

# THE WORKS OF GERRARD WINSTANLEY

WITH AN APPENDIX OF DOCUMENTS  
RELATING TO THE DIGGER MOVEMENT

EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

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# INTRODUCTION

POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY is not, characteristically, the product of the study or the laboratory. It occurs rather as an incident or a by-product of action, and even when it is produced by scholars, its authors have one eye on the forum. When political philosophy is produced in quantities, it is a sure symptom that society is going through a period of stress and strain. Political philosophies are secreted—to paraphrase a famous comparison of substantive and procedural law—in the interstices of political and social crisis. Of this there is no better illustration than the period of the Puritan Revolution. Here within the span of a few years—flanked on the one side by a longer period of preparation and on the other by a period of restabilization—occurred the most extraordinary outpouring of political philosophy that the modern world has seen. For it was the first of the modern revolutionary eras: a time in which all the intellectual, religious, moral, social, and political traditions were broken apart and put together in a new pattern. It produced political theories by great scholars, Hobbes and Harrington, and after an interval, Locke. But it produced also a great mass of popular writing on the subject indicative of the disturbance that was taking place in the minds of thousands of obscure men. As a symptom of what was taking place and as a sign of the future this popular political theorizing was hardly less important than the work of scholars.

Of these popular political philosophies much the most interesting is that which grew up in connection with the Leveller party and its plans for reestablishing constitutional government after the Revolution. Beside the large literature of pamphlets and manifestoes, there is one unique document, the report of the Putney debates in the Army Council, between the agitators from the regiments and the officers of

Cromwell's staff.<sup>1</sup> Here one finds the *verbatim* report of a discussion, unpremeditated and unrehearsed, between men in the midst of a revolutionary crisis. The debates afford a glimpse into the minds of private soldiers in Cromwell's army and some first-hand knowledge of the more radical ideas about constitutional government which prevailed among political-minded Englishmen in the less prosperous section of the middle class. These ideas form a surprisingly coherent plan of democratic radicalism, both in respect of its philosophy of individual natural rights and also in respect of the political apparatus by which democrats later tried to give their philosophy effect.

Side by side with this movement of Leveller democracy and originating on its fringes was the communistic movement of Gerrard Winstanley, whose works form the subject of this study. By comparison Winstanley's effort to found a socialist community for cultivating the common land was a very minor matter. The Levellers were a political party, numerous enough to compel at least the appearance of consideration from persons in authority. Their leader, John Lilburne, was a master of popular agitation with a genius for dramatizing himself before the public as the embodiment of the people's liberties. Their ideas were suitable for the platform of a party devoted to radical democratic reforms. Winstanley's movement was negligible in size, probably never more than fifty or sixty in the group at Cobham, and while other similar groups sprang up elsewhere in imitation of this, they never made a party. The ideas behind Winstanley's communism were not such as could ever have made an effective party. And Winstanley himself, it must be admitted, showed no evidence of possessing the practical political capacity that can be sensed in some of the army agitators. In spite of these disparities, Leveller democracy and Winstanley's utopian socialism are companion pieces, representing as they do the earliest examples of these two rival types of modern revolutionary radicalism.

The contrast between the two was not chiefly in respect to their practicability. That was a matter of degree, since in a sense both were utopian. The Leveller party accomplished none of its designs,

<sup>1</sup> *The Clarke Papers*, edited by C. H. Firth, Vols. I and II, Camden Society Publications, N.S. Nos. 49 and 54, Cambridge, 1891, 1894. The debates have been reprinted, in an improved text, by A. S. P. Woodhouse, *Puritanism and Liberty*, London, 1938.

and when later democratic movements realized what the Levellers planned, the results were not much like the expectations. Both movements were nearly as much religious as they were political. In Winstanley's case this is obvious; he was a mystic and his communism was revealed to him in a trance. But it would be a mistake to suppose that the Levellers were less religious than he, merely because their religion took a different form. Every revolution gets its drive from ideas that, psychologically speaking, are religious in their effects on human motivation. The Puritan Revolution made no pretenses about these ideas: it took them for what they were. In addition, the public questions about which a revolutionist was concerned were as likely to be ecclesiastical as political. It is probably true that, even when the Revolution was at its height, there were ten Puritans who were interested in reforming the church for one who cared what happened to the government of England. Finally, in the seventeenth century, theology came close to being a universal language, and among the large mass of Puritans Calvinism was the accepted form of theology. It is hopelessly unhistorical to take the seventeenth-century radical out of the religious and theological context in which, as a matter of fact, he did his thinking and his acting. And this holds good of the Levellers as it does of Winstanley. Anyone who wants to understand John Lilburne is ill advised if he forgets that Lilburne was a bitter opponent of prelacy before he ever thought of agitating for the reform of Parliament. In the case of Winstanley, communism was merely the last step in his rejection of beliefs held in common by the great mass of Puritans, however much they might differ among themselves about the details of those beliefs. But what put Winstanley outside the Puritanism of the Revolution was not a loss of religion, but another kind of religious experience.

What distinguished Winstanley's communism from the political philosophy of the Levellers was the thorough-going difference of principle between them. The most interesting phase of their history is to see these two types of political radicalism taking shape and forming each its own body of suitable philosophical ideas. Each, as it becomes internally coherent, rejects the other. The Leveller, as one can see from the Putney debates, was a political individualist. The object of his reforms was to safeguard personal and civil liberties. These liberties he conceived as inalienable rights inherent in

every human being and inseparable from the idea of freely acting personality. The critical points in a political program were for him the suffrage and the bill of rights; the first to insure that government should be responsive to the popular will, the second to keep even a popular government from intruding upon the inviolable domain of individual right. In short, the Leveller was a democrat, and his political philosophy already embodied the social ideals of democracy: freedom of opportunity for the individual, prevention of monopoly by a liberal government. Among the rights to be respected and safeguarded by such a government is the inviolability of property. Already the Leveller notions of reform pretty clearly suggested the program characteristic of radical democracy: the separation, as complete as may be, of political action from interference with the working of the economic system.

There was scarcely a proposition in this summary account of Leveller doctrines from which Winstanley would not have dissented. Only in desiring that the Revolution should do its work thoroughly on English law and government, and in his reliance on the suffrage and frequent elections, did he follow the Leveller program. His ethics included no such belief in the moral excellence of aggressive individualism as was implicit in Leveller philosophy, and this, I believe, was a result of a quite different religious conviction that separated Winstanley from the characteristic moral ideals of Calvinism. Perhaps, too, Winstanley's own private failure in the rough-and-tumble of business may have given his moral valuations a twist: initiative and enterprise seemed to him fine names for greed and cunning. It seemed to him impossible that a free and peaceful society could be held together by the impulses that were responsible for oppression and war. Against the aggressive and acquisitive and competitive tendencies in human nature, as Winstanley thought, the principle of mutual aid and cooperation did continual battle. Only the latter, as it succeeds in keeping the family going, makes human life possible at all. Only its extension over the whole range of human relationships can bring into being a society that is really devoted to the democratic ideals of equity and reason. Accordingly it seemed to Winstanley to be a contradiction in terms to look for a free political system in a society that still harbored poverty. For political and legal

oppression arose, as he thought, precisely from the relationships of property that put some men within the economic power of others.

It is Winstanley's grasp of this idea that put him outside the circle of Leveller political philosophy. His claim to a place, though a small one, in the history of political philosophy is that he tried to visualize a social system of a different sort, in accordance with the ethical principles that he had come to believe. The denunciation of abuses, economic as well as political, is a normal part of every revolutionary crisis. The fact that Winstanley found picturesque ways of calling landlords thieves and lawyers rascals does not distinguish him from a thousand other writers of his time, or of times before and after. The point is that he tried to frame for himself a different idea of property and a different idea of the relationship between property and government from those that existed or from those accepted by the other social philosophies that he knew. In short, he tried to plan a socialist society. In this respect it is well not to expect too much. Winstanley was a man of little education, a small tradesman with no experience of large affairs or of public questions. He had a keen appreciation of craftsmanship but very little conception of economics. His platform for a communistic society is not very complete, but it is complete enough to rank as the first socialist utopia formed in the hope of becoming a party program. Beyond any doubt it was the product of an intense moral and religious experience, and Winstanley achieved a really great degree of clarity in setting out the differences that put him in opposition to the prevalent qualities of Puritan thought and belief. In this respect he is a figure of not inconsiderable historical interest because he brings to light one of the less known phases of ethical thought in the age of the Revolution. It is moreover a phase not without significance in the later history of English morals and religion. It is the purpose of this Introduction to offer a summary of these phases of Winstanley's communism.

### WINSTANLEY'S BIOGRAPHY

Very little is known with certainty of Winstanley's life except what may be gathered from the occasional biographical remarks that occur in his writings. There is no doubt that he was born in Lancashire, for he addressed his first published work, *The Myserie of God*, to

his "beloved countrymen" of that County. In the *Registers of the Parish Church of Wigan, 1580-1625*,<sup>1</sup> there is an entry showing that "Garrard, son of Edward Winstanlie" was baptized on July 10, 1609. Though Winstanley was a rather common family name<sup>2</sup> in the southern part of the County, this entry may very well record the birth of the Digger leader. If so, he was forty years old when the work at St. George's Hill began.

From his own statements it is clear that Winstanley was bred a tradesman and was engaged in business in London at the beginning of the Civil Wars. In the London Marriage Licenses in the Bishop of London's Register<sup>3</sup> occurs an entry showing that on September 28, 1640, Jerrard Winstanley was married to Susan King. It is quite certain from the address to the City of London at the beginning of *A Watch-word* that Winstanley had been admitted to the liberty of the City and had suffered bankruptcy as a consequence of the financial stress that accompanied the Civil Wars. He appears to have been engaged in some branch of the cloth industry and was probably a member of one of the City Companies.<sup>4</sup> Certainly he admired the Companies and modeled the regulation of trade in his *Law of Freedom* partly upon them. After his failure in business it was necessary for Winstanley to accept the hospitality of friends in Surrey. This move apparently was made at once, since he says that he was present in Kingston and saw Francis Drake, his future opponent at St. George's Hill, take the Covenant, presumably in 1643. In 1649, when he launched his communist project, Winstanley evidently was making a precarious living by pasturing his neighbors' cattle.

The key to Winstanley's communistic philosophy lay in his re-

<sup>1</sup> P. 74. Publications of the Lancashire Parish Register Society.

<sup>2</sup> In the Registers published (for seventy-seven parishes) the name Gerrard Winstanley occurs three times; the other two cannot refer to the right person.

<sup>3</sup> *Index Library*, Vol. LXII. For this reference I am indebted to Mr. C. W. Winstanley.

<sup>4</sup> At the Public Record Office there is a record of a suit in Chancery Proceedings, Reynardson's Division, dated October 20, 1660, by Jerrard Winstanley of Cobham, co. Surrey, in which he states that in April, 1641, being then a citizen of London, he had dealings with one Richard Allsworth for "fustions dimmities and lynnin cloth and such like commodities". He states also that his books were lost or destroyed in the late war. There appears to be no record of Winstanley in the books of the Drapers Company; possibly he was a Mercer or a Merchant Taylor. This reference also was given to me by Mr. C. W. Winstanley.

ligious experience, and though all that he wrote refers directly or indirectly to that subject, there are only a few events, and no dates for these, that can be established. He says in his *New Law of Righteousnes*, the book in which he first announced his communism, that formerly he had been "a strict professor and goer to church", which probably refers to membership in one of the more conventional religious congregations. At some time prior to his first publication, he had become a Baptist, since in *Truth Lifting up its Head* he says that he had undergone "the ordinance of dipping".<sup>5</sup> It is not unlikely that he had been one of the lay preachers in whom the Baptist sect abounded and who formed one of the most scandalous features of that body, in the eyes of more conservative Christians. The skill with which Winstanley varied the arguments in his pamphlets to suit the audience he was addressing suggests that he may have had experience in the art of *ex tempore* preaching. Like other Baptists, he not infrequently compares these unlearned "prophesiers" with the disciples of Christ and speaks with bitterness of the attempts by Parliament to suppress the preaching of the unordained. It is evident, however, that his Baptist connection was a thing of the past before Winstanley's writing began. He never refers to baptism with water as other than a non-essential form "after the flesh", to be contrasted with the baptism of the spirit, which he had come to regard as the true substance of that rite. In *The New Law of Righteousnes* he contrasts himself with those "that still live in dipping in water" and who still consider the observance of other Gospel forms important. If he ever had practiced more or less regular preaching in Baptist conventicles, he had evidently abandoned it by 1648 for a still more informal kind of religious discourse in occasional private gatherings: "not customarily to make a trade of it, for fleshly ends, but occasionally as the Light is pleased to manifest himself in me".<sup>6</sup> His *Mysterie of God* was written to prove the doctrine of universal salvation, that even the

<sup>5</sup> This form of the rite began to be practiced in England in 1641; Champlin Budge, *The Early English Dissenters*, Cambridge, 1912, Vol. I, pp. 330 ff.

<sup>6</sup> *The New Law of Righteousnes*, p. 2 (bracketed paging). There is a difference, at least of emphasis, between *The Mysterie of God* and *The Saints Paradise*, which were written within a few months of each other in 1648. In the former Winstanley enlarges upon the necessity that preaching should set forth the "experimental" knowledge of the preacher; in the latter he renounced formal teaching altogether, since the only true teacher is the spirit which is in every man.

damned shall be rescued from Hell at the end, which was heretical doctrine from the point of view of the Arminian Baptists, and was still worse from the standpoint of Baptists who retained the stricter Calvinist theology.

It is clear, therefore, that before 1648 Winstanley had already passed beyond the Baptist sect and had become what I think would properly be called a Seeker, in the terminology of the day. That is, he had ceased to be a "goer to church" at all, because he was unable to find religious satisfaction in any existing religious body. Like Joseph Salmon he had heard a "voice from the throne of the Heavenly Almightiness: Arise and depart, for this is not your rest".<sup>7</sup> It was no uncommon experience in the mid-seventeenth century. The early records of the Quakers show many cases of men and women who "passed through all the professions", and "whose custom it was when met together neither to preach nor pray vocally, but to read the Scriptures and discourse of religion, expecting a further manifestation".<sup>8</sup> Such persons and such groups made no inconsiderable portion of those who were ready to accept the teaching of George Fox. Moreover, it is obvious that the Baptists furnished a great many of these believers in the immanence of God and discards of the Christian ordinances; the early histories of the English Baptists are filled with complaints on this score.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, Winstanley's religious development was in some degree typical; many men and women in England were passing through a characteristic religious evolution which took them first out of the larger and more stable religious bodies, like the Episcopalians or the Presbyterians, into Independency, then into some Baptist congregation, and ultimately beyond the limits of any organized community.

This was, however, no growth of indifference to religion. In truth

<sup>7</sup> *Heights in Depths and Depths in Heights*. Per me Jo. Salmon. London, 1651, p. 12. Salmon was not a very well-balanced person, but his religious autobiography is a record of the kind of spiritual pilgrimage that many wiser men went through.

<sup>8</sup> *The First Publishers of Truth*. Being early records (now first printed) of the Introduction of Quakerism into the Counties of England and Wales. Edited by Norman Penney. London, 1907, pp. 16, 18, 48, 52. On the relation of such groups in Yorkshire to Fox's early teaching there, see W. C. Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, London, 1912, ch. 3.

<sup>9</sup> E.g., Adam Taylor, *The History of the English General Baptists*, London, 1818, Vol. I, p. 157. Cf. W. T. Whitley, *A History of British Baptists*, London, 1923, pp. 84 f.

it was exactly the reverse. The Seeker awaited a new revelation from above, either a new disciple gifted like the disciples of Christ to found a new church, or more often a new discipleship spiritually revealed in the inner experience of every believer. It was experience of this latter sort that terminated Winstanley's seeking and brought him finally to a state of peace and religious satisfaction. The record of the change, so far as he ever wrote it, is in his two early pamphlets, *The Breaking of the Day of God* and *The Saints Paradise*, the titles of which were evidently meant to be descriptive. It is clear that Winstanley passed through "spiritual burnings", such as George Fox describes in the opening pages of his *Journal* and such as fill the religious autobiographies of so many men of this time. Fears and anxieties, consciousness of sin, the temptations of the flesh, the horror of death, the dread of devils and spirits and apparitions—all these Winstanley enumerates with a vividness which shows clearly that he was recounting his own experience. In the end he arrived at tranquility in the consciousness of a personal revelation—an "experimental" knowledge of God within him, which supersedes the "imaginary" knowledge of the letter and the external law of ordinances and ceremonial, and which he conceived to be the cause of a complete moral transfiguration.

