

THE ELIZABETHAN FAMILISTS  
A SEPARATIST GROUP AS PERCEIVED  
BY THEIR CONTEMPORARIES

How outsiders perceive a group is secondary to how its members see themselves, and historians of English separatist groups have understandably concentrated on the latter aspect. While doing so, they have of course indicated that the environment was hostile to the separatists and have often described in some detail the persecutions encountered, but any detailed examination of the attitudes underlying these persecutions has usually been considered a task for someone else. That task, in a limited way, the present essay undertakes.

Who were the separatists? Some historians, looking largely toward later denominational descendents, have tended to confine the term to those groups offering explicit justifications of their separation, whether through some kind of congregational compact or through detailed doctrinal formulations. The present paper adopts a more comprehensive definition based on the groups' practice rather than their theory. It regards as separatists any self-selected group holding periodic meetings, without participation by an authorized cleric of the national church, for worship and discussion of their religious concerns. Most separatist groups also gave much attention to reading and expounding the Bible and showed an animus against the beneficed clergy; some had as leaders former clerics of the established church, emphasized special tenets of theology, or formalized membership by a compact or special admission ceremonies. But the autonomous gathering of the like-minded - the conventicle, as it came increasingly to be called - is considered here to be the central defining characteristic, as indeed it seems to have been by the separatists' contemporaries.

In terms of the whole Christian theological tradition, there was a bigger gap between a few points of doctrine (notably Arianism) held by some separatists and the tenets of orthodox English Protestantism than the doctrinal gap between the latter and Roman Catholicism. On a broader front, there were marked similarities between the "sectaries" and important radical elements of the Church of England, especially in their attitudes toward the Bible and what they saw as vestiges of "popery" and "idolatry" in Church of England practice. Some Puritan clerics like Robert Browne and John Penry left the church to become separatist leaders. But the importance of the gap between Puritan and sectary was emphasized by the Puritans' often being the sharpest opponents of separatists and by the sanctions society imposed against each. The Church of England cleric who got into trouble with the establishment might find himself deprived of his living or imprisoned; the sectary in similar case was in danger of being hanged or even burned alive.

The outsider's view of a sect is important not only for separatist history but also, in a larger sense, because the way Elizabethan separatists were perceived by their countrymen is part of the collective mentality of the age. To what extent did the public then (as modern historians often do) identify a group of separatists by the specific points of theology they espoused? Did contemporaries make careful distinctions between one group of separatists and another, or did they in most cases - as they certainly did in some cases - lump all of them under some comprehensive name such as "Anabaptists" or "Brownists"? (Sir Walter Raleigh, when he spoke to the House of Commons in 1593 of ten or twelve thousand "Brownists" in England, certainly had others in mind besides Robert Browne's immediate followers,<sup>1</sup> as Sir Andrew Aguecheek in *Twelfth Night* probably does when he declares, "I had as lief be a Brownist as a politician.") Can one explain the strength of the antagonism separatists aroused? Are there any indications of admiration for any aspects of the separatists that helped bring an eventual change in the severe hostility toward them?

Answers to such questions can to some degree be inferred from the way various members of Elizabethan society refer to separatist groups - in the case examined here, to the then new sect called the Family of Love. These "Familists" have left no lineal descendants and, at least till the last decade or two, have received little attention from religious historians, but they exemplify most of the separatist characteristics just mentioned, and they were prominent enough in the England of 1580 to be the sole target of a punitive royal proclamation.<sup>2</sup> Other case histories could be found in earlier separatist groups such as the Lollards or the Free-will men of Edward VI's reign, as well as in various contemporary or later sects, but the Familists' strikingly successful exploitation of the printing press gained them more public attention than any other separatists in Elizabeth's reign.<sup>3</sup>

The Familist movement had been founded about 1540 in the German city of Emden by Hendrik Niclas (or "H. N." as his followers called him), who put much emphasis on personal religious experience and the close fellowship of small groups of true believers.<sup>4</sup> Niclas was a prolific writer, whose works were translated (from the original Low German) into a number of languages, and the evangelizing efforts of the Family of Love (termed at other times the Household or Communialtie of Love) consisted largely of disseminating these varied works. On paper, at least, it had an elaborate organization of elders of differing status ranked under Niclas. In the Low Countries it won secret adherents among such intellectuals as Abraham Ortelius, the geographer, and Christopher Plantin, founder of the famous Antwerp printing house.

