodford's grandfather, Edward Woodford (1518–1604), had married Margery Ragdale (d. 1616), and their children included the diarist's father Robert, Henry (1568–1645), who married Joan and had a son William, and Margaret (d. before 1638), whose married name was Wale.

[3]PDR, Archdeaconry of Northampton wills, second series, C168 (will of the diarist's father); *VCH Northamptonshire*, IV (London, 1937), pp. 202–203; D.H. Woodforde (ed.), *Woodforde Papers and Diaries* (London, 1932), loose pedigree at the end; baptismal register for Old (PDR, 246P/1, 6 April 1606); marriage registers for Old and Draughton (PDR, 246P/1, 1603; 107P/1, 2 May 1603); Metcalfe, *Visitation of Northamptonshire 1618*, p. 103.

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surplice. However, the evidence for the couple's sacrament-gadding is inconclusive.[4]

Woodford's earliest years were spent at Old, where his playfellow was William Chapman, the son of a local gentleman. Samuel Woodford described his father's education as ordinary. His parents elected to send him to the grammar school at Brixworth, three miles from Old, despite the fact that their village possessed one of its own. Nothing is known about Brixworth school's endowment and little about its pupils. Robert Skinner, a future bishop of Bristol, had attended until about 1605. Woodford mentions only one of his own contemporaries, Robert Yorke, a later attorney. The identity of its staff is similarly obscure. Assuming that Woodford entered at age seven in 1613 and spent several years there, he would have been taught by Mr Elborough, whose identity is uncertain.[5]

When it comes to his level of educational attainment there is more to go on. Woodford developed a facility with the English language; the diary contains several purple passages, usually inspired by Scripture, and the language is at times poetic. He was competent in Latin, using only a small amount of legal Latin but three times quoting passages from classical authors, once from Virgil's *Aeneid* and the same passage twice from Horace's *Epistles*. He was also familiar with Horace's moral odes and even made his own translations.[6] It therefore seems likely that the diarist was the same Robert Woodford who was the friend of Richard Allestree, the almanac publisher based at Derby and Coventry, and who contributed two Latin dedications that were included in the almanacs between 1629 and 1641. Woodford had links with both these towns, and Samuel Woodford stated: 'A Poet I was born, for my father was so before me'. His interest in the ancient world extended to Greece: there is no evidence for his knowledge of the language but he owned a copy of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* in English.

[4]Baxter may not have been a diehard nonconformist and possibly compromised with the ecclesiastical authorities: he certainly continued in post until his death in 1607: Sheils, *Puritans*, p. 54; PDR, CB38, fo. 114r; Longden, *Clergy*.

[5]For Chapman, see Diary, p. 123 and n. 131. The schoolmaster could have been Thomas Elborough (d. 1615) or else John or William. The family were closely connected to the William Greenhills, senior and junior, successive vicars of the parish: D.K. Shearing, 'A study of the educational developments in the Diocese of Peterborough, 1561–1700' (unpublished MPhil thesis, University of Nottingham, 1982), biographical appendix; Longden, *Clergy*; V. Larminie, 'Skinner, Robert (1591–1670)', in *ODNB*; *VCH Northamptonshire*, IV, p. 219.

[6]Alexander Brome included a translation of Horace's moral ode (Book II, number 14), purportedly the work of Samuel Woodford, in his *The Poems of Horace [. . .] Rendred in English Verse by Several Persons* (1666). However, when Samuel reprinted the ode in his own work, *Paraphrase upon the Canticles* (1679), he explained the deception on p. 161, saying that it was the work of his father: H.F. Brooks, 'Contributors to Brome's Horace', *Notes and Queries*, 174 (1938), pp. 200–201. I am grateful to Christina Batey for this reference.

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He was well versed in the Bible, and owned a modern devotional aid: the popular catechism written by the famous puritan divine William Ames.[7] He evinced interest in modern European politics, owning histories of France and an unidentified 'imp[er]iall' history (p. 314).[8] He also acquired a popular manual for attorneys written by Sir Edward Coke, and Allestree's almanacs would have been useful in his professional life, but his literary tastes ranged beyond the narrowly vocational. He owned and read books and exchanged them with other literate individuals such as Anthony, an attorney whose surname is not supplied. Given his lack of higher education it is not surprising that he was not up to date with the latest discoveries in cosmology, marvelling to God how 'that glorious lampe of thine the sunne runne dayly about the earth goe forward & turne back againe to light us' (p. 336). However, he was interested in natural phenomena. He did not manifest the Englishman's obsession with everyday weather but recorded what he regarded as unseasonal conditions, meteorite activity, and, on 22 May 1639, an otherwise unrecorded solar eclipse.[9]

Woodford underwent a spiritual conversion in his 'infancy' (p. 396), that is, before the age of seven. The nature of this experience will be discussed below; it is enough to note that he does not attribute it to the influence of any individual. His parents may have been of crucial importance but their opinions do not emerge from the sources. He rarely mentions his father. Robert senior died before the start of the diary, and when Woodford uses the term he is generally referring to his father-in-law. His mother, Jane, on the other hand, was one of the mainstays of his social circle.

To social obscurity we must add professional. As a provincial attorney he was part of the 'lower branch' of the legal profession, where career paths could be vague and informal. Attorneys did not generally undergo the academic education provided by the universities and inns of court, instead relying on vocational training by binding themselves to a senior legal practitioner. Woodford bound himself to John Reading, an Inner Temple barrister with puritan contacts who was to be his only regular patron.[10] Reading lived in the parish

[7] I am grateful to Bernard Capp for knowledge of Allestree: B. Capp, 'Allestree, Richard (b. before 1582, d. *c.*1643)', in *ODNB*; NCA 9494, front section (quotation); Diary, pp. 143, 314.

[8] All page references in the text refer to the diary as reproduced in this volume.

[9] For meteorological observations, see, for example, Diary, pp. 98, 153, 154, 165, 171, 217, 249, 250, 260, 276, 277, 297, 348, 349, 370; for the meteorite, see *ibid.*, p. 351. See also J.F.W. Schröter, *Spezieller Kanon der zentralen Sonnen- und Mondfinsternisse, welche innerhalb des Zeitraums von 600 bis 1800 n. Chr. in Europa sichtbar waren* (Kristiania, 1923).

[10] C.W. Brooks, *Pettyfoggers and Vipers of the Commonwealth: the 'lower branch' of the legal profession in early modern England* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 152–156; Diary, p. 96, n 2.

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of St Peter in the western quarter of the town of Northampton, and possessed another house in the Blackfriars area of London. If Woodford's traineeship was typical, it would have begun around the age of fourteen in 1620 and lasted for six to seven years; he would have lived in his master's houses for its duration. Around 1623 Woodford began to suffer from the financial problems that would dog him for the rest of his life. On 17 October 1638 he noted 'I have bene in this debt & want about 15. yeares' (p. 249). It is likely that the origin of the debt was the fees that he and his parents had paid to Reading. The level of these costs, which has been estimated at between £30 and £80 in 1600, may have risen in the interim.

As Reading's career progressed, so did Woodford's training. Reading held the post of associate clerk of the summer assize on the Midland circuit from 1618 to 1632; he served as undersheriff of the county in 1623, and in 1626 he was called to the bar. He also served as the steward of Northampton, probably from 1632 until 1635.[11] Woodford's time spent with Reading clearly involved an enormous broadening of the horizons of the provincial trainee as he was introduced to the society and culture of other Midland towns and developed his own networks of contacts. In 1637 he encountered Adrian Garner, an apothecary at whose house in Nottingham they had lodged 'in the Circuite' (p. 103). He would also have experienced London itself for the first time as he shuttled back and forth pursuing his master's cases in the royal courts and visiting the Temple; by 1637 he was spending nearly one quarter of his life in the capital.[12] Around 1626 Woodford's period of training with Reading would have been complete but the details of his life before 1635 are few, though he certainly remained in Reading's orbit. Despite disagreements, they remained on good terms, and Woodford continued to rely on Reading (whom he still called master) for employment.

The years 1635 and 1636 were pivotal. On 22 January 1635, at the church of All Hallows, London Wall, he married Hannah Haunch (1617–1699), the daughter of Robert Haunch, weaver and citizen of London, and his wife, Susanna, née Heighes. The minister of the

[11] Brooks, *Pettyfoggers and Vipers*, p. 233; J.S. Cockburn, *A History of English Assizes 1558–1714* (Cambridge, 1972), p. 315; TNA, STAC8/139/6; Longden, *Visitation of Northamptonshire 1681*, p. 135; Markham and Cox, *Northampton*, II, p. 570.

[12] For the Readings' house at Blackfriars, see Diary, pp. 131, 175; London was one day's hard ride from Northampton, but Woodford generally made an overnight stop, either at Mr Walker's White Hart at Dunstable (Bedfordshire) or another Mr Walker's Red Lion at St Albans (Hertfordshire). The White Hart dated from at least the sixteenth century: *VCH Bedfordshire*, III (London, 1912), p. 355. Exceptionally, on 19 June 1639, he completed the trip in one day – starting at 5 a.m. and arriving at 8 p.m.

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parish was Andrew Janeway.[13] Robert's relationship with Hannah was close, providing mutual support throughout the tergiversations of life and producing fourteen children.[14] The union also brought with it considerable material advantages: Samuel Woodford claimed that 'my Mother brought a considerable Portion to my Father'.[15] It has not been possible to establish the amount of Hannah's dowry but it is clear that Robert Haunch paid it over a long period. He and Woodford normally enjoyed friendly relations. However, during an argument over what Woodford regarded as Haunch's parsimonious accountancy on 18 October 1638, Woodford claimed that there was 'interest due to me from the time that I was marryed till now for much of the porcon' (p. 250). The Haunches' house, the Two Wrestlers, standing adjacent to Carpenters' Hall, provided Woodford with a base for his frequent stays in the capital, a second home.[16] The Woodfords' first child was born there on 15 April 1636, baptized at the parish church, and named Samuel after his maternal uncle, Samuel Haunch.

On 20 July 1635 Woodford achieved the office of steward of Northampton, which would be the mainstay of his career.[17] Reading admitted neglecting his stewardship owing to the pressure of business: he had in 1635 become the escheator of Northamptonshire and in 1636 chamberlain for the incorporation of the London suburbs.[18] He nominated Woodford as his successor, whereupon the mayor and aldermen elected him by a majority. In his manuscript history of the town, Tobias Coldwell shed more light on the competition for the office: 'A great difference amongst the aldermen about the Steward's place. Mr Pilkington and Mr Woodford, but Mr Woodford

[13]NCA 9494, front section; Guildhall Library, Corporation of London, MS 5083; R. Newcourt, *Repertorium Ecclesiasticum Parochiale Londinense*, 2 vols (1708–1710), I, pp. 256–257.

[14]Only three – Samuel (1636–1700), John (1637–1694), and Susanna (1639–1672) – achieved parenthood and Samuel alone outlived his mother: N.H. Keeble, 'Woodford, Samuel (1636–1700)', in *ODNB*; NCA 9494, 9537.

[15]NCA 9494, front section.

[16]B.W.E. Alford and T.C. Barker, *A History of the Carpenters' Company* (London, 1968), map opposite p. 40; J. Stow, *A Survey of London*, ed. C.L. Kingsford, 2 vols (Oxford, 1908), II, map at back. The Two Wrestlers survived the Great Fire and was let out as tenements by 1678: NCA 9494.

[17]There is a problem over the dating of Woodford's election. The entry made by the town clerk, Tobias Coldwell, in the borough records is dated 20 July 1636 but Thomas Martin's mayoralty (he is described in the entry as mayor) covered the period 29 September 1634 to the same date in 1635. The true date was probably 20 July 1635, to coincide with his term of office: Book of Orders, unpaginated entry at start of volume; Northampton Central Library, 198-10-2797, p. 44.

[18]NRO, D(F) 123; N.G. Brett-James, *The Growth of Stuart London* (1935), pp. 230, 236–237, 284.

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carried the place'.[19] Woodford was admitted to the office on condition that he paid William Brooke, the steward before Reading, a pension, though these payments go unrecorded. His defeated rival, Thomas Pilkington, mounted a legal challenge to Woodford's incumbency. Woodford succeeded in seeing this off, and won a much sought-after, and therefore presumably lucrative, office with life tenure. He was now a more established practitioner and took on his own clerk: Hatton Farmer of Towcester served him throughout the period covered by the diary and went on to greater heights than his master, becoming town clerk in 1658 and town attorney by 1660.[20]

In May 1636 Woodford's father died, having already conveyed to his son the house and land he owned at Old, which constituted, in the eyes of Samuel Woodford, 'a meane Fortune if yet of a Fortune it may discerve the name'.[21] The widowed Jane departed to live at nearby Wilby, but Woodford did not settle in the family property, letting it out to tenants instead. In early 1638 Joseph Easton and a Mr Fuller brought New Year's gifts of a brace of capons to their landlord: Easton seems to have paid Woodford £6 10s yearly for his tenancy and to have supplied him with a biannual load of coal. Fuller, whom Woodford describes as an 'ill tennant' (p. 241), is not mentioned again. Woodford's inheritance proved to be the source of great stress as he worried constantly that his creditors would seize it to recover his debts, which by 25 November 1637 ran at a substantial £192. He survived financially only because of a skein of long- and short-term credit, but was frequently behindhand in payments of church dues, tradesmen's bills, and rent.[22] Nevertheless, he was a substantial householder with the rank of gentleman, owing to his office, and possessed high-status objects – a sword, a cane, a watch, a horse.[23] His landholding was enough to qualify him for the shire electorate in 1640, and his assessed share (15s) of the £100 levy ordered by the vestry to pay for a new ring of bells constituted 0.75 per cent of the total. His main creditor was Thomas Watts of Easton Maudit, who held Woodford's fate in his hands. His fear of repossession surfaced when Watts found out about the death of his father, but Watts 'pr[o]mised me not to bringe me in or trouble me for the land' (p. 122). His debts continued at a

[19] Book of Orders, unpaginated entry dated 20 July 1636; Northampton Central Library, 198-10-2797, p. 44 (quotation).

[20] Diary, pp. 97 n. 8, 160, 281, 324.

[21] NCA 9494, front section; in his will, proved by his wife, Jane, Robert senior bequeathed to his son a 'garner' and chest. He described himself as a husbandman: his inventory was valued at £36 12s 6d: PDR, Archdeaconry of Northampton Wills, second series, C168.

[22] Diary, pp. 141, 160, 162, 188, 192, 241, 245, 259, 293, 310.

[23] *Ibid.*, pp. 130, 132, 198, 220, 328.

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high level: £214 on 8 December 1638, and £200 by 15 October 1639. When in May 1639 he was instrumental in conveying one man's land to another owing to debt, he was thankful 'that I still keepe my fathers inheritance' because 'if any Creditors should call I should be forced to doe the like, but Lord helpe me to pay my debts without the sale of it if it be thy will that the name of my deare father that bred me thus may not suffer' (p. 303).

By the time of the diary, Woodford had moved from Reading's home to his own dwelling in the parish of All Saints, the central and most populous quarter of Northampton. Here he lived in rented accommodation near the water supply, or Great Conduit, in the south-east corner of the Market Square.[24] The Woodfords' landlords were the interconnected Crick and Spicer families, haberdashers and woollen drapers. The house had originally belonged to George Crick (d. 1633) but Woodford paid rent to his son, Samuel, and his wife, Mary, and to William Spicer, who had married George's widow, Ann.[25] Woodford paid an annual rent of £5, in addition to which he paid Richard Chapman 18s per annum for stabling.[26] He was vigilant for opportunities to improve this estate, wanting to move from tenant to owner-occupier, but was forced by lack of funds to turn down Spicer's offer in 1637 to sell him the house. On Watts's advice, he considered selling his patrimony and buying land at Duston near Northampton which Robert Rich, Earl of Warwick, proposed to sell. He made two trips to Duston, on 4 December 1637 and 14 March 1638, and even commenced preliminary negotiations with Warwick's solicitor, but lost out to another attorney, Francis Cook.[27]

The outbreak of bubonic plague at Northampton in 1638 severely disrupted family life. The Woodfords opted for flight, a policy made possible by the presence of Hannah's family in plague-free London. They instructed their servants, led by Susan ('Sue') Tue, to smuggle the babies (Samuel and John) out of Northampton in wicker baskets borne on horseback. Tue set out on 10 April 1638 and the parents followed on 24 April, leaving their servant Temperance in charge of the house.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 196; Markham and Cox, *Northampton*, II, pp. 171–172, 196, 252. The Cricks owned a house, which may have been Woodford's, abutting the Guildhall at the junction of Wood Hill and Abington Street: Book of Orders, p. 18, and unpaginated entry after p. 611 dated 14 November 1653.

[25] George and Ann had lived adjacent to the Guildhall at the south-east corner of the square: Book of Orders, p. 18, and unpaginated section at the back, deed of sale dated 14 November 1653; Markham and Cox, *Northampton*, II, p. 172. By marrying a freeman's widow, Spicer obtained freedom of the borough: Book of Orders, 23 October 1637; TNA, PROB/11/263.

[26] For rent, see Diary, pp. 141, 162, 165, 245, 267. For stabling, see *ibid.*, p. 171.

[27] *Ibid.*, pp. 139, 186–187; Bridges, *History of Northamptonshire*, II, p. 500.

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Hannah remained in London with the children while Robert operated peripatetically, oscillating between the Haunches in London and the house of his friend Thomas Pentlow, at Wilby. Woodford returned to the family home at Northampton alone on 25 October 1638 but the family did not rejoin him there until 15 February 1639. Even then, Samuel remained in London with his grandparents, and the new baby, Sarah, in Edmonton with her nurse. By 1641 both were living with the Haunches: Sarah, who died young, they buried in an aisle of their church. After 1643, Woodford placed Samuel with them for adoption.

Woodford now entered Clement's Inn, the parent institution of which was John Reading's Inner Temple.[28] On 26 November 1638 (following a trial run on 14 June) he decided to rent a chamber at this inn of chancery located near Chancery Lane. Records do not survive but it is clear that Woodford followed the usual practice of leasing jointly with a chamber-fellow, probably Stephen Harvey, a fellow Northamptonshire attorney.[29] Woodford does not seem to have received any formal instruction at the Inn, but certainly benefited from Harvey's knowledge, of whom he wrote that he had been 'a great helpe to me in my affayres' (p. 314). The members were mainly natives of the West Midlands but the East Midlands were well represented: indeed the principal, Godfrey Maydwell, was a native of Northamptonshire.[30] There were plenty of colleagues from Woodford's own area with whom to mix and compare notes: these included Theodore Greene and his junior, Andrew Broughton, who later enjoyed notoriety as the clerk of the High Court of Justice that tried King Charles I. Woodford used his chamber both as an office and as a place to lodge. By 14 February 1639 he had succeeded in obtaining another position, that of almoner for Northamptonshire, again by the good offices of Reading.

From the conclusion of the diary until his death, infuriatingly little emerges from the sources to illuminate Woodford's public life. He does not appear in the records of the Northamptonshire County Committee, but continued as steward.[31] Before 1647 Thomas Pickering, a member of a gentry family from Isham, replaced Hatton

[28]Brooks, *Pettyfoggers and Vipers*, pp. 156–157, 164–172.

[29]Diary, p. 294, n. 670.

[30]Maydwell's family came from Geddington. His brother, Lawrence, owned land there and at Cranford, where in 1640 Godfrey presented the minister, John Fosbrooke, to the moiety of St Andrew: J.J. Howard (ed.), *The Visitation of London 1633–1635*, Publications of the Harleian Society XV and XVII, 2 vols (London, 1880, 1883), II, p. 91; Longden MS, 22 May 1640.

[31]Book of Orders, pp. 505, 577, 611; NRO, YZ 5270; Bridges, *History of Northamptonshire*, II, pp. 211–212. One John Woodford was listed as a Northampton Ejector in August 1654, but Woodford's second son was only seventeen years old at that time and apprenticed to his

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Farmer as his clerk. The peak of Woodford's career came on 3 December 1653, when Sheriff Peter Tryon appointed him undersheriff of the county. A separate indenture was issued on 11 February 1654, as, over the intervening period, the Cromwellian Protectorate had superseded the Commonwealth.[32]

Details of his private life are similarly scarce. His son Samuel obtained a place at St Paul's school in 1646 through the influence of Susanna Haunch, the boy's grandmother.[33] Samuel went on to Oxford University, supported by a bequest from his grandfather Haunch and an exhibition from the Mercers' Company. Having joined Trinity College in 1653 he soon transferred to Wadham, whose head was a magnet to the Northamptonshire godly. John Wilkins was a preacher praised by his father in 1638, and later a founder member of the Royal Society.[34] The Woodford family continued to benefit from the generosity of its more affluent relations.[35]

Robert Woodford died at Northampton 'of a consumption' on 15 November 1654 and was buried at All Saints' on 17 November, his clerk, Pickering, having died days before. Samuel had become estranged from his father but, after a religious conversion later in life,

grandmother, Susanna Haunch, in London: C.H. Firth and R.S. Rait, *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642–1660*, 3 vols (London 1911), II, p. 973.

[32] *VCH Northamptonshire*, IV, p. 189; TNA, PROB/11/249: Pickering bequeathed 10s each to his master and mistress for mourning rings and 5s each to their children; NRO, Tryon (Bulwick) MSS, T(B) 259/2, 6.

[33] Venn, under Samuel Haunch; NCA 9494, front section; at St Paul's, Samuel was a contemporary of Pepys: M.F.J. McDonnell, *St Paul's School* (London, 1959), pp. 218, 247; C.W. Sutton, 'Cromleholme, Samuel (1618–1672)', rev. C.S. Knighton, in *ODNB*.

[34] NCA 9494, front section; J. Henry, 'Wilkins, John (1614–1672)' in *ODNB*; Keeble, 'Woodford, Samuel'. Woodford's friends Peter Whalley, John Bullivant, and John Parker, the Northampton lawyer, sent their sons Nathaniel (1655), Jeremiah (1656), and Samuel (1656) to Wadham: Isham, *Diary*, p. 200, n. 24, and p. 62, n. 15; Woodforde, *Woodforde Papers*, p. 5; J. Parkin, 'Parker, Samuel (1640–1688)', in *ODNB*.

[35] Woodford was overseer of Haunch's will: he and Hannah were to receive the rents of The Two Wrestlers for the duration of their lives. Robert Haunch (1649), uncle Christopher Haunch (1647), and Susanna (1658), also made bequests to the Woodfords. Susanna bequeathed her apprentice John Woodford's services (he completed his apprenticeship in 1658), and the use of her shop, to her brother, Edmund Heighes, haberdasher. By 1678 John was married with children: he continued to reside in the parish of All Hallows, London Wall. Samuel went on to inherit the estate of his great-uncle Edmund Heighes at Binsted in Hampshire. This side of the family demonstrated their eternal gratitude by their frequent use of the name Heighes. Woodford's daughter Susanna married Daniel Gifford, who, following problems with debts, emigrated to the East Indies, whereupon Samuel Woodford brought his sister to live with him at Binsted, where he claimed she died of grief (and consumption) on 26 September 1672, her son, Samuel, being adopted by her mother and stepfather, Hannah and Robert Guy: TNA, PROB/11/209 (Robert Haunch), PROB/11/253 (Susanna Haunch); PDR, Archdeaconry of Northampton Wills, third series, B, fo. 131 (Christopher Haunch); Keeble, 'Woodford, Samuel'; NCA 9494, front section; NCA 9537, unpaginated, under 23 December 1670.

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he set the record straight, acknowledging that he had lost the 'best friend I had in the world', and crediting his father above all with encouraging him in his education. Robert Woodford died landless, as he had feared: Samuel told how his father had bequeathed neither land nor cash, only diaries, 'leaving me & the rest of his children that portion in a Treasury of Holy Prayers & blessings, wch he could never manage to provide for us in Lands & Monys' and 'on wch wee to this day live plentifully'. Samuel confirmed that his father had continued to exercise a godly influence over him, describing how, after his death, he had descended into ungodly company at Oxford.[36] Woodford left no will; in March 1655 Hannah obtained control of the administration of his goods. In 1662 she remarried: Robert Guy, the lord of Holdenby Manor in the village of Isham, was another lawyer but a more successful one, having served as clerk of the peace of Northamptonshire during the Interregnum. She died in early March 1699, outliving Guy and all her children except Samuel, and was buried at Isham. To later generations of Woodfords she was known as 'Mother Guy'.[37]

'To worke out my salvacon wth feare'

Succeeding generations did nothing to counteract the impression of Woodford's historical insignificance: the first of a dynasty of diary-keepers, he seems to have been regarded merely as the precursor of his famous descendant, Parson James Woodforde. Scant interest was shown in the content of his diary, although the Historical Manuscripts

[36]NCA 9494, front section (quotations); NRO, 223P/1, 17 November 1654; Ferrell, 'Imperfect diary', pp. 140–141.

[37]TNA, PROB/6/31, fo. 59. Guy was an assiduous justice of the peace during the Civil War and Interregnum periods, serving on county committees and as clerk of the peace from 1651 until 1660. His first wife had been the daughter of Francis Sawyer of Kettering: their daughter Mary married Nathaniel 'Bunyan' Ponder. Guy's second marriage – to Hannah – took place in London in August 1662 but his main residence was at Isham to the north of Northampton. In 1672, as part of Charles II's Declaration of Indulgence, the house at Isham was licensed as a congregational meeting house. In the same year, the couple adopted Samuel Gifford, Hannah's grandson. Guy's will was prefixed by a godly preamble: TNA, PROB/11/362. He made generous provision for Hannah, for Samuel Gifford, and for Samuel and John Woodford. He made bequests to twenty ministers, or their widows, whose names were to be supplied by Hannah, and enjoined his heir, Francis, to allow his stepmother to live with him until he married: P.R. Brindle, 'Politics and society in Northamptonshire, 1649–1714' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Leicester, 1983), pp. 134–135; Isham, *Diary*, p. 60, n. 6; G.E. Cokayne and E.A. Fry (eds), *Calendar of Marriage Licences Issued by the Faculty Office 1632–1714*, Index Library 33 (London, 1905), p. 21; B. Lynch, 'Ponder, Nathaniel (1640–1699)', in *ODNB*; NCA 9494, end section; Woodforde, *Woodforde Papers*, index (quotation).

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Commission did publish a few entries.[38] The journal dramatically corrects this misapprehension: from the writings of an early modern nobody emerges a compelling study of the puritan psyche and way of life. Woodford's noteworthiness lies in the sheer consistency of his outlook. Every aspect of experience – from thoughts and feelings to the operation of the cosmos – was scrutinized through the same lens of experimental predestinarianism.[39] His Calvinist worldview centred on the belief in an omnipotent and omniscient creator, whose will dictated the history of the universe. Woodford apparently supported the full supralapsarian position on predestination: God had determined mankind's fate before the creation, for purely His own reasons condemning the majority to hell and electing a minority to heaven.[40] Godly professors such as Woodford insisted on the possibility of achieving assurance of their elect status during life. The lives of the elect were known to proceed in a predictable fashion – after an initial awakening or conversion they became increasingly holy over time. Once feeling they were chosen, they persevered in grace and did not fall away. It was the believer's duty to examine his or her own character for the signs of election and to co-operate in the process by inculcating in himself or herself, under God's tutelage, the holy habits of mind and behaviour. This self-analysis was carried out by the conscience (God's 'vicegerent in me' (p. 294)), which possessed the ability to distinguish between the true faith of the elect and the temporary faith achievable by the reprobate.

Woodford had progressed only part of the way on this pilgrimage. He had been converted in childhood by the Holy Spirit, who had made him aware of the sinfulness of his nature and had then proffered the means of salvation, having 'in m[er]cye bestowed the Lord Christ the Cheife of all favors uppon me' (p. 161). Using the metaphor of God as bonesetter, he described the rebirth: God had 'made the bones which thou hadst once broken to reioyne againe' (*ibid.*). God had changed his nature, had broken the old, corrupt, spiritually debilitated man, and from him had fashioned a new, holy being that was no longer inclined to commit the grosser sins. In an alternative description of his conversion derived from the Song of Songs, Woodford referred to himself as the bride and God as the groom who had embraced him and made promises. This refers to the covenant of grace by which

[38] HMC, *Ninth Report* (London, 1883), pp. 493–499.