I myself have known nothing but what I received by tradition from the mouths and pen of others; I worshipped a God, but I neither knew who he was nor where he was, so that I lived in the dark, being blinded by the imagination of my flesh, and by the imagination of such as stand up to teach the people to know the Lord and yet have no knowledge of the Lord themselves, but as they have received by hearsay, from their books and other men's words. . . . I do not write anything as to be a teacher of you, for I know you have a teacher within yourselves (which is the Spirit) and when your flesh is made subject to him, he will teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, so that you shall not need to run after men for instruction. . . . And this is the Spirit, or Father, which as he made the globe and every creature, so he dwells in every creature, but supremely in man. . . . I have yielded to let these few experiences come abroad, and partly unwilling, because I

see more clearly into these secrets than before I writ them, which teaches me to rejoice in silence, to see the Father so abundantly at work; and it shall cease speedily for men to stand up as they do to teach one another, for everyone shall be taught of him.<sup>10</sup>

The essence of Winstanley's "experimental" religion, therefore, was intuition or vision of a mystical sort, precisely such as George Fox describes as the "openings" of the Lord to him. These intuitions were to his mind, as to Fox's, completely self-authenticating, and therefore radically different from the "imaginary" knowledge of books, or authority, or tradition, or of logical inference. From his own account it is clear that, on occasion, he was subject to trances, which indeed are a normal part of the experience of those whose religious perceptions take this mystical form. It is characteristic also that what Winstanley regarded as his mission, the teaching and the practice of communism, should have begun with a command imparted to him in such a trance, as George Fox's effective ministry in Yorkshire began with his vision of "a great people in white raiment by a river-side, coming to the Lord."<sup>11</sup> The story of Winstanley's trance and of the voice that commanded, "Work together, Eat bread together", is told in *The New Law of Righteousnes*, which was published at the end of January, 1649. That this experience was the immediate occasion of his organizing a communist group to cultivate the common at St. George's Hill appears from his reference to this book in the address which precedes *A Watch-word*, and also from the first of the manifestoes issued by the Diggers, *The True Levelers Standard Advanced*. There can be no doubt that Winstanley quite sincerely regarded his communism as a revelation of spiritual truth, whose very existence vouched for its validity and authority. In the course of his movement he presented an argument in several guises, rational or Scriptural, but in his own mind his communism had its inception in what he took to be a direct revelation. For him it neither had nor needed any other support.

Of Winstanley's life after the publication of his *Law of Freedom* in 1652 nothing is known. It appears that he was still living at Cobham in 1660,<sup>12</sup> and since he was then able to institute a suit in Chan-

<sup>10</sup> *The Saints Paradise*, address.

<sup>11</sup> *Journal*, edited by Rufus M. Jones, Philadelphia, 1906, Vol. I, p. 150.

<sup>12</sup> Above, note 4.

cery, he must have recovered a tolerable degree of prosperity. The statement that in his later life Winstanley became a Quaker has no evidence to support it.<sup>13</sup> His mysticism did not come into being as a compensation for the failure of his political and social projects, as has sometimes been imagined. In the seventeenth century any kind of political radicalism was far more likely to begin in religious non-conformity. This was certainly the case with Winstanley. The best Quaker historians find no evidence of any external relationship or interchange between Winstanley and the Quakers, despite the close similarity of his religious experience to that of George Fox and the first generation of the Friends.<sup>14</sup> Such experiences existed far and wide in seventeenth-century England. They were spread largely by sermons, either heard or read, and by conversation and discussion. Even a very high degree of similarity carries no implication of direct influence.

### WINSTANLEY'S COMMUNIST SOCIETY AT COBHAM

On the first day of April, 1649, a little band of some half dozen poor men, all resident either at Cobham or Walton-upon-Thames, appeared upon the common land at St. George's Hill and began to dig the ground and to prepare it for sowing parsnips, carrots, and beans. The Hill lies to the south of the Thames in Surrey, some seven or eight miles southwest from Kingston, and the line dividing the parishes of Walton and Cobham crosses it. Today it is the site of a prosperous suburban real-estate development, well grown with trees, but in 1649 it was an unenclosed and rather barren heath. The leaders of the movement were Gerrard Winstanley and William Everard. They continued their work on the days following, inviting all and sundry to join them in their new venture, which was nothing less than a design to cultivate the common land for the support of the needy. The plan had been announced some two months before, at the end of January, in Winstanley's little book entitled *The New Law of Righteousnes*, in which he had set forth the command, re-

<sup>13</sup> It was a speculation by Eduard Bernstein and G. P. Gooch, based upon the erroneous date assigned in the catalogue of the Thomason Library to *The Saints Paradise*. Bernstein, *Cromwell and Communism*, Engl. trans., London, 1930, p. 132; Gooch, *English Democratic Ideas in the Seventeenth Century*, second edition, p. 190.

<sup>14</sup> Rufus M. Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion*, London, 1909, p. 494.

ceived in a trance, to "work together; eat bread together". In it he had stated his intention to carry the command into action, "when the Lord doth show me the place and manner, how he will have us that are called the common people, to manure and work the common lands". Now, at the beginning of April, he had received the divine mandate for which he was waiting, and with such followers as he could find, amounting within a week or two to some twenty persons, he had begun his mission.

The venture was less surprising than it seems in more settled times, nor need one be greatly astonished that Winstanley's divine commission, under the circumstances, should have taken the form it did. In general his movement was an off-shoot of the great Leveller agitation which had begun with the Putney debates in the Army Council in the autumn of 1647, and which, after subsiding during the Second Civil War, had flared up again shortly before the execution of the King. In December, 1648, the Leveller leader, John Lilburne, had tried to gain the cooperation of Ireton and the officers of the Army in a revision of the Agreement of the People, and the negotiations had broken down after creating in Lilburne's mind a firm conviction that Ireton had duped him. Lilburne had dissociated himself from the emasculated version (as he thought it) of the Agreement which the Council of Officers presented to Parliament in January. And on March 28, 1649, Lilburne and his associates, Walwyn, Prince, and Overton, had been committed to the Tower for their angry charges against the Council in the second part of *England's New Chains*. In April events were shaping up for the Leveller rising in the Army which finally ended at Burford on May 14.<sup>1</sup> The sense of betrayal felt by the Levellers, and their distrust of the officers and gentry, may be gauged from the pamphlet, *More Light Shining in Buckingham-shire*,<sup>2</sup> which almost certainly reflects the atmosphere of feeling to which Winstanley was exposed at this time. It is quite true that his social philosophy was fundamentally different from that

<sup>1</sup> For an account of the Levellers between February and May, 1649, see S. R. Gardiner, *The Commonwealth and Protectorate*, London, 1894, Vol. I, ch. 2. For the period of the Putney debates, see A. S. P. Woodhouse, *Puritanism and Liberty*, London, 1938, Introduction, Section II.

<sup>2</sup> Appendix, p. 627. Note also the sympathy expressed for the Diggers in the resolutions adopted at Aylesbury early in May, 1649, and printed at the end of *A Declaration of the Wel-affected*, Appendix, p. 646.

which prevailed among the Levellers, and also that Winstanley was aware of the difference. But in his own mind he distinguished himself as the "true leveller", the real disciple of Christ who was the "chief leveller". For Winstanley levelling meant nothing less than a complete reconstruction of society, not merely its political reform, and before all else the destruction of "the thieving art of buying and selling".

This economic turn in Winstanley's religious mysticism was not surprising in a man whose sympathies were deeply enlisted by the miseries and deprivations of the poor. The disorders of the Civil War had been a crushing burden upon English industry both in the country and the cities, and with the disorganization of business came widespread unemployment. The enclosure of common land to the detriment of the poor was a grievance commonly condemned by Leveller petitions in 1647 and 1648.<sup>3</sup> The news sheets published during 1649 contain accounts from many parts of England of conditions bordering on famine and pestilence. Winstanley's native Lancashire suffered very severely. More than once the Mayor and Aldermen in London tried to fix the price of bread. Throughout the years 1649 and 1650 the subject appeared repeatedly in Parliament, the misery and discontent among the poorer people being a manifest threat of disorder and rioting, not to say of insurrection. In March, 1649, the Common Council in London and the Justices of the Peace in the counties were ordered to prevent speculation in foods and to supply the poor with corn and coal. No fewer than four parliamentary committees that year were appointed to consider plans for "setting the poor on work".<sup>4</sup> Finally, in 1650, Parliament appropriated £1000 to the City for the relief and employment of the poor.

Under these circumstances it was natural that men should have conceived of the use of the common lands, and more especially of the church and crown lands that had been confiscated, as an additional source of supply. Nor was Winstanley the only person whose mind ran in that direction. Almost as he began his work at St. George's Hill that much-devising man, Peter Chamberlen, published

<sup>3</sup> See the documents reprinted by A. S. P. Woodhouse in *Puritanism and Liberty*, London, 1938, pp. 338, 339, 436. Cf. *More Light Shining in Buckingham-shire*, pp. 3, 10 (bracketed paging).

<sup>4</sup> *Commons Journal*, Vol. VI, pp. 137, 167, 201, 374, 416, 481.

a plan for turning the confiscated land into a "joint-stock" to benefit the poor and enrich the nation.<sup>5</sup> A wiser and a better man than Chamberlen, Samuel Hartlib, published and republished a pamphlet on the state of the poor and the possibility of increasing employment, during the year when Winstanley was trying to launch the communistic tilling of the common land.<sup>6</sup> Hartlib ended as follows:

To conclude, for the better relief of the poor, it was well observed of one, who said that England had many hundreds of acres of waste and barren lands, and many thousands of idle hands; if both these might be improved, England by God's blessing would grow to be a richer nation than it is now by far.

It is not really surprising, then, that the inner light should have opened to Winstanley the vision of a society in which there should be no beggars, or that the utilization of available land for social purposes should have seemed to him to be the solution of the problem of poverty and unemployment.

The Digging at St. George's Hill met such a reception from the landowners and other people of the locality as might be expected. The Diggers were taken by the country-people and shut up in the church at Walton until they were released by a Justice of the Peace, and on another occasion a crowd of a hundred men carried them to Kingston, where they were again released. By twentieth-century standards the English Revolution was astonishingly mild and easy-going. After some two weeks, however, there was an effort to invoke other than the powers of local government. Under date of April 16, one Henry Sanders, of Walton-upon-Thames, lodged an information with the Council of State,<sup>7</sup> giving a rather alarmist account of the Diggers' intentions, which is not borne out either by the pacific tone of their pronouncements or by anything that happened later.

<sup>5</sup> *The Poore Mans Advocate, or Englands Samaritan*, dated April 3, 1649. There is an article on Chamberlen in *D.N.B.* He abounded in "projects", medical, religious, and social, and had the distinction of being a millenarian in 1654 and the King's physician after the Restoration.

<sup>6</sup> *London's Charitie stilling the Poore Orphan's Cry*, dated September 3, 1649; and *Londons Charity enlarged*, April 15, 1650. Hartlib was a German resident of London, a friend of Milton, and the author of many tracts on the improvement of education and of agriculture.

<sup>7</sup> Sanders's letter is printed in *The Clarke Papers*, Vol. II, pp. 210 f. It is reprinted by L. H. Berens, *The Digger Movement*, London, 1906, pp. 34 f.

Bradshaw, the President of the Council, forwarded Sanders's letter to Fairfax with a request that he send a force of horse to disperse the Diggers, lest a local disturbance become a cover for the activity of "a malignant and disaffected party".<sup>8</sup> At the same time the Council of State directed the Justices of the Peace near Cobham to proceed against the promoters of riotous meetings.<sup>9</sup> Fairfax did as he was asked, and under date of April 19, Captain John Gladman reported from Kingston that he had visited the Diggers and had found the business "not worth the writing nor yet taking notice of: I wonder the Council of State should be so abused with informations".<sup>10</sup> He stated also that Winstanley and Everard had agreed to report their doings and purposes to the General, and they did so at Whitehall on April 20.<sup>11</sup> On the same day the first of the Digger manifestoes was issued, with fifteen signers, *The True Levellers Standard Advanced*. This document clearly stated that they were acting on the authority of a revelation, that, of course, which Winstanley had reported in *The New Law of Righteousnes*.

These proceedings made a nine-days wonder and they were widely reported in the news sheets of the time, but for the most part the news writers appear to have known nothing beyond what was reported to the Council of State and what transpired at Whitehall when Winstanley and Everard visited Fairfax.<sup>12</sup> This interview must have been picturesque. Like the Quakers later, the two Diggers refused to remove their hats in the General's presence, "because he was but their fellow-creature". They proclaimed themselves to be "of the race of the Jews", that is, of the chosen people or saints, and said that they relied on God to make the barren land fruitful. Their pur-

<sup>8</sup> Bradshaw's letter also is printed in *The Clarke Papers*, Vol. II, pp. 209 f., and is reprinted by Berens, *op. cit.*, pp. 35 f. The matter is reported in Bulstrode Whitelocke's *Memorials* under date of April 17, 1649.

<sup>9</sup> *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic*, 1649-1650, p. 95.

<sup>10</sup> *The Clarke Papers*, Vol. II, pp. 211 f., Berens, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

<sup>11</sup> The interview is reported at length in Whitelocke's *Memorials* under date of April 20, but Whitelocke copied his account almost *verbatim* from a pamphlet entitled *The Declaration and Standard of the Levellers of England delivered in a Speech . . . by Mr. Everard*, London, Imprinted for G. Laurensen, April 23, 1649. Reprinted by Berens, *op. cit.*, pp. 37 f.

<sup>12</sup> The most circumstantial account, which seems to depend on an eye-witness from Surrey, is in *The Kingdoms Faithfull and Impartiall Scout*, April 20-27. One gathers that the Diggers were repeatedly driven off by the country-people and as repeatedly came back to their work again.

pose, they said, was to remove the worse than Egyptian bondage imposed on England by the Norman yoke and to restore the ancient community of enjoying the fruits of the earth, without however breaking enclosures or meddling with private property. It is clear from these early accounts that at the start William Everard, rather than Winstanley, was regarded as the leading spirit in the movement. Everard was definitely "queer". Gladman in his report to Fairfax had described him as "no other than a mad man". From the address to *Truth Lifting up its Head above Scandals* it is apparent that Everard and Winstanley had religious associations that preceded their plan for a communistic society.<sup>13</sup> Though Everard's name appears first among the signers of *The True Levellers Standard Advanced*, he does not appear among those who signed the second manifesto, the *Declaration from the Poor Oppressed People of England*, in June, or at any time thereafter. In the news sheets for May it was repeatedly stated that he had joined the mutinous regiments near Oxford, which were defeated at Burford on May 14.<sup>14</sup> Whatever became of Everard, there is practically no doubt that the ideas and the leadership of the communistic movement belonged wholly to Gerrard Winstanley.

The next information about the communistic colony in Surrey comes at the end of May, when Lord Fairfax, returning to London from Guildford, stopped at St. George's Hill to see and talk to the Diggers.<sup>15</sup> There were then twelve men at work and some barley was sprouting, though some of the crops had been trampled by the country-people. It seems pretty clear that Fairfax was loath to bring the Army into a matter which he rightly regarded as belonging to the civil authorities. Early in June some of the soldiers quartered at Walton joined the local people in a raid on the Diggers, and on the ninth, Winstanley handed to the General the *Letter to the Lord Fairfax* complaining of this ill-treatment. Apparently Fairfax prom-

<sup>13</sup> See the note on Everard below, p. 103.

<sup>14</sup> For example, *Mercurius Britannicus*, May 8-15; *The Kingdoms Faithfull and Impartiall Scout*, May 10. Since, however, he is sometimes called "Captain" Everard, there may be a confusion of identities.

<sup>15</sup> This interview was reported in a news sheet entitled *The Speeches of the Lord Generall Fairfax . . . to the Diggers at St. Georges Hill*, May 31, 1649. In fact, only one page refers to this subject. The interview is mentioned in several other news sheets.

ised that the soldiers should keep hands off, for in the letter which Winstanley wrote the following December, he says that the soldiers had not molested the Diggers for a half year past. In the meantime, however, the relations of the communist colony to the local landowners were growing more strained. On June 1 the Diggers issued their second manifesto, *A Declaration from the Poor Oppressed People of England*. The number of signers has now risen from fifteen to forty-five. They assert that they mean to cut and sell the wood on the common to finance their work, and they give notice that they will prevent the landlords from cutting the wood.<sup>16</sup> A few days later the local owners retaliated with a piece of organized hooliganism, which the Diggers reported in *A Declaration of the Bloudie and Unchristian Acting of William Star and John Taylor*. For obvious reasons the threat to take the landlords' rights of commonage was regarded as more serious than merely digging up an acre or two of heath, which probably had no value for purposes of cultivation.

With affairs in this somewhat threatening posture, the more responsible of the local landlords decided to substitute legal duress for the more dangerous methods of the mob. On June 23 four suits asking damages for trespass were begun against the Diggers in the Court of Record at Kingston, which by the Charter of the Borough had jurisdiction in the Hundreds of Elmbridge, Copthorne, and Effingham, west of the town. Winstanley aired the grievance of these suits in July and August, in *An Appeal to the House of Commons* and *A Watch-word to the City of London*, but since he complains that he was never shown the declarations, it is likely that he did not know exactly what the court's action had been. Some of his statements are not quite correct. However, the record is available,<sup>17</sup> and

<sup>16</sup> *Mercurius Republicus*, May 22-29, reports a near-riot in which the Diggers were prevented from cutting wood, "the horses hurt and killed that were to draw the same away".

