
A table of contents for *The Baptist Quarterly* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bq_01.php

Henry Jessey
A Pastor in Politics

I HAVE decided to speak* about Henry Jessey's politics because of my suspicion that the time is perhaps once more approaching when, while a service of ordination may become optional for the making of a minister of Christ, a prison sentence may yet become obligatory. So I want to uncover for you the motives which took Jessey into politics and the ambiguities and troubles which attended his commitment. Nevertheless, I do not want you to think that I have deluded myself into believing that I have discovered either a seventeenth century English Martin Luther King or yet one more lily-livered liberal mouthing platitudes about 'involvement' from a safe suburban pulpit. Henry Jessey was a man of his time and not ours. His spiritual and political context was not our context, his arguments were not our arguments, his crises were not our crises, but the question remains whether his deepest concern ought to be ours.

Jessey, apart, perhaps, from being an Oxbridge man, was nearly everything a Baptist minister ought to be. He had the grace of perseverance and served one congregation for about a quarter of a century. He was friendly to other Christians, at least within decent limits, for neither papists nor unitarians were invited to the ministers' fraternal to which he belonged. He was good with children, though a bachelor, and had even written a book for them. He was an enthusiastic expositor of Scripture and shared, during the 1650's, in a scheme for replacing the King James Version with a new and more accurate one. He was also deeply committed to the cause of world-wide Christian missions with a perspective which embraced the North American Indians, the Jews and the people of the East Indies. He was, above all, a man of prayer and an evangelical of steadfast convictions. In short, Henry Jessey was, you might think, a superintendent's dream, you could settle him almost anywhere! Except for one thing—his involvement with the politics of the kingdom of Christ.

Even in the revolutionary generation to which he belonged involvement in politics was not absolutely inevitable. It was possible, some men found, even during the Great Rebellion, to convince oneself that politics could be ignored and that to have nothing to do with them was *not* in itself a political decision, a decision for the *status quo*. Three

* *This lecture was given at the Annual Meeting of the Baptist Historical Society as the second Henton Lecture in April, 1971.*

convictions seem to have made it impossible for Henry Jessey to keep out of politics: first, that the will of God, as he believed it to be revealed by the Bible, must lead to concrete acts of obedience now. Secondly, that God shortly intended to manifest Christ's millennial reign upon earth. Thirdly, that the imminence of that kingdom required political preparation by Christians now.

For some of us it would be a long step to reach the third of these convictions from the other two but Jessey's own experience conditioned him to accept it fairly readily. Virtually ever since his conversion at Cambridge in 1622 he had discovered that spiritual obedience carried with it political implications. His conversion and his consequent allegiance to Puritanism placed him almost inevitably in opposition to the then Church establishment. In 1624 he became chaplain to the family of Brampton Gurdon in Suffolk. Gurdon was a sturdy Puritan country squire who, significantly enough, would one day be known as father 'to three Parliament men'.[1] In Suffolk Jessey became friendly with the Winthrops who were soon to sail for New England to create the Puritan colony of Massachusetts. In 1633 he moved back to his native Yorkshire to take the place of another Puritan minister who had been ejected for nonconformity and was soon in trouble himself for not using the prescribed ceremonies. Under pressure from the church authorities he found a home with another Puritan squire, Sir Matthew Boynton and, in 1636, moved with him to Uxbridge, Middlesex. Hardly had he settled in there before he was invited to become pastor of the illegal, underground, Independent congregation founded by Henry Jacob in 1616. When he accepted that task Henry Jessey clearly crossed the line between those acts which could be regarded as primarily matters for debate among ecclesiastical partizans and those which verged on, if they did not actually entail, treason. In a generation where church and state were so closely identified one's Christian convictions could soon take one beyond disagreement with one's bishop into direct confrontation with the State.