[39] For experimental predestinarianism and the *ordo salutis* ('way of salvation'), see R.T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Oxford, 1979), pp. 51–79; C.L. Cohen, *God's Caress: the psychology of puritan religious experience* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 75–110; P. Lake, 'William Bradshaw, antichrist, and the community of the godly', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 36 (1985), pp. 570–589.

[40] He noted with disapproval that a preacher condemned supralapsarians: Diary, p. 251.

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God saved the chosen: it was understood as the action of a testator bequeathing an inheritance to his heirs.[41] According to Woodford's narrative, God had thenceforth accompanied him, sustaining him through his youth, maintaining him 'clenil[y] from many great & scandalous sines which my Corrupt nature would have thrust me into' (p. 396), and delivering him from Satan.[42] He describes a concrete instance of God's deliverance of him from an (unnamed) temptation that had assailed him on 16 October 1634. Three years later he related to a friend 'in private the temptacon which began uppon me this day 3 yeares. oh Lord I blesse thee for thy wonderfull m[er]cye in carryeinge me through it' (p. 125). In assessing his current spiritual state, Woodford allowed himself the necessarily modest judgement that he had indeed grown in grace: he now enjoyed some 'hope of heaven' (p. 338), whereas previously he had enjoyed 'lesse hope of heaven' (p. 161). He referred also to 'heaven & eternall happinesse my everlastinge inheritance' (p. 250). He was not 'voyd of god & grace' (p. 338), and, comparing himself with a prostitute, was 'not as bad as the worst in the world' (p. 186).

He sought to place this quest for good, or war against evil, at the centre of his life: 'one thinge onely is necessary and that we are to seeke the Kingdome of heaven & the right' (p. 268). In a poetic passage he emphasized the urgency of this mission, the necessity not to waste one precious moment of time, and the duty to live in a holy fear of God: 'give me in this my day to worke out my salvacon wth fear [. . .] oh mye god give me to improve every inch of time thou affordest, why should I loose the pr[i]son[er] time that cannot be called back' (p. 336). As a spiritual autobiography, the diary (which was, as we shall see, part of a series) served an important purpose in this project. Woodford recorded his relationship with God, and his struggles both with Satan and with his partly unreconstructed self, which he rebuked: 'I have discoursed wth my soule in the pr[e]sence of god about the folly that its guilty of' (p. 369).[43] Reviewing these experiences enabled him to monitor the progress of his growth in grace and improve his practice of godliness by reference to past successes and failures. To help with this he used two symbols that had been established for centuries. The trefoil (a three-lobed or clover-leaf) symbol served to remind him of his most significant spiritual states, prayers, or formulae; exceptional

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 350; Cohen, *God's Caress*, pp. 47–74.
[42] For Woodford's conversion and spiritual history, see Diary, pp. 161, 165, 258, 396.
[43] For other examples, see *ibid.*, pp. 159, 248, 257, 285.

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passages he annotated with two trefoils. The pointing hand symbol drew attention to matters concerning his children.[44]

The elect saint, owing to his or her capacity to live by faith, was joyful: 'a Christian is called to reioycinge, & a good conscience is a continuall feast' (p. 139). At times, when his mind was in this 'holy frame' (p. 338), Woodford detected these characteristics in himself and enjoyed a communion with God. The most powerful instance of this occurred on 17 March 1638, when he experienced 'most great & Ravishinge comforts in secret prayer the Lord even broke in uppon me, he made even his glory to passe before me', affording him a foretaste of heavenly bliss: 'Oh Lord to enioy thy pr[e]sence & to behold thee in thine excellencyes & glory by an eye of fayth is even heaven here uppon the earth'. This spiritual 'high' was so intense that it lasted until the next day. During a dream he experienced a similar level of confidence of salvation: 'I did reioyce in the Lord in spirit with much fayth & dependance on a p[ro]mise as if the Lord was about to p[er]forme it to me' (p. 144).[45] Another aspect of the correct view of the world involved an acknowledgement that one could not earn salvation through one's own virtues, but could only attain it by means of the mercy of an all-powerful God: 'the m[er]cy of the great & gracious god shall shine uppon my soule in the face of Jesus Christ to p[ar]don my sinnes' (p. 258). God would alter one's nature: 'The power of the Almighty god through the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ shall Crucify & kill my strong Corrupcons for his grace is sufficient for me both to forgive & to mortify' (*ibid.*). On similarly confident occasions, he was moved to tears when optimistic that God had promised to bless him 'though I am nothinge' (p. 181). Again, blessing would come 'not for my merits (which are no better than sinne), but for his m[er]cyes sake' (p. 112). Such intense moments were fleeting: rather more common were brief impressions that his affections had been retuned to holy, as opposed to worldly, frequencies. Then he felt alive and described his affections appropriately as 'quick', 'melting', 'warmed', or 'gracious', and experienced 'eiaculacons in fayth' (p. 221). He experienced the divine presence only intermittently, 'sundry times' (p. 387) over a two-month period in 1641. A budding saint could expect these manifestations to become steadily more frequent and was required to yearn for ever greater grace. Woodford

[44]Woodford's pointing hand (W.H. Sherman has named the symbol the manicule) is a basic model with a cuff, and pointing index finger with nail. Both symbols were used by Francis Bacon, Ben Jonson, and, in her journal, by the Northamptonshire gentlewoman Lady Grace Mildmay (d. 1620): W.H. Sherman, *Used Books: marking readers in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia, 2008), pp. 25–52, 169.

[45]For another heavenly vision, this time inducing tears, see Diary, p. 350.

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entreated God to appear more frequently and to permit him to 'enioy a holy Comunion with thee, yea a firme Comunion that it may never be broken off any more' (p. 190).[46]

Holy emotions dissipated as Woodford complained to God: 'oh that thou wouldst dwell in the soule of thy servant, why shouldst thou be like a traveller that stayeth but for a night' (p. 271).[47] The fault lay with mankind, who severed the intimacy by sinning. Woodford appealed to God to 'let us not by sinne bereave our selves of thy good p[ro]vidence & blessing' (p. 144).[48] Sin was the prevailing propensity of a corrupt world: Woodford prayed to God that he might 'keep a good conscience voyd of offence both to thee & men' (p. 300). However, residual corruption, and hence the inclination to sin, was present within even the most accomplished saint as his or her inheritance (or 'bias' (p. 324)) from the Fall. Woodford mused on the persistence of briars and thorns, his label for this corruption: 'there is somew[ha]t of the Bryar & thorne in every estate & condicon of this world (brought upon us by o[u]r first defection)' (p. 124). This was the old man, the quality of corruption at perpetual war with holiness within the individual saint. Woodford employs many other names, including the self, the flesh, carnality, the creature, corruption, the world, nature, even death. Internal conflict was a necessary mark of election, proof that carnality did not enjoy uncontested possession of the soul. To make matters worse, Satan exploited this congenital weakness. The believer fought a defensive war engendering a like mentality. Woodford took up various weapons to help him. Faith was a potent defence: he noted that the 'fiery iniections & darts of Satan come thick upon me, the Archer hath shot sure at me wth envenomed arrows, but Ile take the sheild of faith & in the name of god Ile quench & repell them' (p. 271). Faith was also described as a castle, and God as a shield, a refuge, even a rabbit warren.[49]

Woodford sought to demonstrate virtue through the height of his sensitivity to vice: from the list of his sins we can read off the virtues to which he aspired. The regenerate man would be zealous in identifying and extinguishing every last scintilla of impurity in his soul. Woodford was obsessed with his own sinfulness and with maintaining watchfulness to prevent the slightest lapse. Vigilance meant developing a hypersensitivity to the threat of sin so that it might be averted. Having taken receipt of a suit of new clothes, he made a mental note to avoid

[46] *Ibid.*, p. 338 (marked with a double trefoil).

[47] He uses the same expression to describe God's concealing Himself from the godly collectively: *ibid.*, p. 289.

[48] For a fuller description of this, see *ibid.*, p. 338.

[49] *Ibid.*, pp. 180, 265. For God as refuge and rabbit warren, see *ibid.*, pp. 184, 399.

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pride: 'Lord graunt they may not be a snare to me' (p. 221). While desiring the position of clerk of the peace he wished 'to submit my will to the Lords & not at all to Covet any thinge that is my neighbors' (p. 110). More usually, vigilance took the form of warning himself not to overcharge for his professional services: 'God forbid I should ever put forth my hand to receave the least peny of unlawfull gayne' (p. 388). Sometimes it meant avoiding bad company or various cultural norms in the tavern. On one occasion it meant rejecting a modest business opportunity. The aptly named Mr Pyke had persuaded his wife to make over £1000 to him and called upon Woodford to witness the transaction: he refused 'knowinge that he had wrought her to it by undue meanes' (p. 210). He confessed his actual lapses retrospectively in the diary, although he rarely mentioned the specific commandments breached and sometimes did not put a name to the failing at all.

A key element of the godly outlook was acceptance of an all-encompassing divine providence: the idea that God intervened constantly in the life of the individual and in society generally.[50] All experience was suffused with meaning: even the life of a lowly country attorney was significant. However, it was essential for the incipient saint to exhibit the right interpretation, or sanctified use, of experience or phenomena, to clarify the divine plan as it applied to him or her and to achieve the required dependence on God. Woodford asserted his intention to be dependent: 'I rise & goe & move in the strength of the Lord, or desire to doe so' (p. 280). 'We subsist', he declared to God, 'by thy speciall yea even miraculous p[ro]vidence' (p. 399). The reaction to all events, whether advantageous or disadvantageous, became a litmus test of godliness. The positive side of this was the correct use of mercies or blessings. He acknowledged with thanks every iota of divine providence, from the mundane – obtaining payment from clients – to the intangible – a transitory feeling of happiness or the mental wherewithal to cope with life's difficulties – to the miraculous – protection from looming danger. He recorded praises for his survival after he fell from his horse, for a successful navigation of the forest near Olney in Buckinghamshire, and for his preservation 'goeinge & cominge over Billing Bridge in the great water where I did not well know the way' (p. 171). On the negative side was the correct use of afflictions, which were the saints' universities according to the

[50] Alexandra Walsham has established that providentialist thought was widespread and far from the monopoly of puritans or even Protestants: A. Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999). Richard Cust has shown that Charles I himself thought in such terms: R.P. Cust, 'Charles I and providence', in K. Fincham and P. Lake (eds), *Religious Politics in Post-Reformation England: essays in honour of Nicholas Tyacke* (Woodbridge, 2006), pp. 193–208. Woodford mentions the word 108 times.

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godly Londoner Nehemiah Wallington.[51] Woodford knew that he was required to regard his problems not as the random and remediless cruelties of fortune but as proof of the didacticism of a loving God striving to effect his spiritual improvement. It was his duty cheerfully to embrace the means of divine chastisement and to search out and correct the sin through which he had offended God and cut the link between them.

Woodford faced serious dangers, disease and war being prominent among them, but by far the most persistent difficulty in his life was his dire indebtedness, the leitmotif of the diary. His reaction to this hardship, profound melancholy, was the wrong response, implying mistrust of God's promises in the covenant to provide for his every spiritual and material need. If contentedness in all conditions was the fruit of faith, then depression, which Woodford referred to as the cares of the world, indicated guilt of the sin of unbelief or rebellion against God. At times he doubted God's probity, expressing 'distrust of the Lord for outward things' (p. 385). His heart was 'ready to be daunted & say it will allwayes be thus I shall never be able to pay but goe backwards rather then forwards, thus infidelity takes hold on me & bringeth worldly sorow whereby I sinne against the bounty & the power of my god' (p. 357). If the godly man kept worries at bay by at all times holding in mind his heavenly inheritance, Woodford allowed his problems to cause him to forget this and to sever the link with God: 'my hart doth not enioy the Lord as form[er]ly, for the thorny cares of the world doe dull my affections often' (p. 132).[52] He was undoubtedly referring to unbelief when he thrice – on 11 and 18 August, and 6 November 1638 – alluded to 'that sinne'.[53] Satan only exacerbated the situation by incessantly reminding him of his predicament and exposing him to temptation: 'these my debts doe stare me in the face, and satan continually iniects them seeing my weaknesse & want of fayth' (p. 267). Occasionally he identified other sins responsible for his debts: pride, profuseness, and idleness in his calling. His fear of ruin could push him to the brink of despair. There was anecdotal evidence that depression could lead to insanity, yet he did not, like Wallington, contemplate suicide.[54] As he approached a crisis he asked rhetorically: 'shall I sink under the burden & suspend my fayth and be discouraged?' (p. 285). He appealed to God: 'wilt thou shew a miracle to the dead' (p. 267).

[51] P.S. Seaver, *Wallington's World: a puritan artisan in seventeenth-century London* (1985), p. 129.

[52] For forgetfulness, see Diary, pp. 182, 250.

[53] *Ibid.*, pp. 227, 230.

[54] *Ibid.*, p. 142. See the cases of Arthur Potter (*ibid.*, p. 265) and the man described by Mr Stancy (*ibid.*, p. 192). See also Seaver, *Wallington's World*, pp. 22, 31, 60.

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He drilled himself to accept the correct interpretation of the affliction as God's just and apt punishment of his sins, and was occasionally successful. Debt was a punishment that fitted this crime as it could be equated with sin, a debt owed to God: 'I have not cared for runninge in debt to thee by dayly strivinge against thee, & therefore it is iust with thee I should Runne in debt to men' (p. 142). Debt was the divine correcting rod: 'I kisse the rod & accept the burden' (p. 304).[55] He also used the metaphor of God the alchemist to describe this: 'when thou hast tried us & given us fayth & humilyty bringe us out of the fire as gold' (p. 270).[56] God had imposed hardship in order to teach him the lesson that he should 'live by fayth in regard of outward things, & to be contented in the want of them' (p. 139).

Repentance was the main weapon in the godly's war with sin and the flesh, enabling them to revert to virtue and faith. Woodford repeatedly performed this exercise of self-humiliation, which consisted of various elements neatly summarized in the sermon of a local schoolmaster, Henry Hall: '1 poverty of sp[iri]t & sight of wants 2 sence of them with sorrow & greife 3 hungringe & thirstinge after grace' (p. 146). The godly alone could make constructive use of sin to achieve repentance. In a lesson derived from the minister Andrew Perne, Woodford outlined the way in which contemplation of sin could be used to attain humility, and so turn away from the carnal self back towards a holy disposition: 'we ought to make a good use of sinne to be humbled by it, to goe out of o[u]r selves' (p. 225). He condemned his sins and the worldly nature from which they sprang. The resulting hyperbolic references to his own ungodliness were of course a requirement of the theology. In the most noteworthy of these, he addressed God in a phrase reminiscent of Cromwell's self-appraisal as the 'chief of all sinners': 'I am the vilest & the proudest wretch that ever lived that cannot contentedly submitt unto thee, nay Its a shame that I cannot depend uppon thee after so many p[ro]mises made to me from thy selfe & warnings given to take heed of these cares' (p. 159). Far from growing in grace, it seemed that regression was his lot. After smoking and drinking too much to forget his problems, he lamented: 'I th[r]ive not but am a very starvelinge in grace & godlines & stand as it were at a stay if not goe backward' (p. 324). He compared his own preoccupation with worldly concerns unfavourably with the attitude of the gentiles, although he probably also had in mind the quotation denigrating riches from the pagan Horace.[57] Humiliation climaxed in

[55]For another example of the comparison between material and spiritual defects, see Diary, p. 309.

[56]See also Seaver, *Wallington's World*, p. 129.

[57]Diary, pp. 110, 164.

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the recognition of his own spiritual impotence and dependence on God's mercy to be saved: 'if I remayne at home restinge uppon myne owne grace or p[er]formances I am utterly lost & damned forever, oh give me a Christ for his sake give me salvation freely' (p. 237).[58] He confessed to God that 'thou mightest glorify thy Justice in my destruccon', and begged that He deal with him 'in m[er]cye' (p. 227). Occasionally, humiliation shaded into surrender: 'Lord I will trust in thee though thou kill me I will lye at thy dore' (p. 136).[59]

In an attempt to induce God to lift his embargo on material wealth, Woodford worked to demonstrate that he had indeed learned his lesson, that God had successfully weaned him from worldly priorities to spiritual. Attempting to express a holy contempt of worldly riches, he wrote 'all earthly things yea the heighth of pompe or heapes of riches & are but dung & drosse in comp[ar]ison of things spirituall' (p. 143). In another passage he screwed up his resolution that 'a Christian in the lowest & worst estate and condition is in farre better case, then a man out of Christ in his greatest wealth and Jollity, and hath more true cause of cheerfullnesse' (p. 139).

In the process of repentance, the concomitant of humility was the disposition described in one of the Beatitudes as hungering and thirsting for grace, praying for God to alter (or heal) one's corrupt (or sick) nature by enduing one with the power to avoid or combat sin, the power of self-abnegation. Woodford asked God to 'increase my fayth empty me of my selfe' (p. 385).[60] He asserted his own spiritual impotence and yearned to access divine grace: 'give me the use of my graces for I am not able to stirre them up my selfe, Lord endue me with strength from on high' (p. 139). The looked-for culmination was God's near perfecting of him in this life – 'oh that I were as holy as an angell of light oh that I could doe thy will in earth as the angells doe it I heaven' (p. 324) – and glorification in the next: 'Lord give us [. . .] weaned affections from the world; Lord give us so to live to thee here that we may after this life be receaved into pa[ra]dise' (p. 124).[61] In a continuation of this metaphor, the solution was to be a weaning from worldly to spiritual affections, from carnal to spiritual breasts.[62] As we shall see, the rule of godly behaviour was moderation,

[58] For condemnations of human merit and lauding of divine mercy, see *ibid.*, pp. 112, 216, 227, 388.

[59] For humiliation see *ibid.*, pp. 256, 282; for divine favour being better than life, see *ibid.*, p. 227.

[60] For other examples, see *ibid.*, pp. 236–237, 288.

[61] For living to God forever, see *ibid.*, p. 307.The apocalyptic optimism of 1641 gave rise to a particularly mystical example of this yearning for grace derived from the Old Testament: *ibid.*, p. 388.

[62] *Ibid.*, p. 100.

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but immoderation was permitted when yearning for divine love and grace. Woodford prayed: 'make me sick of Love to the Lord Xt' (p. 284). So it was that, alongside his constant prayers for material supply, there were alternative requests for the grace to live by faith in the face of hardship: 'if I can live by fayth in this disadvantage of direfull melancholy surely I should have a most comfortable life if this were removed as one that can dannce in Wooden shoes would surely be more nimble in pumpes' (p. 264).[63] However, the affliction of debt was never removed and led eventually to the repossession of his lands. In the absence of further journals it is impossible to establish whether he reached a spiritual reconciliation with his increasing poverty.

Similarly, Woodford treated the afflictions caused by his family's illnesses as lessons in holiness. The swelling of Hannah's breast following childbirth was said to have resulted from their joint sin of 'deadnes in seeking' the Lord (p. 120), and the children's sicknesses were likewise attributed to parental sin. Woodford emphasized the following passage, referring to one of Samuel's maladies, with the pointing hand symbol: 'thou doest in goodnesse exercise us Lord make us gayners by every passage of thy p[ro]vidence towards us' (p. 333). When they feared that John might lose his sight, Woodford simply asked for pardon of their 'misdoeings' (p. 399). The moral was to love God above all else and to react to divine favour in the correct fashion. Children were seen as blessings, a comfort to their parents. However, the Woodfords' fault lay in their excessive love for their children, which overshadowed their love for God. Human attachments, unlike that between human and God, were to be characterized by moderation. Children were to be loved, but not carnally, for their own sakes, rather as divine gifts, which were to be received with grateful praise, and whose purpose was to stimulate godly action. During one of John's illnesses, Woodford prayed: 'graunt that our harts may sit loose from what ever we possesse, that thou alone mayest dwell in our soules' (p. 103). Referring to the children, he requested God to keep his and Hannah's 'affections from exorbitancy that we may love them in thee & for thee' (p. 104). Their carnal attachment to their children constituted an abuse of divine gifts; he implored God: 'strip us not of the m[er]cyes thou hast bestowed upon us for o[u]r abuse of them' (p. 399). Affliction was designed to correct this wrongdoing. During three bouts of sickness Woodford bargained with God as he did over debt: the three children involved were John, Samuel, and, most poignantly, Thomas, who died aged nine days on 27 August 1640.[64]

[63] Further examples of his asking for the faith to bear his predicament: *ibid.*, pp. 142, 228, 264.

[64] *Ibid.*, pp. 103–104 (John), 399 (Samuel), 362–365 (Thomas).

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He proposed to turn back the clock, to return each child to God for re-issue, so that this time he might receive the gift spiritually, with praises and a recommitment to godly activism, such as walking in God's way 'circumspectly & watchfully shininge in o[u]r conversacon to others' (p. 399) or 'more holily & precisely & circumspectly' (p. 364). Woodford pleaded movingly for Thomas's life, accepting that he was a temporary gift which could be withdrawn at any time, and submitting the issue to divine judgement: 'sanctifye this to me & my family whether it be m[er]cy or correcon & let even afflicon be in great m[er]cye' (*ibid.*). Unfortunately, the verdict was correction and he and Hannah were 'much afflicted' (p. 365), but he was able to conclude the episode on the correct pious note: 'helpe us to be bettered by this exercise blessed be thy name that thou remaynest still o[u]r god, thou art better then all the comforts of the creatures, oh make us gayners hereby for the Lords sake. It was buryed this afternoone' (*ibid.*). Although he loved his wife and children, their problems do not seem to have undermined his faith as indebtedness did. Indeed, their minor ailments often disappeared, reinforcing his belief in the power of prayer.

It should come as no surprise to learn that Woodford recorded his good works with less fanfare than he did his vices. Between sermons on Christmas Day 1637 he invited poor neighbours to his house for dinner 'who were much refreshed by it, oh Lord I pray thee enable me still that I may be able to give somethinge to those that are in want' (p. 154). Other works of charity included his London collection for the distressed population of plague-stricken Northampton.

To tackle his problems, Woodford made use of the various means of spiritual comfort available to him. Meditating on Scripture was the crucial part of his regime: the Sermon on the Mount saw off depression and the Epistle of James shielded him from Satan. The latter corroborated the idea that God tested believers to teach them patience. Thus, when Satan aggravated the crisis with his temptations, Woodford managed to find comfort in the thought that the outcome would be his spiritual improvement: 'Ile count it all Joy when I fall into diverse temptacons I trust & beleive the fruit of them shall be comfortable I meane not the temptacon & enticements of sinne but the fiery darts of Satan' (p. 269).[65] This led to him trying to cultivate the paradoxical habit of mind in which he would react to misfortune with joy. Scripture (on this occasion Mark 9:24) provided him with a favourite mantra with which to screw up his resolve: 'Lord I beleive helpe my unbeleife'.[66] This was possibly one of the

[65] *Ibid.*, pp. 264, 267–268.
[66] *Ibid.*, pp. 145, 165, 167, 254, 267, 339, 362.

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ejaculations in faith involuntarily escaping his lips as he rode the highways of Northamptonshire. The most comforting aspect of the Bible was that it allowed Woodford to place himself in an epoch-long tradition of professors. He traced his spiritual genealogy back to the heroes of the Old Testament, which taught that however much God had tested the godly He had never deserted them. Surely no less would be done for their modern counterparts. Unsurprisingly, the examples of Abraham (who had himself suffered from debt), Job, David, Daniel, Mordecai, and Cyrus were especially edifying.[67] During a crisis over debt from 6 to 8 December 1638, the Holy Spirit Himself intervened directly to plant apposite passages in Woodford's mind, which provided temporary alleviation of his depression.

Sometimes it needed another member of the godly to call attention to the relevant scriptural passage. Woodford found comfort in discussions with several godly contacts, but he achieved the most optimism about his financial predicament after a conference on 8 December 1638 with his friend Samuel Martin, who referred him to the Sermon on the Mount: 'if we walk in gods way & he sees good all these shall be added' (p. 268). The Sermon had come to mind spontaneously in previous days. Martin went on to expound other scriptural passages which demonstrated that God would lift the affliction once Woodford had demonstrably learned his lesson: 'fooles are afflicted for their folly & yet they cry & god doth deliver them' (*ibid.*). By the next morning the passage had embedded itself, inspiring optimism: 'though I have brought affliccon upon me through mine owne sinne & folly yet I cry unto thee & thou wilt surely have m[er]cy uppon me' (*ibid.*). Two months later he was still recycling the phrase and the idea; and he likewise wrote to Hannah in London, drawing her attention to passages that had comforted him.[68]

Woodford bolstered his sense of assurance by remembering his own spiritual history, and here the diaries came into their own. Since the elect persevered, evidence of a consistent stream of past favour was a convincing argument for elect status, as when he recalled, 'Thou hast bene my god hitherto & hast raysed me from the dunghill, I will surely trust in thee for time to come' (p. 140).[69] There was a degree of comfort to be gathered from God's carrot-and-stick style of pedagogy. In the past, He had granted a mercy to Woodford after having first

[67] *Ibid.*, pp. 134, 164 (trefoil symbol), 249, 264, 357, 364, 369 (trefoil), 385 (trefoil).

[68] *Ibid.*, pp. 263–264, 267, 282.

[69] For reference to providences, see *ibid.*, pp. 385, 387; for Woodford's relief from melancholy, see *ibid.*, p. 275; for God as deliverer, see *ibid.*, pp. 167, 226, 267; for Woodford's conversion and spiritual history, see *ibid.*, pp. 161, 165, 258, 396.

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'excercised me wth some affliccon or other & who knowes but this may have a mercy at the end of it' (p. 241).

Woodford bargained with God, sometimes in the form of a conditional covenant of the type he encountered professionally. Both individually and with Hannah, he pledged to regard God's fulfilment of His promise to provide for his material needs as an instance of divine love and to reciprocate with ecstatic praise and a recommitment to divine service. Interestingly, he created physical aides-memoires to remind himself to acknowledge divine beneficence in the event that it materialized. He twice carved his initials into ash trees.[70] More bizarrely, he invented a new genre of religious expression, spiritual toilet graffiti, writing 'CXW. 38. in the house of office for Cares of the world 1638. Resolvinge if the Lord doth helpe me to be put in mind when I shall sometimes come thether to prayse his name' (p. 270). The nature and occasions of such praises beggar the imagination.

Other focuses for meditations that stimulated his faith included the omnipotent divinity and its creation. Addressing God he asked: 'when I looke to thy word, & to the workmanship of thy hands the sunne moone & starres which thou hast made, I will say what ayleth thee oh my soule, [. . .] trust still in god for the Lord Jehovah is the work of ages' (p. 285). Woodford's universe was moral. Even in its ordinary operation it contained homilies for those with eyes to see them: for instance, the diligence of the ant was edifying. Meditation, on the Northampton to Wellingborough road, on the spectacle of hounds chasing a hare, led him to self-condemnation for lack of faith, and reminded him how the sinner was pursued by his own conscience and God's wrath. He also found solace in contemplation of the covenant and sabbath.[71] Perhaps a more surprising heavenly contemplation, given the supposed puritan dislike for any music except psalm-singing, was stimulated by hearing the Daventry wait musicians playing: 'my poore soule in the hearinge of it was lifted up above it to consider of heaven & of that great God who hath put this into the harts of men' (p. 161).

Woodford was keenly aware of his duty to attempt to solve his problems by recourse to normal remedies, not just to God. To combat his depression he tried the spa waters at Wellingborough, which were popular with Charles I, Queen Henrietta Maria, and Cromwell. Woodford partook of the waters on two occasions but to no effect. Next he tested the antimonial cup, a drinking vessel impregnated with the emetic antimony, which was reputed to have properties efficacious against melancholy. On the first occasion it was ineffective, but on the second he noticed a decided improvement. He also took care to

[70] *Ibid.*, pp. 262 (trefoil, a covenant), 234, 237.
[71] *Ibid.*, pp. 167, 256 (trefoil), 397.