<sup>17</sup> The suits are Nos. 159-162, entered on June 23, 1649, in the Court of Record Book, now in the Guildhall at Kingston-upon-Thames; indexed as B. Judicial, I. Court of Record Books, No. 10, 21 Charles I to 1658, in Surrey Record Society, No. XXIX: *Borough Records*, by Miss D. L. Powell, p. 49. I am indebted to Miss Powell, the Honorary Secretary of the Society, for a transcript of the record. No. 159 was against John Barker, Thomas Starre, and William \*\*\*\*\* (probably Hoggrill), but Barker's name is stricken out; damages £4 and judgment on August 25 against the manucaptor, since the defendants cannot be found. No. 160 is against Henry Bickerstaffe, Edward Longhurst, and John Barker; damages £10 and judgment

by putting this with Winstanley's statements, a complete picture of what happened can be pieced together. The suits were brought by Thomas, Lord Wenman, Sir Ralph Verney, and Richard Winwood, who must for some reason have been in legal possession of the Manor of Walton; the property belonged to Francis Drake,<sup>18</sup> whom Winstanley clearly regarded as responsible for the suits. Winstanley persistently refused to employ a lawyer, a stand which he doubtless took on principle, as he refused to remove his hat before Fairfax, and as the Quakers refused to take an oath. The statement which he offered to the court (later printed in *A Watch-word*) was a pamphlet rather than a proper pleading, and the court naturally refused to accept it. His non-appearance was technical, since he says that in fact he went to court on three days. The court accordingly gave damages in the sum of £10, with plaintiffs' costs of 29s. 1d. The cows which he was pasturing were taken in execution, but had to be released because they were not his property. Winstanley boasts that he never satisfied the judgment. It is pretty obvious from his account of the affair that the purpose of the suits was not to recover damages but to harass the Diggers and break up their community.

Whether because of these suits or for some other reason, the Diggers in the autumn left their first situation on Francis Drake's land and moved over into Cobham Manor, which was the property of John Platt<sup>19</sup> (or his wife), the rector at West Horsley. The crops planted in the spring had been destroyed but the Diggers planned to prepare the land and plant a crop of winter grain, and they had built four houses. From this time forward Platt appears in Winstanley's writings as his chief opponent. Evidently the state of affairs became more troubled. On October 10 the Council of State, on information of a tumultuous meeting at Cobham, again directed Fairfax to send troops to support the Justices of the Peace.<sup>20</sup> The news

against the manucaptor, who produced Bickerstaffe and had him committed to prison in execution for damages. No. 161 is against Henry Barton, Samuel Webb, and Abraham Pennard *alias* Goodgroome; no further action on this suit. No. 162 is against Winstanley; he is recorded as not appearing and was given a day successively on July 7, 14, and 21. A jury assessed damages of £10 and costs on July 28, and a writ of execution issued on August 11.

<sup>18</sup> See the note on these men below, p. 319.

<sup>19</sup> See the note on Platt below, p. 346.

<sup>20</sup> *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic, 1649-1650*, p. 335.

sheets report a petty riot, in which about fifty Diggers refused to disperse at the command of the Justices of the Peace, and state that they are to be indicted at the next Quarter Sessions.<sup>21</sup> Platt, so Winstanley says, spent two weeks at Army Headquarters trying to persuade Fairfax to send soldiers to Cobham, which he finally did, but ordered them merely to support the sheriff. About the end of November, however, some of the soldiers joined with the gentry in destroying two houses that the Diggers had built, and this occasioned the letters of protest that were sent to Fairfax in December. At this time also Winstanley again went to Whitehall to see Fairfax. On the first of January he published his *New-Yeers Gift for the Parliament and Armie*, which reviews the efforts made during the preceding months to disperse the Diggers and includes also some of his most vigorous statements of his religious communism.

This great Leveller, Christ our king of righteousness in us, shall cause men to beat their swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks, and nations shall learn war no more, and everyone shall delight to let each other enjoy the pleasures of the earth, and shall hold each other no more in bondage. Then what will become of your power? Truly he must be cast out for a murtherer and I pity you for the torment your spirit must go through, if you be not forearmed, as you are abundantly forewarned from all places; but I look upon you as part of the creation who must be restored, and the spirit may give you wisdom to foresee a danger, as he hath admonished divers of your rank already to leave those high places and to lie quiet and wait for the breaking forth of the powerful day of the Lord. Farewell, once more. Let Israel go free.<sup>22</sup>

Winstanley himself had achieved the serenity of waiting upon the Lord, which was a characteristic part of his religion: "I have writ; I have acted; I have peace."

In the meantime the Diggers had pushed forward their work with remarkable vigor, intending that the spring of 1650 should see the first achievement of their communal cultivation of the common land. Writing in April Winstanley says that they had eleven acres of grain

<sup>21</sup> *A Brief Relation*, October 16; *Mercurius Elencticus*, October 15-22.

<sup>22</sup> *New-Yeers Gift*, p. 43 (bracketed paging).

growing and had built six or seven houses. On the whole it seems pretty clear that, as a consequence of Winstanley's determination and enthusiasm, the communist society at Cobham accomplished more than the historians have usually implied.<sup>23</sup> They were encouraged that spring by a similar venture in Northamptonshire<sup>24</sup> and another, as they say, in Kent. At the end of March they issued a new manifesto, *An Appeale to all Englishmen*, which bore twenty-five signatures, and they circulated an appeal for funds among their sympathizers in the surrounding country. At the same time, however, their local opponents, led by John Platt, became correspondingly active. They turned the cattle into the growing grain, and with a good deal of brutality, it seems, they destroyed the houses and turned the Diggers, women and children, out upon the heath. Winstanley's last argument, which is really an admission of defeat, was published on April 9, 1650: *An Humble Request*.

At some time which I have not been able to determine, the threat of the preceding autumn to take criminal proceedings against the Diggers was carried into effect. At the Public Record Office there is an indictment, endorsed *billa vera*, against Winstanley and fourteen other Diggers for disorderly and unlawful assembly, reciting that on April 1, 1649, being so assembled, "ad tunc et ibidem apud Cobham praedictam in comitatu praedicto terram ibidem vi et armis, etc., riotose routose et illicite effodierunt, anglice did digge up."<sup>25</sup> Unfortunately, apart from the indictments, there are no other records of Surrey Assizes extant for this date;<sup>26</sup> consequently it is not possible to say what further action was taken, but the return of a true bill is *prima facie* evidence that a prosecution followed. The bundle in which the indictment occurs is endorsed "Winter Sessions, 1649 and 1651", which suggests that the indictment was probably returned

<sup>23</sup> S. R. Gardiner, *The Commonwealth and Protectorate*, London, 1894, Vol. I, pp. 48 f.

<sup>24</sup> Appendix, p. 649.

<sup>25</sup> Assizes: Home Circuit, File 35, Bdle 90. Those named in the indictment, besides Winstanley, are Henry Barton, Thomas Starr, John Heyman, William Everard, John Palmer, James Hall, William Comes, Adam Knight, Thomas Edsaw (Edcer), Richard Goodgreene (Goodgroome), Henry Bickerstaffe, Richard Medley (Maidley), William Boggerell (Hoggrill), and Edward Longhurst.

<sup>26</sup> Guide to Archives and other Collections of Documents relating to Surrey: *The Public Record Office*. By M. S. Guiseppi. Surrey Record Society, No. XXIV, pp. Aa 59 f.

in January, 1650. Winstanley, however, never refers to it, which is surprising if it occurred before the writing of the *Humble Request*, in view of the publicity he gave to the civil suits of the preceding summer. Apart from the date endorsed on the bundle of indictments, I should have been inclined to infer that the Diggers were indicted at the Easter Quarter Sessions in 1650. If so, this was the last step in the dissolution of the communistic society at Cobham and the conclusion of Winstanley's effort to cultivate the common land.

### WINSTANLEY'S ANTECEDENTS AND CONNECTIONS

Winstanley asserted repeatedly that he derived his beliefs from no man and from no book. It is obvious that this cannot be literally true, but it is certain that Winstanley was quite sincere in saying it. As has already been said, he was subject to flashes of insight which he attributed to an inner Light or a divine voice and his communistic experiment was directly induced by such an experience. In his writings he never cites any book but the Bible, and he never mentions any person, except William Everard, with whom he had been associated. It is therefore quite impossible to trace specific influences which contributed to his religious convictions or formed the antecedents of his communism. Winstanley was no scholar and probably had little occasion to be critical about the origin of his ideas; I should infer that he was a less bookish man even than the great Leveller agitator, John Lilburne, who improved his terms in prison with a considerable amount of reading. Like the early Quakers, to whom of all his contemporaries he was intellectually most akin, he combined a great amount of energy and determination in action with a highly developed power of introspection and of religious contemplation. It is almost certainly the case that he absorbed his ideas largely from sermons—that enormously powerful agency of Puritan publicity<sup>1</sup>—from the "prophesying" of laymen in the conventicles, and from private discussion and conversation. Hence it was easy for him to imagine that his thought was spontaneous.

This characteristic of indefiniteness and lack of personal attachment is typical of English thought in the mid part of the seventeenth century, perhaps most typical of all of the decade of the 1640's. The

<sup>1</sup> This phase of the period has been well presented by William Haller in his *Rise of Puritanism*, New York, 1938.

Puritanism of Thomas Cartwright and his successors at the close of the sixteenth century is individual and easy to identify. The same is true of strains of continental thought more akin to Winstanley: the mysticism of Jakob Boehme or the religious individualism of Acontio, which in the earlier part of the seventeenth century can be safely attributed to those men or a few disciples influenced by them. In respect to this kind of ideas, however, the seventeenth century was very definitely a period of popularization. The pulpit and a popular press of astonishing productivity, at least in comparison with any preceding age, rapidly spread both religious and political thought to a multitude of obscure and uneducated men. And as the ideas traveled, their individuality was worn off; by 1648 it is practically impossible to tell where any popular writer got his ideas, unless he provides the autobiographical clues, and even then it is not certain that he knows. On the other hand, the 1640's are too early for any organization of the religious denominations that lay to the left of Independency. Nothing is harder than to tell what a writer like Thomas Edwards meant by words like Anabaptist, Antinomian, Familist, or Ranter, and while he probably took little enough trouble to find out what the persons that he vilified really believed, the task was not too easy. In the less stable denominations there were as yet no standards for membership and no general organization. The history of congregations is a story of continuous division, and occasionally of recombination of the parts, largely according to the personal influence of individual preachers. All sorts of religious sects multiplied amazingly after about 1645. Even the Baptists had no national organization until the 1650's, though several congregations joined in adopting a confession of faith in 1644. The Quakers had no effective national organization until after 1660. To ask where Winstanley "belonged" in 1648 in respect to religious affiliation is therefore meaningless; there was not as yet any place where he could belong.

Nevertheless, Winstanley certainly did not stand alone. It is quite possible to trace similarities, though not influences, between him and certain religious currents of the time, though no one except Winstanley made religion the occasion for a communistic theory of society. As was said above, Winstanley had at some time been allied with a Baptist congregation, though he had abandoned the connection before 1648. In substantial respects, however, he continued to

hold convictions in common with the Baptists. One of these was his frequently stated belief in toleration and a rooted objection to any interference by magistrates with freedom of religious belief or practice. The Baptists supported this position far more consistently than the Independents, who were the only other religious body of the time that supported it at all. Their conception of the church was out-and-out separatist, "a company of visible saints, called and separated from the world by the word and Spirit of God".<sup>2</sup> The belief that every Christian must be consciously "called" and separated from the world by a personal experience was the ground for the belief in adult baptism. This emphasis upon what Winstanley called "experimental" religion was the reason why the Baptist congregations were a chief recruiting ground of those who, like himself, came to regard the experience as all in all, superseding both organization and the practice of fixed religious rites. The Baptists themselves condemned in 1650 precisely the tendency illustrated by Winstanley, to regard Scriptural history as "but a letter" and the ordinances as "but fleshly forms", and to replace them with "a God within, and a Christ within, and a word within".<sup>3</sup> For the Baptists, though they required few ceremonies, were as tenacious of those they did require as any other religious denomination, and despite their emphasis on experience, they did not as a rule depart from the rigid acceptance of Scriptural authority which was characteristic of other Puritans. Most of them were Calvinist in their theology, though there were General Baptist congregations that denied particular election. It is not difficult to see, then, why for Winstanley his Baptist connection was only a temporary halt on the road to a religion without forms and without dogmas. As Robert Baillie said, instancing Roger Williams and John Saltmarsh, "Very many of the Anabaptists are now turned Seekers, denying the truth of any church upon earth for many ages past . . . any Church discipline at all, or any Church act, Church state, or Church ordinance whatsoever."<sup>4</sup>

The respect in which Winstanley probably owed most to his Baptist antecedents, however, was his belief that the restoration and ref-

<sup>2</sup> Baptist Confession of 1644, Section 33; E. B. Underhill, *Confessions of Faith and other Public Documents illustrative of the History of the Baptist Churches of England*, London, 1854, p. 39.

<sup>3</sup> *Heart-Bledings for Professors Abominations*; Underhill, *op. cit.*, p. 295.

<sup>4</sup> *Anabaptism*, London, 1647, pp. 96 f.

ormation of religion depend upon the poor and the unlearned, the condemned and ridiculed, "the despised sons and daughters of Zion", in whom the Spirit is rising up. This idea recurs repeatedly in Winstanley's religious tracts and it may very well have led him to the belief that social regeneration would come by the communistic association of the poor laborers and landless peasants. "You are the despised ones of the world, yet the blessing is in you and shall spread forth to fill the world." These are the words with which he prefaced the revelation of his communism in *The New Law of Righteousnes*. A similar idea, though quite without reference to communism or any social project, occurs in Baptist writers and in others akin to the Baptists.

The voice of Jesus Christ reigning in his Church comes first from the multitude . . . God uses the common people and the multitude to proclaim that the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. As when Christ came at first the poor received the Gospel . . . so in the reformation of religion . . . it was the common people that first came to look after Christ. . . . You that are of the meaner rank, common people, be not discouraged; for God intends to make use of the common people in the great work of proclaiming the kingdom of his Son. . . . The voice that will come of Christ's reigning is like to begin from those that are the multitude, that are so contemptible, especially in the eyes and account of Antichrist's spirits and prelacy: the vulgar multitude, the common people—what more condemned in their mouths than they? <sup>5</sup>

This is the form in which class-feeling became most definitely conscious in the seventeenth century. In the 1640's the Baptists as a group were certainly constituted mostly from the poorer part of the urban tradesmen and workers. They were looked down upon for that reason, and very naturally they retorted by trying to change a badge of contempt into a mark of honor. The Baptist clergy was generally

<sup>5</sup> *A Glimpse of Sions Glory*, London, 1641; reprinted in A. S. P. Woodhouse, *Puritanism and Liberty*, London, 1938, p. 234. William Haller attributes the pamphlet to the Baptist clergyman Hanserd Knollys; *The Rise of Puritanism*, New York, 1938, p. 270. Cf. the similar idea in John Goodwin's *Anti-Cavalierisme*, 1642; quoted by J. W. Allen, *English Political Thought, 1603-1660*, Vol. I, London, 1938, p. 476. Goodwin was not a Baptist but like them he became an extreme Separatist.

reproached by Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and Independents alike as unlearned and uncouth, "mechanick preachers". The Baptists in turn condemned the established clergy as tithe-takers who preach for lucre. They often made a virtue of leaving their clergy to support themselves by a trade, and they regularly opened their meetings to the "prophesying" of any layman who was moved to speak, not excluding women. They deliberately defended the right of the unordained to preach, if they were "gifted and enobled by the Spirit", a practice which Parliament tried repeatedly and unsuccessfully to suppress. Winstanley shared with the Baptists, and perhaps first got from them, his detestation of those who make a trade of preaching. With this went what Robert Baillie called "their declared rage against universities and all societies of learning", of course as training schools for the clergy, which also appears to the full in Winstanley. It is difficult to imagine where, in the seventeenth century, he could more readily have found the rudiments of a sense of class-antagonism than in the left wing religious groups, though the Baptists as a class (apart from those who joined the Fifth Monarchy movement) had no radical views whatever, either about government or property.<sup>6</sup>

When Winstanley first appears in print, in his *Mysterie of God*, it is to defend the heresy of universalism, the belief that in the end even the damned shall be rescued from hell by the mercy of God. Perhaps it is not altogether fanciful to connect this belief also with a kind of religious sentimentalism that grew out of the agitation of the masses. In the seventeenth century it never arrived at any kind of denominational organization, and consequently it does not relate Winstanley to any group that can be identified. The belief recurred sporadically in the decade before 1650 but with sufficient frequency so that teaching "that all men shall be saved" was made actionable by the Ordinance for the Punishing of Blasphemies and Heresies.<sup>7</sup> It was mentioned several times by Thomas Edwards in his list of

<sup>6</sup> They were accused of harboring subversive ideas often enough to have defended themselves against the charge. *A Declaration by Congregational Societies in and about the City of London, as well of those Commonly called Anabaptists as others*, London, 1647; reprinted in E. B. Underhill, *op. cit.*, p. 273. There are sections on liberty, magistracy, "propriety", and polygamy.