Hence, some years before the outbreak of civil war in England, Jessey had become familiar with the experience that what he believed to be obedience to God led to acts of political disobedience which were in conflict with the law of the land. Nevertheless his first known published work was *A calculation for this present year, 1645*. There he listed, among other things, a number of crucial dates in the ecclesiastical history of England. The last of these was 'This present Parliament that here first rooted up Prelacy 1641 end and hath engaged it selfe for a Reformation according to the Word of God, began Nov. 3 1640'. So, quietly but firmly, Henry Jessey now sided with those who, *by an act of state,* sought the reform of religion! Times had changed, and had changed for the better. But there was another significant contribution to this first publication for it concluded with a short explanation, based on *Daniel* 2, of the four monarchies which had stretched through world history until his own day 'and of the Fifth shortly succeeding, and farr surpassing them all'. The Fifth

Monarchy would be constituted by no earthly power but by Christ and his Saints.

Was this form of advent testimony peculiar to Henry Jessey in 1645? Was he just a lonely eccentric? In the last few years a great deal of attention has been given to questions concerning the history of apocalyptic ideas in England during the first half of the seventeenth century. It now seems clear that it was John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* which first popularised for English readers the importance of biblical apocalyptic. William Haller[2] certainly supports the view, expressed by Professor Glanmor Williams in his Whitley Lectures, that ' Foxe has almost unchallengeable claims to the title of prince of English historical myth makers '.[3] In addition William Lamont has shown that, in the period up to 1660, eschatological and apocalyptic thought were by no means the sole preserve of extreme sectaries: in fact, they coloured the thinking of both Anglicans and mainstream Puritans.[4] If it is true that ' Foxe's work conditioned English Protestants to look to the Book of Revelation for salvation '[5] and so prepared the way for the expository writings of the men whose books were most widely influential on this subject in the 1640's, Thomas Brightman, Joseph Mead and John Archer, it also seems clear that even such distinguished and level-headed Independents as Thomas Goodwin espoused the millenarian cause in the 1640's only to abandon it in the 1650's ' when it had become an embarrassment '.[6]

The difference in this matter between Goodwin and Jessey was not between two utterly different casts of mind but rather between two men, one of whom, Jessey, maintained a revolutionary position longer. It certainly needs to be emphasised that a literalist interpretation of the symbols in *Daniel* and *Revelation* was both entirely intellectually respectable *and* intensely interesting to a wide spectrum of English Churchmen during the generation before 1660.

While, however, it was one thing to be convinced of the impending foundation of the Fifth Monarchy of Christ and his Saints it was quite another to join or to form a party dedicated to hastening on that blessed event. The Fifth Monarchy men differed from less activist millenarians in three ways. First, many of them believed that, at a sign from heaven, they should be prepared to use even violence to prepare the way for the coming kingdom. Secondly, they tended to identify the symbols in Scripture with both personalities and events in recent or imminent English history. Thirdly, they tended to envisage a political, legal and ecclesiastical structure for the millennium derived partly from contemporary radical ideals and partly from Scripture. When this has been said, however, it must also be recognized that there were very considerable variations of viewpoint among adherents of the party and the question of violence must always be considered in the context of a wise remark by Dr. G. F. Nuttall: ' In the seventeenth century violence of language was usual and does not in itself indicate an intention to act violently '.[7] There is certainly no evidence that Henry Jessey, for example, ever advocated the violent overthrow

of the Cromwellian regime although there is no doubt at all that he was deeply critical of it and shared the criticisms voiced by many of his Fifth Monarchist friends. He is, in fact, important as a convinced Fifth Monarchist who kept a close relationship with men like William Kiffin who were widely recognised *and* criticised as supporters of Oliver Cromwell. In fact he serves to prove that not all Fifth Monarchists adhered to the common pattern.

In 1651 an enthusiastic student of the prophetic Scriptures, Mary Cary, published a book entitled *The little horns doom and downfall* which included some introductory material from various preachers including Henry Jessey. In passing he stated that he had been interested in ' the glorious state and priviledges of the new Jerusalem that shall be upon earth ' for over twenty years.