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obtain treatment for his ill son, John, from a godly apothecary, and Hannah, when afflicted with sore breasts, 'used much meanes but they are ineffectuall' (p. 125), and later consulted Dr Aaron Gourdon about the same malady, who prescribed a purge.[72]

The holy family

Woodford sought to establish religion, rather than traditional dynastic concerns, as the founding principle of his family: 'feare of [God's] name will give beinge and continuacon to a family' (p. 175). He did not regard godly profession as a solitary pilgrimage but as a collective enterprise in which his closest co-religionist and 'yoakfellowe' (p. 278) was the wife provided for him by God through the holy ordinance of matrimony. Hannah, his 'deare & holy wife' (p. 223), possessed a calling equal to his own. Woodford acknowledged this by celebrating his wedding anniversary on 22 January, and in the diary he sometimes emphasized that date (and 3 April, their shared birthday) by conducting a review of their combined spiritual estates. On their fourth anniversary, in 1639, he gave thanks for Hannah and hoped that they might 'live more holily the fifth yeare then before let us & o[u]r family increase dayly in grace' (p. 278). We have already noted the reciprocal comfort that they provided during times of crisis. This suggests a degree of equality in their spiritual status. Woodford was certainly aware of his marital responsibilities, which he heard expounded by the famous Banbury lecturer, William Whateley: husbands 'ought not to be profuse or niggardly or Churlish' (p. 191). Hannah seems to have enjoyed a degree of independence, as when she and the other wives (including the mayoress) went drinking in the town.[73] His absence from Hannah was treated as an affliction from which they might both learn. He prayed God to 'sanctifye the absence of me & my wife from one another to each of us' (p. 215).

The Woodfords, despite their shortage of money, regarded their family not as a burden but as a divine blessing: 'give us such a seed', Woodford asked God, '(when in m[er]cye thou shalt add still to our family) as we may have cause to blesse thee' (p. 148). Indeed,

[72]K. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (Harmondsworth, 1973), pp. 113–128; C. Carlton, *Charles I: the personal monarch* (London, 1983), p. 94; J. Morrill, 'Cromwell, Oliver (1599–1658)', in *ODNB*; Diary, pp. 223, 247, 265, 286.

[73]Diary, pp. 302, 339.

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God had provided their son Samuel in response to their prayers.[74] However, as divine blessings, the purpose of the children's provision, continuance, or withdrawal, was spiritual, the religious education of the parents. Both needed to prepare spiritually for the birth in order to achieve an appropriately holy frame of mind. Woodford composed dedicated prayers: in Sarah's case while Hannah was in labour. For the mother, birth was a mystical experience: on the brink of Sarah's birth, Woodford asked God to grant Hannah 'strength & patience & a cheerfull spirit & speciall communion wth thee' (p. 403), and himself strove to achieve humility. Susanna's birth evoked an even more intense prayer. It was Woodford's wish that, for Hannah, the birth would be a re-enactment of her own rebirth, her conversion. At the instant of delivery, when the pain (the lot of fallen womanhood) was at its height, Hannah's faith would enable her to apprehend the divine blessing transfiguring grief into joy. He prayed to God: 'let the sence of thy favor come wth the sence of payne, & let thy hand mayd feel her Joy surmount her grief very much let her fayth remayne fixt upon thee immovably' (p. 400). The Woodfords' aspirations for their children were partly spiritual, that they should become saints, but they also expressed more conventional desires for male offspring with 'right shape & forme[,] use of witts' (p. 148), who would be a comfort to their parents. Deformity implied possible divine disfavour, as was confirmed by Woodford's uneasiness over Sarah Crutchley, who was born with extra fingers.[75]

The puritan mother's responsibility extended to suckling her own children, as Woodford acknowledged when he asked for 'the blessinge of the breast as thou hast given us of the womb' (p. 124), but this was not forthcoming. Hannah's breasts were often sore, making feeding impossible. Perhaps aware of godly expectations on the subject, they were reluctant to employ a wet nurse and did so only after taking advice. John was suckled by nurses Woodnot, Heighes, and Emerson. Another local, Goodwife Iblethy, nursed Susanna. With Sarah, the Woodfords used the services of a woman based at Enfield Chase near Edmonton, who was part of a well-established wet-nursing industry on the fringes of the capital.[76]

Pre-eminent among the roles that Woodford envisaged for himself was that of priest within his own family church: 'let my house be a Church & let mount Gerizim be amongst us' (p. 388). The mainstay of his daily routine was a session of prayers, at which the family became

[74] *Ibid.*, p. 298.

[75] *Ibid.*, pp. 95, 156, 400–401.

[76] *Ibid.*, pp. 112, 120, 123, 146, 315, 324; L.L. Schücking, *The Puritan Family: a social study from the literary sources* (London, 1969), pp. 67–68.

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synonymous with the household. Meetings were attended by Hannah and the infants, Woodford's clerk, Hatton Farmer, and a transient population of household servants, and usually took place either just before or after supper, the former time being preferable '(unlesse some waighty occasion forbid) because freest from drowsiness' (p. 113). He also mentions morning sessions. With Woodford in the chair, the main content of weekday sessions was a reading from Scripture of around one or two chapters. On 12 October 1637 the diary records recommencing the book of Genesis: the goal was a cyclical coverage of the whole Bible. By 15 November the family had reached the twenty-fourth chapter, by 28 November the thirty-third. References to these domestic devotions are infrequent, but by 6 August 1640 the family were starting in tandem the first chapters of both the Old and New Testaments, suggesting that the whole of scripture was covered every two or three years. On Sunday evenings the format was slightly different, consisting of instruction by the head of the family. Woodford, having taken notes at the sermons he attended, would repeat these to the family and then examine them to ensure that they had been paying attention. As he possessed the catechism written by the famous puritan divine William Ames, it is fair to assume that this was used as a teaching aid. Woodford counted his in-laws, Robert, Susanna, and Samuel Haunch, as part of his godly circle, and joined in their family piety when staying with them in London. The Woodfords were also close to Hannah's uncle, Christopher Haunch, who lived near them in the village of Cranford. Woodford had a similarly high regard for his own cousins – Robert Ragdale of Wilby and Gregory Dexter of Old, the radical London printer, colonial governor, and Baptist minister.

Within his miniature godly commonwealth, Woodford also laid claim to the roles of teacher and magistrate. He told God of his intention to prepare his children through religious education for their conversion experience: 'make them instruments of thy glory in their time and enable me to educate them to that end' (p. 124). Exposure to the family devotions would contribute to this, as would personal tuition in the providential mind-set expressed in the diarist's requesting from God the strength to 'singe of thy m[er]cyes & tell them to o[u]r children' (p. 299). This alludes to the practice of teaching not only by formal dogma but also by personal example. Woodford clearly intended to educate his children by reference to divine providences drawn from his own experience and recorded in his diary. Samuel Woodford acknowledged the spiritual value of his father's diaries, admitting that he had been 'piously & Religiously brought up in the knowledge & feare of God' by his parents. If education began at an early age, then so did an authoritarian discipline, provoking one

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of the servants, Sue Tue, temporarily to walk out in protest at the Woodfords' correction of their eighteen-month-old baby, Sam. As an adult he confirmed the strictness of his upbringing in which his parents 'never let me sin without regret', a seed that was belatedly 'powerfull through the Grace of God to reclayme me'.[77]

The obligation of the godly to form a community and avoid the company of the profane extended to the selection of servants, whose duty was to serve their masters, Woodford asserted to God, 'in thee & for thee' (p. 129). Woodford's choice of clerk, Hatton Farmer, seems to have been successful. He experienced much satisfaction while assessing Hatton's spiritual estate: 'I trust the Lord hath begunne the good worke of grace in his soule' (p. 192). When Hatton lapsed by spending time at an alehouse, Woodford's correction was accompanied by a desire to do him good, mimicking God's chastisement of believers through affliction.[78] This provides an indication of his later treatment of his own children.

The Woodfords' relations with their household staff were considerably less successful, despite their having taken the requisite care to select godly candidates rather than just locals.[79] For example, they employed relations of, or those recommended by, godly friends. Elizabeth ('Besse') Curwyn was the stepdaughter of the Woodfords' godly friend George Curwyn, who, with his wife Elizabeth, later emigrated to Salem, Massachusetts.[80] The six-year-old Besse deserted the Woodfords to return to her mother, and afterwards Woodford noticed that several townspeople were making typically anti-puritan allegations against Hannah. They did 'traduce my wife in layinge the imputacon of haughtinesse of spirit to her charge; and this we suppose to be through the unfaythfullnes of Besse our late servant, & the talkinge of her dame' (p. 123). Woodford's account is further evidence of his kicking against the interpretation of divine affliction required by godly sainthood. Although he accepted that the disobedient servant was an affliction sent to strengthen them, he was reluctant to kiss the rod. He asserted that Besse and others had wronged Hannah, though

[77]Diary, p. 152. Quotations are from NCA 9494, front section. Woodford's education of his children had apparently paid dividends. Samuel Woodford's attempts at spiritual autobiography owed much to his father's influence. For instance, two of them (that published in Ferrell, 'Imperfect diary', and NCA 9494) begin with similar appeals for privacy. These two also demonstrate a similar spiritual purpose to his father's volume, namely to provide the autobiographer with assurance and to proselytise his posterity.

[78]Diary, p. 271.

[79]As part of their poor relief provision, the town government attempted to enforce the employment only of Northampton residents as servants: Markham and Cox, *Northampton*, II, pp. 180, 326.

[80]For the Curwyns, see Diary, p. 121, n. 115.

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he blunted the accusation by admitting that maligning people was a failing of the town as a whole: 'Lord [. . .] heare our poore prayers in graunting us a sanctified use of this affliccon let us be bettered by it, teach us to goe through good report & evill, & in thy due time Cleare us, & Lord p[ar]don this gen[er]all sinne of us in this towne (traducinge)' (*ibid.*).

Besse Curwyn was quickly replaced by Ann ('Nan') Morris from Towcester, who a week later claimed to be lame and returned home to be replaced by Elizabeth ('Besse') Morris from Kingsthorpe, who lasted only ten days before departing 'in hast' (p. 126). Shortly after, Sue Tue also left in protest at the Woodfords' punishment of Sam. Woodford replaced Besse Morris by sounding out his godly friend William Tompson by letter. Tompson, who lived at Wilby, recommended a girl called Temperance but, despite the promising name, Woodford's problems with servants continued unabated. He employed Richard ('Dick') Odell, the son of a townsman he knew, even though he had been one of Hatton's alehouse companions. Woodford continued to see wayward household servants as divine instruments sent to punish his shortcomings, while insisting on being the offended party.[81] Accepting that the relationship between masters and servants involved reciprocal responsibilities, he was certain that the fault lay on one side only and clearly regarded them as unconverted: 'give them to doe their dutyes to us & we to them take away the rebelliousnes & risinge of spirit that are amongst us, Lord Convert them unto thee make sinne their greatest sorowe that Christ may be their greatest Joy' (p. 339).

Holy duties and ordinances

'Constancy in holy dutyes (p. 146)' or ordinances was a key indicator of growth in grace. When using these catchall terms, Woodford drew a distinction between private and public. The former denoted solitary devotions and the latter collective – family prayers, official church services, even exclusively godly prayer meetings. Private (or secret) prayer stood at the apex of this hierarchy as Woodford implied after attending one sermon, noting that he 'did behold the goeinge of my god in the sanctuary even in this publiq ordinances' (p. 272). The diary captures a life of private prayer and most entries are couched in those terms – extemporary, informal, and shading into spontaneous meditations. His most detailed and lengthy compositions took the

[81] *Ibid.*, p. 309.

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form of petitionary prayers in which the believer requested everything from spiritual strength to temporal supply through the intercession of Christ: 'blessed be thy name oh Lord for erectinge this office of peticons that we may in all exigencyes put up our supplications in the name of the Comon savior the Lord xt & receave helpe' (p. 152).[82] Indeed, Christ was the altar upon which the sacrifice of prayers was made. Praise was another mode of prayer he often used, for example when a petition was granted, and by recording such divine answers to prayer he shored up his sense of assurance. Prayer in all its forms was a spiritual activity, but only the worthy could reap its benefits. Rigorous preparation was essential: the mind must be alert, not sleepy, and free from worldly interference as, for instance, when travelling. Attaining efficacious prayers depended on achieving the holy frame of mind in which faith and zeal predominated. Woodford bemoaned his failure to achieve this: 'my prayers have longe wanted that fayth & fervency they have formerly bene offred up with beinge kept downe with the thorny cares of this world, & distraction of businesses' (p. 139). At a godly meeting, the quality of his own contribution was compromised by a similar failure, leading him to condemn himself for dereliction of duty: 'I p[er]formed duty but my hart was very dull & the Lord for my sinnes in too much carking care as I may supose wtheld himselfe much from shininge, Lord accept of my paynfull & straightned prayers' (p. 383).

Public ordinances were nevertheless of crucial importance to his divinity: frequenting sermons was the public practice most associated with puritanism. Woodford's irreducible minimum weekly requirement for sermons did not alter whether he was at home or away. In all circumstances he attended two sermons on Sunday. The only occasion on which he failed to achieve this was 4 March 1638, when the authorities cancelled the afternoon sermon at All Saints' parish. Hannah missed out on one more occasion owing to illness. Furthermore, in Northampton he attended his own parish church and did not usually resort to the trademark godly practice of gadding. The need to do so was obviated by the rich variety of spiritual wares available in his own parish. He gadded only once (9 June 1639), and then in company with the mayor and aldermen, to St Sepulchre's, another town-centre parish, to sample the preaching of a newly appointed incumbent. In contrast with his punctilious Sunday observance, his attendance at the Thursday lecture was infrequent: he records attending on twenty-six occasions. From time to time the opportunity for supplementary sermons arose, but again he regarded attendance at these as optional. He was equally concerned with the *quality* of Northampton sermons, as we shall see.

[82] Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, pp. 113–128.

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Woodford rarely commented on the public prayers provided by these ministers. The occasional exceptions shed light on his expectations of the ministry and on the puritan atmosphere obtaining in his parish. In remarks on two ministers who capitulated to court pressure and went back on godly habits, he expressed a zero tolerance even of occasional conformity with canonical requirements. He voiced his distaste for the Prayer Book service as practised by Charles Newton, whose performance had 'turned somewhat canonicall [he] gave thanks for the S[ain]ts dep[ar]ted' (p. 183). Woodford clearly preferred the extemporary prayers favoured by the puritan ministry. He was willing to forgive Newton an aberration he did not repeat. More serious, however, was the behaviour of William Martin, an apostate who fell from former godliness by practising conformity with canonical ceremonial – 'he bowes at the name of Jesus & stands up at gloria patri' (p. 106) – for which Woodford accused him of backsliding. Clearly such behaviour was abnormal at All Saints'.

In terms of the numbers of sermons attended, Woodford's behaviour during his stays in London was similar to that in Northampton. He always attended two on a Sunday, though he supplemented this with more extras than when at home, and, once only, indulged in five over one week, much less than Wallington's maximum of nineteen.[83] However, the pattern of his sermon-going in the capital was very different from that at home. He almost invariably gadded from his base at the parish of All Hallows, London Wall; and he never mentioned Andrew Janeway, the incumbent there. Woodford attended Sunday sermons in the parish only twice, when he and Haunch had invited Andrew Perne to preach.

His parish of first resort was the godly preaching centre of St Mary's, Aldermanbury, where John Stoughton was the incumbent. Woodford held Stoughton's preaching in the highest regard whether it was his two sermons every Sunday or lectures on Wednesdays and Fridays, and described his sermons as excellent and Stoughton himself as a star. Woodford was equally impressed with his replacement, Edmund Calamy, another nationally famous puritan preacher. Like his predecessor, Calamy invited many other minsters to preach in the parish, such as Simeon Ashe, all of whom received Woodford's praise. Woodford's second choice parish was St Stephen's, Coleman Street, where the future Congregationalist, John Goodwin, was the vicar. Once, Woodford and Haunch travelled outside the city on Sunday to Calibute Downing's living at St John's, Hackney, where Goodwin preached both times. A further two ministers popular with Woodford

[83] P.S. Seaver, *Wallington's World: a puritan artisan in seventeenth-century London* (1985), p. 37.

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were Obadiah Sedgwick of St Mildred's, Bread Street, and Joseph Simonds of St Martin's, Ironmonger Lane.

What stands out is the overwhelmingly positive tenor of Woodford's remarks about preachers, whether in London or at home: he was less critical than Samuel Rogers, the professional preacher from Essex.[84] He did not reserve his praise for radical puritans: his taste in preaching seems relatively eclectic. He lauded moderate Calvinists such as Edward Chetwind, Dean of Bristol, and Richard Holdsworth, Master of Emmanuel College, Cambridge. He was impressed with the future Royalist Jeremy Leech, minister of St Mary le Bow, Cheapside, who invited the Northamptonshire minister James Cranford to preach with him. Woodford recorded very few bad sermons in the London parishes. William Martin's replacement at the famous St Antholin's lecture, Budge Row, was described as indifferent. However, the preacher at St Botolph's, Aldgate, who was probably the incumbent, the future zealous Royalist Thomas Swadlin, was such a disappointment that Woodford retreated immediately to Aldermanbury.

Central to Woodford's piety was the ordinance of the Sunday sabbath, which, unlike the saints' days enjoined by the church authorities, was sanctioned by holy writ. His sabbatarianism reflected the divisiveness at the heart of all his divinity, in that only the godly would love the Lord's Day and its activities, while the ungodly mass would despise it. He thanked God 'for thy sabaths which the world loves not' (p. 327). Of course, Woodford engaged in public worship on weekdays, but his sabbath observances were of a higher order in that the entire day was set aside as sacred. He rejoiced that God 'had given us the lib[er]ty of his blessed Sabath, to rest from our labours & to refresh our selves in holy Converse with him in the blessed ordinances' (p. 116). All secular activity was proscribed to allow the ordinances free reign, but mere attendance at, and mechanical utterance of, prayers was inadequate. The effects of these ordinances on the believer were held to be spiritual. In order to participate in 'a holy & a right manner', the individual must be in the correct spiritual state of 'fayth & sincerity of hart' (p. 146, trefoil symbol). To achieve this, preparation was essential. Woodford sometimes prepared (and not only when he proposed to take communion) with a perfunctory prayer on Saturday, occasionally, as most notably on 3 December 1637, followed by a longer version the next morning.

If the optimum state was achieved, then the spiritual benefits of the public ordinances could be dramatic, as Woodford revealed in hoping

[84] T. Webster and K. Shipps (eds), *The Diary of Samuel Rogers, 1634–1638*, Church of England Record Society XI (Woodbridge, 2004), pp. xlii–xlvii.

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that the divine 'spirit may come along wth thy word that so every grace may be increased every sinne decayed every affeccon inflamed and rightly placed put wind into my sayles this day' (p. 163). Here is a clear illustration of the idea of the word preached as an edifying boost. Indeed, it functioned actually to dispel evil, as Woodford noted when speaking in praise of the Wellingborough lecture.[85] His most intensely edifying experience resulted from the sermon by Thomas Case on 18 March 1638, concerning the saints' assurance, one of the few performances to approach the potency of secret prayer, although Thomas Ball's efforts on 16 December ran it a close second. A more typical reaction was that he described his mind as being in a holy frame or graciously affected, or with adjectives indicating life, such as 'enlarged' or 'quickened'. Non-holy frames of mind, resulting from faulty preparation, he described with words betokening death, such as 'dull', 'heavy', or even 'dead', and these resulted in self-condemnation for the sin of slackness in duty. In a typical blend of the spiritual and the mundane, he blamed his sleepiness at morning sermon on 'my infirmity of sinnes & want of care to goe to bed early the last night' (p. 181). In its worst form this spiritual dullness could result in Woodford accusing himself of breaching the fourth commandment – he confessed to God his habit of 'prophaninge thy Sabath & ordinances continually' (p. 393). It is an indication of the intensity of the godly reverence for the sabbath that a lack of spiritual rigour was viewed as profanation, and this explains the puritan reaction to the Laudian Book of Sports, which allowed more straightforwardly profane activities.

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper was central to Woodford's piety: he averaged six communions per year (double the canonical requirement) but, given the gaps in the journal, the actual figure was probably higher. He rarely received outside Northampton, the exceptions being once at Wilby and thrice at Aldermanbury, London. The rite's importance to him is demonstrated by his once (on 4 November 1638) choosing to renew his covenant. The significance of this ordinance was more than commemorative: the believer could expect substantial spiritual benefits. He prayed: 'let me this day by fayth eate the flesh & drinke the bloud of the Lord xt' (p. 359), and hoped to be 'alive & quickned & may feele a sensible increase of grace & decay of sinne' (p. 222).[86] Again, only the fit could reap these rewards, and fitness comprised the same repentant qualities that were the goal of all Woodford's piety: he asked God to 'graunt that I may reape benefit by them, give me the fayth spirit & affeccons of a xxian'

[85] Diary, p. 392.
[86] *Ibid.*, pp. 221, 262, 280, 386.

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(p. 222). Calamy alluded to these qualities in a sermon expounding Psalm 51: 'The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.'[87]

The rite, though carried out in public, was essentially an internal affair. Woodford carried out the same soul-searching preparation as for the sabbath itself. In the most colourful instances of his preparatory routine, on 2 June and 1 September 1639, he confessed his sins directly to God, instead of via a priest, and strove for a contrite heart.[88] There were also external characteristics to pure communions: the worship should be free of carnality, and the serving minister, who must himself be worthy, might exclude the obviously profane.[89] An unrewarding communion was the result of poor preparation. God withheld himself at the 2 June sacrament owing to Woodford's 'deadnes & coldnesse in dutye' (p. 309), which persisted until Tuesday, when God sent the affliction of disobedient servants to draw attention to the flaw. The concentrated effort involved and the devastating implication of failure is illustrated by a later passage: 'I laboured to have my hart affected but I had little comunion oh my god. oh my god hide not thy face from me' (p. 367).

The godly community

Woodford enjoyed contacts with a variety of godly professors from London and across the Midlands, but his base was the community centred on Northampton, a town notorious for puritanism since the reign of Elizabeth. The network contained some of the leading figures in the lay and clerical elites controlling the town, the most important to mention being Thomas Martin, his wife, Jane, and their eldest son, Samuel. Thomas Martin was the most prominent leader of the godly group in the oligarchy in the first half of the seventeenth century and he was also Woodford's closest friend and ally: indeed, as mayor in 1635 he had driven through Woodford's candidacy for the position of steward in the teeth of considerable opposition from other aldermen. A wealthy woollen draper, Martin had served as mayor in 1616, 1624, and 1634. During his terms of office he had pursued a vigorously godly agenda: in 1624 the corporation had moved unilaterally against

[87] *Ibid.*, p. 313 and n. 721.

[88] P. Lake, 'William Bradshaw, antichrist, and the community of the godly', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 36 (1985), pp. 582–585.

[89] Woodford held that ungodly ministers should not be allowed to give communion to the godly (Diary, p. 289), and questioned whether it was contrary to divine law to receive the sacrament in the presence of those who were overtly profane (*ibid.*, pp. 188–189).

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alehouses, suppressing many. From 1607 he had also taken the leading role in seeing off repeated challenges from the conformists in the town, led by John Lambe, and in 1628 was reported for holding an illegal conventicle in his house. In 1643 he was elected a justice of the peace for the town and served on county committees.[90] The following year Woodford drew up Martin's will, and was rewarded with a golden ring inscribed 'from a true friend'.[91] Samuel Martin was only slightly less eminent, serving as a churchwarden of the parish in the 1630s, chamberlain of the town in 1638, mayor in 1645 (when Northampton was a Parliamentary garrison), and captain in the militia in 1648.[92]

The Rushworth family was another crucial part of the Woodfords' inner circle. Francis Rushworth and his wife, Joan, were natives of Coventry, and Woodford made social trips with them back to their roots.[93] Francis was an apothecary by trade and part of the next generation of town oligarchs. He served as churchwarden of All Saints' in the decisive years of 1637 and 1638, as mayor in 1643, and was appointed to the county committee.[94] The Sargent family – Roger and his sons, Joseph and William – were equally important. To this vital group we must add the names of Woodford's landlords: Samuel and Mary Crick, and William and Ann Spicer. Crick's father, George, a town bailiff and All Saints' churchwarden, had been accused of illegal conventicling with Thomas Martin. William Spicer was bailiff in 1649: his will was witnessed by the stationer Peter Whalley, another of Woodford's contacts.[95] In 1634 Whalley had been accused by the Privy Council of selling copies of *Histriomastix*, William Prynne's attack on stage plays; he later served as town chamberlain, mayor, and MP for the borough. The Fisher family was also central to the godly scene.

[90]Markham and Cox, *Northampton*, II, pp. 115, 304–305, 552. Martin was the nephew of Francis Foster of Whiston, a radical puritan minister deprived for nonconformity in 1605. Martin and the godly had clashed with John Lambe in 1607, and he later led the opposition to Lambe's chancellorship of the diocese, being instrumental in promoting charges against him (with the support of Sir Edward Montagu) to the 1621 parliament, which Lambe survived only by activating his influence at court through the Lord Keeper, John Williams: see Sheils, *Puritans*, p. 81; Longden, *Clergy* (Foster); TNA, STAC8/205/19; Fielding, 'Peterborough', pp. 84–85, 185, 188. Martin was later accused of entertaining the minister John Woods at a conventicle in his house: PDR, CB A2, under dates 29 May 1628, 15 June 1629, and 13 July 1629; NRO, Finch (Hatton) MSS, F(H) 133.

[91]PDR, Archdeaconry of Northampton Wills, third series, A178.

[92]Vestry Minutes, pp. 30–31; Markham and Cox, *Northampton*, II, pp. 441, 552, 568.

[93]Diary, pp. 212–213.

[94]Vestry Minutes, pp. 33–37; Markham and Cox, *Northampton*, II, pp. 17, 441, 552.

[95]Book of Orders, p. 18, also entry dated 23 October 1637; Vestry Minutes, pp. 17, 21, 25, 29, 32, 34, 36, 38; Markham and Cox, *Northampton*, II, pp. 171–172, 441, 552, 561–562; PDR, CB A2, under dates 29 May 1628, 15 June 1629, 13 July 1629; TNA, PROB/11/263; G. Ford, 'Where's Whalley? The search for Sir Samuel uncovers a Whalley–Cartwright alliance in Northamptonshire', *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, 62 (2009), p. 38.

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Francis, mayor in 1608 and justice of the peace for the town from 1630 to 1642, supported Woodford in his contest for the stewardship, but his brother John enjoyed a closer relationship with him. A hatter by trade, in 1619 John had been appointed master of the house of correction by the town assembly. In 1635 he had stood accused of preaching to the prisoners in the jail, and he was the only layman noted by Woodford as preaching in the All Saints' pulpit. He was elected mayor in 1640 and served on the county committee. Finally, Woodford numbered his master, John Reading, and his brother Jason among his godly acquaintanceship, though not a third brother, an attorney called Daniel.[96]

One of the defining characteristics of the godly community was its preference for voluntary forms of piety, shading into sociability. The Woodfords, Rushworths, and Martins in particular met constantly at one another's houses, usually over a meal. The purpose of these gatherings was to worship, to demonstrate their distance from the corrupt world, and to achieve collective growth in grace. This is suggested by Woodford's description of a supper conference at his house at which he and Hannah were joined by Francis and Joan Rushworth: 'blessed be the Lord for the priviledges & opportunityes we enioy of meetinge together in peece & Love, oh Lord sanctifye & blesse every meetinge of o[u]rs that we may glorify thy name & be instruments of good to one another' (p. 124). At another supper conference at home the Woodfords were in company with the Rushworths and Samuel Martin. Through conference the saints aimed to promote godliness – faith, joy, mutual love, and improvement. Woodford requested God to grant them 'comfort in o[u]r meetinge graunt that we may be cheerfull in the confidence of fayth & direct us to good & wholsome discourse that we may be bettered by it' (p. 166). The result was positive. The outcome was equally upbeat when Woodford attended a supper conference at Samuel Martin's attended by Peter Whalley and their wives.[97] At a dinner conference at the Woodfords' attended by the Rushworths and John Fisher and his wife, the godly schoolmaster Daniel Rogers read a tale from Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*. On a further occasion Woodford joined John Fisher to seek the Lord to address both personal and political problems. Woodford seemed almost to identify this godly network with the visible church: 'Lord [. . .] heare o[u]r poore prayers doe good to thy church blesse us & o[u]r families' (p. 366).