<sup>7</sup> The Bill was before Parliament for about a year and a half and was finally passed in 1648; see W. K. Jordan, *The Development of Religious Toleration in England, 1640-1660*, pp. 90 ff.

sectarian heresies.<sup>8</sup> The belief in universal salvation appears to have been only a passing phase of Winstanley's thought, because eschatology in any form quickly lost interest for him. Still, this particular belief was a consequence of two other ideas that formed a permanent part of his religious metaphysics. The first of these was the belief that the world is governed by the power of universal love; given this belief it is hard to think that any part of the creation can be irretrievably damned. The second is the belief that the unfolding of this cosmic power of love runs through a series of stages that end with universal salvation. Thus history is turned into a succession of revelations or manifestations of divine love which mark the rise of the soul toward God. This is an almost universal aspect of religious mysticism.<sup>9</sup> It was neither difficult nor illogical for Winstanley, in his *Mysterie of God*, to extend the plan by supposing a final stage beyond the last judgment, in which even the damned would be released out of hell. It grew from a conviction that no creature of God could be beyond the reach of the love of God. Only evil as such, "the Serpent", is ineradicably opposed to God and must therefore remain in hell forever.

It is perfectly apparent that at a critical point in the development of his religious thought Winstanley was powerfully affected by some form of religious mysticism. By mysticism in this connection is meant the belief that God manifests Himself to man by an inner Light or clairvoyance, transcending either sensuous or rational knowledge, and consequently with a certainty which transcends the authority either of Scripture or of the church. The revelations of the Light are conceived as an experience which each individual can and must enjoy for himself, the teaching of any other person being by comparison thin and insubstantial, a mere form of "hearsay". Such a belief had, of course, recurred again and again in the history of Christianity, and also in the history of Protestantism, though it was more akin to

<sup>8</sup> Edwards connected it with a pamphlet called *The Fulnesse of God's Love Manifested*, by L. S. (1643): *Gangraena*, Part I, p. 30; with one entitled *Divine Light Manifesting the Love of God unto the Whole World* (1646): *Gangraena*, Part III, pp. 10, 11, 13; and with John Saltmarsh's *Free Grace, or the Flowings of Christs Blood* (1645): *Gangraena*, Part II, p. 2. Richard Coppin published several pamphlets teaching this doctrine after 1649; see the article in *D.N.B.*

<sup>9</sup> The idea of a progressive revelation was elaborately developed by John Saltmarsh in his *Sparkles of Glory, or some Beams of the Morning Star*, London, 1647.

Lutheran than to Calvinist Protestantism. Since in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it was unthinkable that Protestant mystics should seek to recreate monastic institutions, there was a corresponding modification of the plan of mystical contemplation. The mystic remained in the world, though in thought he set himself apart from it. The mystical experience which is here in question had therefore a second property: it was not exclusively contemplative and it did not end primarily in a kind of esoteric knowledge. The inner light was conceived as a means of spiritual, and consequently of moral, regeneration, a source of Christian strength and of righteous living which flowed continually and which the illuminated man tapped again and again in the midst of his quite ordinary pursuits. With the light, therefore, it was common to contrast the dark, the flesh with the spirit, as two powers that contended continually for mastery, within man and indeed within all nature. Scriptural history, and even the whole outward form of nature, were often conceived as a type or a parable or a visible manifestation of the inward struggle between the regenerating power of spirit and the degenerating power of darkness and flesh. Mysticism as here used, therefore, had three properties: the consciousness of inner Light, its saving power against inner darkness, and the belief that every man reenacts in his own experience the cosmic drama in which the Light becomes victorious over darkness.

Certainly mysticism in this sense was involved in everything that Winstanley either said or did; it was for him the essence of religion and the root from which he consciously derived his communism. Precisely how he came in contact with this sort of religious faith cannot be determined, but there is in truth no mystery here, for there were plenty of sources open to him in England in the 1640's. In the case of George Fox, whose *Journal* is an infinitely fuller record of biographical detail than exists for Winstanley, the precise sources of his substantially similar mysticism are also undiscoverable. This type of religious faith was, to be sure, a minor phase of English Puritanism, kept in abeyance probably by the dominance of Calvinist rationalism, which was always unfriendly to any form of mystical experience. Nevertheless it had existed in England before Winstanley was born, and there is unquestionable evidence of its spread before and during the time at which his ideas were taking form. Since none of these possible sources can be certainly connected with Winstanley, there

is no need to do more than refer to them, stressing the general features of their doctrine and passing over their individual differences.

In the sixteenth century the Netherlands had, of course, been a fertile seed-bed of mystical sects, and any number of Englishmen with strongly marked religious interests had lived there. One such sect, the Family of Love, founded by Henry Niclaes, or Nicholas, was transplanted to England, where it existed sporadically in small religious communities throughout the seventeenth century. Very little is known about the English societies of the Family of Love, and that only in the distorted form reported by their enemies, but a number of Niclaes's works in English translation were reprinted beginning in 1646.<sup>10</sup> It is possibly significant that these translations, like several others of the works mentioned in the pages immediately following, were published by Giles Calvert, who was also Winstanley's publisher. Calvert was already notorious in 1646 as a sectary and a publisher of unlicensed books, and in the 1650's he became the chief publisher of Quaker books.<sup>11</sup> Historians of early Quakerism like Rufus M. Jones and W. C. Braithwaite believe that some relationship existed between Familist groups and groups that became Quaker, and possibly between the Familists and George Fox himself, though it is no longer possible to discover where the points of contact were.

The essence of the Familists' doctrine was the power of inward illumination: man deified and God hominified. By virtue of this inner light, they believed that it was possible for men to recover the original purity which Adam had before the Fall. According to report they were accustomed to share their property within the community. The illumination manifests itself in history in successive "breakings through" of the spirit. According to Robert Baillie they taught that the Scriptures are allegories, the ordinances of religion are "meat for

<sup>10</sup> An account of the Family of Love by Edmond Jessop, who had personal knowledge of the sect, is quoted in Champlin Burrage's *Early English Dissenters*, Cambridge, 1912, Vol. I, pp. 212 ff. There is a good account of Niclaes in R. M. Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion*, London, 1909, ch. 18. On English translations of Niclaes's works see William Haller, *Tracts on Liberty in the Puritan Revolution*, New York, 1934, Vol. I, p. 43.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Edwards, *Gangraena*, Part II, p. 9; Part III, p. 62. There is a short biography of Calvert in Henry R. Plomer, *Dictionary of Booksellers and Printers, 1641-1667*, p. 42.

babes", and the good and evil angels are merely good and bad impulses in the mind of man. Winstanley held all these beliefs, or at least beliefs that a Presbyterian like Baillie would have thought indistinguishable from them. Baillie associated teaching of this sort with Giles Randall, who "for some years has preached peaceably at the Spittle, to as great a multitude of people as follows any Sectary about the City".<sup>12</sup> There is not the least difficulty in supposing, therefore, that Winstanley heard this or other like preaching, as Professor Haller believes to have been the case with William Walwyn.<sup>13</sup>

The works of Henry Niclaes were not the only books of mystical religion which gained currency in England at this time. In 1645 the much better known books of Jakob Boehme began to be published in English translation.<sup>14</sup> An English version of *The Vision of God*, by Nicholas of Cusa, was published in 1646, and of the *Theologia Germanica* in 1648, under the auspices of the same Giles Randall who has just been mentioned.<sup>15</sup> This translation of *The Vision of God* appears to have been actually made by another popular clergyman of a few years before, John Everard, who had preached at St. Martin's-in-the-Fields and later at Kensington, where he attracted great audiences by his sermons. Everard, though himself a scholar and apparently the intimate of well-to-do patrons, seems to have meant his sermons to be attractive to the poor and humble. The editor of his sermons says he was "familiar even with the meanest, and if willing to be taught he was as willing to instruct and teach them, and they were upon this account more welcome to him than lords or princes."<sup>16</sup> These sermons, which were not published until 1653, were probably very influential in popularizing and publicizing the ideas of continental mystics, such as Boehme and Sebastian Franck,

<sup>12</sup> *Anabaptism*, London, 1647, pp. 102 ff.

<sup>13</sup> *Tracts on Liberty*, Vol. I, p. 44. A tract entitled *The Power of Love*, published in 1643, is a pretended Familist sermon which Professor Haller believes to have been written by Walwyn; it is reprinted, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 271. Walwyn was not himself a Familist, or indeed a mystic of any kind, but was willing to turn sectarian enthusiasm in the direction of social reform.

<sup>14</sup> R. M. Jones, *Spiritual Reformers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, London, 1914, ch. 12; there is a list of translations, p. 213, note.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 253 ff.

<sup>16</sup> *The Gospel-treasury Opened*, To the Reader. The editor was Rapha Harford. I have used an edition published in London, 1679.

whose works had been until this time available in England only to scholars. Everard's editor describes his preaching in words that Winstanley would have been glad to apply to himself.

He would often say that he desired and thirsted to be acquainted with men who had experience of Christ rather than men of notions or speculations, that desired to act more than to talk; and he did also in his public preaching often aver that, though they were never so mean, poor, and despised by the world, yet if they were but acquainted with such experimental truths as these, they were more welcome to him than so many princes and potentates.<sup>17</sup>

The central thought in Everard's sermons is the familiar idea of all mysticism: God in the whole creation and God in man.

Never look nor never expect outwardly to find God, for God dwells within; nor expect not outwardly to hear God, for God dwells in his temple within; there he preacheth and there he teacheth.<sup>18</sup>

And Christ lives in every man, the "beggarly fellows" as well as the rich or the learned. Without denying the letter of Scripture, Everard still treats the Gospel story as an allegory whose mystical meaning is to be found in the inner experience of every man, "inso-much that whatever any man hath known in the letter and history of [Christ], that he knows the same within him, as truly done actually in his own soul as ever Christ did anything without him."<sup>19</sup> The Scripture is a type of the cosmic spiritual drama, and Christ and Satan, Heaven and Hell, are actually present in the soul.

For there is no part of holy writ but is fulfilled always, in all times in every part thereof, either in every member of the church or in the enemies of the church at one time or other. Always the same things are in fulfilling, in doing, throughout all ages.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, The Epistle Dedicatory.

<sup>18</sup> The Rending of the Vail; *ibid.*, Part I, p. 45.

<sup>19</sup> The Star in the East; *ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>20</sup> The Dead and Killing Letter; *ibid.*, p. 358.

It was this sort of teaching in which literal-minded Calvinists saw the denial of Scripture, of religious ordinances, and of creeds. And in truth by implication they were denied. Under the stress of the Revolution Winstanley and his kind merely drew deductions that Everard a few years before had seen no occasion to draw.

There were at least two other influential clergymen who were famous in the 1640's as teachers of a mysticism akin to Everard's. These were John Saltmarsh and William Dell, whom Richard Baxter mentions as the two most influential preachers that he saw in Cromwell's Army.<sup>21</sup> What commended these men to Cromwell was chiefly their forthright stand in favor of religious toleration, and this position in turn depended partly upon the relatively small weight that they gave to the forms and ordinances of religion as compared with the inward experience. Saltmarsh's tract entitled *The Smoke in the Temple* (1646) dealt with possible means for reconciling the various English religious bodies (other than the Catholics and Episcopalians). His most significant work was called *Sparkles of Glory* (1647); both these books were published by Giles Calvert. *Sparkles of Glory* dealt with two current questions then receiving much attention in Parliament, the imposing of penalties to enforce conformity to Presbyterianism and the prevention of preaching by unordained laymen. Saltmarsh attacked Presbyterianism at its doctrinal center, the belief "that there is a very model [of belief and church government] in the letter of Scriptures to be discovered" and "that the setting up of such a form is an immediate way of fixing God and his Spirit upon it". The latter belief, he says, "is indeed a finer kind of idolatry, to conceive that God enters into outward things, and conveys his all glorious and Almighty Spirit by them, when as they are only signs, figures, and images of more spiritual things".<sup>22</sup> The substance of Saltmarsh's argument is the all-sufficiency of the "quickening Spirit" or inward revelation of God, which makes the true church consist in unity or incorporation with God. "The sons of men taken into this glory of the Son of God are that new or second creation, that New Jerusalem, which came down from God."<sup>23</sup> Hence all forms or

<sup>21</sup> *Reliquiae* (1696), pp. 56 f. There is a brief account of Saltmarsh and Dell in R. M. Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion*, ch. 20.

<sup>22</sup> *Sparkles of Glory*, Address to the Reader.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

ordinances or even creeds have much less importance than Presbyterians, Independents, and Baptists attach to them. "All things in the visible churches of the nations were, and are, in the absence of the Spirit and of gifts, administered by arts and sciences and grammatical knowledge of tongues and languages."<sup>24</sup> Like Winstanley Saltmarsh pictures the whole history of religion as a contrast of flesh and spirit, the two Adams or two seeds, manifesting themselves primarily as the struggle of good and evil in man. Neither God nor the Devil is far away, either in space or time, but are omnipresent forces. The history of mankind is therefore a succession of "ministrations", or manifestations, which "types out" the experience of every Christian.

William Dell is best known for the strong stand which he took against the utility of university education as a way of training the clergy, this being the more remarkable since he was, between 1650 and 1660, the Master of Caius College, Cambridge. This matter will be referred to later in connection with Winstanley's ideas of education. Here it is important only to notice that this estimate of education was derived from the idea that a "spiritual" ministry, being dependent upon experience of the inward working and revelation of God, could not be supplied, or perhaps even fostered, by an education in languages, the arts and sciences, and divinity. This was a conclusion shared by Saltmarsh and indeed by all exponents of the inner light, and it affected profoundly Winstanley's ideas about the proper aim and content of public education. In general Dell's conception of religion was very like Saltmarsh's: since it depends upon a unique experience, forms and outward conformity are relatively insignificant. In 1646 he preached a sermon before the House of Commons on the reformation of the church, the gist of which is that civil authority, being necessarily confined in its action to that which concerns outward conduct, has nothing to do with true reform. "The reforming word is the word within us." In a pamphlet which he addressed to the House of Commons in 1649<sup>25</sup> he further contrasted the true church

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>25</sup> *Right Reformation, or the Reformation of the Church of the New Testament* (1646). *Select Works of William Dell*, London, 1773, p. 105. *The Way of True Peace and Unity in the True Church of Christ* (1649). *Works*, p. 145. This pamphlet is reprinted in A. S. P. Woodhouse, *Puritanism and Liberty*, p. 302. Both these works were originally published by Giles Calvert.

with any outward regulations either by Parliament or by ecclesiastical officers.

The right church then is not the whole multitude of the people, whether good or bad, that join together in an outward form or way of worship. . . . But the church I speak of is the true church of the New Testament, which I say is not any outward or visible society, gathered together in the consent or use of outward things . . . but it is a spiritual and invisible fellowship, gathered in the unity of faith, hope, and love. . . . Wherefore it is wholly hid from carnal eyes, neither hath the world any knowledge or judgment of it.<sup>26</sup>

Within such a society there is absolute equality and no distinction of rank or power, a conception which in Winstanley's mind may well have germinated in the vision of a communistic society.

In the kingdoms of men some have greater estates than others and are in higher honor and authority; and this breeds envy and emulation and strife and distance, etc., but in the Son's kingdom . . . all that are counted worthy to dwell therein do alike inherit all things.<sup>27</sup>

In Dell's opinion there is no reason why Christians should contend about forms, laws, or power; such matters, he thinks, may be left to each congregation to settle according to its own ideas. The distinction between clergy and laity ought to be laid aside. The only penalty which the church can inflict is to exclude the unworthy from its membership.

John Everard, Saltmarsh, and Dell were all scholars, bred at Cambridge in the academic tradition of the day, though their power lay in the influence of their preaching upon unlearned men. Winstanley had a meagre education, though he must have been a man of considerable intellectual power and of very great moral energy. In these respects he stood closest, as has already been said, to George Fox and the men who, under his leadership, became the first generation of Quakers. Fox's leadership, however, grew from the fact that

<sup>26</sup> *Works*, p. 157.

<sup>27</sup> *Works*, p. 177.

he found many persons like-minded with himself, not from the indoctrination of his followers.<sup>28</sup> For an understanding of Winstanley this fact is important, since it shows that the sense of a spiritual illumination was a common experience in the later 1640's, shared by many men of little learning and of humble position, and therefore likely to be communicated in ways that can no longer be traced. Those who gathered to the teaching of Fox were but a small part of those whose religious experience was of this type. The writings of William Dewsbury, James Nayler, Francis Howgill, and Edward Burrough are filled with passages telling how "the Lord discovered to me the deceits of all these men in England that were seeking the kingdom of Heaven in outward observations". Any of these passages could be transplanted into one of Winstanley's tracts without producing the least sense of incongruity. In the case of these works there can be no question of influence upon Winstanley, since they belong to the decade of the 1650's.<sup>29</sup> The resemblance, however, is astonishingly close in respect of all the characteristics of the mystical experience here in question. It is closest of all perhaps in the case of George Fox himself, whose sense of "Christ within", of worship as communion with God, and of such communion as an inward source of serenity and energy seems almost identical with Winstanley's conception of religion.<sup>30</sup> The substantial difference between the two men lay not at all in their religious ideas, but in Fox's absorption in his mission and his apparent indifference to the public questions that in 1649 were shaking the foundations of English society. Winstanley, on the other hand, came to be dominated by his desire to create a social and economic utopia out of the Revolution.