It seems that Jessey believed that Mary Cary had made out a strong, but not completely convincing, case for her interpretation which identified Charles I as the little horn, dated the conversion of the Jews in 1656 and the completed glory of Christ's kingdom in 1701. Jessey was cautious and concluded that her arguments ' deserve to be well weighed ' but suggested that others, ' acquainted with much of the Lord's minde ', differed from her in a number of details. However, as he remarked, ' Time will make the truth evident '. It is interesting that he himself evidently believed that the conversion of the Jews would take place before 1658: certainly it was a necessary prelude to the return of the Lord and the setting up of his kingdom.

One of the most belligerent of all the Fifth Monarchy men among Jessey's circle was Christopher Feake. He produced a writing in 1659 called *A beam of light shining in the midst of much darkness and confusion* which sought to tell something of the story of the Fifth Monarchy men and their ideology: it is valuable in suggesting another type of motivation for Jessey's own political commitment. The pamphlet may not be thought to throw much light upon the *causes* of the Great Rebellion as they are today so widely debated but it does, to my mind, throw considerable light upon what some men believed its *purposes* to have been—and, at a time when almost any motive other than the religious is apt to be highlighted, it may serve to redress the balance in some degree. Of course, while we all know that war aims do have an awkward habit of changing during the course of a conflict, it seems likely that for Feake, and probably for Jessey and others also, the cause of Christ's kingdom (in whatever way it may have been understood), had lain close to the heart of the matter all the way through. It also serves to illustrate the degree to which political and ecclesiastical tyranny seemed, to some men, to go hand in hand. Feake began by speaking of the prayers many had offered in 1640 ' for deliverance from under that antichristian tyranny and persecution which was then managed with a very high hand, and very presumptuously, by the late King and his Prelates '. The divine response to these prayers had been, so Feake believed, the summoning of the Long Parliament and the various decisions which it then took.

Among these was freedom for many of those previously persecuted for their religion. Feake wrote: 'It would have done a good man's heart good indeed, to have seen ancient preachers, and other Christians, appear in publick, without danger, after so many years obscuring themselves from the knowledge of men, because of the rage of the prelates and their pursevants, watching alwaies an opportunity to catch and crush them: who now were instrumental several waies, to undermine the Prelats and their rable of Romish ceremonies and that publickly, and to purpose '.[8] Now, as is well known, foremost among those who had had to hide from the authorities' pursuit and persecution in the 1630's had been the very congregation which Jessey led from about 1636 and which, more than once, had had its members arrested when they met for worship.

Yet, Feake suggested, while God had favoured the parliamentary cause with many victories and while the proclamation issued by the Army before they marched into Scotland in 1651 seemed to support and answer 'the Fifth Kingdom-mens largest principles and expectations', after the crowning mercy of the battle of Worcester, when the royalist cause seemed destroyed once and for all, Cromwell and his supporters seemed to lose their former enthusiasm for reformation. The sectaries, as Feake was not embarrassed to call his friends, approached the Parliamentary leaders with advice 'to press forward in promoting that glorious cause . . . every where, and every way '.[9]

The official response was chilly so it was decided to hold a meeting at Allhallows the Great in London of sympathetic officers, soldiers and churchmembers. After a day of seeking the Lord's guidance about their next step they decided upon 'Six general heads of prayer'. The first provided the framework of all the rest: 'that the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ may be exalted speedily in these nations, and also in all the earth; and that whatsoever stood in the way of it might be utterly pulled down and brought to nothing'. The other matters to be prayed for were: the replacement of corrupt magistrates by righteous, the replacement of ungodly ministers by godly, the union of all God's true people, the stirring of Parliament, the Army and the churches to further reform and, finally, that no treaty with Holland should be 'prejudicial to the cause of Christ'.[10] It will be readily seen that this prayer programme might easily become political.