Such examples could be multiplied. Sometimes these consultations assumed a more disciplinary tone: Woodford condemned the

[96]Markham and Cox, *Northampton*, II, p. 115; Diary, pp. 95 (and n. 1), 155, 336–337.
[97]Diary, p. 186.

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beneficed minister James Lewis for 'his course of company keepinge' (p. 124). This brought about some reformation.[98] Perhaps the clearest example of the spiritual benefits of godly conference is a series of meetings with the Martins. While Hannah was absent during the plague, the Martins and Mary Crick provided food and company, but even more important was spiritual sustenance: during one conference with Samuel Martin, Woodford received valuable counselling about his melancholy; at another they shored up one another's resolve to avoid bad company.[99] The godly also held larger meetings to discuss public affairs, whose subject matter will be discussed later. On occasion, godly conferences could appear to be the urban government at prayer as when Woodford went 'to Joyne in dutye wth gods people' (p. 182). At least ten individuals were present, including the serving mayor, William Collis, his wife and family, the Woodfords, John Fisher, William Turland, and Mrs John Harbert. As with other ordinances, only the spiritually worthy would benefit: Woodford confessed to being 'very dull & unfit' (*ibid.*), illustrating the spiritual rigour deemed necessary, but the outcome was still positive. Further meetings took place at the houses of Dr James Hart (Lord Edward Montagu's physician), James Fryers, and Thomas Ball, the incumbent of All Saints' parish and leader of the Northampton godly.[100]

The godly network to which Woodford belonged had used its influence in the corporation to appoint Ball, a minister with national clout, who had built up, through the influence of his mentor, Dr John Preston, a network of influential contacts with clergy such as Richard Sibbes, and lay politicians such as Viscount Saye and Sele, the Earl of Warwick, Christopher Sherland, and Sir Gilbert Pickering.[101] Ball then appointed his own subordinates: Charles Newton served as curate from 1632 until 1639, and William Holmes from 1639 until 1645. Daniel Rogers, the son of Daniel, the lecturer of Wethersfield, Essex, served as schoolmaster from 1631 until 1642.[102]

Ball and the corporation had developed the already godly town into an outstanding centre for puritan piety. Woodford's diary is a unique source for the operation of the exceptionally dynamic system of preaching over which Ball presided. He provided two sermons on Sunday – often delivered by him and his curates but frequently by a bewildering array of guests from around the county and country. The

[98] *Ibid.*, p. 239.
[99] *Ibid.*, pp. 255, 267–268.
[100] *Ibid.*, pp. 188, 370.
[101] J. Fielding, 'Ball, Thomas (1590–1659)', in *ODNB*; Markham and Cox, *Northampton*, II, p. 384.
[102] Diary, p. 107, n. 49.

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corporation also required him to maintain a lecturer, but in reality Ball operated the Thursday morning lecture as a combination to which he again invited a host of visitors.[103] His regime also included a communion celebrated on the first Sunday in the month. In total, Woodford heard sermons by thirty-two different ministers, but even this tally is an underestimate. We have already noted the powerful effect on him of a sermon delivered by the visiting divine Thomas Case. Unsurprisingly, Woodford heard Ball more often than any other, and his remarks were invariably complimentary. Andrew Perne was another of his favourite preachers. Perne's efforts were never regarded as anything less than profitable, several times as excellent, and twice earned him the accolade of being a star. Three visiting divines delivered sermons that affected Woodford strongly: an unnamed preacher, William Rathbone, and Henry Hall.[104]

Woodford reserved his criticism for sermons he encountered outside his own parish: for example, in other town-centre parishes, staffed by conformists. When he visited Giles Thorne, Sir John Lambe's client, at St Sepulchre's, his conclusion was negative: 'it appeares by his sermon what he is, Lord weed up the darnell & the Cockle' (p. 310). He also tested the water at St Giles's parish, where George Colson was the curate to Richard Holbrooke, a Church court official. He could only bring himself to stay for part of Colson's Christmas Day sermon because there was 'but litle in it' (p. 154).

The Thursday lecture and Sunday observances allowed Woodford to mix with godly contacts, both lay and clerical, from Northampton's hinterland. After the conclusion of public duties, the congregation dispersed into a number of dinner parties to discuss, among other topics no doubt, the contents of the sermons they had just heard: we have already seen how good sermons stimulated Woodford to take notes for later repetition. After Henry Hall, schoolmaster of Paulerspury, had delivered one of the Sunday sermons, he attended a supper conference held at the Woodfords' with Joan Rushworth. The day after Richard Trueman, the vicar of Dallington and son of the godly saddler, had delivered a Sunday morning sermon at All Saints', Woodford and his mother dined with him on venison pasty at

[103]The lecture differed from those held in many market towns in that it was not held on a market day but on Thursday, which had been of civic significance as far back as the Order of 1571. From May 1630 the mayor and aldermen met fortnightly after the lecture to discuss town affairs. The lecture (which dated from 1629 and perhaps even from Jacobean times) occurs in the records in 1654. In 1656 Alderman John Gifford elicited the help of Sir Gilbert Pickering and Cromwell's son-in-law, Lord John Claypole, to support the ministers in the town, and the last reference to it is in March 1658: Markham and Cox, *Northampton*, I, p. 128; II, pp. 49, 400; Fielding, 'Peterborough', p. 159, n. 6; Sheils, *Puritans*, pp. 120–122.

[104]Diary, pp. 146, 276, 365.

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the Rushworths' house. The lectures provided similar opportunities for godly social interaction. After five separate lectures delivered by Ball, Woodford attended the following dinners: at his own house attended by Henry Hall and Hatton Farmer's mother; again at home to entertain Daniel Rogers, the Martins, and the Rushworths; at Ball's house; at the house of the churchwarden and baker Peter Farren, who wined and dined the whole town assembly; and at Joseph Bryan's, a Gray's Inn bencher, who had invited Woodford's confidant John Bullivant, rector of Abington, his wife, Mary, and the Rushworths.[105]

The lecture attracted devotees from further afield. The most eminent was Robert Rich, Earl of Warwick, who came to hear Ball, his client and ally, preach. However, the most important incomers from Woodford's point of view were his friends Thomas Pentlow and Andrew Perne of Wilby, and Thomas Watts and Henry Allen of Easton Maudit. Woodford befriended two men called Thomas Pentlow who were related to each other. One was lord of the manor of Wilby and married to Elizabeth Jones of London, where the couple owned a second house in Ironmonger Lane. Woodford took refuge at his house in Wilby for several months in 1638 when the plague was in full spate at Northampton. Another held a manor at Broughton.[106] The two Pentlows seem to have agreed in their religious convictions: Pentlow of Broughton had in 1627 presented Andrew Perne, one of Woodford's favourite ministers, to the other Pentlow's parish of Wilby. Perne, who preached in co-operation with fellow ministers on a Sunday – such as his curate, biographer, and convert, Samuel Ainsworth – headed a godly following (including Pentlow and Woodford's cousins, the Ragdales) which had supported the previous incumbent, the notorious puritan John Everard. During the 1630s they clashed with the Church authorities over their gadding to Leicestershire to hear Thomas Hooker preach, their refusal to report gadders who came to hear Perne, and their ceremonial nonconformity.[107]

[105] *Ibid.*, pp. 109 n. 63, 153, 160, 187, 309, 337.

[106] Pentlow of Wilby (d. 1657) served assiduously on county committees and on the bench during the Civil War and Protectorate periods: his memorial inscription at Wilby proudly stated that, after serving for ten years as a justice of the peace, he had finally been made of the quorum. See P.R. Brindle, 'Politics and society in Northamptonshire, 1649–1714' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Leicester, 1983), pp. 134–135, 138–139, 143, 144, 150–151; *VCH Northamptonshire*, IV, p. 147; TNA, PROB/11/263; *Historical Gazetteer of London before the Great Fire* (London, 1987), pp. 118–125; Bridges, *History of Northamptonshire*, II, p. 156. For Pentlow of Broughton and Weston Favell, who was married to Isabel (née Eakins), see Venn, under William Pentlow; Metcalfe, *Visitation of Northamptonshire 1618*, p. 178; *VCH Northamptonshire*, IV, p. 109; PDR, Church Survey Book 5, fos 13r, 131; TNA, PROB/11/153.

[107] Longden MS, 17 March 1627; Fielding, 'Ball, Thomas'; J. Fielding, 'Perne, Andrew (*c.*1595–1654)', in *ODNB*; R. Cust, 'Sherland, Christopher (1594–1632)', in *ODNB*; Longden,

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This community tended to take control of the religious rites of passage, such as baptism, by performing them in private at home. For the godly, the role of conversion necessarily reduced the importance of the sacrament: Woodford requested God to convert his (already baptized) children: 'make them thine by adopcon' (p. 124). Before Sarah's baptism, he asked that God 'sanctify my child for the ordinance of baptisme & sanctify the ordinance to the child, & make the Child thine owne by grace' (p. 234). Before John's baptism, his father simply wished that the inward grace might go along with the outward sign. Nevertheless, the ritual was still regarded as important: Woodford ensured that his children were baptized within a week or two of birth and requested the vicar to baptize the six-day-old Thomas at home when it was clear that he would not live long. However, the significance was mainly symbolic, marking the children's entry into the community of the godly, and was an occasion for socializing. The Woodfords chose godparents, according to the stipulations of the Book of Common Prayer, although they referred to them by the more acceptable title of witness. Woodford appointed John Reading and his mother, Jane Woodford, as witnesses at John's baptism. Owing to Woodford's unclear instructions as to the child's name, the witnesses bickered when they were asked to supply the name – Joan favoured Robert but Reading prevailed, providentially according to Woodford, with John. While John's baptism was held on a Sunday in the course of normal observances, Susanna's was performed on a Tuesday. Charles Newton conducted the rite and it was thought necessary to provide a sermon, for which purpose Woodford procured Andrew Perne. Daniel Cawdrey provided the baptismal sermon for John and Martha Gifford's child. Woodford acted as a witness to John Bullivant's child, and attended the domestic baptism of Joseph Sargent's.[108] In line with tradition, there was sometimes a celebratory meal consisting of wine and sugarplums.

Churching was the follow-up rite relating to childbirth and here, again, the godly reduced the ceremony, a reintegration of the new mother into the social life of the parish, to an exclusive occasion performed away from the parish church and its ceremonial requirements. After John's birth, Hannah Woodford was churched at home by an unnamed cleric in the presence of the landlords

Clergy; PDR, CB 61, under 11 July 1630; PDR, CB A63, fos 192, 408, 417, 425; TNA, SP16/308/52; E. Allen, 'Everard, John (1584?–1640/41)', in *ODNB*; TNA, STAC8/35/3; TNA, SP16/251/25. Robert Ragdale had been excommunicated in 1626 for insulting the local conformist minister: PDR, CB 58, unfoliated, 28 July 1626; PDR, Miscellaneous Book 5b, fo. 2r.

[108] Diary, pp. 95–96, 150, 186–187, 323, 370.

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(Mary Crick and William and Ann Spicer), John Loe (the godly ironmonger), and his wife, Ann. Charles Newton churched Hannah at home after Susanna's birth in the presence of Mary Crick and the Rushworths; after Thomas's birth, William Holmes performed the ceremony, after which he attended a dinner at the Woodfords' attended by Crick, Christopher Iblethy (the husband of the Woodfords' wet nurse), John Friend the sexton, and Messrs Fery and Johnson, who both acted as parish clerks at various times and may therefore have had an official role in the proceedings.[109]

Godly example

For puritans, the character and experience of individual saints was at least as important as abstract doctrine.[110] When James Lewis preached at the funeral of John Rolles, Woodford noted 'Lord thou art pleased to preach to us by thy word & by example, oh teach to profit' (p. 384). The godly were expected to increase collectively in grace by a process of trading experiences of divine providence in their lives. The most striking example is Andrew Perne's relation of his conversion experience to Woodford. He claimed to have been converted at St Catharine's College, Cambridge, where he had held a fellowship during the mastership of Richard Sibbes.[111] Woodford derived a similar amount of edification from the contemporary example of Thomas Warren of Old, 'on whom I trust the Lord hath shewed much m[er]cy & converted him a sinner from his evill way Hosanna in the highest' (p. 394).

Woodford's co-religionists confided to him instances of the providential intervention of the Holy Spirit in their lives. John Fisher, the evangelist of the jail, related his delivery from the violence of prisoners who had locked him in the dungeon during a jailbreak. Thomas Watts attempted to comfort Woodford about his level of debt using the example of his own deliverance.[112] Woodford reciprocated with edifying tales of his own, sometimes perhaps derived from that list of providences, his diary. The warning at the beginning of the volume shows that the contents were not meant for all eyes. Only fellow professors could be trusted to peruse it: he 'shewed my book

[109] *Ibid.*, pp. 197, 326, 369.

[110] P. Collinson, '"A magazine of religious patterns": an Erasmian topic transposed in English Protestantism', in *Godly People: essays on English Protestantism and puritanism* (London, 1983), pp. 499–526.

[111] Diary, pp. 99–100.

[112] *Ibid.*, pp. 170, 259.

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to some Lord deliver me from danger & blesse & prosper thy people' (p. 362). The godly's daily task of working out their salvation was lent a historical perspective by reading Scripture or the *Acts and Monuments*, which permitted the godly to identify themselves as part of a timeless struggle, as the heirs of past saints, a 'saving remnant' in a corrupt world and unreformed church.

The pilgrimage that started with conversion ended with death. As with so many aspects of godly life, the secret was in the preparation. Woodford strove to be prepared for death, but left no will.[113] Godly dying, like godly living, was not a private but rather a social, even theatrical, affair.[114] The death of 'that holy man' (p. 97), Thomas Freeman of Cranford, was a textbook case: the epitome of a godly death. The collective nature of godly religion is again reflected in Woodford's narrative of the deathbed drama. He attended Freeman's bedside with his mother and Hatton Farmer. In this final act, the dying professor and the assembled godly conclave provided mutual encouragement and corroboration of their callings. By this late stage the spiritual man was expected to have all but banished the carnal. The signs of election included a love for the godly and a cheerful enthusiasm for death deriving from assurance. Freeman's will had already stated his full assurance of salvation and the godly witnesses now informed Woodford of Freeman's joyfulness: he 'complained that his body was become a very unfit organ for his soule to worke in he reioyced much to see us; and seemed no whit afrayd of death but desired to be dissolved and to be with the Lord xt' (*ibid.*). This was a staple godly formula. Woodford's group returned the next day to find Freeman weaker but on the brink of a holy death. Shortly afterwards, he 'sweetly slept in the Lord' (p. 98). The godly spectators had provided spiritual comfort and had, by prayer, helped to send him joyfully on his way, corroborating the dying saint's status as a potent holy man. Freeman had chosen his parish priest, Robert Lambe, to deliver the funeral oration. Lambe was the client of Bishop John Williams of

[113]However, he did draft that of his friend Thomas Martin, and perhaps had a hand in its composition. Martin asserted man's impotence ('he cannot p[ro]mise life to himselfe for one minute'), and his gratitude to God for all worldly and spiritual blessings. He stated his assurance of elect status (Christ had 'layd up a crowne of immortality for me') and his expectation of physical resurrection, of being 'cloathed with my Skinne, & with these eyes of my body shall see my Redeemer': PDR, Archdeaconry of Northampton Wills, third series, A178.

[114]R. Houlbrooke, 'The puritan death-bed, c. 1560–1640', in C. Durston and J. Eales (eds), *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560–1700* (1996), pp. 122–144.

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Lincoln, and his reputation was mixed. However, those attending the ceremony were unequivocally godly.[115]

The example provided by Woodford's friend Joan Rushworth was less straightforwardly positive. When her final illness took hold, Joan was 'troubled in Conscience' (p. 390) and as Woodford's family was about to begin its Sunday evening sermon repetition the crisis erupted and Samuel Martin arrived to bring Woodford to her bedside. Joan, harbouring doubts about her election, 'was in mighty horror roringe sometimes most hideously & cryeinge out she was damn'd she was damn'd, she should be in hell to all eternity, & that she had neglected so great salvacon' (p. 391). Woodford and Martin played the roles of spiritual physicians. Their joint counsel at the height of the crisis elicited from her a response that demonstrated the required marks of election – love of God and the godly, and the recognition that she had offended God by sin: 'the Lord stayed her in some measure in the midest of her horrors she acknowledged she loved god & his children, & that she had iniured god but he had done her no iniury at all' (*ibid.*). Woodford prayed for her and inscribed the prayer in his diary. He was in no doubt about the significance of this affliction: in wrath God had withdrawn Himself from Joan to teach her humility and encourage her to renewed repentance. Yet Woodford also derived from the incident lessons for himself and the other onlookers, namely to increase vigilance against sin, which had caused God to obscure himself from Joan, and to re-engage with godly values – the necessary mixture of dread and love of the divinity, of confidence and doubt. Woodford does not tell us anything further about Joan's illness but the conclusion appears to have been satisfactory. She died over a week later and Woodford noted that Daniel Rogers preached excellently at her funeral.

If Woodford derived spiritual encouragement from the reality of his fellow professors' lives, then he did equally from the sermons preached after their deaths. Rogers was said to have preached excellently again at the funeral of John Ball, an Oxford scholar whose father, Lawrence, was elected mayor in 1641. Woodford's friend John Bullivant preached at the funeral of a Mrs Wilson. More revealingly, Charles Newton preached at the burial of Goodman Atkins, which suggests that it was not only the wealthy who received such tributes. This also illustrates the process of continuous peer review and assessment by which godly lives progressed. Woodford treated the sermon critically, comparing it with his own knowledge of the subject's life. Newton, said Woodford, had 'spoke very well of who I think deserved no lesse' (p. 188).

[115]Thomas Freeman's will stated that he was 'in hope and full assurance' of resurrection. He also bequeathed money to both ministers of Cranford, Robert Lambe and John Fosbrooke: NRO, Archdeaconry of Northampton Wills, second series, G211; TNA, SP16/266/54.

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Godly unity?

Woodford regarded angry divisions in society as sinful manifestations of still carnal natures. When witnessing an argument between non-godly participants, he mused 'while they wrangled, what Jarringe & Contradiccon sinne hath brought into this world Oh Lord let thy gospel be so powerfull upon us that the Lyon may become a Lamb' (p. 127). He condemned himself for anger, having exploded against the ungodly Daniel Reading, expressed 'too much foolish choler' (p. 272) in response to a dinner invitation from the corporation, and, after a drinking session, broken out in 'Corrupt passion' (p. 324) against Edward Chadwick, a professional rival. He was equally furious with servants whom he had instructed to catch his horse.[116] Squabbling among the saints was more serious still, as the godly community was partly defined by its unity. However, to characterize the relationships between the Northampton godly simply as a matter of amicable collaboration is to tell only half of the story. Woodford reveals the group to have been riven by disputes. There were naturally tensions within his own family, whether it was his mother and wife bickering over sugarplums, marital strife, the Woodfords' clashing with Hannah's Uncle Christopher, or Woodford falling out with his father-in-law over money. The godly ideal of moderation in behaviour involved a restraint of humankind's natural passions. After Jane and Hannah's spat, Woodford wrote that God had given his family 'speciall love one to another so I humbly pray thee give us discretion, & power over every passion, that no jarre may at any time come at all to interrupt that true affection betweene us' (p. 96). Inter-godly tensions at work are covered in a later section.

At times the failings of the godly threatened to become public, with the danger of discrediting their profession, especially during the sensitive decade of the 1630s. These underlying tensions came to light when Woodford and Robert Haunch quarrelled with John Reading over the fee that they jointly owed him for obtaining the county almonership for Woodford. Woodford claimed that Reading had demanded £100 at first but had then allowed Woodford to beat him down to £50. He was thrown into a panic by Reading's threat to make the matter public by pursuing the debt in the Court of Requests, and hoped to settle the matter without recourse to the law. One of the justifications for this was that publicity would bring godly profession into disrepute. He was not prepared to accept all the responsibility for this, and apportioned the guilt for the affliction between himself and Reading. He asked God: 'Are we not both thine, pr[e]serve thy gospel

[116] Diary, p. 110.

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from imputacon, we are both of us vessels wherein there is no pleasure & thou mayest Justly breake us one against another, but oh let us live in thy sight, & let thy m[er]cye pr[e]vent o[u]r ruine' (p. 283). The dispute was successfully concluded by reference to two saintly umpires. Woodford had made use of this form of mediation previously, when he and Hannah had fallen out with her uncle, Christopher Haunch. On this occasion the godly minister William Spencer of Scaldwell fulfilled the role, by whose physicianship the injury to the godly community was 'somewhat cured' (p. 98). That the Woodford *vs.* Reading dispute had come to a head in London perhaps explains the choice of two London clergy – John Stoughton and William Gouge – as referees. Stoughton was doubtless Woodford's selection, while Gouge, prolific writer and minister of St Ann's, Blackfriars, where Reading's London home was situated, was his. The divines suggested a compromise figure of £60, which Woodford paid.[117]

Equally disturbing for Woodford was his falling out with his cousin Robert Ragdale and other Wilby residents engaged in a dispute over leases with Thomas Pentlow, the lord of the manor. Woodford's position was ambiguous since it was his friend Pentlow who employed him to operate the court. He helped the tenants to draw up their statement of grievances, but was distressed to learn that 'my cousin had much abused me & s[ai]d [. . .] that hell swarmed with Lawyers' (p. 383). Woodford was particularly upset by the fact that fellow godly professors ('those that are good' (p. 378)) were charging him with provoking them to promote a lawsuit against Pentlow, then taking Pentlow's side in the ensuing dispute. Woodford struggled fiercely to accept the right interpretation of the affliction. He strove for the necessary qualities of humility and submission to the divine will, which required him to love his accusers as the instruments of divine castigation of his sin: 'Lord pardon my faylings in any kind, & doe thou blesse those that speake ill of me & doe them good & make me a gayner by it [. . .] remove pride & pr[e]iudice let us be base & low in o[u]r owne eyes' (p. 379). However, he simultaneously harboured rebellious objections to his opponents' views, whose blameworthiness he contrasted with his own righteousness: 'bringe forth my righteousnes & uprightness her[e]in as the Light' (*ibid.*). From Woodford's viewpoint he was also an offended party, which necessitated a posture of culpability towards God but righteousness towards man. Addressing God he admitted: 'I have deserved ten thousand times more from thee (though not from them)' (p. 383). Claiming to have worked impartially to negotiate an informal compromise, he prayed for his own eventual submission to the scourge.

[117] *Ibid.*, pp. 283, 302, 304, 308.

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His opponents, he stated to God, 'are but the instruments thou usest to doe me good by, helpe me to love them' (*ibid.*). The dispute was apparently resolved by agreement rather than litigation, but the ill-feeling between Woodford and the Wilby residents persisted. He hoped for reconciliation, but the axiomatic unity of the godly was not restored.[118]

The godly's relationship with the ungodly

Woodford subscribed to a highly polarized and exclusive view of Christian society, whose members he categorized as either godly or ungodly. As Peter Lake has shown, this was a viewpoint with potentially radical ramifications in which ordinary members of the national Church and society were excluded from the Christian community.[119] Woodford described the godly in orthodox terms and their excluded opponents as being at the opposite pole spiritually – as the reverse of righteous, strict, godly, holy, good, honest, religious, Christian, profitable, converted. The acme of godly behaviour was a mixture of preciseness and prudence, to walk 'holily & precisely & circumspectly' (p. 364). The godly possessed the ability to recognize these qualities in others.[120] However, the diary's descriptions of Woodford's encounters with strangers show that snap decisions were rare. On the road he met 'one Mr Taylor of Birmingham a godly man & his freind, I rec[eive]d much good & comfort in discourse & conference with Mr Taylor' (p. 342). Similarly, he travelled with a Mr Richards, a carrier from Loughborough, 'an honest religious man I hope' (p. 278). A third instance involved a journey with 'an honest man of Titchmarsh one heyes' (p. 170). In all these cases, Woodford felt confident after only a few hours in judging them godly.

His experiences at Clement's Inn show how godly groups could coalesce. Woodford and his godly chamber-fellow, Stephen Harvey, had no sooner installed themselves than they sought out other likeminded men. Harvey, said the diarist, 'hath found out a society of honest younge men in o[u]r house blessed be god for it, Lord increase thy graces in us all' (p. 332). The group, described severally as their honest or Christian society or company, induced a Mr Ratcliff to join them. One night they disputed 'which way we should goe as most

[118] *Ibid.*, p. 392.

[119] P. Lake, '"A charitable Christian hatred": the godly and their enemies in the 1630s', in C. Durston and J. Eales (eds), *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560–1700* (1996), pp. 145–183.

[120] C.L. Cohen, *God's Caress: the psychology of puritan religious experience* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 148–149.

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p[ro]fitable in o[u]r meetings' (*ibid.*); another time the professed aim was to 'seeke the Lord' (p. 333).

Godly taxonomy was not entirely a matter of black and white: there was room for grey. One could never be absolutely certain about a person's status, not even one's own. Woodford requested a meeting with Stephen Chapman, a minister who originated in his home parish of Old but who held a living in Devon, 'whom I did desire to sift because I had heard well of but not from p[er]fect intelligence but his hast[e] beinge much I am not yet satisfyed but I hope very well' (p. 102). In this picture of the judicious Woodford assessing the evidence of godliness presented to him by a member of the clerical elite and finding it wanting there is further evidence that peer assessment was at least as important for the godly calling as individual introspection. There was ample scope for differences of opinion over godliness, and Woodford's verdicts on individuals have the power to surprise. While regarding the moderate puritans Robert Bolton and Joseph Bentham as godly, he perfunctorily dismissed their friend and collaborator, the barrister Edward Bagshaw, as 'a rude man' (p. 191), despite his fierce reputation for opposing Laudianism.

Puritan disapproval of various aspects of contemporary culture is well documented. In a society where drinking and smoking were normal, the godly ideal was not complete abstinence but moderation in carnal pleasures. On one occasion Woodford confessed to God an overindulgence in alcohol: 'let me find cherefullnes in attendinge uppon thee wthout such squeezinge the Creature for that which it cannot yeild wthout thee' (p. 247). His love of tobacco he acknowledged by asking God to 'take off the necessity from my body & the affection from my mind of usinge Tobacco' (p. 236). Wicked alcoholic immoderation might lead to drunkenness, a sin dire in itself but also a catalyst leading to greater wickedness. When Woodford learned that a man had committed adultery he concluded that 'this is a fruit of his drunkennesse' and requested God to 'fence my heart for ever ag[ains]t such abominacons' (p. 257). However, his behaviour does not seem to have differed hugely from the prevailing norm. He noted his frequent shortcomings retrospectively in the journal. Such lapses occurred even when in the company of professors: at Francis Rushworth's house, 'instead of comfortinge my selfe with gods creatures I through want of moderacon was sick' (p. 288). After a meeting at Samuel Martin's, Woodford complained of their collective failings: 'let not our metings be an occasion of excesse, but make us moderate' (p. 298). He later noted the failings of both himself and Simon Moore, the minister: 'I drunke too much wyne wth him for it made me a litle ill afterward' (p. 328).