In order to understand Winstanley, however, it is less important

<sup>28</sup> There is, for example, a kind of spiritual autobiography in William Dewsbury's *Faithful Testimony*, London, 1689, pp. 44-56, referring to experiences that occurred as early as 1645.

<sup>29</sup> It has sometimes been supposed that Winstanley influenced the early Quakers, but the historians of the movement find no proof of it. See R. M. Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion*, p. 494. Nathaniel Stephens says that *The New Law of Righteousness* was still in circulation among mystical persons of his acquaintance in 1656. *A Plain and Easie Calculation of the Name, Mark, and Number of the Name of the Beast*, London, 1656, p. 267.

<sup>30</sup> There is an excellent account of Fox's principles in R. M. Jones, *George Fox*, London, 1930, ch. 5, or in W. C. Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, London, 1912, chs. 2-4.

to emphasize differences between him and others of the group to which he belonged than to stress the fact that the group existed and that it differed in fundamental respects from the rest of what is loosely called Puritanism. Motivated as it was by religious mysticism, this group was different, and was profoundly conscious of being different, from Presbyterians, Independents, and even from most English Baptists. When they asserted the sufficiency of "experimental" religion, Winstanley, Fox, Saltmarsh, and Dell knew exactly what they meant to reject. The vain "imaginary knowledge" that Winstanley condemned, the "speculations" that Everard said led more to talk than to action, the "notions" which Quaker writers accused their opponents of purveying, "so as your pride, lust, riot, and oppression may be exalted",<sup>31</sup> were merely different names for that imposing edifice of Calvinist theology, which supplied the intellectual underpinning for all the other religious groups that lay to the left of the Episcopalians. Attempts to define Puritanism are not very profitable, and in actual usage the word now means practically nothing. In my judgment, however, no reasonable clarity can be attained unless a line is observed at least between mystics like Winstanley and the Quakers, and those who, like all Calvinists and nearly all Baptists, thought it essential to maintain a creed, a church discipline, and the outlines of rational theology. For Calvinism, whatever may now be thought of its premises, was in its method rationalistic; it was a lawyer-like analysis and interpretation of Scriptural texts, as if they were clauses in a charter. And this whole operation is exactly what the mystics rejected. It is quite true that all Christians have always admitted that religion ought to be personally experienced as well as rationally justified. The mystics, however, denied that any rational support was required for an experience which, in itself, was altogether self-authenticating. The effects of this denial were very profound, and, interestingly enough, they were far more destructive of clericalism, ecclesiasticism, dogmatism, and supernaturalism than any frontal attack on Calvinist theology could possibly have been in the seventeenth century. These effects will be traced in the exposition of Winstanley's religious argument for communism.

<sup>31</sup> James Nayler, *A Salutation to the Seed of God* (1655); *A Collection of Sundry Books*, etc., London, 1716, p. 243.

## WINSTANLEY'S RELIGIOUS ARGUMENT

Winstanley nowhere set out in logical order an outline of the religious convictions which, as he believed, led inevitably to communism as their social corollary. This was in part due to the fact that his writings are pamphlets, written as occasion demanded, and in part to the fact that his convictions were in process of formation, not in the stage of being logically systematized. It is quite clear that he would have regarded this last stage, if he had reached it, as a mark of degeneration and not of progress. Winstanley's communism belonged to the class of prophetic writing, with no delusions about a "scientific" proof—the contemporary analogue would have been a theological proof—of the validity of human aspirations. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to arrange in a logical order the chief headings of his argument, which is in fact not very complicated. The propositions are repeated again and again throughout his works. After the revelation recorded in *The New Law of Righteousnes*, which turned his interest definitely toward the social implications of his religion, his train of thought is complete, though he varied the presentation of his case somewhat to adapt it to the audience he was addressing. *The Law of Freedom*, which was published a year and a half after the attempt to cultivate the common land had failed, is somewhat different from the works produced in the course of the controversy. Here Winstanley is trying to set out a rounded communist constitution that he hoped might commend itself to Cromwell. As his reliance on statesmanship has perforce grown, so his millenarian hopes have correspondingly shrunk. But even with this change of interest and purpose, there is no change of the convictions that lay behind Winstanley's communism.

The premise from which Winstanley's thought began, often stated but never argued, was his belief that the events of the Puritan Revolution were part of a tremendous change that was altering the whole status of human life. It is to be a real reformation, affecting to their roots all the relationships of men in society. As such it has a cosmic rather than a national significance, though it has the latter too. England, he hopes—speaking in the congenial chiliastic imagery of *Revelation* and the *Book of Daniel*—will be the tenth part of the city

Babylon that falls off first from the Beast. In the troubles that accompany and follow the Civil Wars, and more especially in the contempt and persecution visited upon the sectaries, he sees the rage of the evil powers, in man and the world, against the power of spiritual reformation, which in the end is certain to overcome them. The sectaries, therefore, have a quite extraordinary significance; the persecution of the "mechanick preachers" is part of the persecution which the synagogue visited upon the equally humble disciples of Jesus, and which the world, the flesh, and the devil always visit upon the saints. The subtle craft, the unparalleled hypocrisy, and the cruelty expressed against the saints (i.e., the sectaries) are an expression of the angels of darkness let loose in the spirits of men. The bright appearing of God in the saints, casting down all forms and customs of the beast (i.e., religious law) is what torments the world today. For the saints are about to partake of the glory of the city of God. The present is a transitional stage—the dividing of time—between one cosmic era and another, in which the rule of divine love will finally be consummated on earth. Hence a true reformation concerns not the church alone but will extend to government and all the social relationships on which government depends. Magistrates will "love and delight to be executing justice for the good and safety of the commonwealth". God has cast England into the fire: hence the troubles of the times and hence also the greatness of the triumph that awaits the spirit of love and truth.

Winstanley's language, it should be observed, was more extraordinary than the idea he had to express. Millenarian hopes and imagery are a normal accompaniment of every revolution. They are expressed in the figures of speech which, in the circumstances, come easiest to the pen—the New Jerusalem, democratic liberty and equality, or the classless society. However expressed, they represent the religious aspect of the revolution: the symbols that serve to release men's energies, that wear the guise of ultimate ends, and that always remove farther into the future when one tries to approach them. In Puritan England there was no effort to disguise the fact that these symbols were religious, and their natural imagery came from the Bible. In some degree most men, and by no means the most visionary, shared ideas like those that Winstanley expressed. Cromwell's letters show

that he habitually regarded himself as acting under the guidance of God to accomplish the designs of Providence. In the course of the discussion in the Army Council with the Levellers he said:

I am one of those whose heart God hath drawn out to wait for some extraordinary dispensations, according to those promises that he hath held forth of things to be accomplished in the later times, and I cannot but think that God is beginning of them.<sup>1</sup>

Milton's pamphlets, especially those on the reform of the church, include many passages holding out extravagant hopes of the regeneration, both of church and of government, that is impending in England. The Fifth Monarchy movement produced a great outcropping of works that set forth the chiliastic hopes from which that movement grew, though such ideas were not wanting at any time after 1642.<sup>2</sup> As usual it was the groups on the extreme left wing of the revolution that abounded most in millenarian expectations. In this respect, then, Winstanley was merely typical, both of his time and also of the place that he occupied in the Puritan Revolution.

It is characteristic of Winstanley, and also of others who were most given to these expectations, that they looked for the literal and, so to speak, the physical realization of the Kingdom of God on earth. It is a mere trick of self-seeking priests, he thought, to fob men off with hopes of a better life beyond the grave, or with "spiritual" meanings of Scriptural promises, instead of urging them to create the New Jerusalem here and now. Flesh judges it right that some should be poor and others rich and powerful, but in the light of equity and reason it is right that all should have freedom and subsistence. It dishonors the Maker that there should be oppressing tyrants, especially among Christians who make a verbal profession of love while in action they deny it. Fleshly dominion of one over all shall cease, and the eye of flesh shall see it. The visions of the Apocalypse thus become literal prophecies of that which is about to be. The saving distinction which Calvinists usually drew between the realms of nature and grace was quite obliterated. In 1647 the Baptist Thomas

<sup>1</sup> A. S. P. Woodhouse, *Puritanism and Liberty*, p. 103; *The Clarke Papers*, Vol. I, pp. 378 f.

<sup>2</sup> A number of typical passages are quoted by Louise F. Brown, *Baptists and Fifth Monarchy Men*, Washington, 1912, pp. 14 ff.

Collier preached a sermon at Army Headquarters which in part might have been uttered by Winstanley.

It's true that we have had, and still have, exceeding low and carnal thoughts of heaven, looking on it as a glorious place above the firmament, out of sight, and not to be enjoyed till after this life. But God himself is the Saints' kingdom, their enjoyment, their glory. Where God is manifesting himself, there is his and the Saints' kingdom, and that is in the Saints.

In the new Heaven and the new earth that will thus arise, "The nations shall become the nations of Christ, and the government shall be in the hands of the saints."<sup>3</sup>

It was not the case, however, that Winstanley belonged with the Fifth Monarchy Men in the implications that he attached to a government in the hands of the saints. The rule of the saints became a synonym for government that was censorious, meddlesome, illiberal, and reactionary, devoted to establishing on earth not the kingdom of love but the dominance of a church, a dogma, and a discipline. This is the character that messianism in politics has always tended to assume, and the character that Puritanism often did assume. So far as can be judged of a man who never had to take the responsibility for any actual rule, Winstanley had no leanings whatever in this direction. In his *Law of Freedom* there is no suggestion that he wished to give the suffrage to the saints, meaning thereby persons of one religious profession as distinct from another. He was saved, I think, by the completeness with which he had broken away from any doctrinal or theological standard of religion. He believed, naively no doubt, that a life of Christian love was about to transform the whole economic and political organization of society, but he expected also a complete transformation of human nature. He did not believe that some, already in possession of the light, could force it on others. The all-sufficiency of the mystical experience, carried to its logical conclusion, destroyed church and clergy, and with them tests of orthodoxy and rationalized systems of the supernatural. The result, though it seems paradoxical, was something that might almost be described as secularism tinged with a religious motivation.

<sup>3</sup> The sermon is reprinted in A. S. P. Woodhouse's *Puritanism and Liberty*, Appendix, p. 390.

The second premise of Winstanley's religious argument, and the one which was central to all that he had to say, was his belief in the Light, or the Christ within—a divinely given insight or intuition working a moral reformation—as the essential part of religion. So much has already been said on this point that there is little need to add more; there is no limit to the number of citations that could be given from Winstanley's works, if there were any object in multiplying them. In contrast with "experimental" religion he places the "imaginary power"—parallel with John Everard's contrast of religious action with "notions and speculations"—by which Winstanley means school divinity, especially Calvinist theology, and all that he conceived to flow from it. There was of course nothing distinctive merely in the belief that religious experience is unique; Christians of every group agreed to that, and even a man so hard-headed as Ireton might assert that, "Everyone hath a spirit within him." But for Winstanley, and for the mystics and the Quakers, the experience becomes all in all. It supersedes the whole system of doctrine built up by inference from Scripture: the supposed truths of metaphysics and cosmology, the plan of church-government, and the ethical rules supposed to be demonstrable by piecing together Biblical texts. In a word it did away with all that made the clergy a learned profession, and Quakerism merely drew the logical conclusion when it abolished the distinction between clergy and laity. To this Winstanley added another inference when he argued that the abolition of the clergy implied also a thoroughgoing change in social organization. The "imaginary power", according to Winstanley, had four branches: the preaching "universative" power, the kingly power, the power of lawyers, and the art of buying and selling. Of these the clergy is the chief, and all fall if it falls. The universal power of love which rules in the creation, if once it is given first place in human life, must reform all human relationships and hence both the economic and political organization of society.

If Winstanley had been a speculative metaphysician, he would have been a pantheist. Some such conception is characteristic of mysticism, which of necessity sets aside any such rigid conception of God's personality as is required by theism. God is an indwelling power in nature and in man. Winstanley, in the address which precedes *Truth Lifting up its Head*, expressly adopts the word "Reason" in place of God, because the latter suggests a being apart from nature and from man,

a being whose action is imagined to be far away or long ago, rather than an omnipresent power whose action is immediately felt. It would certainly be an error to infer that this implied any rationalistic (in the sense of non-religious) intention on Winstanley's part. Reason is, for him, merely a neutral word for "the incomprehensible spirit" from which the creation flowed and which continually works in it, "that living power of light that is in all things". He often calls it also "universal love". It manifests itself in the unconscious teleology of all living things, but especially in man by leading him to govern his actions according to justice, wisdom, and righteousness; if reason rules in a man, he will never trespass against his fellow-creature. There was plenty of authority for such a use of the word in the mystical tradition which Winstanley somehow tapped. The opposite of reason for him is "imagination", the false idea of separateness from God and one's fellows, that issues in covetousness and self-seeking, and fills men with fears, doubts, wars, divisions, and lust. From imagination proceeds the letter that killeth; from reason or love proceeds the spirit that maketh alive.

The struggle between reason and imagination—the higher and the lower natures—which every man experiences in his own being, is but a part of the cosmic struggle between light and darkness, God and the Devil, that goes on continually in the world. This struggle, and the final victory of light, is a standard theme of mystical experience, as it is with Winstanley and George Fox and as it was with Jakob Boehme. To this way of thinking it is more than an analogy, for there is a literal identification of reason with God, and of evil inclinations with the devil. The cosmic drama is reenacted in every man and is continually repeated in human society. Both God and the devil are literally within the soul. Winstanley is quite explicit in saying that it was the discovery of this fact that first set him free from the fears and anxieties, the dread of the supernatural that had assailed him, which forms an almost normal antecedent to the state of mystical exaltation. It is accordingly characteristic of this conception that it pictures history as successive stages in the struggle, or as "risings-up" of the spirit against the flesh. Winstanley tries his hand more than once at periodizing history, especially the Scriptural story and the history of the church, in the light of this idea, as Saltmarsh had done in his *Sparkles of Glory* and as many others did. It ought to be noted that the idea behind this read-

ing of history is essentially millenarian. It in no way implies progress or a gradual development but the contrary. The "outpourings" of the spirit come when "the time has been fulfilled" and they invariably lead up to a perfect stage in which the light will be fully triumphant, a new heaven and a new earth.

In the case of Winstanley the identification of inner and outer, of evil in man and evil in nature, was carried in his earlier pamphlets to the most naive extreme. In *The New Law of Righteousnes* he supposed that the corruption of the flesh in evil men literally infected the whole of nature. Their decaying bodies, after they were dead and buried, corrupted the plants and through them imparted the poison of evil to the beasts that fed upon the plants. The very elements, and all bodies that are composed of them, are disordered by man's rejection of the spirit. In *The Myserie of God* he supposed that when the spirit recovers its sway in man, as he expects that it is about to do, all the creatures other than man will be dissolved, since there will be no further need for food. It seems pretty clear that this conception of the close sympathetic relation between man and nature played a considerable part in the beginning of his communism. From the first of the Digger manifestoes, *The True Levellers Standard Advanced*, it appears that he confidently expected the reestablishing of the rule of community and love among men to increase automatically the fertility of the barren land. In fact, without such a belief, his communism was hardly workable, since it implied that a large part of the English population would be fed from the produce of land that had not previously been arable. This mystical element in Winstanley's thought had become less prominent when he wrote *The Law of Freedom*; in that work he assumes the existence of a considerable amount of nationalized land got from the confiscated estates of the King, the royalists, and the clergy.

In Winstanley's rather simple-minded metaphysics, then, the visible world is quite literally the garment of God, and God is the moving spirit in the world, manifested in the sun, moon, and stars, in plants and animals, but especially in human history. This universal power is present in every man and is able completely to transform human nature. All that is required is that men should be aware, directly and immediately, of the light that is within them and, being aware, should follow its dictates. This for Winstanley is the essence of all religion, its only

necessary condition and its all-sufficient condition. It is, however, not an easy condition, for not only the temptations of the flesh but also the forms and outward observances that imagination creates stand between men and the direct apprehension of truth and righteousness. It does not appear that Winstanley thought of this experience as a transcendent vision, momentarily attained, which sometimes lifts the mystic into another world. Like the Quakers he thought of it rather as an experience repeatedly enjoyed and continuously affording strength and guidance in quite everyday affairs. The beginning of religion is the knowledge that there is within one the capacity for such experience and guidance; the practice of religion consists in having habitual recourse to it, and everything else belongs among things indifferent.