The first meetings for prayer along these lines took place in All-Hallows, Thames Street, London, toward the end of December 1651. When they became known to the ruling junta they were highly unpopular and 'within the space of a year or thereabouts' the meetings had virtually collapsed for lack of support. A small group who remained deeply concerned about the whole matter then invited six congregations 'who were least leavened with the spirit of self-seeking' to send delegates to discuss its reconstruction and revival. After a meeting or two at London House, and, thereafter at Blackfriars, a sizable group began to assemble regularly 'partly to hear those Scriptures opened, which concerned the blessed interest of Jesus

Christ; and partly to wrestle with the Lord again (after our former neglect) for the fulfilling of his word '.[11]

Feake, like most others among the Fifth Monarchy men, at first applauded the expulsion of the Rump of the Long Parliament in April 1653 and the summoning of the Parliament of the Saints later that same year. But the consequent dismissal of the Parliament of the Saints towards the end of the year and the appointment of Cromwell as Lord Protector was a great deal less popular with them. Feake described the action of the soldiers in making Cromwell Protector as lifting up an ' idol into the throne of supream authority in these nations, which were to be governed by none other then the Lord Jesus Christ himself '.[12] It was at this time that Vavasour Powell, another Fifth Monarchy man, asked his congregation the famous question whether God would have " Oliver Cromwell or Jesus Christ to reign over us?" This was a question which would not have been asked a few months earlier for then, as Christopher Hill remarked in his recent study of Cromwell, ' the two had not seemed to be rivals '.[13] If you sympathised with Mary Cary's view that the destruction of the Stuart Monarchy and the execution of Charles I marked a further milestone in the advance of the ultimate drama of the ages, the appointment of a new quasi-Monarch to bear rule in England seemed a blasphemous attempt to reverse the very tides of history and of the divine purpose. So, in his pamphlet of 1659, Christopher Feake summarised the task of all those who looked for the true kingdom, the kingdom of Christ, the Fifth Monarchy, in these terms: they were ' to indeavour the supplanting and destroying of Antichrist and his interest, both at home and abroad, and to improve with all diligence their time and talents for the advancement of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, throughout all the earth . . . and, uniting together in one Spirit, to become a peculiar people (or, as it were, a nation in the midst of a nation) waiting for the word of command from their Leader, to execute the vengeance written against Babylon, for being drunk with the bloud of the Saints, and with the bloud of the martyrs of Jesus. Amen. Hallelujah.' As you will at once realise it is precisely this type of language which highlights one of the major problems in the interpretation of Fifth Monarchist policy. How far were these words governed merely by the language and imagery of the Apocalypse? How far were they used deliberately to excite and inflame men to their own interpretation? How far were they a cold-blooded invitation to prepare for a share in hastening Armageddon? Perhaps the writer did not know himself. Certainly it appears that most Fifth Monarchy men, whatever their *theories* about revolution, believed that those who, like Thomas Venner, resorted in practice to violence had ' jumped the gun '.

Nevertheless, for our present purposes, the most important fact to which this tract bears witness is the *felt continuing link* between the Fifth Monarchists of the 1650's and the underground independent congregations of the 1630's and their sense of sharing the same cause.

Convictions about the Crown Rights of the Redeemer which led to illegal gatherings of secret churches in the back streets of London before the Civil War had now led men out into a campaign to transform the constitution. The Great Rebellion had taught men to think that Christ had his crown rights in politics too. These men shared the thoughts of the Scots reformer who reminded James VI and I that he might be King of Scotland but he was also but one more subject, God's silly vassal, of the King of kings! The line is a direct one to the Cape Province director of the Christian Institute of Southern Africa, the Revd. Theo. Kotze, who responded to Mr. Vorster's recent threats by telling him that he was *not* Lord of the Church.[15]