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From time to time Woodford was obliged to interact with unprofitable company, a malign influence over the godly. Such contacts were permissible only if one had a calling. Yet he was sometimes prepared to tolerate this necessary evil, as, when eager to obtain royal patronage, he socialized with two royal servants – Henry Middleton, a sergeant-at-arms, and Mr Winstanley, keeper of the royal apartments at Whitehall. He lamented his failings, of committing sins in bad company, in writing: 'Lord what doe I doe in such Company [. . .] Let not the cares of the world & melancholy cause me to put forth my hand unto evill' (p. 247). He had already described these men as unconverted: at Wilby one Sunday they 'did not like the length of the sermons, Lord convert them unto thee' (p. 242).

Woodford details various characteristics of the ungodly, among which profanity and opposition to godly piety are prominent. Middleton and Winstanley embodied both attributes. However, the stark dichotomy between the godly and the ungodly existed mainly in Woodford's mind: his action was usually limited to recording his regrets. He again internalized his rejection of sinners and their sins after a session at the Swan Inn in Kettering with bad company, consisting mainly of conformist ministers: 'let me never goe into such Company againe unlesse I have a calling' (p. 236). While noting the malign influence of sinful company into which he had fallen at Grafton Regis – conformist ministers and other 'lea[r]n[e]d drunkards' (p. 343) – he drew a nice distinction between their excess and his own slightly better behaviour, which was neither drunkenness nor moderation but still sinful: 'the Lord kept me that I ranne not to the same excesse, [. . .] yet I had cause to be humbled for want of that moderacon that should have been in m[e]' (*ibid.*).

Woodford found support for his determination to avoid bad company from his friend Samuel Martin after they had both lapsed – in Woodford's case with the town chamberlain, Edward Burgins, whom Martin nevertheless included among his friends. Woodford lamented 'Lord give me I pray thee wholly to forsake & reiect such company', and conferred with Martin, who 'blames himselfe for keepinge company sometime wth those that feare not god in drinkinge wine & takinge tobacco wth them now and then' (p. 255). Both men resolved 'in gods feare & wth his helpe to reforme in that p[ar]ticuler' (*ibid.*). This resolution seems to have worked in the short term: three days later, Woodford rejected an invitation to socialize with James Lewis at the Swan Inn at Kettering where he had previously fallen into bad company. Yet this was the exception, and he continued to achieve only limited success in avoiding 'occasions of evill' (p. 257).

That negative examples from life could be as potent as positive ones is demonstrated by the story of William Perkins, a former soldier

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and keeper of the Swan Inn at Northampton. An ungodly death to set against the godly ones, Perkins expired, rumour had it, 'havinge caught a surfeyt wth drinkinge' (p. 302). Woodford attended his funeral for its didactic benefit and does not mention the content of the funeral sermon preached by Charles Newton, but concludes 'make him an example to me & all other that heare of it that we may learne moderacon in the use of thy m[er]cyes' (p. 303).

The telling of jokes and funny stories was another custom to be treated with circumspection. Woodford could appreciate their attraction but was suitably pious about the danger of sin, unlike Daniel Reading and others that had 'a great facultye in merry tales & Jests which I dare not allow my selfe in or least apply or give my mind unto, although they take much with the hearers' (p. 198). He apparently abstained, but his only condemnation was internal. He compared Reading's unprofitable company with the profitable company of his barrister friend Henry Goodere: 'give me more to avoyd the socyety that is not p[ro]fitable as Mr Readinge, Lord blesse & doe good to Mr Goodere whom thou hast endued with the grace of thy sp[iri]t' (p. 336). The attitude towards inherently sinful activities was clearer cut: when two squires, John Syers and Robert Mulshoe, 'played longe here at night' (p. 198) – presumably at cards or dice – Woodford simply refrained and concluded 'Lord convert them' (*ibid.*).

More offensive yet were those aspects of conventional culture that involved misuse of the divine name – swearing and the drinking of healths – as they entailed a direct breach of the third commandment. Woodford restricted his response to opting out of the offensive behaviour. A Mr Meridale invited him into company at an inn and, Woodford conceded, 'showed me much love'; but when the company's behaviour deteriorated he stood aloof: 'they were loose & swearinge, & dranke a health or two which I would not pledge in the Ceremony oh Lord establish me that I never decline thy truth' (p. 130). He thought this sin serious enough to activate his duty of reproof, although he exercised this mainly when away from home among strangers, when the consequences for his own reputation were fewer. He met a 'very wild gent' (p. 315) on the road from London to St Albans, where they lodged together. The next day Woodford took on the role of evangelist, issuing an admonition, and praying for the conversion of the unnamed gentleman. Woodford 'often intreated him to leave his swearinge, Lord convert him' (*ibid.*). Similarly, in company with William Beeley, archdeacon of Carmarthen, he 'opposed a health which he began: blessed be god' (p. 185). At the Swan in Kettering, Woodford acted in concert with Francis Rushworth, who was rather more outspoken than he. The diarist was 'troubled to be in such Company' with the innkeeper, John Baxter, and others, and noted that

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'we reproved Baxter the host for his swearinge Lord bestowe grace upon him' (p. 243). This no doubt constituted the shining conversation he promised God. In general, however, the course of normal social interaction was not greatly disturbed.

In his journal Woodford condemned activities that were anathema to the godly – bear-baiting, maypole-dancing, and stage plays.[121] He denounced the University of Oxford during a visit as a sink of iniquity: it was 'p[ro]digiously p[ro]fane I p[er]ceave for drunkennesse swearinge & other debauched Courses, stage playes & Lord reforme these seminaryes' (p. 316). Yet in the 1650s he sent his son Samuel to this 'seminary', which had, in the meantime, been reformed by Parliamentary visitors. In reality, Woodford was willing to apply a degree of latitude when participation in various pastimes was part of the expected round of socializing. Despite his contempt for stage plays he witnessed an interlude called *The New Hunt* during a social visit to Sir Christopher Hatton at his palatial Elizabethan pile, Kirby Hall: 'we saw litle of it cominge late' (p. 238). However, returning to Kirby the next day he was in the audience to witness another interlude, *Masculine Humours*, by the rabidly anti-puritan poet and cleric Peter Hausted. Neither of these works has been traced.

Woodford positively enjoyed several traditional pursuits: like Cromwell and Colonel John Hutchinson he liked music, which he found to be a transcendental experience, and was happy to go bell-ringing at Wilby with Thomas Pentlow and Samuel Ainsworth.[122] He may even have attended the Easter horse race at Northampton Heath on 29 March 1638 with Pentlow and Watts. Clearly a far from dour puritan, he did not find pleasure only in prayer meetings. He relaxed by strolling with his family in Moorfields, London's first civic park, by playing bowls at Wellingborough, and by fishing with Thomas Bacon, squire of Burton Latimer, at his watermill.[123]

Godly attorney

Woodford regarded his profession as a divinely ordained calling. The bedrock of his career was the stewardship of Northampton, to which the corporation had appointed him for life after he had taken the steward's oath. John Reading would have passed on to him a written guide to his duties – the now lost 'Steward's Book of

[121] Diary, pp. 118, 179, 316.

[122] J. Morrill, 'Cromwell, Oliver (1599–1658)', in *ODNB*; P.R. Seddon, 'Hutchinson, John (bap. 1615, d. 1664) in *ODNB*; Diary, p. 243.

[123] Diary, pp. 214, 218 and n. 456, 231, 232.

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Annual Memoranda of Court Proceedings'. Woodford's court work revolved around the weekly meeting of the Court of Record, at which he served as deputy clerk to the town clerk, Tobias Coldwell, and as clerk to the bailiffs.[124] The mayor presided over the court, which met every Monday except for a vacation in August. Woodford served as a witness to the enrolment in the borough records of important contracts. His income derived from fees: a day's takings ranged from 16s to an exceptional £3. The steward was also clerk of the bailiffs' court, which was the equivalent of the sheriff's court in the rest of the county. Woodford does not make separate mention of the meeting of this court, which probably also assembled on Monday, when several functions converged. The third of his court duties involved keeping the court leet dealing with manorial business and petty crime on behalf of the mayor.

The steward worked closely with the mayor and recorder to organize the administration of urban justice at Northampton's quarter sessions, at which the recorder presided. Woodford co-operated with Mayor William Collis to prepare the business of the sessions, and on 9 December 1637 with the bailiffs to invite to dinner the recorder, Richard Lane, a Middle Temple bencher with court connections, and the county justice of the peace, Dr Samuel Clarke, who was responsible for the Hundred of Spelhoe, in which Northampton lay.[125] The mayor initiated charges against individuals while the steward drew up the necessary paperwork. For example, Woodford's friend Mayor John Gifford required him to draw up such charges against Richard Mottershed for misbehaviour in the Monday court and against Humphrey Ramsden for night walking, drunkenness, and causing an affray: these charges had political ramifications and will be discussed below. Meanwhile Woodford was winning the trust of Lane, as he records presiding over the quarter sessions himself as Lane's deputy.[126]

Performing as the representative of the corporation, Woodford negotiated with individuals and other bodies, most often over charitable bequests to the town. When the legacy bequeathed by Sir Ralph Freeman, mayor of London, to his home town of Northampton was not forthcoming from his son-in-law, Sir George Sondes, Woodford liaised between Mayor Collis and Sondes's cashier. Alderman Thomas Wheatley of Coventry had left an annual amount to be lent to Northampton tradesmen, naming the aldermen of

[124] Markham and Cox, *Northampton*, II, pp. 3, 116–117, 533. Woodford had been appointed by the upper chamber of the assembly, the mayor and aldermen (previous mayors).

[125] *Ibid.*, pp. 103–106, 115–116, 130–132, 533.

[126] Diary, pp. 108–109, 163, 310.

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Coventry as the trustees of his charity; Woodford was part of a delegation of Northampton aldermen despatched to Coventry to negotiate with the mayor and corporation for payment. Mayor Fowler and the corporation charged Woodford with the task of collecting tax arrears due to the town from the Soke of Peterborough. Having successfully negotiated with the recorder and justices there, he was delighted by the praise that he received from his own aldermen on his return. Similarly, in the plague year of 1638, Woodford represented the town's interests to the justices meeting at the county quarter sessions at Kettering by passing on the corporation's desire to hold the next county sessions at Wellingborough rather than Northampton itself because of the disease.[127]

A variety of miscellaneous duties devolved upon the steward. Together with the recorder he was instrumental in installing the new mayor at Michaelmas. Recorder Lane would read a charge to the new incumbent, after which Woodford tendered the oath of office to him. The steward also made payments on behalf of the corporation – to the minister for his maintenance, to the town wait players, and to messengers delivering royal proclamations from London, although Woodford disputed this last responsibility with the sergeants. The steward acted as clerk to the coroners, who were responsible for investigating sudden deaths, and was expected to attend various civic functions.[128] By virtue of his office, he also exercised the quasi-judicial function of arbitrating disputes. Woodford and Bailiff Benoni Coldwell successfully effected a compromise between Messrs Peach and Hart. Less successful was the attempt of Woodford and Thomas Martin to mediate in a dispute between John Bernard and Alexander Eakins over the keeping of greyhounds. This clearly demonstrates that Woodford's office allowed him to box well above his weight socially, as both were members of the gentry. He and his fellow referees, Thomas Martin and Thomas Morgan, met at the Swan Inn to provide arbitration but failed to prevent the escalation of the dispute, which continued with a scuffle.[129]

The success of Woodford's stewardship hinged on his maintaining a good working relationship with his employers in the upper echelons of the corporation. With this end in mind, he sent a gift of mutton to the town's attorney, Daniel Reading, and dined with him and with Mayor William Collis. He sent a six-gallon 'roundlet of claret' (p. 328) to Mayor-Elect John Danby and a turkey to Recorder Lane.

[127] *Ibid.*, pp. 173–174, 239, 253, 276, 319.
[128] Markham and Cox, *Northampton*, II, pp. 112–114, 130–132; Diary, pp. 119, 126, 160, 162, 290, 328, 371, 380.
[129] Diary, pp. 127, 323.

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Indeed, Woodford was cultivating Lane and his wife, Margaret, as prospective patrons: he persuaded Lane to appoint him his deputy to keep the court for the Hundred of Hamfordshoe with the hope that, thenceforth, 'this small wheele' would 'turne about a greater' (p. 173), but Spencer Compton, the Earl of Northampton and Lane's patron as lord of the hundred, overruled Lane by appointing his own candidate, John Eakins.[130]

Woodford's relationships with a number of other members of the corporation were, however, problematic. The steward argued constantly with various town officers, many of whom were godly, in disputes that were caused by personal dislike, or social or professional rivalry. He squabbled with Bailiff Benoni Coldwell, a member of his godly network. Though accusing himself of 'rash anger & violent passion' (p. 181), he pleaded in mitigation that he had been provoked. Edward Burgins was another bugbear. A barber by trade, Burgins served as chamberlain of the town, but Woodford regarded him as bad company. However, Burgins's will, which included a godly preamble, shows that he enjoyed godly friendships with Samuel Martin and Joseph Sargent. Woodford's most persistent enemy was the mayor, William Collis, who attended a godly meeting with him and who was regarded as a nonconformist by Sir John Lambe's informer. Woodford and Thomas Martin quarrelled with Collis and the sergeants (Thomas Crutchley, James Fryers, and John Hall, also members of the godly community) over who should pay messengers delivering royal proclamations to the corporation. A greater row erupted over Woodford's objection to the level of Monday court fees authorized by Collis and paid to him by the sergeants. Collis blew hot and cold, and Woodford lamented that he would never win the man's favour: 'I can have small hope of it if I looke unto the disposicon of the man' (p. 150). As a result, Woodford was obliged to appeal to his allies, John Gifford, Alderman Roger Sargent, and Chamberlains Thomas Judkins and Joseph Sargent, but the conclusion of the dispute goes unrecorded.[131]

Woodford's absence from the town during the plague of 1638 strained the relationship with his employers, who remained at their posts.[132] He obtained from Mayor-Elect Richard Fowler a leave of absence from the latter's installation at Michaelmas, but later Woodford feared that Fowler would dismiss him for his absenteeism.

[130] *Ibid.*, pp. 148, 155, 157, 172, 180, 182.

[131] TNA, PROB/11/195; TNA, SP16/474/80; Diary, pp. 126, 127, 129, 150–152.

[132] The corporation stayed put (Diary, p. 206), as did Thomas Ball (Fielding, 'Ball, Thomas'). Francis Rushworth took a shop under the Swan Inn, Kettering (Diary, p. 243), while several of Woodford's neighbours sheltered at Wellingborough (*ibid.*, p. 213).

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The corporation may have been placated by Woodford's charitable fundraising efforts on behalf of the stricken town: he supported the relief efforts undertaken, after the appeal of Mayor William Collis for aid, mainly by Recorder Lane, the town attorney, Richard Rainsford, and county justices Drs Samuel Clarke and Robert Sibthorpe. Woodford acknowledged the non-partisan nature of these charitable schemes (these men, we shall discover, occupied the opposite pole from him in politics and religion) while noting the reluctance of the godly justice, Sir Rowland St John, to lend his support. Lane's appeal to the Privy Council had met with a swift response: the county justices of the peace were to raise a weekly contribution of £100 on top of the £48 per week already ordered by Clarke and Lane from the towns within five miles of Northampton.[133] Woodford enhanced this official effort with deeds of his own. He wrote to Mayor Collis giving him permission to contribute the court fees due to him to the relief of the poor and the sick. Enlisting the help of his father-in-law, Robert Haunch, he twice (in June and July 1638) set about raising contributions from Northamptonshire expatriates living in the capital and from Haunch's London friends. He amassed around £70 and £11 respectively. Sir Paul Pindar, a merchant prince and diplomat originating in Northamptonshire, outshone the other donors with a contribution of £50. When transporting the first of these sums into the country by carrier proved prohibitively expensive, Woodford concealed the gold coins in his boots and assumed the responsibility himself. He undertook further money-raising schemes with the help of another Northamptonshire native, the London alderman William Abell, who suggested first a petition to the Court of Aldermen (which foundered on a technicality, despite the support of the mayor, Sir Richard Fenn), and then one to Archbishop Laud (the fate of this latter idea is not recorded). Woodford's fears of dismissal proved groundless and he was welcomed back and allowed to resume his duties.[134]

The tireless search for patronage shows that Woodford aspired to the career progression of a successful attorney. Haunch was a potential source. With his backing and that of Worsley, a friend who was clerk of the Tallow Chandlers' Company, Woodford began manoeuvres to obtain the clerkship of Weavers' Hall, of which Haunch was the upper bailiff in 1636 and 1637. The attempt was abortive but Woodford was equally active back in Northamptonshire, where (though conscience-stricken) he coveted the position of clerk of the peace for the county, which was filled by Francis Gray of Wellingborough. The achievement of such a post usually depended on the gentry's patronage, so when

[133] *Ibid.*, pp. 203–204, 241, 249.
[134] *Ibid.*, pp. 202, 210, 218–220, 230, 252.

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the rumour of Gray's illness reached him, he headed immediately to Wellingborough with Pentlow of Wilby, but the severity of the illness must have been exaggerated and Gray survived for years.[135] Sheriff Peter Tryon was responsible for Woodford's belated attainment of the county undershrievalty in 1653, at the end of his career and his life. This apparently new influence in his life may simply have been the posthumous exertion of the influence of his old master, John Reading, who had served as undersheriff in 1623 under Tryon's father, Moses.[136]

In late 1638 Woodford launched a search for employment in the national sphere. After an apparently chance meeting at Wilby with Henry Middleton, a royal sergeant-at-arms, and his companion Winstanley, the keeper of the royal apartments and galleries at Whitehall Palace, Woodford jumped at the possibility of royal patronage. He arranged to rendezvous with Winstanley during his next visit to London and, after enjoying a guided tour of the royal apartments, elicited from Winstanley a promise to obtain for him a position in the king's gift. After prolonged socializing with Winstanley and Middleton in London, Woodford gained an interview with John Benbow, clerk of the patents. At Benbow's house in Green's Lane, Westminster, Woodford rifled through his book and established that reversions had been granted on only three of the seven auditorships of the exchequer. Woodford urged Winstanley to procure one of the reversions for him but, despite further costly oiling of the wheels, Winstanley prevaricated, and the subject disappears from the diary.[137]

There was one occasion on which the search for central patronage was successful: Woodford's purchase of the county almonership from Reading. The episode speaks volumes about seventeenth-century business ethics. Woodford successfully covered it up, but he clearly felt qualms of conscience and prayed to keep his conscience 'ungashd' (p. 283). Above all, he feared being caught. If the matter became public: 'that will discover to the world that I give money for the place & then another may step in & get it from me' (p. 279). Such transactions were regarded as acceptable so long as they were kept secret. On 14 February 1639 Woodford attended the lord high almoner to Charles I, Bishop Walter Curll, at Winchester House, to be confirmed in office. Woodford entered into a bond of £200 with Curll to collect the various forfeitures due to the crown and to submit them to Curll in

[135] *Ibid.*, pp. 97, 131, 219, 221, 229. Haunch had been elected to the livery in 1616 and was chosen as upper bailiff in 1636 and 1637: A. Plummer, *The London Weavers' Company 1600–1970* (London, 1972), p. 451.

[136] Bridges, *History of Northamptonshire*, II, pp. 289, 318; NRO, Tryon (Bulwick) MSS, T(B) 248, 259/6; TNA, STAC8/139/6.

[137] Diary, pp. 242, 246–248, 251.

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the Easter and Michaelmas terms. This was no doubt the reason for Curll's meeting with Woodford at Northampton the following Easter, though the diarist gives no details of monies received and makes no further mention of the post. Nor did he express any disquiet at working alongside a bishop who enthusiastically supported Laudian religious reforms.[138] In the end, despite Woodford's receptiveness to the idea of court patronage, his career was not crowned with great success and he remained a provincial attorney.

The perquisites of the stewardship of Northampton were never adequate to Woodford's needs. In consequence, he was constantly engaged in a search for private clients to bring in more funds. There were two categories of work involved in his private practice: court and non-court. He served as the steward for private landlords, which involved keeping their manorial courts (baron and leet), acting as justice jointly with the landlord who appointed him.[139] These courts were at the centre of parish society, and Woodford mixed regularly with landowners and clergymen. Other court work included representing clients at the town's and county's quarter sessions, or before boards of enquiry into damages following natural calamities. His records of the storms raging in Northamptonshire and London in January 1639 and the flooding that hit Northamptonshire in April 1640 also provide interesting data for the study of climate history.[140] The high point of his court work consisted of conducting suits before the central courts based at Westminster Hall and the biannual county assizes. Woodford rarely conducted a case from beginning to end: often he was involved only with the procedural paperwork. His non-court work required him to draw up a variety of legal instruments, concerned mainly with the disposal of property and provision of credit. Other property transactions included arranging the bride's jointure during marriage negotiations and establishing charitable trusts. Still other documents concluded local disputes without recourse to law. Woodford also compiled wills and, when required, witnessed them or supervised their execution.

Kinship and godly networks provided much of this practice. He kept the manorial court at Broughton for Thomas Pentlow and that of Pentlow's namesake at Wilby, and represented the latter in a quarrel with Recorder Lane. He also operated the manorial court for his

[138] *Ibid.*, pp. 283–284, 303; M. Dorman, 'Curll, Walter (1575–1647)', in *ODNB*.

[139] C.W. Brooks, *Pettyfoggers and Vipers of the Commonwealth: the 'lower branch' of the legal profession in early modern England* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 197–202.

[140] Diary, p. 276 (stormy weather); Woodford mentions the flooding of the River Nene at Northampton and of the River Tove at Towcester, and flooding on land owned by Robert Pearson, perhaps at Walgrave, seven miles north of Northampton: *ibid.*, pp. 349, 351.

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cousin Gregory Dexter at Old and for Thomas Bacon at Burton Latimer. He represented Peter Whalley in a dispute and conducted court business for William Warren of Old.[141] Woodford owed his employment in three court cases to his godly connections. Thomas Watts employed him in a Chancery suit over property in which the plaintiff was the godly John Temple of Frankton in Warwickshire. Woodford was integral to the organization of Watts's case: he prepared his answer to Temple's initial bill of complaint, scheduled meetings of local commissions at Lutterworth and Banbury to gather evidence, and accompanied Watts to London to a preliminary hearing before Sir Charles Caesar, master of the rolls. He attended the final trial at Warwick assize, at which the verdict went against Watts. Woodford gained further employment by means of Watts's influence with Sir Christopher Yelverton, who stood accused by the dean and chapter of Christ Church, Oxford, of ruining the rectory of Easton Maudit, which Yelverton leased from them. Woodford made a trip to Oxford to dispute with Christ Church's barristers, but does not seem to have been involved in the resulting Chancery suit.[142] Pentlow of Broughton engaged Woodford to act for him in a case in the Court of Wards against his landlady, Philippa Sill. Again, Woodford was prominent in steering Pentlow's case, although he also obtained the counsel of the barrister Robert Tanfield of Loddington. Woodford co-ordinated the meeting of a local commission at Towcester, acted as clerk of the proceedings, and carried the completed records to London. He compiled the briefs used to instruct counsel, and liaised with the barrister, Thomas Kittermaster. Finally, Woodford accompanied Pentlow to Westminster to retain three advocates qualified to act for them in the court: the outcome was successful.[143]

The same process of godly recommendation operated to provide Woodford with court work of a political nature and with non-court practice. Reading was instrumental in Woodford's employment as part of the legal team representing the county gentry against royal revitalization of the forest law. Later, Thomas Bacon retained Woodford to represent him in an acerbic dispute with a conformist faction in his parish. Woodford supervised moneylending transactions for his cousins, the Warren and Ragdale families of Old. He handled other non-contentious work for them, representing them in local administrative matters: he liaised between his cousin Gregory Dexter and the Commission for Charitable Uses, and approached Justice

[141] *Ibid.*, pp. 129, 198–199, 243, 299, 319–320, 323.
[142] *Ibid.*, pp. 310–312, 322–323, 325, 334, 339–341, 395, 397–398.
[143] *Ibid.*, pp. 233–237, 249, 277–279.

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Francis Downes on behalf of his aunt to request her exemption from the obligation of training an apprentice. For Pentlow of Wilby he provided guidance and paperwork relating to his purchase of property and organized leases for him both as lessor and as lessee. He executed similar lease work for George Coles (to Thomas Ball) and for John James of Olney, Buckinghamshire. He restricted his will-compiling service to godly confidants, owing presumably to the intensely personal nature of the credos contained in such documents. Those which he composed for his father and Thomas Martin are extant: those for Pentlow of Wilby, John Fisher, William Tompson, and George Basse, the latter two also of Wilby, are not. He agreed to act as supervisor of the wills of Thomas Watts and John Loe the ironmonger.[144]

Woodford pursued long- and short-term strategies designed to broaden his client base in what was a keenly competitive market. The names of his rival attorneys – John Eakins, John Danby, Richard Rainsford, Edward Chamberlain, Francis Cook, and Henry Fleming – occur periodically in the diary. During his six-day working week he followed the market days in an area describing a triangle to the north of Northampton. Monday was court day in Northampton; Wednesday was Wellingborough market day; Friday was Kettering market day; Saturday was one of the market days back in Northampton. From August 1640 he added the Tuesday market at Towcester, to the south of Northampton, to his routine. To supplement this weekly schedule he attended the various annual fairs at Northampton, Wellingborough, and Kettering, and the courts: the county sessions at Northampton (or Kettering or Wellingborough), Northampton borough's own sessions, and the biannual assizes. His aim was to follow up on the gentry and aristocratic contacts that he had made to build up a clientele of wealthy patrons. Sir Christopher Hatton entertained him at Kirby Hall, as well as at his hunting lodge in Moulton Park; Sir John Isham offered hospitality at Lamport; John Bernard at Abington. Sir Christopher Yelverton invited him to Easton Maudit; Francis Nicolls entertained him at Faxton. He even enjoyed a friendly conversation with Sir Thomas Cave of Stanford, the patron of Archbishop Laud. In a similar vein, while in London he dined with the merchant, customs farmer, and Laudian church restorer, Sir John Wolstenholme.[145]

[144] *Ibid.*, pp. 105, 152–153, 156, 170, 179, 194–196, 242–243, 259, 274, 285–286, 302–303; TNA, PROB/11/235 (Watts), PROB/11/189 (Loe).

[145] Diary, pp. 155–156, 181, 238 (Hatton); 125–126, 327, 335 (Isham); 125, 161 (Bernard); 108, 158, 229 (Yelverton); 125, 203 (Nicolls); 244 (Cave); 132, 274 (Wolstenholme).

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Touting for business paid dividends, and Woodford must have established a reasonably good reputation in the locality. When in Northampton, the royal sergeant-at-arms, John Powell, engaged him to draw up a writ, but most employment came from the local gentry. John Bernard selected him as one of the referees to mediate his dispute with Alexander Eakins, squire of Weston Favell, over keeping greyhounds, but Woodford was unable to translate this initial involvement into court work. After the arbitration broke up in violence, Bernard retained a rival, Francis Cook, to act for him in the resulting lawsuit. Richard Denton employed Woodford to represent him in a dispute in the Court of King's Bench against the quarrelsome Eakins over rights of common. Woodford obtained a prohibition to stay proceedings in a junior court, initiated the case in King's Bench before Lord Chief Justice Sir John Bramston, and had Eakins jailed. When the case came to trial at Northampton assizes, Woodford consulted Recorder Lane, who with Denton found fault with Woodford's handling of the case, but Woodford was vindicated when the jury found for Denton in this case and in a counter-suit launched by Eakins. Sir John Isham, whose wife, Judith, was regarded as godly, though he was not, not only employed Woodford to compile documents for him but also invited him to be steward of his manorial court.[146]

Woodford's private stewarding work was concentrated in two clusters of manors. As we have seen, the first lay within the Northampton–Kettering–Wellingborough triangle and developed mainly from family and godly influence. The second focus was the manor of Grafton Regis to the south of Northampton, near the border with Buckinghamshire. Indeed, Grafton was his most important work of this kind: he kept the courts baron and leet there for the duration of the diary. Grafton's courts were prominent as they lay at the centre of the honour of Grafton, a cluster of manors designated by Henry VIII to support his mansion there. Woodford had obtained the post by the patronage of the owner, Sir Francis Crane (d. 1636), or his French widow, Lady Marie. In March 1640 Woodford enjoyed a sudden increase in stewardship practice from the surrounding manors. Only that of Potterspury did he obtain not through the favour of the patron but by purchase.[147]

The level of Woodford's work fluctuated. Summer was normally a dead time: there was a long gap between legal terms and this was exacerbated by the steward's vacation in August. Added to this was an extra ebb and flow caused by the impact of public crises. The outbreak

[146] *Ibid.*, pp. 127, 133–134, 137, 149, 158, 175, 195, 287, 326–327, 329, 331, 402.
[147] *Ibid.*, pp. 109–110, 136, 148, 170, 210, 260, 293, 343, 347–348, 371–373.