In England, H. N.'s followers came mainly from the artisan and small trader segment of society. The earliest document clearly referring to the Family is a deposition of sixty-six items made by two disgruntled ex-Familists before a Surrey magistrate on 28th May 1561, which describes in detail the

congregation meeting secretly near Guildford, mentions other congregations in half a dozen additional counties, and characterizes the members as "all unlearned, saving only that some of them read English".<sup>5</sup> The problem of literacy, however, did not inhibit an extensive programme of disseminating Familist publications printed in English abroad.<sup>6</sup> These publications, which range from broadsides to pastoral letters and include both verse and a play by Niclas, commenced appearing in 1574. In June of the next year the Privy Council discussed the Family on the first of thirteen occasions which extended to January 1581.<sup>7</sup> In June 1575 also there occurred a forced recantation at Paul's Cross by five named Familists. The names, like most of those in the deposition of 1561, are common English names and the chronicler, John Stow, termed them "Englishmen" in contrast to the "Dutch" Anabaptists whose recantation at Paul's Cross he described in May 1575.<sup>8</sup>

The attacks on Familism in print began in 1577, and in the two following years books were published by three men who had made extensive investigations of the movement and apparently persuaded persons in authority of its dangers. John Rogers, a clergyman of the Church of England, wrote *The displaying of an horrible seete of grosse and wicked heretiques naming themselves the Familie of Love*, 1578 (STC 21181), enlarged 1579 (STC 21182), and printed as an amended "confession" most of the deposition made by the two ex-Familists before the Surrey magistrate, William More, in 1561. In several prefaces, Rogers also presented information about Niclas and his continental background. In *An answer unto a wicked & infamous libel made by Christopher Vitel, one of the chief English elders of the pretended Familie of Love*, 1579 (STC 21180), Rogers quoted Familist counter-attacks extensively in replying to them. John Knewstub, a beneficed cleric of pronounced Puritan leanings who had attacked Familists (along with "papistes" and other groups) as "sworn enemies unto godliness" in his *Sermon preached at Paules Crosse the Fryday before Easter*, 1579 (STC 15046), concentrated on them with such effect in *A confutation of monstrous heresies taught by H. N.*, 1579 (STC 15040), that the Privy Council on 10th October 1580 commended him to the Bishop of Norwich as an expert on Familists, and again in January 1581 to five other bishops. William Wilkinson, a Cambridge-educated schoolmaster later to receive a minor church position, published *A confutation of certaine articles delivered unto the Famillye of Love*, 1579 (STC 25665), prefacing his own attacks on the Family with shorter statements by Bishop John Young of Rochester and Bishop Richard Cox of Ely, and with information about the pre-Familist career of Christopher Vitel.

Whether because of the persuasions of these three writers, the discovery of suspected Familists among the Queen's guard, or repeated complaints from the counties of Familist activities, the Privy Council grew increasingly disturbed about the sect. This is seen not only in the register itself but in the royal proclamation of 3rd October 1580, and in the consideration of punitive legislation by the House of Commons for a time in early 1581.<sup>9</sup> Sometime between then and 30th November 1582, the

furore over Familism died down. A letter bearing that date and the signatures of five members of the Privy Council directs the authorities at Cambridge to release certain now penitent Familists;<sup>10</sup> the Council register, when it resumes in early 1585 after its gap of thirty-one months, contains no more mention of Familists; no further books are recorded as appearing on either side. The sect itself lived on in England for over a century,<sup>11</sup> but its post-Elizabethan history is in various respects a separate story.