Henry Jessey's relations with Oliver Cromwell seem, at first examination, to be remarkably *inconsistent*. Among several indications that he was deeply critical of the Protectorate there stands the apparently clear evidence of his co-operation with Cromwell in, of all things, his state organisation of the churches! When the *Ordinance appointing commissioners for the approbation of publique preachers,* dated Monday, 20 March, 1654, was published, there, among the others, stood the name of Henry Jessey. The apparent enormity of his acceptance of this task is made clear by the following excerpt from the ordinance: 'every person, who shall from and after the five and twentieth day of March instant be presented, nominated, chosen, or appointed to any benefice . . . or to preach any publick settled lecture in England or Wales, shall, before he be admitted into any such Benefice or Lecture, be judged and approved, by the persons hereafter named, to be a person, for the Grace of God in him, his holy and unblameable Conversation, as also his knowledge and utterance, able and fit to preach the Gospel'. While successive Baptist historians in their search for denominational respectability have been quite proud to point to the fact that Henry Jessey and certain others were made Triers (this was the popular term for the commissioners appointed by the Ordinance) the attitude of many of their contemporaries, both Baptists and Fifth Monarchists, was very different. In fact Christopher Feake, preaching a few feet away from Henry Jessey in Allhallows Church three years later, knowing his presence and the fact of this appointment perfectly well said, most unfairly but with an edge on his words which must have come near to drawing blood: 'What are the court of the Triers, but your court of archbishops and bishops etc., that a man shall not preach the gospel without a passeport from them?'[16] The point was unfair, in some degree, because, of course, the Triers did not prevent men without their approval *preaching* the Gospel. What they did do was to prevent men being *paid* for preaching the Gospel who had not their approval. And therein lies the rub for Henry Jessey: the men whom the Triers approved would be paid not only from the lands and treasure of the Church of England which had been inherited at only one remove from the Romish Antichrist, but they would be paid for by the tithes which

all the sectaries and notably both Baptists and Fifth Monarchists, abhorred from the very depths of their being—and their pockets.

How could Henry Jessey, of all people, the man who helped further to undermine Cromwell's trustworthiness in the eyes of the Saints by putting round the story that the Protector had promised to bring the practice of tithe paying and tithe farming to an end by September 1654, be a party to a commission whose work was going to be so intimately linked with tithes?[17]

It had not been so difficult for Jessey to work with the Cromwellian establishment of Church and State the previous August. In August 1653 the saints were, on the whole, pleased with Cromwell. In April he had dismissed the rump of the Long Parliament and, shortly afterwards, had announced plans for the summoning of a Parliament of the Saints. This nominated Parliament looked far more like the Parliament of Fifth Monarchy and sectarian idealism for, though not *exclusively* chosen from the spiritual aristocracy of the land—the leaders of the gathered churches—it certainly gave those men a most influential voice in its affairs. Meanwhile, in August 1653, the war with Holland was going well. The Fifth Monarchists, rather surprisingly, supported this Protestant dog eat dog affair, because Holland was a far too successful commercial rival of England. Hence both Jessey and his Fifth Monarchy friend John Simpson, were invited as honoured guests on board the English warship *The General* for a thanksgiving service after a recent successful naval action. Their arrival and the arrangements made for it were noted in letters to Navy Commissioners which certainly implied that the two men were well known to the government and widely respected.[18]

On the other hand, with the dismissal of Barebone's Parliament at the end of 1653 and the inauguration of the Protectorate, a *quasi* monarchical institution, the Fifth Monarchy men and other 'republicans' went into outspoken opposition. In consequence Feake and Simpson were soon in and out and then in prison again.

What then, in this situation, possessed Henry Jessey to accept appointment in March 1654 as a Trier? He is known to have been in opposition late on in 1655 for a Baptist named Jerome Sankey, then working closely with the Protector, wrote to Henry Cromwell in Ireland to tell him of unsuccessful attempts to win over both Jessey and Simpson.[19] My first reaction was to seek access to the papers recording the work of the Triers held in Lambeth Palace to discover whether, in fact, Jessey ever actually served on the commission. Unfortunately, the papers, which give a great deal of information about men whom the Commissioners examined, give no indication even about whom, among the Commissioners, attended the meetings. So my attempt to discover whether Jessey actually served on the Commission failed. However, assuming that the official document does not lie and that Jessey's consent had been obtained to serve before the list of Commissioners was printed, how can this willingness to co-operate be explained—especially when we know that by next year he was in

opposition to the Protector and when we know what he and his colleagues felt about tithes?