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of plague at Northampton in 1638 and the drastic effect of the Bishops' Wars disrupted the markets, fairs, and courts that were the lifeblood of his profession, and caused potential clients to lose confidence: 'people want moneys & those that have it are loath to p[ar]t wth it' (p. 291). There followed a corresponding increase in optimism and business after the elections to the Short Parliament in March 1640 seemed to presage better times ahead. This proved to be the case, as the advent of the Long Parliament brought Woodford a great deal of business.

Religion and current affairs

Woodford was avidly interested in news, an enthusiasm that was greatly assisted by his profession's peripatetic lifestyle. His weekly circuit allowed him access to a wealth of gossip and news from across Northamptonshire and the East Midlands, while the area's position near a key north–south artery relatively near to London, and his own connections with the capital, meant that national, and even international, news was abundant. His London links included letters from Hannah, the Haunches, and others. His contacts included John Dillingham, a Northamptonshire tailor who had moved to the Whitefriars area as a professional newsletter writer, and Woodford's cousin Gregory Dexter junior, a connection with the London press.[148] Most news came, in the diarist's idiom, down from London rather than up from the North Country; however, at John Reading's house Woodford heard of the mistreatment of the godly hero Henry Burton at Lancaster Castle. The outbreak of the Bishops' Wars only increased this traffic. News from York included details of the refusal of Lords Saye and Sele and Brooke to fight the Scots; Henry Sprig's sons, returning from the north to Banbury, showed Woodford the proceedings of the Glasgow Assembly.[149] The availability to Woodford of the Haunches' London house allowed him to witness events of national significance such as Judge Sir Richard Hutton's summing up in Hampden's Case or the triumphant return from jail of Burton, Bastwick, and Prynne, and to meet other figures of national stature, such as the authors of the Covenant, Alexander Henderson and Lord Archibald Johnston of Wariston, whom he encountered at Dillingham's. He experienced the disturbances centring on Archbishop Laud's palace at Lambeth. As he flitted between London and the headquarters of the central courts at

[148] *Ibid.*, pp. 103, 141 (and n. 190 on Dillingham), 254, 288, 291, 368.
[149] *Ibid.*, pp. 99, 299, 301, 325.

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Westminster Hall, he participated in a vibrant news market, including news of who was preaching at court, developments in Hampden's or Chambers' Case over ship money, the doings of the archbishop or royal family, and proceedings in Parliament.[150]

Woodford analysed the body politic using the various polarities which he applied to society generally: God versus Satan; the converted versus the unconverted. Although he did not use the terms court and country, he clearly envisaged such an opposition but with the terms being understood as ideological poles not geographical locations. He envisaged public affairs as a global, immemorial battle between the religious and ideological poles of Christ and Antichrist, true religion and popery, the essence of all evil.[151] He interpreted the politics of the 1630s as a popish conspiracy to subvert the Church and state: it is not known when he arrived at this interpretation but it certainly predated the diary. In this he shared the viewpoint of the parliamentary opposition leaders of the 1620s.

For Woodford, the key threat was religious, and the most iniquitous government policies were the intensely ceremonialized public ordinances enjoined by the Laudians centring on newly created holy altars. As we have seen, for the godly, pure ordinances involved an exclusive, spiritual worship, and provided a crucial means of maintaining their callings. Laudian worship, in contrast, was seen to be compromised by inclusiveness and to consist of bodily postures invented by corrupt humanity. The honour accorded the altar was regarded as idolatrous and superstitious, misdirecting reverence towards a thing of human invention. Woodford prayed that God would 'extirpate all pop[er]y Idolatry sup[er]stition & p[ro]phanenesse and come forth oh Lord amongst thine adversaryes who doe plott against thee & seeke to defile thine ordinances with base humane inventions' (p. 216). He contrasted the godly's pure spiritual sacrifices with the impurity of Laudian efforts: 'why should we cut off a dogs neck before thee & offer thee swines blood instead of the sacrifice wthout blemish, why should carnall ordinances & an earthly sanctuary still remayne & the worship in spirit & in truth be yet refused' (p. 289). To Woodford, of course, the true altar was Christ himself. Laudian ceremonies were moreover regarded as 'innovations' (p. 182), implying that the Church had been basically sound before their introduction and the godly capable of enjoying pure ordinances within it. He also condemned

[150] *Ibid.*, pp. 130–131, 175–176, 200, 274, 281, 377–378.

[151] P. Lake, 'William Bradshaw, antichrist, and the community of the godly', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 36 (1985), pp. 570–589; idem, 'Constitutional consensus and puritan opposition in the 1620s: Thomas Scott and the Spanish Match', *Historical Journal*, 25 (1982), pp. 805–825.

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Laudian insistence on full canonical and Prayer Book ceremony, which, at All Saints' Northampton at least, was also innovatory.[152]

Consequently, Woodford gave his wholehearted support to the efforts of the parish and corporation to prevent the creation of an altar at All Saints'. The diocesan bishop, Francis Dee of Peterborough, had been uniquely early in enjoining the construction of railed, east end, altars from 1634. The response of All Saints' had been robust, railing in the communion table but refusing to transform it into an altar, instead placing it tablewise in the chancel, surrounded by the lavishly refurbished seats of the civic oligarchy.[153] Woodford never mentioned this rail, which he found inoffensive as it did not enclose an altar. The authorities had attempted to change this arrangement: in January 1637 Dee's deputy, Dr Samuel Clarke, had tried to force the removal of the table to the eastern end of the chancel, but Dee had been obliged to move it himself into the altarwise position for his visitation in July when he had inveighed against puritans and, with Clarke, had bowed towards the altar.[154] The offence for Woodford lay in the table's altarwise position. He recorded with praise that, on 3 September, the churchwardens, Rushworth and Farren, turned the table east to west at the communion.

As part of the visitation, Dee had commissioned a survey of parish churches from Clarke and Dr Robert Sibthorpe. Both men were part of a firmly entrenched clique of avant-garde conformists, led by Sibthorpe's brother-in-law, Sir John Lambe, which had been active since the late sixteenth century, clashing repeatedly with the godly town.[155] Woodford described this intervention 'by some of the worser sorte of divines & by [ap]p[ar]iters & to observe the standinge of the tables whether altarwise or not & to set them so; oh Lord looke uppon us in m[er]cy it is an evill time' (p. 104). They ordered the churchwardens of All Saints' to demolish the existing rail and the seats in the chancel, and to place the communion table altarwise along the eastern wall and enclose it with a returning rail with kneeling bench attached, at which all parishioners were to receive the Eucharist. On 12 November 1637 Woodford confirmed that the

[152]Diary, pp. 106, 183, 270.

[153]K. Fincham, 'The restoration of altars in the 1630s', *Historical Journal*, 44 (2001), pp. 930–931; Fielding, 'Peterborough', pp. 95–118; TNA, SP16/474/80; TNA, SP16/370/51.

[154]PDR, CB A63, fos 430r–432v; TNA, SP16/474/80.

[155]Sheils, *Puritans*, pp. 6–7, 75–76, 87, 126–127; idem, 'Some problems of government in a new diocese: the bishop and the puritans in the Diocese of Peterborough 1560–1630', in R. O'Day and F. Heal (eds), *Continuity and Change: personnel and adminstration of the Church in England, 1500–1642* (Leicester, 1976), pp. 167–187; idem, 'Religion in provincial towns: innovation and tradition', in F. Heal and R. O'Day (eds), *Church and Society in England: Henry VIII to James I* (London, 1977), pp. 156–176; Fielding, 'Peterborough', pp. 57–91.

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communion table had been moved to the east end '& there is an iniuncon it seemes to come up to it but Lord establish us in thy truth & for Xt his sake root out all sup[er]stition & Idolatry'. He deemed the proposed second rail offensive as it was to enclose an altar. In contrast, he praised the churchwardens' refusal to rail the table where it stood at the east end when so ordered by Clarke on 16 and 18 December, and repeated this praise on 31 December after they had returned the table to its position 'long wise in the body of the Channcell' (p. 157). As a result, Clarke excommunicated them. The churchwardens appealed to the Court of Arches, but the dean, Sir John Lambe, refused to absolve them, whereupon they petitioned Archbishop Laud, claiming to have completed the work and asking him to direct Lambe to grant them absolution. However, the churchwardens had lied, and Lambe suspended the case. The wardens next appealed to the Court of Delegates, where, remarkably, they obtained an inhibition from the dean, Sir Henry Marten, overturning Clarke's original sentence. Lambe responded with a suit in the Court of High Commission, forcing the wardens to rail the table as originally instructed.[156] Woodford noted on 16 March that 'The Com[munio]n Table is raylinge in to the top of the Chancell & the seates there pulled downe. O Lord destroy sup[er]st[iti]on' (p. 188). This second rail was completed shortly after 17 March, and Woodford now raised the matter to a higher level: 'The rayle in the Chancell is now s[ai]d almost up and its confidently reported that the sicknes is in the Towne' (p. 189).

The godly interpretation of divine affliction applied equally to the world of public affairs, where God intervened to highlight public vices: Woodford interpreted high corn prices, the Northampton floods, a solar eclipse, and meteorite activity in this fashion.[157] Far more serious was the Northampton plague of 1638. He regarded this as punishment for the creation of the altar, and responded in the same way as he did to personal affliction, requesting God to remove the affliction or else to preserve the godly so that they might learn from the episode. Only its destruction would propitiate the divinity. He asked God to 'command thy destroyinge Angell to cease for the Lords sake oh pull downe the abhominacons that are amongst us' (p. 197). Whether consciously or not, Woodford was locating the conflict in historical context: previous outbreaks of plague in Northampton

[156]TNA, SP16/381/88; TNA, SP16/370/57; TNA, SP16/378/74; TNA, SP16/474/80; HLRO, main papers, petition of Farren and Rushworth, 6 February 1641; J.S. Hart, *Justice upon Petition: the House of Lords and the reformation of justice 1621–1675* (London, 1991), p. 72.

[157]Diary, pp. 111, 307, 349, 351.

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had similarly signalled divine displeasure with public policy.[158] The godly used their informal structures to work through the problem of the plague. Woodford debated the issue with Thomas Martin and Matthew Watts and, during a dangerous visit to the town, with an anonymous woman 'that had lived well who complayned for want of a peck of corne; I went into the towne & wept uppon it & confessed that sinne was the cause of our mourning' (p. 205). The godly were unified in their estimation of the cause of the outbreak. Thomas Ball set out the problem by preaching sermons on Jonah 3, in which the people of Nineveh avoided divine wrath by repenting and fasting.[159] The parish's repentance was noted by Clarke in a letter to Lambe of 17 June 1638, in which he tried to persuade him to inform Laud that 'they now doe what they list in the church service at All Saints in Northamptō. Some very lately cut the Rayle or Cancel that was about the Lord's Board in Pieces, and brought downe the Lord's Table into the middle of the Chancel'.[160]

The Laudian altar had lasted less than three months. On 14 April 1639 Woodford noted that the table was 'still' down, and there is no evidence that the altar was ever renewed. The second of Ball's remedial measures, a public fast conducted by himself and Newton, took place on lecture day, 21 June 1638, as Sibthorpe complained to Lambe. The crisis revealed differences among the godly over their response to affliction. Woodford and Francis Rushworth fled Northampton, but those with higher callings – like Ball and the corporation – remained at their posts. For Woodford this realism was clearly a legitimate response, but on a rare visit to the plague-ridden town he chided himself for a lack of faith in divine providence. After fulfilling Ball's criteria, the town still had to wait until February 1639 for the pestilence finally to subside. Then Ball ceased to preach political sermons, perhaps for the first time since 1634, and returned to 'his former manner to set forth a body of religion' (p. 286).[161]

Woodford found confirmation of his interpretation of events in the providential deaths of those who ignored divine chastisement by embracing Laudianism. When George Colson, the curate of St Giles's

[158]The 1578 incidence had coincided with the suppression of puritan activity at All Saints' and with unpopular foreign policy: marriage negotiations with the papist duc d'Anjou. In 1606, the issue had been local policy: Mayor (and physician) George Coldwell's suppression of alehouses had brought the plague's ravages to an end. See Sheils, *Puritans*, pp. 123–124; A. Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999), p. 140; J.H. Raach, *A Directory of English Country Physicians, 1603–1643* (London, 1962), p. 111.

[159]Diary, p. 253.

[160]The rail was demolished between 9 April and 16 June but probably nearer to the latter date: *ibid*., p. 197; TNA, SP16/393/15.

[161]TNA, SP16/393/75; Diary, pp. 205–206; PDR, CB A57, unpaginated, dated 11 February 1634; PDR, CB 67, unpaginated, 3 August 1637.

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in the eastern part of the town, died suddenly, Woodford remarked that he had refused 'to give the sacram[en]t to those that refused to come up to the rayles' (p. 183). More dramatic yet was the death of Richard Powell, one of the vicars of Pattishall. As an ally of Lambe, Powell headed a Laudian faction in the parish, which clashed constantly with a godly one led by the other vicar, Miles Burkit, over the altar policy, among other things. To Woodford, Powell was 'a p[er]secutinge preist' who had died suddenly 'in the house of office' (p. 270) en route to the Church court, where he had intended to report his parishioners, after first approaching three times an east end communion table. The lesson for Woodford was clear: 'Thus doth the Lord glorifye himselfe in the destruccon of his obstinate enemyes' (*ibid.*). If the saints were living sermons, then the ungodly were perishing ones and equally likely to convert sinners. He wished that God's 'adversaryes would lay this to hart that they might convert & turne unto thee that thou mightest heale them' (*ibid.*).

Woodford's opposition to ceremonial was not a case of ecclesiological nimbyism. Popish pollution of ordinances he regarded as a national problem requiring a national solution: his estimation of the threat did not decrease after the demolition of the altar. Indeed, in reality the vast majority of parishes in the town and diocese did possess railed Laudian altars by this time.[162] He declared that 'the whole Kingdome is in a forlorne condicon gods ordinances in many places mixed wth base ceremony & sup[er]stition' (p. 215). God was still punishing other areas, which had not repented like godly Northampton: 'thy Judgments' he told God 'are much abroad the pestilence rageth in the Countrye the small pox in the Citty of London' (*ibid.*). Woodford concurred with the verdict of John Baynard, who preached at Wilby on 'the causes of the pestilence that now rageth in many places vizt Idolatry Corrupcon of gods worship oppression & oh Lord remove both the Cause & the stroke' (p. 230).

The second aspect of popish antichristian plotting against true religion involved an assault on doctrine and the practical divinity associated with it. Woodford petitioned God for the only solution, a national godly reformation. In this analogy he portrayed God as a thresher, praying Him to 'purge thy floore blowe away the chaffe that is amongst o[u]r doctrine & in o[u]r discipline let pop[er]y

[162]Woodford tended to identify his own parish with the town as a whole. Whereas All Saints' had repented, the three adjacent urban parishes had not and were still occupied by Laudians – two of them the appointees of Sir John Lambe – and possessed railed altars. Nevertheless, the pestilence had ceased in all four: PDR, Church Survey Book 5, fos 69, 78v, 80v, 83. The living of St Peter's was held by Dr Samuel Clarke, St Sepulchre's by Richard Crompton, and St Giles's by Richard Holbrooke. The latter two were clients of Lambe: Diary, p. 154, n. 237.

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& Arminianisme hide them selfe' (p. 313). Arminianism threatened the predestinarian theology underpinning godly profession. He again conveys the impression that this was an error that had infiltrated the national Church as a whole, and his examples come from varying locations, both high and low. He argued heatedly with Arminians such as William Bernard, a member of the Northamptonshire gentry, and, in St Dunstan's churchyard, London, with an attorney whose Christian name was Anthony. During a business trip to Coventry he dined in the town hall and described how James Naylor 'an arminian & I had much dispute about pr[e]destinacon' (p. 254). Naylor was not alone: Woodford defended God's 'truth but I found few there that favoured it' (*ibid.*). Anti-Calvinism reached to the very apex of the nation. Woodford was a member of the congregation assembled in the presence of the king at the Chapel Royal, Whitehall Palace, to hear a sermon by the royal chaplain, William Beale, a protégé of Laud. For Woodford, Beale embodied the link between the attacks on doctrine and worship. Beale, whose house at Cottingham possessed a 'shamefull Crucifix' (p. 238), preached 'ag[ains]t supr[a]lapsarians & p[ro] Confession to, & absolucon by the Church' (p. 251).[163] Such divinity, with its intense sacerdotalism, threatened Woodford's direct link with God.

Woodford's core piety was everywhere beset by the popish adversary. He encountered ministers who had been silenced by the authorities and noted that Dr Clarke had threatened Richard Trueman, minister of Dallington, with death for daring to speak out against ceremonialism. Andrew Perne's afternoon sermons came under scrutiny from the Church court official, Dr William Roane ('that sup[er]stitious doctor'), who arrived to 'heare & (I doubt) to entrap Mr Pearne' (p. 222). John Stoughton came under far more sustained pressure from Laud, Lambe, and William Juxon, Bishop of London: Woodford referred to Stoughton's harassment by the 'malice of Satan & his instruments' (p. 174). Following his attendance at Stoughton's sermon on the anniversary of the Gunpowder Plot in 1637, Woodford placed the current antichristian threat to Stoughton as simply the latest in a historical series including the Spanish Armada of 1588. He expressed gratitude to God for 'defendinge thy holy gospel & the professors of it especially for kepinge us from the cruelty of [15]88 & this hellish powder plot graunt that thy gospel may still runne & be glorified pr[e]vent & break in peeces all plots & machinacons that are against it' (p. 133).

Woodford singled out Clarke as a key adversary, equating him with Haman, the biblical enemy of the Jews. In 1638 the surrogate

[163]Woodford had lodged at Beale's house on 10 September 1638.

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exploited the outbreak of plague as a convenient pretext to reduce the frequency of sermons: as Clarke wrote to Lambe, 'I long since advised the mayor and some of his discreet Brethrē that the Thursday lecture, and sermons on Sundayes in the afternoone, should be forborne in theys Infectious & dangerous tymes'.[164] The diary entry for Sunday 4 March 1638 details Clarke's banning of the afternoon sermon on that day, and explains this as stemming from an infernal conspiracy to undermine true gospel religion, describing a Manichaean conflict in which the adversaries are dominant and the godly a victimized minority. Laudian attacks were again portrayed as novel deviations from previous orthodoxy. However, this impression of Laudianism triumphant was quickly dispelled. Five days later it appeared that Clarke was 'appeased & that things here shall be much as they have bene' (p. 185). Such proved to be the case. The next Sunday, the practice of two sermons was resumed and not interrupted again for the duration of the diary.

Indeed, alongside fear of the popish threat in Woodford's mind ran an estimation of the English Church as essentially sound and capable of providing pure ordinances. He hoped that 'this Kingdome may be still the place of [God's] delight, & that thine ordinances may still flourish' (p. 100). Again, he informed the Lord 'we yet enioy thine ordinances Lord continue them to us & o[u]r posterity forever' (p. 120) and wished that 'thy gospel may still runne & be glorified' (p. 133). His estimation of the intensity of the popish threat was not lessened by Northampton's extraordinary capacity to see off the threat of Laudianism. That this fear persisted in his mind beyond these victories reinforces the view that he regarded popery as a national and no mere local phenomenon. In any case, the Laudians were still in office.

Popish inundation also threatened to overwhelm the sabbath, a matter of divine law specified in the fourth commandment. Woodford regarded government policy as doubly sinful, attempting to sanctify the plethora of saints' days dating from before the Reformation while profaning the genuinely holy sabbath. He never explicitly mentions the Book of Sports (the clergy at All Saints' apparently never read it), but the Book's sanctioning of various recreations was in his mind when he complained of the explosion of profanity: 'why should p[ro]phanenesse be established or countenanced by a law' (p. 289).

[164]TNA, SP16/393/15. Bishop Matthew Wren of Norwich had persuaded Bishop William Juxon of London to use the tactic of suspension owing to plague against the Dedham lecturer, John Rogers, in 1636. Juxon failed to reinstate Rogers when the disease subsided: T. Webster and K. Shipps (eds), *The Diary of Samuel Rogers, 1634–1638*, Church of England Record Society XI (Woodbridge, 2004), pp. lxxii–lxxiii.

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On the other hand, observing saints' days deprived God of his due. On St Matthew's Day, Woodford expressed the wish that 'we might once leave this dedication of dayes to Saints & dedicate all o[u]r dayes to thee o[u]r god' (p. 327), and on another occasion criticized Charles Newton for praying for dead saints. Woodford experienced direct pressure only in 1639 in Bishop Juxon's London.[165] He related how on 23 May (Ascension Day) his stationer refused to sell him parchment for fear of questioning by the authorities, claiming that the Church was prohibiting secular work on saints' days but not on Sundays. This deprived the subject of his liberty to work for six days a week: such opinions were of course the source of the idea of the protestant work ethic. On St Peter's Day (29 June), Woodford condemned the law as sinful, wishing that 'it may be lawfull by man's law also to worke uppon the Six dayes & not to p[ro]phane the Seaventh' (p. 315). He omitted mentioning any anti-sabbatarianism in Northampton but noted that on 28 October 1639 (Simon and Jude's Day) the Monday court did not take place.

A final defining characteristic of the adversary's divinity was their marginalization of godly profession as radical sectarianism. Laudians described as such any who objected to their version of ceremonialized public worship, so when James Forsyth, minister of Old, 'spake ag[ains]t puritans' Woodford responded with a prayer for the 'rootinge out all Idolatry sup[er]stition & will worship & the restauracon & establishm[en]t of that which is in spirit & in truth' (p. 226). He and the godly regarded themselves not only as orthodox members of the Church of England but as the best part of it, and he reacted sharply against Laudian attempts to 'stayne' them 'with opprob[r]y[um] callinge them puritans, sectaryes' (p. 289).

Woodford envisaged an ideal godly commonwealth, in which national laws corresponded with divine.[166] He stated to God that 'the feare of thy name will give beinge and continuacon to a family & nothinge else can establish a house or a nacon' (p. 175). England was portrayed as having been previously sound. Many of her laws were indeed godly; he prayed God: 'Let thy lawe & o[u]r good lawes fflourish' (p. 314). Woodford subscribed to a clear definition of a godly judge who ruled 'for the fatherlesse & the widow & the oppressed' (p. 288). Set against this notion of good governance was the destabilizing factor of popery, which was equated with oppression. God's church '& our Comon wealth' were in the opposite of a 'right

[165]Webster, *Godly Clergy*, pp. 206–207.

[166]P. Lake, 'Constitutional consensus and puritan opposition in the 1620s: Thomas Scott and the Spanish Match', *Historical Journal*, 25 (1982), p. 808.

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and blessed frame' (p. 99) because the same popish adversaries had subverted the country's laws.

As with religious affairs, Woodford perceived matters in black-and-white terms, polarities corresponding to Christ and Antichrist, and worked to fit current events into these categories. His primary secular concern was with the prerogative tax of ship money. At no stage did he express himself in terms of anxiety over relative levels of assessment for the levy. His concern was for the national test case of its legality, that of John Hampden. He followed each stage of the dispute, dividing the judges between the supporters of oppression and popish error (the majority supporters of the royal position) and the minority supporting justice and righteousness. His 'friend' (p. 286), Sir Richard Hutton, was one of only two judges to find against the king, citing the illegality of the tax. Woodford greeted Hutton's verdict with euphoria: 'Justice hutton delivered his opinion freely and playnely against the businesse shewinge it to be contrary to the lawes of the Realme' (p. 200). He compared this with the dithering error of Judge Jones, who 'fluttred in his argum[en]t, meteorlike hunge betweene heaven & earth & yet in the end concluded ag[ains]t Mr hampden' (*ibid.*). He wrote that Oliver St John's defence of Hampden was 'much applauded & hummed' (p. 133) by those present, which much displeased Judge Sir John Finch, a supporter of the tax. Woodford witnessed the deliberations of Justices Sir Robert Berkeley and Sir George Vernon in the Exchequer Chamber. Recording their verdicts in the king's favour, he offered up a prayer that 'Justice & righteousnes may flow downe like a streame in this Kingdome' (p. 176). While in London in June 1639 he also followed the later stages of another high-profile ship money dispute, that of the London merchant Richard Chambers, who, in 1636, had launched a suit in the Court of King's Bench against Sir Edward Bromfield, the Mayor of London who had jailed him for non-payment of the levy. Woodford condemned the tax while asserting the basic rectitude of English laws: 'Lord turne the streame of things for the Lord's sake, oh Let thy lawe & o[u]r good lawes fflourish' (p. 314).

Woodford expressed the same sentiments while observing the impact of the ship money tax on his friends. When William Tompson of Wilby obstructed the official trying to distrain his goods for non-payment of the levy, Woodford prayed to God requesting that the 'great & heavy taxe' be withdrawn, and that the kingdom might live 'in thy feare seekinge the p[ro]motion of thy glorious gospell' (p. 167). At Wilby he witnessed the uproar caused by residents of the village assembling to threaten bailiffs sent by the sheriff to distrain the goods of defaulters: 'the women assembled & some men and affright them, there was much running wth forkes & Cowlestaves & Ah Lord

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reforme whats amisse both in the church & Comon weale' (p. 240). The protesters included his friend Constable Francis Freeman, who was sent for shortly afterwards by the Privy Council, and Thomas Pentlow later became involved in the dispute. Woodford was also on hand in Wilby when Henry Middleton, the royal sergeant-at-arms, arrived to arrest Francis Sawyer of Kettering, a member of the godly gentry, and William Walker, Chief Constable of Wymersley Hundred, for their vehement opposition to the tax.[167] Woodford believed the arrests to be wrongful. As Middleton departed for London with his prisoners, Woodford repeated his plea to God to 'show m[er]cye to this Kingdome, amend and reforme what ever is amisse' (p. 243), but his account was rather defensive owing to his decision to associate with Middleton for career reasons. This sensitivity illustrates the general unpopularity of the tax: 'Mr Midle[ton] told me he came to appr[e]hend Mr ffr[ancis] Sawyer (of which I knew nothinge before)' (p. 242). Woodford condemned another form of misgovernment associated with popish oppression: Sir Robert Banastre's harsh treatment of a debtor, whom Banastre told he would treat like a dog, caused the man to commit suicide. Banastre had connections with the court, was the county's most assiduous ship money sheriff, and beautified Passenham church along Laudian lines. Given Woodford's own financial predicament, it is not surprising that he abhorred the sins of usury and extortion, for which he censured Sir Henry Robinson and Thomas Pilkington's widow, Ann.[168]

Woodford included the revival of forest law within his definition of popish oppression, regarding it as an overbearing misuse of the royal prerogative, exemplified by the behaviour of Judge Sir John Finch. As we shall see, Woodford played his part in resisting the forest law. He complained that Finch had prejudged the issue without listening to the objections of the county gentry: he had 'much anticipated us in o[u]r evidence by declaringe what hath bene allreadye adiudged in this Iter in other places which he hath warned the Councell to take notice of' (p. 117). Finch was here referring to previous proceedings in Essex at which the forest policy had been set out. This involved increasing the area of land subject to forest law to medieval levels and then imposing composition fines on landowners for the illegal liberation of land from the operation of that law, a transparent expedient to raise revenue.[169] Woodford confirmed his appraisal of Finch in 1640 when the latter was appointed Lord Keeper. He asked God to 'put *good* men into places' (p. 397, my emphasis). Like the more moderate puritan, Lord

[167] Diary, pp. 242 (and n. 528 on Sawyer and n. 529 on Walker), 240 (and n. 524 on Freeman).
[168] *Ibid.*, pp. 164, 272–273, 381.
[169] Pettit, *Royal Forests*, pp. 83–95.