## II.

This essay is not concerned in any detail with the message which H. N.'s tracts, in hundreds of pages, tried to convey to the English reader. Suffice it to say that they are permeated with the language and imagery of the Bible (as his informed opponents recognized)<sup>12</sup> and insist that the Scriptures have now been fulfilled through the insights received by H. N. These insights stress the need for spiritual regeneration - a need to be satisfied through the close fellowship of the faithful gathered in the Family of Love. Niclas presents no coherent system of doctrine. He seeks rather to communicate his varied insights in vivid but familiar language, and to this end he uses traditional Christian terms like "baptism" in various untraditional and inconsistent ways. The Family's central term, "the Love", (as occurring in such frequently used phrases as "under the obedience of the love"), is never really defined or explained but, as John Rogers rightly remarked, is sometimes "to be taken for God, sometime for Christ and sometime for your whole doctrine and profession".<sup>13</sup> And "godded with God", the phrase by which H. N. apparently meant the attainable culmination of the believer's efforts toward a closer union with God,<sup>14</sup> seemed mere blasphemy to many of his contemporaries.

Nor does the present essay deal, except tangentially, with the detailed case against the Family put forward by the three writers who had carefully read and annotated H. N.'s tracts, investigated the sect's associations abroad, and engaged in direct controversy with its leaders in England. The paper focuses not on those who had made a study of the sect but on those whose opinion was more casually formed, who had done little more than overhear the specialists contending or possibly had a brief contact with a Familist. The concern here is not with Elizabethan Familism itself but with the public image of it.

As to the government's perceptions of the sect, the register of the Privy Council shows Familists to be a surprisingly frequent preoccupation in the period between June 1575 and January 1581 but does not convey any dominant impression beyond the evident assumption that they were a threat to public order and security. Of the nineteen items relating to the sect, five have to do with the suspected Familists in the Queen's guard, another six with complaints about the sect's activity in various counties, three with protests from clergy ousted from their livings for suspected Familism, three with measures to

implement the royal proclamation, and a miscellaneous three with similar suppressive measures. It is tantalizing, of course, to have recorded only the actions taken by the Council, not the discussions lying behind the actions.

The royal proclamation of 3rd October 1580 does undertake to explain why the sect is dangerous, but since such documents usually had a propaganda dimension, the mention of a Familist characteristic in the text does not necessarily mean it was important in the government's own perception of the family. Thus, in terming H. N.'s highly figurative language "a monstrous new kind of speech never found in the Scripture nor in ancient father or writer of Christ's church", the proclamation was probably just making an easy propaganda point. Several other points, however, suggest real alarm over potential security problems raised by the Familists. For one thing, they are perceived as holding "privy assemblies of divers simple unlearned people". Another point is their having printed abroad certain "heretical and seditious books" (four titles are given) which they "secretly brought over into the realm". Finally, Familists are said to believe "that they may, before any magistrate ecclesiastical or temporal, or any person not being professed to be of their sect ... by oath or otherwise deny anything for their advantage" - that is, conform to the Church of England outwardly while still holding their own religious convictions inwardly. All of these accusations had a solid basis in fact (Familists having a well-argued case for their insistence that religion was ultimately a private matter beyond the province of public authority)<sup>15</sup> and, taken together, they portrayed a group of people who seemed beyond the normal controls of church and state, and hence a potential source of rebellion. The Familists' ability to smuggle in their books from abroad may also have suggested to some members of the government the more serious overseas menace of Roman Catholic tracts and missionary priests; Lord Burghley, at least, had privately referred to the sect as "papistically" a year or two before.<sup>16</sup> It is perhaps noteworthy that Familists' belief in yielding outward conformity without reference to their real religious convictions is almost the only belief which the proclamation portrays them as holding. It is charged at one point that Familists believe only their own members "to be elect and saved", but the "heretical and seditious" content of the smuggled books is not otherwise indicated.