When men suck content from creatures, as from men's learning, gifts, customs, prayers, or forms of worship, and think they shall never have comfort unless they enjoy these outward helps, this is to prefer the broken cisterns before the fountains. . . . He cannot meditate nor understand till God come into him; he cannot speak till God give utterance; he feels his heart barren of understanding, of love, of peace; he feels and sees nothing in him but only a thirsting soul after God, whom his secret thoughts tell him is able to satisfy him, if he please but to manifest himself. . . . The experience and writings of prophets, apostles, and saints are dry shells to me and cannot comfort, unless God, whom my soul breathes after, give to me likewise some experiences of his love, as he gave to them, and then I shall have joy; yea, and my joy then will be fulfilled, and not till then.<sup>4</sup>

All Winstanley's reflection upon the religious and social problems of his day, which eventuated in his communism, was little more than an effort to carry through, relentlessly and to their final conclusions, the implications of this fundamental insight. These implications were devastating for all existing forms of faith and ecclesiastical institution, and also, as he came to believe, for all existing political and economic institutions, since he supposed that the latter must stand or fall with the former. In truth, his procedure, though simple-minded and without much grasp of the complexities of the phenomena he was trying to deal with, was surprisingly logical and thorough-going. Without

<sup>4</sup> *The Breaking of the Day of God*, 1648, pp. 51 f.

trying to reproduce the many repetitions and digressions into which he fell, I shall summarize his chief deductions relative to the authority of Scripture, the nature of the church, and the position of the clergy.

Winstanley's belief in the sufficiency of an experimental religion, consistently carried out, made a clean sweep of the mythology of the Christian tradition, and more particularly of Protestant bibliolatry. By placing the whole religious drama within the setting of the human mind, the mystics quite destroyed the external or, so to speak, the physical existence of those entities upon which all doctrinal forms of Christianity depended. Christ and the Devil, Winstanley says over and over again, are not forces outside human nature; they are the impulses and inclinations, respectively, of good and evil—the flesh and the spirit—which every man experiences as the controlling motives of his own action. The Devil is not “a middle power between God and me, but it is the power of my proud flesh”. And “the power of the perfect law taking hold thereupon threw me under sorrow and sealed up my misery, and this is utter darkness”.<sup>5</sup> Heaven and hell are therefore literally within the soul, not places far off. Similarly, Christ is the regenerating power of goodness within every man, not the historical character who lived long ago in Palestine.

And therefore if you expect or look for the resurrection of Jesus Christ, you must know that the spirit within the flesh is the Jesus Christ, and you must see, feel, and know from himself his own resurrection within you, if you expect life and peace by him.<sup>6</sup>

So that you do not look for a God now, as formerly you did, to be [in] a place of glory beyond the sun, moon, and stars, nor imagine a divine being you know not where, but you see him ruling within you, and not only in you, but you see him to be the spirit and power that dwells in every man and woman; yea, in every creature, according to his orb, within the globe of the creation.<sup>7</sup>

In the second place, the belief in the all-sufficiency of direct experience destroyed the importance of a literal interpretation of Scripture. For Winstanley Scripture was valuable as a record of experiences enjoyed

<sup>5</sup> *The Saints Paradise* (edition of 85 pp.), pp. 21–23.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 55 f.

by spiritually minded men in other times and places. To the Scripture stories, such for example as the story of the Gadarine swine, he attached, especially in his earlier writings, a considerable symbolic importance as typifying spiritual truths. After the first two or three of his pamphlets, his inclination to look for far-fetched symbolic meanings in them seems to have decreased, and at no time did he attach much importance to their literal truth. More and more he reserved elaborate citations of Scriptural authority for arguments addressed to those who presumably regarded this as an effective kind of proof, such as the paper addressed to John Platt which he inserted in *An Humble Request*. In order to be rightly interpreted or even recognized it requires the same kind of immediate experience that enabled its authors to write it. It is at the most an aid, not a substitute, and Winstanley clearly looked forward to a time when “none shall need to turn over books and writings to get knowledge”. This distinction between the “experimental” knowledge of religion and “hearsay” knowledge from reading or from hearing a teacher was made habitually by George Fox.

I told him [Cromwell] that all Christendom (so-called) had the Scriptures, but they wanted the power and Spirit that those had who gave forth the Scriptures; and that was the reason they were not in fellowship with the Son, nor with the Father, nor with the Scriptures, nor with one another.<sup>8</sup>

This willingness to dispense with the literal interpretation of Scripture was enough by itself to put Winstanley outside the main intellectual current of Puritanism. Presbyterians, Independents, and Baptists differed from one another in the deductions, with reference either to doctrine or to church-government, which they drew from Scripture, but they were quite in agreement on two points, first, that Scripture contained, either directly or by implication, a complete body of doctrine and practice, and second, that no doctrine or practice was binding upon Christians unless it were justified by the authority of Scripture. The differences between these groups of Puritan Protestants, therefore, were in a sense intellectually superficial. They might have been healed by the development of a sufficiently complete and a sufficiently learned system of theological science, something that these bodies all professed to look forward to. The superiority of Calvinism over other forms of

<sup>8</sup> *Journal*, edited by R. M. Jones, Vol. I, p. 214.

Protestant theology lay in the fact that it went about as far as it was humanly possible to go in constructing this kind of system. On the other hand, the form of religious faith represented by Winstanley and the Quakers was a forthright challenge to the whole principle of Biblical theology. It flatly denied that there was any such system of learned doctrine, or that it would be significant if it could be constructed. The whole theological project ends in nothing except "imaginary, book-studying, university divinity", as Winstanley calls it, a mass of dark interpretations and glosses upon the Scriptural records of an experience which, taken by itself, is self-sufficient and self-explanatory.

The implications of this position for scholarship and for public education will have to be examined later in connection with Winstanley's views of such matters in his *Law of Freedom*. Here it is necessary only to refer briefly to its implications with reference to the church and the clergy. From Winstanley's point of view the true church is exclusively a spiritual body, the whole company of the saints who have experienced salvation and have been morally regenerated by the inward operation of reason or the law of righteousness. No outward organization is required, and it needs no visible marks or signs to distinguish it from the world. It has no doctrinal tests, and certainly no mandate from magistrates to teach any creed or apply any discipline. It requires no rites or ordinances or set forms of worship, and if any congregation uses such forms, they have at the most only a symbolic meaning which might equally well be expressed in other ways, or indeed might equally well remain without formal expression. Winstanley set forth most fully his views upon the ordinances of religion in *Truth Lifting up its Head above Scandals*, where he defended himself against the charge of denying such ordinances altogether. Here it seems apparent that he had dispensed with every form of religious service except the meeting and communion of like-minded persons, and perhaps the "prophesying" of those whom the spirit might move. He expressly denies that baptism, except in the mystical sense of baptism by the spirit, is essential. Preaching from texts or from "imaginary beliefs" is worse than useless. Prayer, if it is "a declaration of the heart", is permissible, but words are "the remotest part of prayer"; its essence consists in acting righteously and in the "reasonings of the heart", that is, in reflection and self-examination. The observance of set days, as of the Sabbath, is a formality, and the notion that a whole parish can be called a church is

a grotesque misunderstanding of the term. These views are, of course, substantially identical with those of George Fox and with the practice of the Quakers. But Winstanley's emphasis is on the negations. I believe it to be true to say that he saw no need even for that minimum of organization by which Fox preserved the Quakers as a recognizable religious body.

From this view of the church it follows that the clergy, as a distinct class of professionally trained persons, simply disappears. There is no place for it, since every man must experience the revelation of the inner light for himself. Moreover, there is no secular training which appreciably contributes to the attainment of such an experience: it is *sui generis* and therefore quite different from any form of worldly skill or learning. Hence the conventional requirements for ordination, and the university training designed to fulfill those requirements, are of no value in preparing men to teach spiritual truths. Like the Baptists generally, Winstanley repeatedly insists that the founder of Christianity and his apostles were simple, uneducated men—fishermen, tent-makers, and publicans—unskilled in those arts and sciences which have become the mainstay of university education. In this he exactly agreed with William Dell, who said:

It is one of the grossest errors that ever reigned under Antichrist's kingdom to affirm that universities are the fountain of ministers of the Gospel, which do only proceed out of Christ's flock.<sup>9</sup>

For Winstanley, what he calls the "preaching universative power" is not only an error; it is part of a general conspiracy by the "zealous professors" of organized religion to keep down those risings of the spirit in the poor and despised ones of the earth that threaten their titles and their special privileges. It would be quite impossible to exaggerate the violence of Winstanley's anti-clericalism. The "ecclesiastical bastardly power got in fornication with the kings of the earth" he sometimes describes as an invention of secular rulers to support their tyrannous power, but more often he represents kings themselves as the dupes of cunning priests. In *The Law of Freedom* he does not hesitate to classify the clergy with those who practice witchcraft.

Thus for Winstanley the church as an organization, the clergy as a

<sup>9</sup> *The Stumbling-Stone, wherein the University is Reproved*, 1653; *Christ's Spirit*, Germantown, Penna., 1760, p. 155.

distinct class, and theology as a learned profession all disappear before a conception of religion that strips it of all sacerdotal and institutional elements. By what may seem at first sight a paradox, the very universality of religious experience in the life of the saint gives to Winstanley's personal philosophy a tone of secularism. Religion has for him no necessary connotation of supernaturalism, though it depends throughout upon an idealist or spiritualist conception of nature and man. Even personal immortality has ceased to be a matter of moment to him. He obviously believed that nothing is known about it; he had become convinced, no doubt both by experience and observation, that the omnipresent fear of damnation among the Puritans was a fruitful source of mental disorder; he believed that the hope of heaven had been used with cynical premeditation to turn men's thoughts away from tyranny and exploitation and to prevent them from applying the suitable remedies in this world for their ills and wrongs. In short, religion was for him a way of life, not a ceremonial, a profession, or a metaphysic. And as a way of life, though it required a continuous recourse to mystical communion with God, it did not exclude the application of intelligence or science to any problem either of individual or of social life.

In concluding this section, it is necessary to say something about the ethical implications that Winstanley attached to his religious beliefs. This is difficult because Winstanley certainly would not have understood a distinction between religion and ethics nor the possibility of one without the other. On the other hand, he undoubtedly did believe that the differences between himself and other religious groups of his time had the most important ethical consequences. His communism was neither more nor less than the expression of that belief. There is nothing harder, however, than to say precisely how religious beliefs pass over into moral conduct, for the transition is not made by logic and often is not such as an outside observer would infer that it ought to be. Philosophers have said that Calvinist predestination ought to have sapped the sources of individual initiative and vigorous action, but anyone who has studied the seventeenth-century Calvinists knows that it had the opposite effect. Similarly, a mystic ought, by conventional standards, to be visionary and incompetent, but the Quakers certainly were far from that. Even in Winstanley's case, though his communistic society was visionary, it was no mean accomplishment under the circumstances to keep the experiment going for a year and to spread his

case before the public as he did. In moral matters it is a kind of logic of the emotions that connects belief with action.

Winstanley's ethics, like that of the Quakers, had a quality which might be called, for want of better terms, quietism or pacificism. It does not appear that Winstanley was literally a pacifist, in the sense that he thought it wrong to bear arms. He was undoubtedly a pacifist, however, so far as concerned the realization of his communism. God, he says, puts no weapons into the hands of his saints to fight against reproaches, oppression, poverty, and temptation. The Levellers will not conquer by the sword, for Christ, who is the head Leveller, fights only with the sword of love, and this in the end will throw down all government and ministry that is lifted up by the imagination. In the end, Christ, the law of universal love, will reign, and this will be true magistracy, the light of truth, reason, humility, and peace. Like George Fox—and this was the root of Quaker pacificism—Winstanley distrusted the efficacy of force to accomplish any permanent moral results, and this was altogether in accord with the belief that morality begins with a change of heart. Hence the root of moral regeneration is a kind of passivity, submissiveness to the better impulse that will rise if it be given the chance, a silence and a waiting until the wiser thought and action ripens.

Tell a man that he hath no knowledge and no faith of God, and his heart swells presently and thinks you wrong him; tell him his own human learning and workings is abomination to the Lord and that he must lay aside his beloved actings and wait only upon God for knowledge and faith, and his heart swells and cannot endure to hear of waiting upon God: and truly God is more honored by our waiting than by the multitude of our self-actings. . . . For the flesh grudges to give God his liberty to do with his own what he will, and the flesh would have something in itself; it hath a secret grudging to acknowledge all wisdom, faith, and life must be given of God, and that his actings can get nothing.<sup>10</sup>

This sense of waiting and receiving, I have no doubt, is an authentic moral experience, quite apart from Winstanley's antiquated terminology. There is a type of mind, as William James has said, that finds itself able to tap unsuspected sources of energy by dipping below the

<sup>10</sup> *The Breaking of the Day of God*, 1648, pp. 72 f.

surface-play of consciousness. It was very different, however, from the typical moral experience that lay behind Calvinism—as different as Winstanley's religion was from Presbyterianism or Independency. Calvinism, I think, was a quasi-military ethics in which the fundamental virtues were conceived to be obedience and loyalty to the commands of the sovereign ruler of the world. The attribute of that ruler which Calvinists were most inclined to stress was not love but power or possibly justice. The relationship was rigidly personal. It required the unswerving devotion and the strict responsibility of every man to his divine superior, and perhaps for that very reason it implied his equality with all the other servants of God. Its moral effect was to steel men in the fight against evil, to discipline their energies and harden their endurance, sometimes to the point of harshness and cruelty. It was a form of moral individualism that stressed the virtues of enterprise and activity and self-assertion. Hence the political affinity of Calvinist ethics, when it showed itself as a radical movement in the Puritan Revolution, was with the democratic radicalism of the main body of the Levellers, of which the best extant record is the debates in the Army Council at Putney. For the social philosophy of democratic radicalism was built upon the postulate of inalienable natural rights, among which the right to own property acquired by one's exertions was not the least. From such a social philosophy communism was necessarily excluded.

It would be quite wrong to imply that the moral quietism or passivity of Winstanley and the Quakers carried with it a lack of vigor or pertinacity. In their case mysticism was neither a doctrine of moral defeat, an escape from a too harsh reality, nor a withdrawal from effective action on the level of everyday affairs. This ethics too may be called individualism, since every man must find out for himself the secret of his own being, without benefit of institutions or of clergy. But the secret that he discovers is not his self-sufficiency but rather his dependence upon subconscious powers that take possession of him and act through him. The relationship is not a personal one of loyalty to an omnipotent ruler, but one of reliance upon forces greater than himself that he nevertheless finds in himself. The outcome of moral reflection is felt not as self-assertion but rather as self-abnegation. Hence the fundamental fact of social ethics is not individual enterprise and self-preservation but rather the preservation of community and the

responsibility of the strong for the weak. This Winstanley called the law of universal love. In all but words he thus arrived at the formula of all the utopian socialisms: From each according to his powers; to each according to his needs.

Winstanley differed from Fox and the Quakers chiefly in believing that this consciousness of human brotherhood must at once become the principle of a new form of community. For him true religion required the immediate creation of a society that substituted community and mutual aid for individualism and competition. He could not content himself with a religious experience that ended with a change of a personal morality, nor imagine a moral reform that did not include the elimination of poverty and the removal of political oppression. Both these, he believed, grew from the single root of self-love and covetousness, or individual aggressiveness, which issued in the tyranny of kings and rulers, the monopoly of the means of production by the landlords, the clerical pretensions of the hireling preachers, and the chicanery of lawyers, who played jackal to kings, landlords, and clergy alike. Because these had all one root Winstanley could not envisage a political reform which was not at the same time economic, or a form of civil liberty that could coexist with poverty and economic dependence. Hence he looked to the English Revolution, pledged by Parliament and the people to a "real reformation", to make the earth a common treasury and England a community in which the king of righteousness should rule in every heart.

#### WINSTANLEY'S POLITICAL ARGUMENT

When Winstanley sets out a formal outline of his argument for communism, he sometimes speaks of a threefold proof: by direct revelation, by the citation of Scripture, and by reason. The religious beliefs behind his trust in the inner Light have been described in the preceding section. Winstanley's offer to prove his case by the authority of Scripture was never, in my opinion, more than the acceptance of what was at the time a conventional form of argument. In his *Letter to the Lord Fairfax* he said that the issues raised had to be settled not by Scripture but by the law in men's hearts. The third line of proof, that based upon reason and equity, was borrowed by Winstanley from the pattern of argumentation built up for the Levellers by writers such as Lilburne, Overton, and Walwyn. In a measure it was second-hand—an effort, so

to speak, to talk in the political vernacular—though certainly not insincere. Winstanley must of course have known about the Leveller agitation that had been going on since 1647, but there is nothing in his early pamphlets to show that he was concerned with it. His use of stereotyped Leveller arguments was not in itself either interesting or important. The question is, how far he perceived the differences of principle that separated his communism from the democratic radicalism of the Leveller program. The answer, I think, is that both sides were surprisingly clear-headed about the contrast. Lilburne repudiated Winstanley in his *Legal Fundamentall Liberties*, and Winstanley marked off his communist group as the “True Levellers”.