My guess is linked with the report that Cromwell had told Jessey on an undated occasion that he could call him, Oliver Cromwell, a juggler—a trickster, if, by September 1654, he had not abolished tithes.[20] What better *Sitz im Leben* could such a promise have than a conversation about Jessey's willingness to join the commission for the approbation of public preachers, to act as a Trier? Certainly, if Jessey believed that he had a promise from Cromwell that tithes would be abolished by September 1654 it would have made it much easier for him to accept the office of Trier in March. Even that might well have made him rather uncomfortable—he was still too close to a state establishment of religion but he might well have satisfied himself by arguing that all he was now agreeing to do was to share in raising the standards of preaching and pastoral charge in the country at large. Furthermore, disappointment with Cromwell who had once seemed as eager as any man to dispense with tithes, could well have served to thrust Jessey, by 1655, into his more natural position of opposition! One of the ways by which Cromwell most deeply offended many of the more radical sectaries, Fifth Monarchists, Baptists of all shades of opinion and Quakers also, was in his failure to abolish tithes. They all believed and, at their best, still believe, that God's people should support God's work from their own pockets and wholeheartedly denied the right of any man to tax them for the support of any state establishment or, indeed, for the support of any church.

Nevertheless, even though there is clear evidence that Jessey and John Simpson were openly critical of the Protector in the autumn of 1655, another series of events which took place at that time suggests that Jessey was still prepared to co-operate with the government in matters which did not commit him to policies of which he disapproved. In September 1655 Menasseh ben Israel (1604-1657), a leading Jewish scholar then resident in Amsterdam, came to England to seek permission for the Jews to re-enter England. He had printed the petition which he addressed *To his highness the Lord Protector* (Amsterdam 1655) and delivered it personally to the Council of State on 31 October. On 12 November Cromwell himself proposed that the 'Jewes deservinge it may be admitted into this Nation to trade and trafficke and dwel amongst us as providence shall give occasion'.

The Council of State was less happy about the proposal and at once set up a committee from among its members and added a number of ministers, lawyers and merchants, among them Henry Jessey and William Kiffin. Jessey had been greatly interested in the conversion of the Jews for some years past and, you will remember, regarded their conversion as a necessary event during the final crisis of history which he believed to be drawing near. While the Protector was certainly sympathetic the conference, which met five times in December, was unable to reach agreement partly because the entry

of the Jews was felt likely to threaten the profits of the City of London and partly because, outside, a campaign of religious, commercial and racial intolerance was quickly whipped up by a number of interested parties.

Early in 1656 an anonymous pamphlet which has always, and, I believe, rightly been attributed to Henry Jessey provided *A narrative of the late proceeds at Whitehall concerning the Jews*. The pamphlet was strongly in favour of permitting them to enter England. Its arguments were not only those of compassion but also on the grounds of 'hopes of their conversion; which time (it's hoped) is now at hand, even at the door'. Jessey argued that in 'no nation hath there been more faithful, frequent and fervent prayers for the Jews then in England' and that none 'are more likely to convince them by scripture and by holy life, then many in England'. Unfortunately mammon, and the gnomes of the city, helped by English dislike of foreigners, all foreigners, but Jews in particular, won out and no permission was given them while Cromwell lived although he himself seems to have favoured their re-entry.

Jessey's moderate position is also demonstrated by two other events which took place before the death of the Protector.

At a meeting of Fifth Monarchy men and their sympathisers held in All Hallows, Monday, 5 January, 1657, Jessey publicly opposed Christopher Feake who had just been released from prison. Before Feake spoke two men had offered prayer, one from John Simpson's congregation and the other from William Kiffin's, both lamenting 'the misunderstandings, the rents, and divisions, that had fallen out among the churches'. Then Feake got up and launched a long diatribe against the Protectorate describing 'this power and the old monarchie' as 'one and the same'; next, he attacked the court of the Triers as mentioned earlier and, finally, he rebuked those who had prayed for a reconciliation between the churches: 'I think it were and would be well,' he said 'if they were more rent and seperated and divided than they are'. His reason was his conviction that they were far too readily making alliance with the 'anti-Christian powers of the world'. After he had finished there was a pause and then Jessey, who had apparently been sitting up near the pulpit, got up and opposed Feake's desire for a further division of the churches. When Feake had replied Kiffin and Simpson got up in support of Jessey and then went on, perhaps further than Jessey would himself have gone, to condemn Feake for 'his fastning the terms Antichristian and Babylon on the civil government'. This was very unpopular with many of the congregation. They at once took Feake's part crying out that Kiffin was a courtier and that John Simpson was an apostate who had once himself 'preached the same things in the same place' as had Christopher Feake that day.[21]