Turning to the perceptions found in the public at large, one finds that Familists sometimes seem to have aroused simple curiosity. A Latin letter of 14th October 1579, to Sir Philip Sidney from his friend Hubert Languet, the Huguenot diplomat, writing from Antwerp, makes it evident that Sidney has asked him to report what he can discover about the continental origins of this strange sect.<sup>17</sup> The situation has its ironies, in that the stories sent back by Languet about the sect's founder refer not to Niclas but to a notorious Anabaptist, Jan Williams of Roermond,<sup>18</sup> and that neither Languet, in giving Plantin's printing establishment as his Antwerp address for letters, nor Sidney, in writing to Plantin a few years later

to order Ortelius's *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* and several other books, shows any awareness of either the printer or the geographer's having been a secret Familist.<sup>19</sup>

References to Familism in the press, by writers concerned primarily with something else, are about as hostile as those by the three clerics directly attacking the sect, but they occur in a variety of contexts. Familists figure prominently in some sharp pamphlet exchanges starting in 1580 between English Jesuits and a number of clerics of Puritan tendencies in the Established Church. Robert Parsons, advancing the familiar argument that Roman Catholicism stood for unity and Protestantism for disunity and a mass of sectaries, shows his awareness of both the Puritan clerics' differences with the church hierarchy and their antagonism to separatists by the way he introduces the Family into the argument. There are now in England, Parsons asserts blandly, "fower known religions ... distinct both in name, spirite and doctrine ... the Catholickes, the Protestants, the Puritanes, and the householders of love, besides al other petye sects newly born and yet grovelinge on the ground". This association of Puritans and Familists, put forward in the dedicatory epistle of a tract justifying Catholics' disobeying the recusancy laws, is reiterated in the text proper and again by Parsons in a later controversial tract.<sup>20</sup>

A number of Puritan clerics replied with predictable anger to the Jesuit tracts, insisting that heresies like "the Anabaptists and Familie of Love" antedate Luther and are to be blamed rather on the Roman church.<sup>21</sup> The authorities in Protestant England have taken strong repressive measures against the Familists, William Charke says, asking why those in Roman Catholic countries "do so little to the punishment of them".<sup>22</sup> These clerics and a number of others write from the implicit assumption that Familists threaten the integrity of the church<sup>23</sup> - a view repeated down to the final years of Elizabeth's reign, when a joint tract by John Deacon and John Walker sees examples of such divisiveness coming "from the Anabaptists in Europe, from the Donatists in Africke, from the Jesuites in Germanie, in France and elsewhere, from the Familists and Barrowists in England".<sup>24</sup>

Other writers saw the Familists, as the royal proclamation did, more as a threat to national unity. The literary physician John Jones, addressing himself to the governing classes and emphasizing the importance of a well educated orthodox clergy "that Unitie may be maintayned and Sedition avoyded", not surprisingly sees the Familists as a threat to social concord generally. Mentioning the titles of several Familist books and obviously drawing on statements in the 1561 deposition by ex-Familists printed by John Rogers, Jones speaks of the Familists as "congregating themselves in one house or other of the Familie, which if he be a disciple they call Rabbi, accompting all things in common otherwise than as the laws of God & our Prince doth warrant, teaching principles ful of sedition, communitie & blasphemie".<sup>25</sup> Francis Shakelton, in *A blazing starre or burnyng beacon seene the 10 of October*

*laste* (1580), asserts that comets are signs sent from God, reminds his readers that false prophets are also foretold in the Bible, belabors the Familists as some of these and, without specifically mentioning the royal proclamation of 3rd October, rejoices that the Queen has now taken punitive action against them.<sup>26</sup> Thomas Rogers, who later became chaplain to Archbishop Bancroft, saw Familists as people who endangered the state by their refusal to bear arms - an allegation about their practices which he apparently took from the 1561 deposition printed by John Rogers. In dedicating to the Queen an anthology of Biblical passages, he speaks of the magistrate's duty to defend "Religion, the Realme and good people" against foreign enemies, and insists that such a "war is good, let the brainsick Anabaptists & the new fantastical sect, the Familists, imagine what they list".<sup>27</sup>