In asserting that equity and right reason are the foundation of all morally binding laws Winstanley was merely taking a position that in one way or another is taken by every party which backs a revolutionary reform. The Levellers had used the argument again and again, in attacking one abuse or another, that no law can be really binding unless it is just and equitable. Richard Overton, for example, in the *Remonstrance* which he addressed to Parliament in 1646, had demanded a general revision of English Law in the light of reason:

Ye know, the laws of this nation are unworthy a free people and deserve from first to last to be considered and seriously debated and reduced to an agreement with common equity and right reason, which ought to be the form and life of every government.<sup>1</sup>

With this Winstanley of course agreed, as he agreed in regarding the Revolution as the occasion for a complete overhauling of English law and institutions. But in calling himself a “true Leveller” he recorded the judgment that the political reforms sought by Lilburne and his party were superficial. Winstanley often says that the object of the Revolution is to restore men’s “birthright”, and like the Levellers, he does not trouble to distinguish at all sharply between the birthright of an Englishman and the rights of man. Sometimes the Digger manifestoes assert that the object of their movement is to recover for Englishmen their right to use the land of England. Sometimes they claim the “creation-right” of every man to gain his living from the earth, which by the law of righteousness is a common treasury for all human

<sup>1</sup> The pamphlet is reprinted in William Haller’s *Tracts on Liberty in the Puritan Revolution*, New York, 1934, Vol. III, p. 351; the passage quoted is on p. 365.

beings. In these respects Winstanley’s social philosophy agreed with that of the Levellers in appealing to a fundamental law of equity lying behind the positive law.

This resemblance, however, is superficial, since no revolutionist could fail to assert the justice of what he desired. Behind the resemblance there was a fundamental difference between Winstanley and the Levellers. Winstanley was clearly aware that he could not effectively claim a right to subsistence as an individual liberty. The Levellers, on the other hand, were in principle democrats. The purpose of their philosophy was to erect barriers against the incursions of bad law and bad government into those private rights which they considered fundamental to human liberty. Hence their plan of reform included bills of rights embodied in a written constitution which Parliament was expressly forbidden to change. Among the disabilities that they proposed to lay on Parliament was that of “abolishing propriety”.<sup>2</sup> In general the Levellers thought of reform as equalizing civil and political liberties, abolishing monopoly, and opening up opportunity to equal competition. For them natural law meant individual rights, and natural equity meant that all men individually should be protected in the exercise of their rights.

Winstanley’s conception of social reform was quite different. It is true that he objected to the private ownership of land because it permitted a few men to monopolize what justly belonged to all, but he had no notion of correcting the injustice by increasing the number of landowners, or by making private ownership possible to everyone. His communism was an effort to envisage a different kind of social system. His argument is that the common land is communally owned. Ideally his plan implied that land and all the means of production should be nationalized, and this is certainly the end he looked forward to, though he was opposed to the violent expropriation of private owners. The “creation-right” to subsistence, therefore, was a communal and not an individual right. Accordingly, Winstanley could not possibly identify equity with individual liberty. In *The Law of Freedom*, where he gave the most carefully planned statement of his theory, he based his com-

<sup>2</sup> The Leveller petition of September 11, 1648; reprinted by A. S. P. Woodhouse, *Puritanism and Liberty*, p. 340. The Second Agreement of the People, Article VII, contained a list of matters upon which Parliament was not to act, Woodhouse, *ibid.*, p. 361.

munism upon the difference between two types of society, the monarchy and the commonwealth. In substance this amounted to the contrast between an individualist, acquisitive, competitive society and a cooperative society. Reduced to a single sentence Winstanley's argument is simply that the latter is morally superior because it grows from the better impulses of human nature. It is not built upon individual enterprise but upon mutual aid and protection.

The political argument that Winstanley perhaps uses most frequently is drawn from the Solemn League and Covenant—the oath taken in 1643 by Parliament and people “to amend our lives and each one to go before another in the example of a real reformation”. This might seem like an *ad hoc* argument, unless it be remembered that Winstanley never conceived of any social or political reform that did not have its origin in a religious transformation. Obviously his interpretation of the Covenant had nothing whatever to do with the actual political purposes of that document when it was framed. He took it as creating nothing less than a solemn personal obligation on every subscriber to effect a real reformation in England, with all that was implied by that expression. To Winstanley's mind it meant nothing less than an effort to realize “the pure law of righteousness”. He acknowledged the obligation in his own conduct: apparently his refusal to employ a lawyer when he was sued for damages at Kingston was based on the belief that the administration of the law as it existed was an iniquitous institution which could not be supported by anyone who meant to amend his life in the interest of a real reformation. It was clearly the intention of the Digger community to boycott the courts and the magistracy as being unsuitable to a Christian society, just as they renounced the use of force as an unchristian way of gaining their ends. They say that they are willing to answer for any unlawful act that they commit, but they will not appeal to the courts for protection even against the unlawful acts of their assailants. In presenting his communistic platform to Cromwell Winstanley, of course, abandoned this attitude. At the same time he still believed the strongest argument for his communism to be the contention that it was implied in the express intent of the nation to effect a true reformation. If this were honestly meant, he urged, there was no place to stop short of a completely Christian society in which covetousness, the root of all inequality, was altogether grubbed up. All bad government, all war and all misery, Winstanley

believed, arise from the acquisitiveness which is chiefly represented by the private ownership of land. Hence there can be no real reformation unless the land is restored to its rightful condition as a common treasury for all men. True religion, he says, is to make restitution of the land.

Often, however, Winstanley gives to the Covenant a much more specific meaning than this: he construes it as a contract between Parliament and the common people for prosecuting the war against the King to recover England's fundamental liberties. Parliament, he says, persuaded the people to take up arms by the promise that each should enjoy his right; some gave military service, some gave free quarter to troops, and all gave taxes. Parliament, Winstanley assumes, represents specifically the gentry and the clergy; their legislation shows that they mean to look after the interests of those classes. The question is whether they will “cozen” the poor commoners of their part of the bargain. Of all liberties the most fundamental is access to the land. This the gentry already enjoy in their enclosures, and Winstanley is willing to leave them in possession. But to complete the bargain the common people ought to have the common land, since this is the very least that can be given in recognition of their “creation-right”. Everyone, Winstanley says, desires and struggles for land—gentry, clergy, and commons alike. Hence there can be no talk of restoring the fundamental liberties of Englishmen unless all are given the right to use the land of England. The most interesting part of the argument is its frank assumption that English government is controlled by a class in its own interest, even though Parliament legally represents the nation. The only question is whether the class in control means to live up to the contract implied in the National Covenant or whether the gentry mean to pursue their own interests at the cost of being “covenant-breakers”. There is in Winstanley's writing a good deal that would now be called “class-consciousness”, but he invariably repudiates the use of force as a way of securing the commoners' rights.

Winstanley addressed another argument to Parliament based not upon the Covenant but upon the legislation passed after the execution of the King declaring that monarchy was abolished and that England was a “free commonwealth”. This formed, I believe, Winstanley's most important political argument, since it turned upon his belief that there are two opposed kinds of society and consequently two kinds of government. The “kingly power” is based upon greed and force, and

therefore corresponds with private ownership of the land, while "true commonwealth-government" is based upon cooperation and therefore corresponds with making the land a "common treasury". Winstanley's argument amounts to showing that Parliament has contradicted itself. By its own act it has "cast out the kingly power", but it has also passed an act "to uphold the old law". By the latter he meant the act authorizing the courts to continue administering the law in force when the King died, but issuing writs in the name of the Keepers of the Liberty of England instead of the King. This, Winstanley argued, is absolutely illogical, if it does not cloak a hypocritical design to change the possessor of the kingly power without changing the thing itself. For the "old law" was merely the will of the Norman conqueror, and Charles's title to the throne was merely as the successor to William. Hence, if the kingly power were really cast out, the whole fabric of legal tyranny ought to go with it. The Civil Wars, he argued, had been fought not to remove the King but to reform a tyrannous system. This identification of tyranny with the Norman Power was a common form of Leveller argument. Winstanley merely adopted it. It had been fully developed by Overton in his *Remonstrance* in 1646 and by John Hare in several pamphlets published in 1647. In fact it was merely one phase of an argument that was common to all the anti-royalist parties and not to the Levellers alone (the mythical presumption that there had once been a free constitution in England which it was the purpose of the Civil War to restore).

Winstanley, however, made his own use of the Leveller argument against the Norman Power. At the conquest, Winstanley supposes, William turned the English out of their land and put his own soldiers in their place. In general, he thinks, all private ownership of land rests on cunning, robbery, and violence; the Norman conquest was merely the case that most concerns England. The lords of manors are the successors of William's "colonels", and the freeholders of the Norman common soldiers. They are merely the beneficiaries of a successful theft, and in consequence they are wholly lacking in title to their land, if the kingly power were really to be cast out. But the power of the landowners has two accessory supporters. These are the lawyers and the clergy. Both, Winstanley thinks, were set up by William to bolster his power. The lawyers were a deliberately created engine of oppression, made possible by keeping the law in French and Latin, and em-

ployed to twist its meaning by cunning and chicanery to the interest of the landowning gentry, who alone have money to pay them.

England is a prison; the varieties of subtleties in the laws preserved by the sword are the bolts, bars, and doors of the prison; the lawyers are the jailors; and poor men are the prisoners.<sup>3</sup>

The privileges of the clergy also were designed expressly to support the conqueror's yoke. William gave them tithes "to preach him up"; they persuaded the people to fancy

That true freedom lay in hearing them preach, and to enjoy that heaven which, they say, every man who believes their doctrine shall enjoy after he is dead. And so [they] tell us of a heaven and hell after death, which neither they nor we know what will be, so that the whole world is at a loss in the true knowledge thereof.<sup>4</sup>

According to Winstanley, therefore, the casting out of the kingly power, if carried out completely, would carry with it the lords of manors, tithing priests, bad laws and bad judges, and cunning lawyers.

Over against this representation of kingly government under the Norman yoke Winstanley places government in a free commonwealth, which Parliament has declared England to be. In his controversial tracts he nowhere undertakes to describe this kind of government or to make clear the contrast in principle which distinguished monarchy and commonwealth. This, however, is his point of departure in *The Law of Freedom*, and there can be no doubt that the distinction between the two types of society is the logical foundation upon which his communism ought to rest. In the controversial tracts he contents himself with arguing that Parliament's pledge is not fulfilled so long as the "old law" remains in force or so long as the landlords are permitted to retain both their enclosures and control of the commons as well. So long as the "creation-right" of access to the land is denied, there can be no pretense that law and government are really based upon equity and reason. The English are not a free people until the poor have the right at least to plant and sow the common land. Equally, he added later, Parliament ought to see to it that the confiscated estates, the king's lands, and the lands of bishops and deans, are not permitted

<sup>3</sup> *A New-Years Gift*, p. 10 (bracketed paging).

<sup>4</sup> *The Law of Freedom*, p. 20 (bracketed paging).

to fall into the hands of private owners but are kept for the use of the poor. The outline of what Winstanley thought would constitute a true commonwealth he sketched out for Cromwell, hoping as so many utopians in the seventeenth century hoped, that that hard-headed man of God would use his limitless power to bring the millennium into existence.

### WINSTANLEY'S COMMUNIST COMMONWEALTH

Some eighteen months after the final failure of the communist venture at Cobham, Winstanley was moved, as he says, "to pick together" as many of his scattered papers as he could find, in one more effort to realize his idea of a true commonwealth. What had happened to him in the interval is unknown. If the authorities had thought it worth while to press the indictment returned against the Diggers, he may have served a jail sentence. When he reopened the question of communism by publishing *The Law of Freedom*, he evidently thought it wise to divorce the national project which he now offered to Cromwell from the unfortunate experiment that had failed in Surrey, for he nowhere referred to the latter. He speaks of his book as "intended for your view above two years ago", which is hard to credit, since he would scarcely have written and laid aside an elaborate appeal to Cromwell at the very time when he was issuing a continuous series of less elaborate appeals to Fairfax, to the army, and to Parliament. It is likely enough that Winstanley had long planned a more complete exposition of his ideas about a true commonwealth, separating them from the controversies connected with his attempt to cultivate the commons. In the winter of 1651 it was an obvious expedient to address the work to Cromwell, but I doubt whether this step would have been indicated until after the Battle of Worcester.

The outcome of the digging at Cobham had demonstrated the impossibility of cultivating the common land by communistic groups, so long as the legal power of the landlords over the unenclosed land remained intact, and it was obvious also that a fundamental change in the law could be made only by a national government free from the forces that had dominated Parliament. Accordingly Winstanley was led to add another to the list of national utopias of which Harrington's *Oceana*, published four years later, was the most famous. The immediate occasion of the work, he says, was a suggestion of Hugh Peters, that

government and law ought to be accommodated to Scripture.<sup>1</sup> The general purport of the book is identical with that of the controversial tracts that Winstanley had published in 1649 and 1650. The kingly oppressor, he says, has been cast out but his powers and the abuses inherent in them are still intact: the clergy and their tithes, the lawyers and the Norman law, the monopoly of the land by the lords of manors. By creation-right the land belongs to all, and no man becomes rich by his own labors but only by being able to appropriate the labor of other men. Winstanley now undertakes to show, by experience, by Scripture, and by history, that all war and all civil disturbances arise from the struggle to gain possession and control of the land. He therefore appeals to Cromwell to cast out oppression and to realize true commonwealth-government by making England a communistic society. He still professes to confine the program of communist tillage to the common and the nationalized land, and he still rejects the idea of expropriating the landlords, but it is very hard to see how he thought the two systems could have persisted side by side. Whatever interest his "platform" possesses lies in its being the outline for a wholly communist society.

Though the general purpose is the same, there is a change of emphasis in *The Law of Freedom*. Winstanley seems to rely less upon a millenarian hope that the spirit will move men to bring in true commonwealth, and more upon the possibility that changing the organization of society will affect their motives and conduct. In one rather surprising passage he avows this kind of change.

I speak now in relation between the oppressor and the oppressed; the inward bondages I meddle not with in this place, though I am assured that if it be rightly searched into, the inward bondages of the mind, as covetousness, pride, hypocrisy, envy, sorrow, fears, desperation, and madness are all occasioned by the outward bondage that one sort of people lay upon another.<sup>2</sup>

In his desire to see progress made Winstanley even says that some parts of his platform might be put into effect though communism were not

<sup>1</sup> Presumably in the Committee appointed January 20, 1651, to suggest to Parliament revisions of the laws. Peters appears to have been the *enfant terrible* of the Committee. See Bulstrode Whitelocke's *Memorials*, pp. 520, 521, 523, 528.

<sup>2</sup> P. 18 (bracketed paging).

adopted.<sup>3</sup> It is not likely that these passages imply any real change in Winstanley's convictions but he had clearly undergone a change of mood, induced by experience and by the failure of his year's agitation for the communal tilling of the common land. The millenarian expectations appropriate to the first stage of his revolutionary activity had given place to a soberer consideration of ways and means and a greater willingness to rely on changes in law and institutions.

In the opening three chapters of his book Winstanley undertakes to set forth the principles upon which he conceives the government of a true commonwealth to rest. This is evidently the result of an attempt to develop more affirmatively ideas that had remained implicit in his controversial tracts. In these his condemnation of the "kingly power" had been clearer than the idea of a commonwealth to which the kingly power stood opposed. In *The Law of Freedom* Winstanley developed the contrast more systematically. Government is a way of "ordering the earth and the manners of mankind" by law, and its purpose ought to be to enable men to live peaceably in freedom and plenty. There are, however, two different ways of ordering the earth—by private ownership and "the cheating art of buying and selling" and by communal ownership without buying and selling. There are therefore two kinds of government, kingly government and commonwealth, and two kinds of law. Kingly government, because it depends on private ownership, depends also on war and conquest, upon the dominion of some men over others through force and fraud, and upon lawyers and the clergy as the twin agencies of covetousness and subtlety necessary for that kind of government. Commonwealth, because it does away with buying and selling, is able to abolish the abuses and oppressions that go with them; it gives a lawful livelihood to the poor as well as to the rich, and its law arises from equity, reason, and righteousness.

In his third chapter Winstanley traces the two forms of government back to two antagonistic principles in human nature. These he calls common preservation—the tendency in a man to seek the good of others as well as himself—and self-preservation. True magistracy, as distinguished from the false magistracy of force, springs from the impulse to common preservation. In origin it begins with the family, in which the superior experience and wisdom of the father are applied to the protection and nourishment of his dependents. Adam, Winstanley says,

<sup>3</sup> P. 72 (bracketed paging).

was the first ruler, and the necessity of planting the earth to gain a common livelihood was his law. The fundamental law of a commonwealth, governed with a view to the common preservation, is that the strong should help and protect the weak and the foolish. The false magistrate is one who favors the rich and the strong; the true magistrate is one who casts out "self-ended" interests and protects the peace and liberties of the common people. The first is the root of all civil wars and revolutions; the second is the root of right government and peace. Essentially, therefore, Winstanley's contrast of kingly government and commonwealth is the contrast between acquisitiveness and competition on the one hand and cooperation and mutual aid on the other, the opposition upon which all communistic utopias have depended.