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Edward Montagu, Woodford deplored the impact of the second part of the policy – the revitalization of the forest courts – on the lower classes of society.[170] He saw this as both unjust and ungodly because the courts 'set very great fines uppon small offences in the forests' (p. 117). When people 'were fined for cutting downe maypoles in the forests, it was told them by one on the Kings p[ar]t that they were not fined for havinge maypoles but for cuttinge them downe in the forest' (p. 118). At court sessions Woodford asked God to bring 'good out of evill' (p. 241) and pleaded 'that Justice & right may pr[e]vayle & that all oppression may cease' (p. 326).

For Woodford the popish plot had been a revolution from the top down led by the archbishop, the bishops *en bloc*, and the Laudian clergy. He unequivocally implicated William Laud in the pollution of ordinances, noting that he 'hath renounced the havinge a hand in bringing men up to the rayles to receave the sacrament oh Lord thou art able to bringe shame & confusion of face upon all fauvo[u]r[er]s & p[ro]moters of sup[er]stition & Idolatry' (p. 306). Referring back to the 1630s from the perspective of 1641, he recalled that 'the cursed B[isho]ps & their Clergy' had been 'as the head' and were now 'as the tayle' (p. 392). Unlike the Essex minister Samuel Rogers, whose criticisms of bishops were aimed at errant individuals, Woodford's diary entries of the 1630s constitute a condemnation of episcopacy itself, about which he never made a positive statement. The bench of bishops was so riddled with popery that the very institution was discredited. This left no room for an ideal of a good bishop.[171] The only person to merit a favourable remark was Bishop John Williams of Lincoln, an opponent of the regime but hardly a godly prelate. He prayed on 24 October 1637 'ag[ains]t wicked B[isho]ps, & their hierarchy I prayed for the establishm[en]t of the gospel here' (p. 220) and later 'ag[ains]t that hierarchy of B[isho]ps ag[ains]t sup[er]stition' (p. 129).

He took a similarly monolithic view of convocation, noting in late 1637, when a rumour was current that Charles I was about to call Parliament, that 'there is speech of a convocation of B[isho]pps at London about the church Cerem[onies] & discipline Lord worke for the best for thy people' (p. 120). The bishops had used their influence to build up among the clergy a faction of likeminded adversaries of God. Addressing God, Woodford described how bishops had 'set up those whom thy soule hateth' (p. 358). He mentioned only one archdeacon, whom he said misused God's name in drinking healths. Woodford singled out various individuals among the episcopate as especially

[170] E.S. Cope, *The Life of a Public Man: Edward, first Baron Montagu of Boughton, 1562–1644* (Philadelphia, 1981), p. 148.

[171] Webster and Shipps, *Diary of Samuel Rogers*, p. lxxiii.

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infamous, including the Archbishop himself, Bishop Matthew Wren of Norwich, Dee's regime at Peterborough, his successor, John Towers, who issued 'base articles' (p. 318) ahead of his primary visitation in 1639, and Juxon's administration in London. To this list we can add secular 'evil counsellors'. Sir John Finch was unpopular with Woodford for his role in ship money and the forest law, as were the majority of judges giving the verdict against Hampden; Strafford he mentioned only during the Long Parliament.

Woodford held an elevated opinion of the true minister, who was characterized as a watchman or watchdog, tirelessly alert for sin in society, and voluble in its condemnation. Laudian clergy he categorized as counterfeits: ineffective preachers, hostile to the godly instead of to sin, enjoying wealthy livings in idleness, they were unfit to deliver the sacrament to God's people. Why, he asked, 'should dumb dogs that cannot barke remayne snarlinge at thy faythfull servants, why should Idle drones eat the fat & drinke the sweete & serve thy people' (p. 289). Clergy of this stamp were to be found both high and low in the nation. Thomas Turner, Laud's chaplain, preached at St Paul's in support of altars and bowing. William Beale, another archiepiscopal chaplain, preached error in the Chapel Royal. To these we can add local Laudian clergy such as Giles Thorne, Sir John Lambe's client as vicar of St Sepulchre's in Northampton, who in Woodford's estimation 'appears by his sermon what he is, Lord weed up the darnell & the Cockle that the wheate may grow' (p. 310). Woodford dismissed a sermon delivered by George Colson, the curate of St Giles's, Northampton, and noted the presence of a 'sup[er]stitious altar' (p. 154) in the church. The only solution to this problem, he stated on 9 July 1638, was a national reformation of the clergy. He called on God to eject popish adversaries and send 'forth into all the corners of the land and establish in all congregacons able ministers of the gospell that may build up thy church and put all iniquity to silence' (p. 216).

Woodford also reviled Laudian church court informers such as Henry Folwell, who instigated a 'devillish plot ag[ains]t a p[ro]fessor one Mrs Clarke' at the quarter sessions by procuring his servant 'to say he saw another in the act of incontinencye wth her': the servant 'afterward confessed the truth & cleered her innocencye' (p. 204–205). Thomas Pidgeon is an instance of Woodford's elision of the profane, the godly's traditional parish enemies, with the religiously deviant. Pidgeon, a Church court apparitor as well as a carpenter by trade, had been Dr Clarke's ally in creating an east end railed altar at his chapel of Upton, in the teeth of opposition from the churchwardens. After socializing with Pidgeon, Woodford

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commented that he 'was almost drunke Lord convert that p[er]secuter to thee'.[172]

He held out only a faint hope of conversion for those he saw as enemies of God. When the court official Dr William Roane scrutinized one of Andrew Perne's sermons, Woodford hoped that the gospel would work 'uppon that sup[er]stitious doctor, I besought the Lord for his convercon' (p. 222). When referring to idolaters in general, he was prepared to go a stage further. If they could not be converted he prayed that God damn them: 'come forth oh Lord amongst thine adversaryes who doe plott against thee & seeke to defile thine ordinances with base humane inventions, if they belong unto thee bringe them in, if not confound them oh Lord confound & curse them and all their machinacons' (p. 216).

Popish rot reached to the apex of the English Church and state, the head of both of which was an unrepentant sinner. Woodford prayed for 'the Kings Ma[jes]tye for his Convercon, to inlighten his eyes to stirre him up to drive away the wicked from the throne, & to make choice of such as will be faythfull' (p. 112).[173] The Essex minister Samuel Rogers shared this opinion of Charles I.[174] This was to go much further than to claim that the king had been misled by 'evil counsellors'. The throne was indeed beset by the wicked, but their influence was merely a symptom of the crucial dysfunction, Charles's defective nature. Woodford regarded Charles as ignorant of true religion, as unable to distinguish right from wrong, and as guilty of consistently sponsoring popish error. After a sermon by William Beale, the royal chaplain, Woodford prayed for the establishment of 'true doctrine & a pure worship' and called on God to change the King's nature: 'give him to discerne betweene things that differ' (p. 251). Recording that Bishop Wren had preached at court, he complained: 'bringe those that are faythfull to preach before his Ma[jes]tye with effect & remove the wicked from his throne that it may be established & continue' (p. 175). He focussed on Charles's appointment of court preachers, but the monarch's wider religious and secular patronage was, of course, considerable. The court itself was not regarded as inherently evil: it had been made so by Charles's wrong decisions, which betrayed no fear of God and thus jeopardized his throne, nation, and dynasty ('house' (*ibid.*)). This final danger was further exacerbated by the poisonous influence of Charles's Catholic wife, Henrietta Maria, for

[172] Diary, p. 264 (and n. 587 on Pidgeon).
[173] For other examples see *ibid.*, pp. 173, 297.
[174] Webster and Shipps, *Diary of Samuel Rogers*, p. lxxv.

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whose conversion he prayed, and of her mother, Marie de Medici, whose pending visit to London he anticipated with abhorrence.[175]

In his vision of a godly commonwealth, Woodford envisaged a crucial role for the monarch, ruling like a David or Solomon. In 1638 he recorded the anniversary of Charles I's accession: 'oh Lord graunt him longe to raigne for thee & the good of thy Church & people' (p. 193). The king was a patriarch with a sacred responsibility for the kingdoms and churches committed to his care by God. On his tour of the privy apartments in Whitehall Palace, Woodford saw 'the 4 gospells the acts of the apostles & the Apocalipse in books all sett forth wth pictures' and prayed for Charles 'make him a nursinge father to the Kingdomes committed to him' (p. 246). Contrast this respect for the institutions of monarchy and judiciary with his contempt for that of episcopacy. The key criterion of a rightful king and dynasty was adherence to divine law. A true king feared God, promoted true religion and justice, and warded off popish error and tyranny. He prayed to God: 'let holy doctrine & pure worship be set up, & let Justice flow downe like a streame, that the throne may be established' (p. 358).

Woodford's respect for monarchy led him to extend much more charitable goodwill towards Charles than towards other sinners: he failed to mention the sumptuous railed altar in the chapel royal at Whitehall, for instance.[176] He strained to see the good in the king: 'make him a blessed instrument of thy glory in these churches let his eyes scatter all Idolatry pop[er]y sup[er]stition & p[ro]phanenesse let the good be accepted of him' (p. 298). However, conversion seemed an unlikely prospect: the nation needed ministers who would preach before him 'with effect' (p. 175), but Charles appointed only the enemies of God. It might be necessary for God to intervene directly through affliction. On 29 November 1637 it was rumoured that the king was sick. Woodford fantasized about a newly converted king, who would do away with popish superstition. A defining characteristic of a godly king was his inclination to rule in partnership with Parliament, and Woodford yearned for Charles to summon one.[177] His estimation of this institution was lofty. Court and country might be riddled with popery but Parliament was not: he associated it with the positive ideological pole of a godly commonwealth, and had supreme confidence in its ability to correct the wrongdoings of the Personal Rule.

[175]Diary, pp. 246, 358.

[176]K. Fincham and N. Tyacke, *Altars Restored: the changing face of English religious worship, 1547–c.1700* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 177, 227–228.

[177]Diary, pp. 144–145.

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Woodford's attitude towards the war with Scotland developed over several months. His first mention of the crisis, on 27 April 1638, was vague. For personal reasons he feared the outbreak of hostilities, which might cause his creditors to call in their debts while simultaneously undermining his ability to repay them by devaluing his property.[178] Around 2 January 1639 his opinion crystallized, after John Dillingham showed him the proceedings of the Glasgow Assembly, which had responded to Charles I's attempted imposition of a new Prayer Book with godly revolution, abolishing episcopacy and establishing a Presbyterian discipline. The diarist never mentioned this origin of the uprising. To Woodford the cause of the conflict was the popish corruption of the English government. He wished for peace certainly, but more importantly for an English reformation to eject popery, on 22 January petitioning God to 'pr[e]vent the warre wth Scotland I pray if thou seest good however let thy truth & gospell be established in power & purity amongst us'. Remarkably, various examples of pro-government propaganda – particularly the royal proclamation of 27 February asserting that the Scots 'strike at the Roote of monarchicall governm[en]t' (p. 288) – convinced him that the English regime was the aggressor, the Covenanters his godly fellow sufferers under oppression. Official condemnation of the Scots as traitors intensified in Woodford's mind the pre-existing notion of a popish conspiracy, proving to him by 6 March that popish control of state policy had become near total. He complained that 'The opposers of god & true religion have said we will devoure at once; they are in our hands, now shall we pr[e]vayle' (p. 289). He therefore prayed for the destruction of Babylon, the popish Antichrist. Of course Woodford had already made up his mind on the subject of episcopacy, owing to what he saw as its complicity in the popish plot, and he undoubtedly regarded the conflicts as the Bishops' Wars, although he never used the phrase. He also identified secular oppression in the regime's conduct of the war, applauding the opposition expressed by the 'godly & gracious' Lords Saye and Sele and Brooke (p. 301), who refused to fight for the king or to swear an oath of loyalty that lacked parliamentary authority.

Events were judged to have come to such a pass that God had hidden His face from a sinful nation. He now intervened directly. This Woodford discussed with John Bullivant: 'how iustly the Lord may bring uppon us the Judgem[en]t of the sword' (p. 295). He and his godly London friends were persuaded that God would lift the affliction once the Church had repented: 'the Lord will surely looke uppon his poore church in the end, when his church is fit for deliverance & when ungodly men have filled up the measure of their sinnes' (p. 307).

[178] *Ibid.*, p. 271.

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Woodford's state of mind combined a desire for holy patience with a militant faith in final victory. Though the prospects seemed grim, he informed God that 'thou hast given us thy word to be neare unto us even in o[u]r mouthes, & we have the mind of Xt. Oh give us fayth to make all o[u]r owne' (p. 289). He considered fleeing from this affliction as he had from the plague, but was delighted at the Truce of Berwick, which concluded the first war. The anticipated reconciliation gave some optimism of a royal volte-face resulting in the redress of the grievances of the Personal Rule. Woodford fervently hoped that it demonstrated 'much Love from the Kinge to' the Covenanters and that henceforth God's 'church & people' would gain 'dayly more & more grace in the eyes of his Ma[jes]ty', while he would now 'frowne uppon the wicked and such as have evill will at Sion' (p. 312). There was some hope that the Antichrist had suffered a setback: 'Lord confirme & sanctifye this peace unto us let it be of moment, a meanes to advance thy gospell & to disappoynt Antixt & his cursed adherents' (p. 314). The resumption of godly reformation by the reconvened Glasgow Assembly no doubt confirmed this.[179]

Running parallel with Woodford's idea of an activist piety was an activist citizenship embodying the duty of Christians to promote virtue and reprove sin. He expressed admiration for individuals and groups who voiced opposition to government policies. Nationally, he applauded the high-profile stand taken by Hampden, Lords Saye and Sele and Brooke, the City of London, and the trio of 'holy livinge Martirs', Burton, Bastwick, and Prynne (p. 377). This extended to his cousin Gregory Dexter, a London printer who, Woodford asserted to God, had 'adventur[ed] himselfe much in thy cause' (p. 384) by printing Prynne's *Instructions to Church Wardens*, for which Dexter suffered in the Court of High Commission.[180] Such high expectations informed Woodford's criticism of the magistracy (Mayor William Collis and the assembly) for capitulating to Dr Clarke even to the extent of allowing the banning of a single Sunday afternoon sermon. His expectations of the ministry were particularly high. As the best solvent of evil was preaching the gospel, Woodford reserved his praise for those ministers who persisted, despite pressure from the authorities, in preaching frequently, expounding Calvinist themes, and denouncing popish error. He applauded sermons condemning superstition delivered by Richard Trueman, Thomas Ball, and Benjamin Tompkins at Northampton, and two unnamed ministers at Aldermanbury in London.[181] He singled out for particular acclaim

[179] *Ibid.*, p. 325.
[180] For Dexter, see *ibid.*, p. 367, n. 867.
[181] *Ibid.*, pp. 100, 154, 182, 219.

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John Stoughton and Andrew Perne. He commended the latter to God as one of the 'Champions for thee, even great Apolloes' (p. 100). Discussing the potency of Perne's performances he hoped the 'gospell might breake forth that the bright shininge of it might enlighten all the world, that Pop[er]y like dagon may fall before it' (p. 228). Others were acclaimed for their analysis of the times as ones of imminent persecution by the enemies of true religion, in which it was necessary to organize against oppression. Woodford expressed emphatic approval for sermons by Saye and Sele's suspended chaplain, John Mayo, in one of which, according to a hostile observer, he preached on the text 'Grow in Grace was very vehement in his use of reprehension saying these ar[e] decaying tymes wherein many did oppose those who grow in grace but they must have fellowship one with another and fortifie themselves against evill tymes'.[182] John Wilkins advocated 'pr[e]paracon for p[er]secucon' (p. 165); and James Cranford encouraged his audience to 'stand for the truth in times of greatest darknesse & danger' (p. 292). Woodford applauded his courage: 'this was a word in season Lord uphold him & stand by him in his troubles & dangers' (*ibid.*).

Woodford's own response to the Personal Rule involved a resolution to remain in England and within the existing Church structure. He rejected for now the drastic reactions embraced by more radical godly groups, such as those who thought separation was essential to achieve pure ordinances. His views were influenced by his position at the centre of a long-established puritan community: he encountered outright separatism only in London, where he discussed the current state of religion with Nicholas Tew and others, 'all unlesse one of them sep[ar]atists or greatly inclininge' (p. 313). Woodford's conviction of the deep penetration of popery, and his dislike of the popish residue in the half-reformed English Church, had substantially convinced him of the case for separation but he was not yet prepared to take the final step: 'my hart doth much hate or distrust the antichristian power that is amongst us and vayne ceremonyes & some weake rudim[en]ts yet why I should sep[ar]ate because of some imp[er]feccons I am not yet wholly convinced oh Lord enlighten me' (*ibid.*).

He felt the same misgivings over emigration. He discussed the issue with Henry Hall, schoolmaster of Paulerspury, and a Mr Shepherd. Woodford, unlike the Essex minister Samuel Rogers, was not enthusiastic about New England, apparently sharing the opinion of Rogers's half-brother, Daniel Rogers, the schoolmaster of Northampton, that departure was unnecessary.[183] He mentions

[182]TNA, SP16/474/80.
[183]Webster and Shipps, *Diary of Samuel Rogers*, pp. xx, 97, 99.

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without judgement two families emigrating to Massachusetts: George and Elizabeth Curwyn headed for Salem; William Sargent later served as lay minister at Barnstaple.[184] These views were perhaps explained by his essential optimism about Parliament's willingness to remove the deficiencies in Church and state. It remains to be seen what actions, other than wishing for the summoning of a parliament, were open to provincial individuals opposed to government policy.

Woodford's contest with popish influence began with prayer, which, at times, he used as a weapon, praying *against* the episcopal bench without hoping for its conversion. He also participated in the collective response of the Northampton godly, which fell back, as instructed by some preachers, on its voluntary structures, which were now put to work on public issues. Such meetings provided mutual support in times of danger and aimed to co-ordinate individual responses into a unified effort. During the town's struggle to avoid the altar policy, Woodford attended a meeting at which Mayor William Collis and his wife were present: 'I am now to goe Joyne in dutye wth gods people to beseech the Lord for helpe in this evill & troublous time [. . .] Lord heare our poore prayers for thy poore church & for our selves' (p. 182). In another example of collective petitionary prayer, he and Hannah joined a group of 'gods people' at Ball's house who were 'seekinge the Lord in the behalfe of his church & o[u]r selves' (p. 370).

Government religious policy was a lively topic of conversation in the county. There was much debate among the godly over the seriousness of the threat of popery and the right response to make to it. Woodford debated ceremonies with Daniel Rogers, with godly groups in Northampton and London, and even with godly strangers on the road. In Northampton he attended two conferences on the subject on the same day. The first took place at James Fryers's house, where, accompanied by Thomas Martin and Martin Tompkins, Woodford interviewed Thomas Case, a Norfolk minister under suspension for nonconformity. The second occurred at the house of the physician Dr James Hart, and was attended by Thomas and Matthew Watts. The conference at Hart's further exposed the pressure brought to bear on godly unity by the policies of the 1630s: 'we had argument about kneelinge at the sacrament, & whether it is lawfull to communicate wth knowne p[ro]phane p[er]sons & about bowinge' (p. 188).

Woodford and friends lent their support to the principled stand against the altar policy made by the churchwardens, Rushworth

[184]Diary, pp. 121 (and n. 115 on Curwyns), 176, 194; R.L. Greaves, 'Lothropp, John (bap. 1584, d. 1653)', in *ODNB*; G.A. Moriarty, 'Genealogical research in England: Gifford: Sargent', *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, 74 (1920, 1921), pp. 231–237, 267–283.

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and Farren: indeed, the parish paid their expenses in the case.[185] Woodford praised their repeated turning of the communion table into a non-altarwise orientation within the first rail, and their rejection of Clarke's instruction to create a railed altar at the east. The churchwardens 'answered him boldly' (p. 151), giving their reasons in 1641: the authorities had no 'Authority so to doe either from Rubrick or Cannons'.[186] On the day of Rushworth's excommunication for refusal to create a railed altar, he and his wife, Joan, attended a supper conference at the Woodfords' with Samuel Martin (during Rushworth's absence in London on account of the dispute, the Woodfords had taken care of Joan). Yet the yearned-for unanimity was not achieved. Even in Northampton the issue of conformity could divide godly opinion. After a supper conference at the Woodfords' attended by the Rushworths, Samuel Martin, and his wife, Woodford chastised Joan Rushworth in the diary for her unhappiness over her husband's stand against Dr Clarke. Joan, he wrote, was 'to blame in beinge heavy & sad to see her husband goe on wth such resolucon in the busines against dr Clarke. Lord strengthen his hands that he may not be discouraged' (p. 183).

What of the Christian's duty to reprove sin? Lacking the protection of a powerful patron, Woodford was acutely aware that the expression of his political views, some of which were actionable, was fraught with danger, and therefore inscribed a plea for privacy at the start of the diary, which he showed to the godly alone. He did not apply to himself the same high standard that he used for national politicians or those with higher callings. As with social manners so with politics, the obligation to speak out was activated only infrequently: conduct was to be dictated by moderation and prudence. When the commissioners arrived at Northampton to order the creation of an altar, he noted, quoting a favourite godly passage from Isaiah 59:15, that 'it is an evill time & the prudent hold their peace, who so dep[ar]ts from evill maketh himselfe a prey' (p. 104).

This caution was only overridden when challenged directly on a matter in which divine law was at stake: on two occasions Woodford found himself in potentially very dangerous circumstances and responded with a degree of courage. The first was when socializing at Sir Christopher Hatton's, a courtier and patron of Laudian ministers. After dinner he fell into conversation with Hatton's conformist chaplain, James Longman. The topic turned to religion 'the times & altars & bowinge to them he favors & maynteynes those innovations' (p. 181); as it happened, this was the time when the construction of

[185] Vestry Minutes, pp. 36–37.
[186] HLRO, main papers, petition of Farren and Rushworth, 6 February 1641.

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the altar was under way at All Saints'. At first Woodford resolved to be circumspect 'so to carry my self that he might not p[er]ceave my opinion' (p. 182). Finally goaded beyond endurance, he expressed opposition on the basis of religious conviction – idolatry was an abominable sin: 'the fire brake out, & I spoke in the behalfe of gods true & sp[irit]uall worship, though with as much discrecon as I could & thought fitt' (*ibid.*). He had still not given full vent to his feelings. He wished to avoid danger, but prepared himself to be persecuted, as instructed by the preachers, by asking God to cultivate in him the necessary capabilities to make his opposition effective: 'if in thy p[ro]vidence thou hast ordeyned that I shall be called forth to witnesse to thy truth, I beseech thee give me knowledge & wisdome & fayth & courage & resolucon & patience' (*ibid.*).

On the second occasion, Woodford found himself outnumbered by Arminians attacking predestination at the council house in Coventry, but this time chastised himself for imprudent zeal: 'the Lord much moved my hart to defend his truth but I found few there that favoured it, I was too earnest & hasty in my argum[en]t' (p. 254). Fortunately for Woodford, his mettle was never put to the test. In contrast, his condemnation of actual Roman Catholicism seems to have been carried out in an atmosphere bordering on conviviality. Encountering Lord Brudenell's Catholic kinsman, Woodford 'used what arguments I could to convince him of his error & prayd unto the Lord in his behalfe' (p. 201) and lodged with him. During a visit to Thomas Bacon's Catholic relation, George Poulton, squire of Desborough, Woodford recorded supping 'wth a demure priest which was there as I was informed, we had much discourse of gen[er]all papists in divinity' (p. 298).

Woodford's actions are often a matter of speculation. In view of his written intolerance of occasional conformity among the clergy and the prevailing mood of anti-Laudian nonconformity obtaining at All Saints', where Ball fended off attacks on his preaching and led determined opposition to ceremonial, it is likely that Woodford seldom, if ever, practised ceremonial conformity. He took a similarly hard line on lay conformity, describing the Laudian Humphrey Ramsden as a 'sup[er]stitious wretch' (p. 101). We can state with a degree of confidence that he was never required to receive communion at the rails of an east end railed altar. During the period of the first rail, the churchwardens repeatedly brought down the communion table and set it pointing east to west. The fully Laudian second rail and altar lasted only three months, during which time Woodford received communion once. He alternated between two seats, one of which was situated in an 'Alley' (p. 197) in the nave, where he sat with the town sergeants by virtue of his office. During the plague he chose to sit with

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Hannah in their own seat, which, if it was one of the tall, formerly collegiate pews, may have made concealment of their postures easier. We cannot pronounce definitively on Woodford's practice: puritans were infamous for mental equivocation, and there were ways to evade the spirit of Laudianism.[187]

A similar problem is encountered when trying to assess his response to secular policies such as ship money. Northamptonshire was one of the most recalcitrant counties, while Northampton itself paid virtually nothing, even towards the writ of 1637. Woodford may in addition have been able to exploit his constant absences to evade payment, but unsurprisingly he furnishes no details. There exists a single recorded instance of his secular resistance: he defaulted over payment of coat and conduct money. Lord Lieutenant John Mordaunt, Earl of Peterborough, sent a warrant for his arrest to Wilby on 29 July 1640. The constable of Wilby, William Lord, returned the warrant saying that Woodford could not be found, and the diary is silent on his whereabouts.[188]

Woodford expressed his ideological opposition to government policy through the pursuit of his calling, in which he sought to counteract oppression. He played a part in the county's opposition to the revival of forest law, liaising between senior counsel – John Whitwick, Edward Bagshaw, and Geoffrey Palmer – and the county gentry, who seem to have been united in their resistance. His landlord, Samuel Crick, provided their accommodation in Northampton.[189] In Woodford's view, the county objected to the defence presented by Whitwick, their chief advocate, finding it too submissive, the consensus being that counsel should protest. Whitwick's submission, he complained, 'was not well liked on the counetryes p[ar]te, it was done so lengthy who would have had a submiss[ion] wth p[ro]testacon' (p. 118).

When he agreed to act for his godly friend Thomas Bacon, squire of Burton Latimer, Woodford was drawn into a truly bitter clash.[190] Bacon's pre-eminence had long been challenged by a group led by the rector, Dr Robert Sibthorpe, whose viewpoint encompassed personal

[187]After a conference with Daniel Rogers at Ball's house, Woodford noted with approval that the schoolmaster 'seemes to loath vayne Ceremonies' (p. 164). Ramsden confirmed Rogers's nonconformity, accusing him of administering the communion without a surplice to sitters and himself receiving the sacrament 'wth thone hand on his heade, & kneeling on thone knee': TNA, SP16/474/80.

[188]Jackson, 'Ship money', pp. 134–135, 195–196; TNA, SP16/461/53.

[189]Diary, p. 118.

[190]I rely heavily on V.L. Stater, 'The lord lieutenancy on the eve of the Civil Wars: the impressment of George Plowright', *Historical Journal*, 2 (1986), pp. 279–296; and Jackson, 'Ship money', pp. 32–45.

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identification with the king and Laud, conformist divinity, ardent anti-puritanism, and an infamous dedication to royal absolutism. The conflict had ranged over various issues including rights of common, pew allocation, and altar creation, but now centred on ship money.[191] In 1638 Bacon retained Woodford to act for him in a Star Chamber case in which he was the defendant and Sibthorpe's ally, George Plowright, the promoter. Faced with Plowright's commitment to collecting the tax, Bacon and others had in 1635 employed delaying tactics, before, with the support of Sheriff Sir John Dryden, referring the matter to the Privy Council. Sibthorpe had activated his influence at court through Sir John Lambe, and Bacon had stood accused of leading a seditious, puritan, conspiracy – counselled by Dryden, Richard Knightley, and Edward Bagshaw – to sabotage the tax.