Nevertheless, even if Jessey did oppose Feake's hard-line approach there were limits to what he would take from the government of the day: he was certainly still a republican who believed that only the

Redeemer had a right to the crown in England. Hence, on 3 April, 1657, he joined with a number of other ministers in London to urge the Protector not to accept the crown which they believed was being offered to him. They reminded him that the Long Parliament had once for all declared on 17 March, 1649 that monarchy was 'unnecessary, burdensome, and destructive to the safety and liberty of the people'. Among other signatories of the letter were the well known Independent John Goodwin and such closed-membership Particular Baptist leaders who were also among Jessey's friends as Hanserd Knollys, John Spilsbery and Edward Harrison.[22]

Under Cromwell Jessey was evidently a Fifth Monarchy moderate —sufficiently concerned for England as a whole to play a part beyond that of his party allegiance, sufficiently concerned for the crown rights of the Redeemer to criticise the government, sufficiently involved in the various shades of grey which political manoeuvres inevitably involve to be suspect of inconsistency.

After Cromwell's death in September 1658 and the gradually mounting chaos which followed the succession of his son Richard, Jessey moved sharply into opposition to the *institution* of the Protectorate.

The end of the Protectorate came, effectively, with the return of the rump of the Long Parliament to Westminster in May 1659, summoned by the Army officers from their council meetings at Wallingford House. John Canne, a Fifth Monarchy zealot, became editor of the official newspaper *The publick intelligencer* and, in the issue dated 9-16 May, 1659, published 'an invitation to the Lord's people . . . to provoke them into a holy rejoycing in the Lord' over his own signature, that of Edward Harrison and of Henry Jessey. The jubilation of the three men was concerned with the ending of the Protectorate which they termed the 'late most glorious and never to be forgotten shaking and over-turning providence'.

In a broadsheet representing the views of twenty Fifth Monarchy leaders published the following September, Jessey, as one of the signatories, bore witness against 'the setting up or introducing any person whatsoever as King, or chiefe magistrate, or a house of Lords . . . apprehending that the great work of taking the kingdome from man, and giving it to Christ, hath had its beginning in the revolutions wee have been under'. Hence they opposed the appointment to any position of trust in government, army, or navy, of any men who had supported the Protectorate 'without good proofe of repentance'. Instead they recommended that government, both locally and nationally, should be entrusted to 'a certaine number of men qualified and limitted' according to the Word of God. They also asked that there should be a reform and simplification of the administration of justice and that 'the rulers over men forbeare for ever to impose any nationall, parochiall ministry, so as to inforce any forme of worship . . . or compell men of one perswasion to maintaine any man of another in the ministry'.[23]

This broadsheet evidently became fairly well known: it not only provoked one or two replies but also, slightly adapted, was reprinted with a large number of signatures from Baptists in the district in and around Abingdon where John Pendarves had been at work before his death in 1656.