When writers do mention the theological tenets of Familism, they usually do so as a way of strengthening or illustrating the author's argument on some other topic. Thus, in a book stressing the importance for Christians of remembering the day of judgment, Thomas Rogers denounces the ancient Manichees for disbelieving it entirely and the modern Familists for maintaining it has already come<sup>28</sup> - referring apparently to Niclas's frequent insistence that "now in the last tyme" the Biblical prophecies are fulfilled in the spiritual regeneration offered by Familism. Familist teachings about human perfectibility and union with God in this life are used by other writers against the Jesuits. John Field, accusing the Roman church of agreeing with various heretical groups on various doctrines, cites as an example "that monstrous head of the frantike Family of Love, who perverteth all the scripture and glorieth in an essential righteousnes".<sup>29</sup> Meredith Hanmer, attacking the Society of Jesus for their "dayley meditations about divine matter", insists that "heer the societie shaketh hands with the Familie of Love, who say that God is hominified in them and they deified in God".<sup>30</sup> Shakelton, in his *Blasyng starre*, attributes to the Family the Arian denial that Christ is co-equal with God, mentioning it as one of the justifications for the Queen's outlawing the sect.<sup>31</sup> Stephen Bateman simply includes Familists at the end of a long compilation about heathen gods and deviant Christian sects; Bishop Cooper casually categorizes them as "blasphemous".<sup>32</sup>

In view of the efforts John Rogers made to portray Familists as somehow related to the radical and violent Anabaptists of the continent and also as pro-Roman Catholic in their tendencies, it is rather surprising to find how seldom either of these identifications is explicitly made in other 16th century publications. In the only Familist reference where the Anabaptists' seizure of Munster in 1535 is mentioned, the technique of guilt by association is applied against Roman Catholics as well as against Familists. Meredith Hanmer, in one of his anti-Jesuit tracts, writes: "The Family of Love have their prophets and disciples. The Anabaptists out of Munster, the heade City of Westphalia, sent abroad (as Sleidan reporteth) in the evening 26 Apostles. And the Pope hath lately, about

40 yeares past, confirmed the sect of Jesuits & sent them abroad, in the evening of the world, with the Anabaptists ...".<sup>33</sup> Other references are explicit in their charge that Familists at least incline toward Rome.<sup>34</sup> John Field, who apparently sees heresy as adopting different guises in different eras, refers in the preface to one of his translations of French Protestant writers to a recent profusion of "Anabaptists, Libertines (which are indeed at this day al shrouded and fostered under the name of the familie of Love ...".<sup>35</sup>

Certain other aspects of the Family emphasized by John Rogers, or the royal proclamation, are virtually absent, or treated with surprising lightness, in the references by other writers. Only John Jones mentions Familists as practicing economic communism, a statement made in the 1561 deposition printed by John Rogers but not made in other exposés of the sect and finding no real support in H. N.'s writings.<sup>36</sup> Nor are Familists generally perceived as either foreigners or dissemblers, despite the innuendoes attempted in the royal proclamation. More surprising is the scarcity, during Elizabeth's reign, of passages associating "Family of Love" with sexual love, though the 1561 deposition contains a few low-key suggestions that Familist sexual mores were somewhat unconventional, and there were to be many suggestions to this effect in the Stuart period. The Elizabethan fondness of playing on words resulted in various jabs such as "that lovely family" or "family of lust", in much the same vein as the burst of rhetoric about "a familie of falshode, a familie of pride, a familie of idolatry, a familie of ignorance and folie", in John Dyos's Paul's Cross sermon of 1579.<sup>37</sup> In one of Barnabe Rich's romances the term Familist is used as a counter-epithet to "Puritan". Don Simonides, quarrelling with his friend Antonio, calls him a "dispisser of beautie and disparager of women ... an Hereticke and ... too precise Puritan"; Antonio responds with, "I take you to be of the Familie of Love. If I be to precise, thou art to pevish [out of one's senses; mad]".<sup>38</sup> But the literary satirists' deliberate assumption that the Family's "Love" was to be interpreted as Eros seems to have started with Thomas Middleton's early Jacobean stage comedy, *The Family of Love*, which drew recognizably on portions of the 1561 deposition and portrayed two citizens' wives as using secret night meetings of the sect for assignations with their gallants.<sup>39</sup>