Woodford acted for Bacon in two commissions for the interrogation of witnesses, one held at Kettering, the other at Daventry. He liaised with Bacon, his brother John, also included in the suit, and Bacon's chosen commissioners, examined witnesses, and completed the paperwork. He produced legal briefs for Bacon's court appearance in conjunction with senior counsel, Geoffrey Palmer, and Bacon even requested him to appear in person in the Star Chamber on 10 May. The attorney's reluctance was due to fear of his opponent: 'I am apt to thinke that dr Sibthorpe will therefore set himselfe against me & ruine me' (p. 305). He tried to persuade himself, with what result is unclear, of his duty to appear, appealing to God: 'I am in my callinge thou canst deliver me from the mouth of the Lyon & from the fingers of the wicked & the violen[t] man' (*ibid.*).

To Woodford this was much more than an administrative dispute: he was battling evil through the legitimate channel of his calling. Bacon, he said, was 'much oppressed by the malice & violence of wicked men that p[er]secute him Lord I pray thee sanctifye it unto him, & breake this snare' (*ibid.*). However, at this point Sibthorpe received a check. Lambe abandoned the suit, which had been overtaken by Plowright's impressment as a soldier by the deputy lieutenants, among them Sir Rowland St John, after Plowright, as Constable of Burton, had failed to press his quota of soldiers for the Bishops' Wars.[192] Sibthorpe eschewed traditional methods of dispute resolution, referring the matter to his court contacts and instigating a second Star Chamber case through Plowright against Bacon. Sibthorpe reiterated the theme of a puritan conspiracy led by Bacon, the lieutenants, puritan justices,

[191] NRO, 55P/57, pp. 63–71, entry under date 19 July 1633; TNA, SP16/261/fos 85v, 91v, 101v, 109v, 117v, 125v, 174v, 214v, 230; NRO, 55P/68, under year 1637.

[192] Temple of Stowe MSS, STT 1885, 16 May 1639; Diary, pp. 193, 195–198, 206, 230–232, 294.

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and even the moderate Lord Montagu, to undermine the king's cause, the collection of ship money.[193] He organized Plowright's case while Woodford organized Bacon's. The latter provided briefs for the Star Chamber hearing on 17 May, at which 'Plowright the p[er]secuter' (p. 306) was found to be at fault and imprisoned.

By virtue of his stewardship of Northampton, Woodford was part of an influential group in the town's government, and here also he was able to combat evil through the pursuit of his calling. When Humphrey Ramsden, a Laudian layman, settled in the town, the godly community co-operated to eject him, with the steward playing his own part.[194] According to Ramsden's account, he had spent the latter half of 1637 in the town, but his enthusiastic ceremonialism had caused the godly of All Saints' parish, a 'nest of Puritans', to revile him as a papist. He had responded by compiling a detailed written account of the parish's nonconformity, but when this was discovered the puritans had mounted a concerted campaign against him and expelled him from the town. A year later, in March 1639, safe in a conformist enclave, he forwarded his denunciation to that 'orthodoxall gent' Sir John Lambe, hoping that he would reduce to conformity the 'malignant refractory spirits who disturb the peace' of the church.[195] Woodford confirmed that the godly regarded Ramsden's ritualism – he bowed when entering and leaving church, as was encouraged by the visitation articles of Bishop Dee – as a popish threat. On Ramsden's arrival in the town, Woodford hoped that the 'sup[er]stitious wretch lately come hether may not doe hurt' (p. 101). The main threat posed by Ramsden was that he might report the nonconformity of the parish, but he might also inflict religious damage by offending godly parishioners with his gestures. Ramsden put the following criticism into the mouth of Charles Newton: 'you offend weak Christians not only those but alsoe did trouble the consciences of strong ones'. The townsmen, led by Newton, Rushworth, and Fery, launched a verbal and violently physical challenge to his practices.[196] He claimed that his hosts in Northampton had reacted with more moderation: John

[193]Temple of Stowe MSS, STT 1890, 3 June 1639.

[194]Diary, p. 101 and n. 22.

[195]TNA, SP16/414/163.

[196]TNA, SP16/474/80. Ramsden said that Charles Newton had criticized him for bowing at the name of Jesus, for standing up at the *gloria patri* and gospel, and for bowing when entering and leaving church. He had further condemned as idolatry Ramsden's worshipping the altar 'before anything'. Francis Rushworth, the churchwarden, said that if he had offended Ramsden 'he served mee right for that I bring new customes into their ch[urch] wch he neither found in the Canons rubricke nor was enjoyned by act of parliament'. Another group of townsmen had sent him the message (via the parish clerk, Fery) that 'there is noe more holinesse in it [the church] than in his owne house'.

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Maunsell, Prynne's former chamber-fellow at Lincoln's Inn, and his wife, Susan, tacitly disapproved of his actions, as indeed did Woodford. The diarist even lent him his copy of William Ames's catechism on 26 November 1637. This moderation changed, claimed Ramsden, when Susan Maunsell discovered his written denunciation of the parish's nonconformity.

The mayor, Woodford's friend John Gifford, ordered him to prepare charges against Ramsden, which he was forced to answer before the Laudian justice, Dr Clarke, at the quarter sessions: 'Ramsden the sup[er]stitious fellow was indicted for night walkinge & p[rese]nted for an affray, & beinge 2ce [twice] drunke, oh Lord convert him if it be thy will or remove him from this towne' (p. 108). Again Woodford associated alehouse ungodliness with religious error. Ramsden's account of these events was rather different. Following Susan Maunsell's discovery of his written denunciation, the Maunsells had encouraged their servants to provoke him.[197] When he had struck one of them, Maunsell had thrown him out onto the street. He also countered the charge of inebriation, claiming not to have entered a tavern for months: 'neither ever would if I had lived in Northton xx yeares because I would not give theym the least advantage sith they were so fully bent against for he did drink ergo he is drunk hath beene an argument stronge enough to condemne mee in Northton'.[198] Ramsden was not entirely without friends in the town. Henry Neale of St Giles's parish represented him, and much of his information came from Christopher Young, Dr Clarke's curate at St Peter's parish, and James Forsyth, rector of Old. However these men were not influential enough to protect him and he left shortly afterwards.

The puritan clique encountered more opposition with political overtones. Mayor John Gifford brought charges against Richard Mottershed of Kingsthorpe for miscarriage in his court; Woodford again drew up the paperwork at the town's quarter sessions. In response, Mottershed threatened them both 'to have Mr Gifford & me in the Starr=chamber & to unsteward me' (p. 163). Mottershed was from a recusant family connected to the Church courts, Sir John Lambe, Bishop Robert Skinner of Bristol, the Earl of Northampton, and Archbishop Richard Neile himself.[199] However, there is no evidence that he carried out his threat.

[197] Ramsden gave the following summary of the parish's attitude towards him: 'I am smiled at by the ministers & better sort and laught out of the ch[urch] by the vulgar the men are a little more sparinge herein then heretofore but women and boyes were never so forward [. . .] I am counted a papist they say throughout the towne there cannot be a more scornfull parishe & censorious people in England': TNA, SP16/474/80.

[198] TNA, SP16/414/163.

[199] Diary, p. 163 (n. 269 on Mottershed).

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Woodford was equally committed to combatting the godly's opponents in the town oligarchy. The godly faction in the senior body of the corporation was challenged by one led by John Danby and William Knight. That this opposition was long-standing and partly based on differences of ideas is suggested by the controversy that had arisen in 1627 over the collection of the forced loan. The mayor, William Knight, had appealed to the Privy Council emphasizing his zeal to collect the levy, with repeated claims to be the only commissioner to make the least effort.[200] In contrast, resistance had been rife in the town and county: in Northampton itself the opposition had included clergy such as Thomas Ball and Benjamin Tompkins, the recorder, Christopher Sherland, his deputy, Richard Lane, and Sir Edmund Hampden. The assembly had split along similar lines over Woodford's election as steward in 1635. Woodford's backers were led by Mayor Thomas Martin, and included the aldermen John Gifford, Francis Fisher, Roger Sargent, John Bott, and John Harbert.[201] This left Aldermen Danby, Knight, and Matthew Sillesby in the camp of his rival, Thomas Pilkington, and indeed all three were beneficiaries of Pilkington's will.[202] The identities of other supporters of Pilkington are a matter of speculation: Henry Chadwick and Richard Fowler are likely candidates. The divergence over ideas emerged again in reaction to the policies of the Personal Rule. It was during Danby's mayoralty that the Monday court was suspended on St Simon's and St Jude's day. Mayor Gifford was censured by the Privy Council for his obstructionism over the collection of ship money, while the majority of the assembly blocked the attempt by Mayor Danby, Alderman Knight, and Mayor Fowler to collect coat and conduct money to support the anti-Scottish war effort.[203] Fowler was probably also stopped by the assembly from paying his respects to the general of the English army, the Earl of Arundel, when he passed through the town, until coerced into doing so by a warrant.[204]

During the elections of 1640 the conflict between these town factions, which mirrored similar divisions in the county as a whole, burst into the open. Two weeks before the shire election for the Short Parliament, Woodford was not a floating voter. He prayed God to take the national election process in hand and deflect the adversaries who

[200] TNA, SP16/75/27, 271. I thank Richard Cust for these references; see also R.P. Cust, *The Forced Loan and English Politics, 1626–1628* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 233, 297–298, 301, 309.

[201] Martin was active in securing Woodford's appointment. Woodford reimbursed him for his expenses in travelling to London about the dispute with Pilkington: Diary, p. 160.

[202] PDR, Archdeaconry of Northampton Wills, second series, L120.

[203] Diary, pp. 324, 330; Jackson, 'Ship money', pp. 134–135; Markham and Cox, *Northampton*, II, pp. 436–437.

[204] Diary, p. 293.

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were hostile to Parliament: 'give grace & wisdome to the Country & Corporacons to make choyce of gracious & able men & thou blesse the worke in their hands pr[e]vent the plots of thine adversaryes' (p. 336). He rejected the overtures of one potential court candidate, Sir Christopher Hatton, despite having previously received hospitality from him. When the godly candidate, Sir Gilbert Pickering, rode from Wellingborough to Northampton, Woodford joined his entourage: 'I was much affected to see him & prayed in my hart for him & came along wth him' (p. 344). The election was fought on issues of principle. John Crewe won the senior seat without polling, owing to his resistance to ship money, leaving Pickering to contest the junior seat with the court candidate, Deputy Lieutenant Thomas Elmes, Hatton having pulled out. After voting for Pickering, Woodford celebrated his victory, which was 'to the Joy of the harts of gods people' (p. 346). His friends – Pentlow, Ball, Gifford, Martin, and Whalley – actively campaigned for Pickering, who had been the pupil of Ball and Preston. During a later enquiry into the conduct of the election, these men were accused of slighting Elmes's supporters as seditious papists and claiming that Elmes was ineligible to stand because, as a deputy lieutenant, he was questionable in Parliament for his part in pressing troops for the Bishops' Wars. On the other side of the divide were ranged Dr Samuel Clarke, Mayor John Danby, and local magnates with court connections, including the new Lord Lieutenant (the Earl of Peterborough), the Earl of Northampton (and his agent, Richard Mottershed), and the Earl of Westmorland.[205] Woodford hinted at the souring of social relationships brought about by the political tensions revealed at the election. Before the contest he had feared that his revealing his allegiance to Pickering might bring him into jeopardy and prayed 'direct me & defend me from evill that may come uppon me for doeinge that wch is right' (p. 342). Afterwards he noticed that his working relationship with Sir John Isham, which had been amicable despite political differences, had cooled: 'I p[er]ceave his carriage was altered towards me in respect that I was for Sr Guilb[er]t Pickering at the eleccon' (p. 352).

Similar divisions were apparent in the Northampton mayoral elections of 6 August 1640, which Woodford describes in religious terms. His friend John Fisher was elected mayor, with the equally godly Henry Sprig and Martin Tompkins as his bailiffs: 'in despite of all adverse power, to the ioy of thy people & the vexacon of the enimyes of religion & strictnes Lord be with thy servants' (p. 359). Woodford celebrated Fisher's victory 'notwithstanding all the opposicon of

[205] *Ibid.*, pp. 342, 344–346, and notes.

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Mr danby now Maior Mr Knight & al' (p. 360). There was also considerable opposition to the godly among the freemen.[206]

As the Short Parliament began, Woodford restated his support for the Scots, the solidarity of international Protestantism faced with the ubiquitous threat of popery, and his identification with Parliament as an institution. He claimed a supranational fast had been held in England, Scotland, and Germany, with the purpose of promoting the success of the parliament, and he prayed for 'my deare bretheren abroad in the world' (p. 350). Enormous expectations of Parliament were coupled with continuing fear that the adversary would sabotage the session. He placed the responsibility for Parliament's sudden dissolution, and the reaction to it of London's lower orders, squarely on the shoulders of this adversary. Staying at the Haunches, he experienced in person some of the unrest. Lambeth Palace was attacked, forcing Laud to flee in disguise over the Thames, the White Lion prison was occupied, and those arrested for the attack on Lambeth were sprung from jail.[207] Woodford regarded these instances of mob violence – by the so-called London 'Apprentices' – as unalloyed 'troubles' and 'evills' (pp. 354–355), despite his loathing of the archbishop. While approving of the anti-popery of the rank-and-file soldiery marching north via Northampton, he failed to endorse their undisciplined ferocity. The men were 'vehemently bent ag[ains]t papists & will scarce be ruled by their captaynes. Oh Lord looke uppon us in this nacon reforme what is amisse send forth thy light & thy truth, scatter Idolatry sup[er]stition & p[ro]phanesse for the Lords sake' (p. 357). Woodford the lawyer preferred the parliamentary way of addressing grievances over popular violence.

The episode of the Short Parliament substantiated his theory of a popish conspiracy and confirmed his estimation of the role of the Scots in thwarting it. He explained the role of the invading army as a *deus ex machina*. Its task of purging and purifying the nation was equated with that of the messenger of the Lord described in Malachi 3:1–3. Through this army, he asserted to God, 'thou canst to the shame of thine enimyes bringe destruccon uppon them whence they did least expect it' (p. 361). Many of his godly friends shared this reading. Scottish propaganda was circulating in the area and a clerical conference at Kettering on 25 August, attended by Ball, Perne, and many others,

[206] *Ibid.*, p. 373, and n. 887.
[207] *Ibid.*, pp. 349, 352–355, and notes.

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lent it their enthusiastic support.[208] A thorough reformation of Church and commonwealth was the only solution to the problem of popery: a return to the status quo was insufficient. Woodford begged God to 'bowe the heavens & come downe & dwell amongst us, & make us a Kingdome of preists a holy nation oh let holy doctrine & pure worship be set up, & let Justice flow downe like a streame' (p. 358).

The process needed to begin with the evil institution of episcopacy, and around 2 August 1640 he called for its destruction by lightning bolt.[209] On the other hand, he still held out a faint hope that the Stuart dynasty might be purified rather than purged. He continued to wish for the conversion of the king, and beseeched God to 'convert his queene unto thee' (*ibid.*), thus ensuring the orthodoxy of the king's 'royall posterity that they may be famous in Jacob & doe worthily in this our Ephratah' (*ibid.*). Woodford became more politicized, mobilizing in support of the aims of national oppositionist politicians. At Wellingborough market on 9 September 1640, he obtained a copy of the Twelve Peers' Petition, composed by Pym and St John and signed by Saye and Sele and Brooke, calling for the summoning of Parliament to address grievances both religious and secular. The next day he circulated the document in Northampton. He attended a meeting of knights and gentry in the town at which a similar local petition to the king was drawn up. Woodford signed the document, which was conveyed to Charles at York by Sir Gilbert Pickering, the shire MP, and Richard Knightley, MP for the borough of Northampton.[210]

Woodford's attitude to the Long Parliament was informed neither by localist concerns nor by issues arising for the first time from the Bishops' Wars, but by already well-rehearsed religious and ideological questions originating in his experiences of the 1630s. He continued to push for godly reformation and reiterated his personal identification with Parliament. The godly conference was now allied to explicitly political objectives. On the first day of the session, Woodford and three former town bailiffs, Francis Rushworth, Peter Whalley, and George Goodman, met 'to read pray & conferre, which meetinge we purpose to be constant in if god p[er]mitt, we rem.[embered] the church of god & the p[ar]liam[en]t begininge this day' (p. 373). On the public level, a royal proclamation stipulated a day of fasting – to

[208]The meeting was held at the Swan Inn, whose host, John Baxter, Woodford had upbraided for swearing on 29 September 1638, and who now provided much of the information used by Lambe in his prosecution of the clergy meeting at Kettering in the Court of Arches: Fielding, 'Peterborough', pp. 18, 161 n. 24, 220, 226 n. 24, 248–249; Webster, *Godly Clergy*, pp. 231–232.

[209]Diary, p. 358.

[210]*Ibid.*, pp. 368–369.

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be observed on 17 November in London and 8 December throughout the kingdom – to remove plague, war, and other divine judgements. Woodford observed both.[211] In London he spent fourteen hours at Aldermanbury listening to Calamy and two visitors preach. Someone reported to him the first fast sermons delivered before the House of Commons at St Margaret's in Westminster by Cornelius Burges and Stephen Marshall. Both thundered against idolatry, profanation of the sabbath, and repression of preaching, and called for the godly to band together in a covenant. Woodford described their efforts as delivering 'glorious things with extraordinary zeale & fervor, this hath bene a heavenly day Lord heare the prayers of thy people worke a holy reformacon' (p. 375), and claimed Parliament was of one opinion. He also observed the fast at Northampton, hearing the curate, William Holmes, preach in the morning and Ball for four and a half hours in the afternoon. In conclusion, Woodford prayed 'Lord remove B[isho]ps & Idolatry & sup[er]stition & pesteringe Ceremonyes & thy plagues out of the Land, & send forth thy light & thy truth' (p. 380).

He was delighted by Parliament's initial burst of legislative activity aimed at liberating the victims of the Personal Rule (in which process he was eager to play an active role) and punishing the perpetrators of its misdeeds. The release of Burton, Bastwick, and Prynne he welcomed as 'the returne of the Captivity from Babilon' (p. 377), and indeed he met both Prynne and Burton at Calamy's church on 29 November. He acted professionally for some of the local victims of the regime, prosecuting the suit of the churchwardens, Rushworth and Farren, at the Grand Committee on Religion, against Clarke and Sibthorpe, and that of Thomas Bacon at the Committee on Ship Money. He also gave assistance to John James in his case against Lambe, Chancellor Thomas Heath, and Dr William Roane for persecution for ceremonial nonconformity.[212] As for the godly's 'Cursed & malicious adversaryes', Woodford consigned them to 'fall before them even as haman before Mordecai' (*ibid.*). He had previously denounced Clarke as Haman, and the bishop's surrogate experienced as sudden a reversal. Lambe, Clarke, and Sibthorpe were summoned before Parliament and punished in the first weeks of its sitting. Woodford celebrated the downfall of many of the highest profile 'evil counsellors' of the Personal Rule: 'the Lord hath done great things allready the Lieu-tenant of Ireland is in the Tower the Archb[isho]p Cant[erbury] under the black rod, the Lord Keeper rune away b[isho]p Wren bound to appeare & 6. Judges' (p. 382).

[211] *Ibid.*, pp. 375, 380.
[212] *Ibid.*, pp. 378–379, 382, 387.

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However, godly reformation was still jeopardized by the papist party. Woodford reported rumours that the adversary was trying to bribe Charles to dissolve Parliament. The adversary might deceive the Scottish army into withdrawal by falsely promising redress of grievances, and then prevail on the king to dissolve Parliament. The Scots were regarded as guarantors of reform, as underwriters of the Parliament's existence: he feared that 'the mouthes of the Scots will be stopped by granntinge all things & the feare is the p[ar]liam[en]t will not last after their returne' (p. 378). Woodford's sense of utter dependence on the Scots and distrust of royal government is expressed in his approval of the terms of the Treaty of Ripon concluding the Second Bishops' War: 'much good newes from the p[ar]liam[en]t this week I blesse god about 300000li given to their br[ethere]n the Scots that there shall be no pub.[lic] goeinge [?after] &. Lord goe on to build thy temple [amo]ng us' (p. 386). He cemented this bond by meeting in person, at Dillingham's house, Alexander Henderson and Lord Archibald Johnston, two of the radical leaders of the Covenanters. Shortly afterwards, the Triennial Act received royal assent, causing rejoicing with bonfires in the City of London.[213]

The London Root and Branch petition of 11 December 1640 blamed the oppression of the Personal Rule on episcopacy. Woodford himself composed, between 12 and 31 January 1641, a similar Northamptonshire document, which has not been found. On 26 April 1641 he welcomed with optimism the 'dore of hope that the Lord hath opened for his poore Church in generall & my selfe in particular' (p. 388), and, referring to the bishops, called on God to 'cutt them off roote & branch in one day forever extirpate their hei[r]archy' (p. 389). In mystical Old Testament language, he outlined an apocalyptic vision of a global revolution led by the godly to convert the vast ranks of the non-believers, a missionary crusade climaxing in the defeat of the Antichrist. He was naturally delighted at the apparent victory of the godly over the discomfited Laudian bishops and clergy, but noted that final victory – abolition of episcopacy and outlawry of Laudian worship – had not yet been achieved.

The shelving of the abolition question and the outbreak of the Irish rebellion would have brought about an abrupt reversal of Woodford's expectations and reactivated his fear of antichristian popery. His interpretation of events would have chimed with the thesis of the Grand Remonstrance, causing him to call for Parliament to assume ever greater powers to confront the Antichrist in Ireland or to purge the English nation. We can easily envisage him developing into a committed Parliamentarian, like his friends, as the town quickly

[213] *Ibid.*, pp. 378, 387.

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became a garrison.[214] Woodford was clearly at this stage leaning towards Presbyterianism, and when in London he favoured the preaching of Calamy and his following. Most of the ministers with whom Woodford was associated followed this trajectory, as did his father-in-law, Robert Haunch.[215] Meanwhile, in Northampton, the political temperature was rising: on 25 July 1641 the crisis induced Ball to abandon once more his pastoral style of preaching, and to revert to political forms of address: he 'spake as desirous of a reconciliacon of the differences that are now in the towne, Lord reconcile them' (p. 391). The dominant godly faction became ever more militant, on 3 August appointing of itself a public fast 'though not commannded publiquely' (p. 393), at which Ball exercised with John Baynard and William Rathbone. In January 1642 the assembly strengthened the town watch, and in April introduced new by-laws, attempting to restore discipline to its increasingly raucous and disorderly sessions.[216]

The diary

The manuscript diary of Robert Woodford is held by New College, Oxford (NCA 9502). It measures 14.2 by 10.5 by 3 cm. It is bound in limp vellum, which has been re-sewn and reattached, and has a wraparound flap to protect the fore edge, secured with a leather tie. Faint lettering at the base of the flap reads 'III'. On the back cover, and upside-down in relation to the contents of the diary, is the inscription 'Liber Quartus [per] Annos' followed by unclear figures. The edges of the text block are sprinkled with red: the lower edge is inscribed 'Lib IV' and the upper edge with 'AD L[iber] 5 1637. 8.9.40.1'. The diary, then, is the sole survivor of a series, but these markings make it unclear whether it is volume three, four, or five, and whether the series continued further. It is possible to speculate that, if each diary covered four years, Woodford would have begun keeping journals in 1622, 1626, or 1630. The earliest of these coincides roughly with the start of his debt problems, the second with the completion of his apprenticeship, but no final decision is possible.

[214] Markham and Cox, *Northampton*, II, pp. 438–442; NRO, Finch (Hatton) MSS, F(H) 133; P.R. Brindle, 'Politics and society in Northamptonshire, 1649–1714' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Leicester, 1983), pp. 134–135, 143, 144.

[215] See *The Testimony of our reverend Brethren Ministers of the Province of London to the Truth of Jesus Christ And Our Solemn League and Covenant etc. Attested by Other Ministers of Christ in the County of Northampton* (London, 1648); Tai Liu, *Puritan London: a study of religion and society in the City parishes* (London, 1986), pp. 134, 226.

[216] Markham and Cox, *Northampton*, II, p. 454; Book of Orders, p. 69.

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The diary contains 588 pages and is approximately 89,000 words long. The first six pages are blank; the seventh contains the following memoranda, separate from the diary itself:

> deb Vrs Johem Clynte de Wychingford in Com Worcester clrs[217] & Lettice ux p deb sup Lease arrer 12 yeares 40s p ann p tythes in Crannesley Leas dat 25° Novbr 21° Jac Cov p soluc reddits so R haunch & Mr h p equal porcon John Clynts alias Clynt Vrs Owen Brabrooke[218] father de Thorpe Malsor in Com Northton husband Johem Atkins de Ketteringe Lynnen dr & Matth Wiseman de Irthlingborow in Com N y V oct ren

The diary begins on the next page. The journal is written in Woodford's own neat hand and covers the period 20 August 1637 to 16 August 1641, suggesting the deliberate organization of four-year diaries.

Woodford did not paginate the book, and made use of four main symbols. The trefoil (either single or double) highlighted spiritually significant passages, while the pointing hand emphasized matters concerning his children. He used a symbol similar to the commercial '@' but with the tail running clockwise to mean 'accusator' (plaintiff), and one similar to the modern ampersand meaning either 'and' or 'etc'. He usually ruled across the page after each entry. There are a small number of annotations by later generations of the family: these stand out clearly from the text and have been ignored.

Woodford admitted that there was sometimes a delay before he wrote up his diary, resulting in faulty recall. He would leave blank ruled spaces for later completion, sometimes (as on 16 January 1637/38) inscribing an aide-memoire in the space. This methodology resulted in occasional minor chronological inaccuracies. Coverage is very full until 29 December 1639 but, thereafter, lengthy omissions are common – the main reason given being weight of professional business but also, occasionally, lethargy owing to depression. On these occasions, either no entries were logged or a single composite one summarized events occurring during the interim. Lacking space in the diary, Woodford inscribed longer, more discursive notes beginning fifteen pages before the end of the volume (the remaining fourteen pages are blank) and working backwards through the diary (but forwards chronologically) until they collide with the diary itself. They are dated and cross-referenced to their main diary entries and cover the period 29 August 1638 to 25 February 1640.

[217] John Clynte of Wichenford, clergyman, was disputing the rights to the tithes of Cransley with Francis Downes of Pytchley: Diary, p. 236.

[218] Churchwarden of Thorpe Malsor in 1637: PDR, Church Survey Book 5, fo. 130r.

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The diary descended through the line of Woodford's eldest son, Samuel, until, in 1970, Oliver Heighes Woodforde donated it to New College. In the meantime, the other volumes had been lost. Dorothy Heighes Woodforde stated that there had been three occasions when significant quantities of manuscripts disappeared: during the Great Fire of London in 1666, a century later, and in 1909. The last of these can be immediately discounted: when the HMC compiled its report in 1883 the diary was described as the last remnant of, and the last volume in, a series of three.[219] The first occasion can perhaps also be rejected. In 1678 Samuel Woodford celebrated his father's literary legacy and would surely have mentioned the loss of the vast majority of it. The remaining volumes were probably destroyed around 1766, when many family papers were deliberately burned during the custodianship of Samuel Woodforde (1695–1771), the rector of Ansford in Somerset and Parson Woodforde's father: the survival of one volume seems to have been accidental.

[219] F.W. Steer, *The Archives of New College, Oxford: a catalogue compiled by Francis W. Steer* (Oxford, 1974), pp. 112–113; D.H. Woodforde (ed.), *Woodforde Papers and Diaries* (London, 1932), p. xii; HMC, *Ninth Report* (London, 1883), pp. 493–499.

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