Naturally, anyone who had thus nailed his republican colours to the mast would, after the restoration of Charles II in 1660, be a marked man. It was at this point that Jessey's theology of providence, which we know to have been deeply influenced over the years by the Old Testament, took over. It seems likely that, after an abortive attempt to accuse him of plotting a rising against the King with, of all unlikely people, William Kiffin, toward the end of 1660, Jessey could have avoided further trouble.[24] But, unfortunately, the well-known Puritan habit of registering special providences—acts of judgment and mercy in everyday life, led him into trouble and into prison for anti-royalist propaganda. In August 1660 Jessey produced, on the basis of letters which came to him from various parts of the country, a report on the sufferings of the saints at the hands of royalists and anti-puritan community leaders like local magistrates with some account of the accidents which had consequently overtaken the persecutors. The book, entitled, *The Lord's loud call to England,* seems to have been intended as a summons to repentance. At all events it seems to have enjoyed a certain success in some sympathetic circles and, the following year, about August 1661, a second similar venture was printed and published under the title of *Annus Mirabilis.* Here there was less emphasis upon the sufferings of the saints and more emphasis upon the strange portents and prodigies and judgements observed by his friends which implied divine displeasure with the new government.

The government, which appears to have ignored the first book, felt that the second might be more dangerous and, about the beginning of December 1661, Jessey was arrested and questioned about it. Presumably a government still not quite able to believe its good fortune in returning to power was uneasy lest too many simple souls should be taken in by the stories of portents and prodigies in a day when quite well educated people still believed in the power of witches. The consequence was his imprisonment for perhaps a twelve-month or more until, in response to a petition for his release, he was set free. He died a few months later. One report of his passing suggests that on his deathbed he was encouraging a Fifth Monarchy revolt.[25] Was this true? We can take the view of his original biographer: 'As for that which was laid to his charge as the cause of his last commitment, viz., that he should preach seditiously, and in a ranting strain against the King: whoever, whether enemies or friends heard the accusation and knew his disposition and manner of teaching, were fully satisfied that this pretended crime, was but a meer forgery'.[26] Is this the answer? Does his apologist over-plead? Did bitterness take hold of

Henry Jessey at the last? Or is this just one more ambiguity from a situation where ambiguity is inescapable?

I began by saying that Henry Jessey was a man of his time and not ours. His spiritual and political context was not our context, his arguments were not our arguments, his crises were not our crises, but the question remains whether his deepest concern should not be ours, both in church and in society, for the Crown Rights of the Redeemer. He believed in the coming kingdom, but he believed that the coming kingdom required obedience now.

NOTES

[1] Anon, *The life and death of Mr. Henry Jessey,* 1671, 4.
[2] W. Haller, *Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs' and the elect nation,* London, 1966, *Passim.*
[3] G. Williams, *Reformation views of Church History,* London, 1970, 62.
[4] W. M. Lamont, *Godly rule: politics and religion 1603-60,* London, 1969, *Passim.*
[5] *Ibid.,* 25.
[6] J. F. Wilson, *Pulpit in Parliament: Puritanism during the English Civil Wars, 1640-1648,* Princeton, 1969, 227.
[7] G. F. Nuttall, *The Welsh Saints 1640-1660,* Cardiff, 1957, 50.
[8] C. Feake, *A beam of light shining in the midst,* London, 1659, 3, 7.
[9] *Ibid.,* 31, 39.
[10] *Ibid.,* 41f.
[11] *Ibid.,* 44f.
[12] *Ibid.,* 51.
[13] J. E. C. Hill, *God's Englishman,* London, 1970, 145.
[14] C. Feake, *op. cit.,* 57.
[15] *New Statesman,* 23 April, 1971.
[16] J. Thurloe, *State Papers,* V.755-9.
[17] *Clarke Papers* II, Preface xxxvi.
[18] *Calendar of State Papers (Domestic),* 1653-4, 103f, 481, 485.
[19] British Museum, Lansdowne MSS, 823f. 120.
[20] J. E. C. Hill, *op. cit.,* 187 conflates Clarke Papers II, Preface xxxvi with *Harleian Miscellany* (1744-46) III, 467.
[21] J. Thurloe, *op. cit.*
[22] E. B. Underhill, *Confessions of Faith,* London, 1854, 335-8.
[23] H. Jessey and others, *An essay towards settlement,* London, 1659.
[24] *C.S.P.D.* 1660/61, 424.
[25] *C.S.P.D.* 1661/2, 173, 608. 1663/4, 277f.
[26] Anon, *The life and death of Mr. Henry Jessey, op. cit.,* 88.

B. R. WHITE.