Having thus set forth the underlying principle of a commonwealth, Winstanley goes on to specify what might be called its chief political device. Like most of the early theorists of democracy he has been captivated by the idea of popular elections and short terms of office. In a commonwealth, he says, all officers are elected and hold office for a single year. He gives the familiar arguments to show that power long and continuously held corrupts the officials who have it, while frequent change keeps them faithful to the public interest and gives political experience to more persons. This part of Winstanley's argument probably shows an affinity with the political ideas of the Levellers. Like the Levellers also, and in contrast with what might have been expected of a person with millenarian tendencies, he shows no inclination to restrict political power to the saints. No one is excluded from the suffrage by his plan except persons whose interests attach them obviously to the Royalist side in the Civil Wars. He expresses himself as against even a moral qualification for voting, and against a religious qualification for officeholding, though "uncivil livers" ought not to be elected to office. For obvious reasons those who have profited by buying confiscated estates are to be excluded from a plan of government that aims at nationalizing this land for the use of the poor.

The fourth chapter of *The Law of Freedom*, which is the longest section of Winstanley's platform of government, is an elaborate effort to outline the officers required in a communistic commonwealth. True to the ideas that commonwealth begins with and grows from the family, he enumerates the father of a family as the first officer in the plan,

each such person being responsible for the education of his dependents, for directing their labor, and for seeing that they are brought up in a useful trade. Beyond the family there are local officers—those responsible for each town, city, or parish—county officers, and national officers. The local officers in Winstanley's plan are of two kinds: the peacemakers, whose duty is mainly to keep the peace, and the overseers, whose duties are mainly industrial. The peacemakers appear to be modeled on the justices of the peace, except that they are arbitrators rather than judges. The settlement of local disputes by arbitration was a part of the Levellers' plan for the reform of local government, designed of course to circumvent the delays, costs, and technicalities of proceedings in the regular courts. The overseers are of four types, (1) those whose duty it is to protect the private property that in Winstanley's communistic scheme still belongs to each family; (2) those who oversee the practice of each trade and the system of apprenticeship by which the youth are to be educated in the trades; (3) those who oversee the common storehouses into which all goods are brought except those produced for immediate consumption; and (4) men over sixty years of age, who have a kind of roving commission to oversee everybody and everything. It is clear that Winstanley based the idea of his overseers upon a guild-system of production; he speaks with high commendation of the London companies and the oversight of production which they were supposed to exercise. The local officers include also a soldier, who is a kind of marshal to execute and enforce the orders of officers and courts, an executioner, and a task-master. The last has the custody and supervision of those who refuse to conform to the general plan, for like all communistic schemes, Winstanley's platform has to provide that those who do not work at the recognized occupations not only shall not eat, but also shall not have their freedom or the custody of their persons.

The essential institution of county government in Winstanley's plan is the county court, held four times a year like the Quarter Sessions, and consisting of a judge and of the peacemakers and overseers from the towns and parishes of the county. Here again Winstanley took a leaf from the Levellers' book. The judges are to be rigidly interdicted from interpreting the law but are to pronounce only its bare letter. This has been a perennial ideal of radicals whose purpose is to simplify the law and its procedure, and who see in judicial legislation a chief cause of

legal formality and technicality.<sup>4</sup> Above the county courts in Winstanley's plan is Parliament, which he describes as the highest court, having supervision of all other courts and officers, with power to remedy all grievances. Nothing is said on the subject, but I assume that Winstanley would abolish the courts at Westminster, as the extreme Levellers proposed to do. Parliament is to be composed of representatives chosen annually from the cities, towns, and counties. Winstanley shows, however, no great confidence in parliaments: he proposes that legislation, after it is passed, shall not take effect for a month, in order that the people may have a chance to register their objections. He did not adopt the Leveller plan of limiting the legislative power with a written constitution. The most positive duty of Parliament in Winstanley's plan is very naturally to direct the planting of the "commonwealth land", which consists of the common and of all the land recovered from the church, the king, and the royalists. This land is to be permanently nationalized, but he does not undertake to frame rules by which it is to be administered.

The same applies generally to Winstanley's account of the economic organization of a society that has abolished buying and selling, which he deals with in the latter part of his fifth chapter. Apart from the overseers in his roster of officers, there is not much that can properly be called an outline of a communistic economy. His plan is that all crops when harvested, and all goods when manufactured, are to go into public storehouses, some wholesale and some retail, and are to be dispensed without price, upon the request of anyone who needs them, either for his own consumption or as raw material for further processing. Winstanley had not reflected on the fact that the price-system which results from buying and selling goods does regulate production and that there would still have to be some kind of regulation, even in an economy that was purely cooperative. Buying and selling seemed to him nothing but a "cheating art", that gives an iniquitous advantage to

<sup>4</sup> John Lilburne proposed the following on judicial reform, as a petition to the first Parliament to be elected pursuant to the adoption of the Agreement of the People: "That the next Representative be most earnestly pressed for the ridding of this kingdom of those vermin and caterpillars, the lawyers, the chief bane of this poor nation; to erect a court of justice in every hundred in the nation, for the ending of all differences arising in that hundred, by twelve men of the same hundred annually chosen by freemen of that hundred, with express and plain rules in English, made by the Representative or supreme authority of the nation, for them to guide their judgments by." Reprinted by A. S. P. Woodhouse, *Puritanism and Liberty*, p. 366.

the cunning and unscrupulous, an estimate which may very well have had its roots in the personal humiliation of his bankruptcy.<sup>5</sup> By its abolition he expected that it would be possible to uproot covetousness and oppression. For the regulation of the system he relied upon criminal penalties against idleness, waste, and the failure to practice a useful trade. For its direction he depended upon the overseers, who are supposed not only to know the best processes for producing goods but also what goods are needed and in what quantities. Winstanley emphasized the duty of the overseers to encourage the discovery of new knowledge and its application to the arts and crafts. Inventors, he says, ought to be signally honored, and all useful discoveries ought to be made known at once to the whole country. Nevertheless, as was perhaps natural for a small tradesman in the seventeenth century, he still thought of industry as dominated by custom and as controlled by self-regulating crafts. For this reason his plan for a communistic society contained little in the way of economic analysis.

The most interesting parts of Winstanley's plan of government are those in which he sketches his ideas of public education. The first part of his fifth chapter is devoted to this subject. Both heads of families and the overseers of arts and trades are required to see that all children are instructed in morals and in useful trades, in languages and in the arts and sciences. It appears clear that Winstanley intends education to be extended to all citizens of the commonwealth. This is not, however, the point which he mainly stresses. What he thinks chiefly desirable is to avoid the creation of a class of professional scholars, educated only in book-learning, in reading and lazy contemplation, like his ancient enemies, the lawyers and the clergy. Every member of a commonwealth, therefore, ought to learn a useful trade or art and ought also to know something of languages, sciences, and history. The arts Winstanley describes as knowledge in practice, laborious and not traditional knowledge. He divides them into five classes: husbandry, with all the supplemental and derivative arts which have to do with the growing and utilization of crops that come from the soil; the arts that have to do with the production and processing of minerals; the arts that concern the care of domestic animals and the use of all the products derived from

<sup>5</sup> There is possibly a note of bitterness in Winstanley's occasional references to his reduction to the status of a day-laborer, "which I was never brought up to". See p. 67 (bracketed paging).

them; the arts that concern the growth and utilization of timber; and, finally, arts that depend upon the stars, among which he mentions astronomy, astrology, and navigation. Winstanley's commonwealth has a completely secularized education centered in the practical applications of knowledge.

He proposes also that popular education in secular subjects shall altogether replace the religious teaching of the church. In his outline of officers for the commonwealth the two whose work is most carefully described are the parish minister and the postmaster. The minister is a parish officer elected, like all other officers, for a single year. One day in seven is to be free from labor, but this has no religious significance. On this day the people meet in their parishes, partly that they may become acquainted with one another but chiefly for purposes of general public education. The minister has the direction of this but he has no monopoly of teaching, such as has been claimed by the ordained clergy. The teaching consists largely of reading from the laws of the commonwealth, but not expounding or interpreting them, and of lectures on public affairs. To supply material for the latter Winstanley provides another group of officers, the postmasters. The postmasters in each parish gather the local news and report it to the capital, where the reports are compiled and printed and a copy sent to each parish for publication at the weekly meetings. In addition to this kind of reading and lectures, Winstanley would have lectures on the arts and sciences, sometimes in English and sometimes in foreign languages, and also on moral subjects like the nature of man and the benefits of liberty. In all this, however, there is nothing that can be called religious instruction of a doctrinal sort. In Winstanley's commonwealth there is literally no church and no clergy, since he identified the practice of that profession with witchcraft.

He who professes the service of a righteous God by preaching and prayer, and makes a trade to get the possessions of the earth, shall be put to death for a witch and a cheater.<sup>6</sup>

So far as his own views were concerned, Winstanley had clearly reached the conclusion that no sort of public worship was necessary. It does not appear what rights he would have extended to those who did not agree with him, which is curious, in view of his very emphatic endorsement

<sup>6</sup> P. 86 (bracketed paging).

of religious toleration in his earlier works. I suppose, though I am not certain, that he would have permitted churches whose membership was voluntary, so long as they relinquished any form of compulsory public maintenance.

Winstanley's secularizing of education was derived directly from his ideas about religion. By making religion exclusively an inner revelation and worship exclusively communion with God, he had divorced it from any relationship to learning, and had abolished any distinction between different branches of knowledge in respect of their relation to religion. This had a twofold effect: on the one hand it destroyed the study of divinity as a branch of learning and on the other it raised all the arts and sciences to the dignity formerly claimed by theology. To know the secrets of nature, he says, is to know the works of God. This is a knowledge by experience as much as that "experimental" knowledge of the spirit upon which he had insisted in his religious tracts. Hence the pursuit of useful knowledge in the arts and sciences is itself almost an act of worship. The very omnipresence of God in nature and of the inner light in human experience brought Winstanley to a completely secular idea of education and scholarship. In this he went squarely against all the prevailing ideas of Puritan education, though his conclusion was the culmination of ideas inherent in Puritanism itself. Again and again throughout the first half of the seventeenth century the Puritan clergy had attacked the remnants of medievalism in the English universities. Their object was to displace the ancient curriculum, based on scholastic metaphysics and dialectic, and to replace it with studies more suitable for the training of pulpit orators and pastors.<sup>7</sup> Thus rhetoric, moral philosophy, and the ancient languages became the essential parts of the course of study. Always, however, there was the assumption that the clergy formed a learned profession, with a body of demonstrated truth (usually thought to be Calvinist theology) at their back. All classes of Puritan clergy, Presbyterian and Independent, poured contempt on the "mechanick preachers" who leaped into notoriety with the spread of the Baptist and other sects.

The small group of Puritan mystics to whom Winstanley was allied, when they broke with the prevailing idea of the clergy, had necessarily to abandon the idea that education ought to be directed to training

<sup>7</sup> The subject is discussed with special reference to Milton in William Haller's *The Rise of Puritanism*, New York, 1938, pp. 297 ff.

clergymen. If a religious teacher required before everything else an intuition of spiritual truth, he could hardly be expected to get this from a study of Greek and Hebrew. In almost identical words John Saltmarsh and George Fox denied that university teaching could make a clergyman.<sup>8</sup> William Dell, who as Master of Caius College, Cambridge, had an educational position of some importance, went on to propose the secularizing of university studies:

If the Universities will stand upon an human and civil account, as schools of good learning for the instructing and educating youth in the knowledge of the tongues, and of the liberal arts and sciences, thereby to make them useful and serviceable to the commonwealth . . . and will be content to shake hands with their ecclesiastical and anti-Christian interest, then let them stand during the good pleasure of God; but if they will still exalt themselves above themselves, and place themselves on Christ's very throne, as if they had ascended upon high to lead captivity captive and to give gifts to men for the work of the ministry . . . then let them in the name of Christ descend into that darkness out of which they first sprang.<sup>9</sup>

In his *Right Reformation of Learning, Schools, and Universities*<sup>10</sup> Dell outlined a system of publicly supported elementary schools for England, with high schools for teaching the languages, arts, and sciences in all the larger cities. Like Winstanley he favored the teaching of a trade with the study of books.

Winstanley's ideas about education, therefore, were not peculiar to him but were shared by those whom he most resembled in his religious ideas. Like Dell he looked toward an education open to the generality of the population, an education in subjects useful to the commonwealth and closer to experience and the practice of the useful arts. But with these men the high value that they set on knowledge at first hand grew

<sup>8</sup> "It is not a University, a Cambridge or Oxford, a pulpit or a black gown or cloak, that makes one a true minister of Jesus Christ." Saltmarsh's *Divine Right of Presbytery*, 1646. "The Lord opened unto me that being bred at Oxford or Cambridge was not enough to fit and qualify men to be ministers of Christ, and I wondered at it because it was the common belief of people." Fox's *Journal*, Vol. I, p. 75.

<sup>9</sup> *The Stumbling-Stone, wherein the University is Reproved*, 1653; cited from a reprint entitled *Christ's Spirit*, Germantown, Penna., 1760, pp. 155 f.

<sup>10</sup> *Select Works*, p. 578.

not from any usual kind of empirical philosophy but from the peculiar form of mysticism embodied in their religious experience. It was the knowledge of the inner light which, in the first instance, they contrasted with verbal learning and the building up of vast systems of unverifiable inferences. The very type and model of this kind of hair-splitting was for them the attempts of literal-minded Puritans to spin out a whole body of belief and practice from the texts of Scripture. In the case of Winstanley that which cuts off clericalism at its root is the fact that the divinity in which the clergy are trained and which they are supposed to practice is an "imaginary" science. It is false in its learned pretensions and, what is worse, it is pernicious in its social consequences. In the end Winstanley became convinced that it was unwholesome both mentally and morally, a result of semi-pathological fears and a cause of hysteria. The passage in his *Law of Freedom* in which he condemns the "divining doctrine" is certainly the most remarkable he ever wrote. It must have grown from much observation of the darker side of religious fanaticism, and it must constitute one of the most extraordinary indictments of Puritanism that was written in the seventeenth century.

There is a threefold discovery of falsehood in this doctrine.

For, first, it is a doctrine of a sickly and weak spirit, who hath lost his understanding in the knowledge of the creation, and of the temper of his own heart and nature, and so runs into fancies, either of joy or sorrow.

And if the passion of joy predominate, then he fancies to himself a personal God, personal angels, and a local place of glory which he saith he and all who believe what he saith shall go to, after they are dead.

And if sorrow predominate, then he fancies to himself a personal devil and a local place of torment that he shall go to after he is dead, and this he speaks with great confidence.

Or, secondly, this is the doctrine of a subtle running spirit, to make an ungrounded wise man mad, that he might be called the more excellent man in knowledge, for many times when a wise understanding heart is assaulted with this doctrine of a God, a devil, a heaven, and a hell, salvation and damnation after a man is dead, his spirit being not strongly grounded in the knowledge of

the creation nor in the temper of his own heart, he strives and stretches his brains to find out the depth of that doctrine and cannot attain to it. For indeed it is not knowledge but imagination. And so, by poring and puzzling himself in it, loses that wisdom he had, and becomes distracted and mad. And if the passion of joy predominate, then he is merry and sings and laughs, and is ripe in the expressions of his words, and will speak strange things, but all by imagination. But if the passion of sorrow predominate, then he is heavy and sad, crying out, He is damned, God hath forsaken him, and he must go to hell when he die, he cannot make his calling and election sure. And in that distemper many times a man doth hang, kill, or drown himself. So that this divining doctrine, which you call spiritual and heavenly things, torments people always when they are weak, sickly, and under any distemper. Therefore it cannot be the doctrine of Christ the Savior.

For my own part, my spirit hath waded deep to find the bottom of this divining spiritual doctrine; and the more I searched, the more I was at a loss; and I never came to quiet rest, and to know God in my spirit, till I came to the knowledge of the things in this book. And let me tell you, They who preach this divining doctrine are the murderers of many a poor heart who is bashful and simple and that cannot speak for himself but that keeps his thoughts to himself.

Or, thirdly, This doctrine is made a cloak of policy by the subtle elder brother to cheat his simple younger brother of the freedoms of the earth. . . . So that this divining spiritual doctrine is a cheat. For while men are gazing up into heaven, imagining after a happiness, or fearing a hell after they are dead, their eyes are put out, that they see not what is their birthright, and what is to be done by them here on earth while they are living. This is the filthy dreamer and the cloud without rain.

And indeed the subtle clergy do know that, if they can but charm the people by this their divining doctrine to look after riches, heaven, and glory when they are dead, then they shall easily be the inheritors of the earth and have the deceived people to be their servants.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Pp. 60 ff. (bracketed paging).

Here was a new note in the secularism which spread over political thought and indeed over all thought after the Restoration. It grew not from philosophic rationalism, or from a skeptical indifference to religion, or from the repugnance of political-minded men to clericalism. On the contrary it sprang from an unusually intense and sincere form of religious experience and from the very essence of Protestantism. It was as genuinely a part of the Pauline tradition in Christianity as those elements which Calvinist Puritans liked better to emphasize. It was, as William James said of Quakerism, "a religion of veracity", the creation of men who had faced the fundamental unreasonableness of the world and of their own natures and, without benefit of clergy, had found serenity and the power to work, the widest scope possible for the exercise of intelligence, and a sense of human brotherhood that lifts the non-rational above the brutalities of irrationalism.