By the last decade of the century still another public image of the Familist had appeared - that of the deluded fanatic, more a nuisance than a danger. In such a role the Familist could provide a useful device for those wishing to make indirect attacks on powerful opponents. Richard Hooker, really aiming at Puritan targets, could speak of how "Familists imagine the Scripture everywhere speaketh in favor of that sect".<sup>40</sup> James VI, writing about statecraft shortly before he succeeded Elizabeth on the English throne, was concerned about religious dissidents (inside and outside the Established Church) as a divisive force in the nation and as a people who invoked scruples of conscience for thwarting the royal will. He evidently thought it more politic to use the term "Familist" in denouncing



such persons, and he does so comprehensively, ignoring distinctions among the various dissident groups. He speaks of "that vile sect among the Anabaptists called the Familie of Love", refers to Robert Browne and John Penry as leaders of it who have tried to evangelize Scotland, and mentions stands taken about the use of the surplice in worship and popish tendencies in bishops - matters with which the historic Familists had never concerned themselves. But he evidently felt he had a recognized public image to refer to - that of people, as he put it, "agreeing with the general rule of all Anabaptists in the contempt of the civil Magistrate and in leaning to their own dreams and revelations ... accounting all men prophane that answers not to their fantasies ... making the Scripture to be ruled by their conscience & not their conscience by the Scripture".<sup>41</sup>

Hints that their fellow Elizabethans found anything about Familists to admire are few, guarded and indirect. The Surrey magistrate, Sir William More, was more disposed than many of his countrymen to see Familists as a menace (as is testified by a letter of his lamenting over-leniency by ecclesiastical authorities toward a Familist missionary), but the fact remains that he preserved in his papers manuscript copies of two songs from the English version of Niclas's *Cantica*, identified as Familist in More's own hand but with a few words of the scribal copies altered to make them less characteristically Familist in tone.<sup>42</sup> The noted Puritan divine, Richard Greenham, generally a denouncer of Familists,<sup>43</sup> and one of the ministers brought in by the Bishop of Ely to reason with imprisoned members of the Wisbech congregation in 1580,<sup>44</sup> has one rather ambivalent passage about Familists which seems to accept implicitly one of their standard complaints ainst the beneficed clergy. "In these days", Greenham remarks, "we attribute so much to ministerial knowledge, and have so little profit by the teaching of the Spirit, and ... we brag so much of faith and have so little love"; therefore, he continues, "the Lord for contempt of his truth doth now teach us by deluding spirits and fantastical devisers and the lying Familie of love".<sup>45</sup> As with More, this is a cautiously limited appreciation of a Familist virtue - an appreciation probably subject to the principle Greenham enunciates elsewhere: "The nearer heresie cometh in likenes to the trueth, the more dangerous it is".<sup>46</sup>

Laurence Chaderton, the future head of Emmanuel College, points to the Family as having a popular appeal which highlights a shortcoming of the Church of England: "And surely ... it is our shameless conversation that terrifieth both the ignorant and wavering Catholicks and the simple sort of the common people, beyng ready to imbrace any religion (as appeareth by these which have receyved & imbraced the erroneus doctrine of H. N. and his familie, falsely termed the familie of love) from the true profession of the Gospell of Jesus Christ".<sup>47</sup> And Thomas Rogers, indefatigable in his detailed pursuit of Familist theological errors,<sup>48</sup> nevertheless concedes that Familists in their daily lives are as well conducted as one could desire. "For who, never seeing their bookes", he asks rhetori-

cally, "would thinke that to be a Familie of ungodlines & heresies which so discrete men, sober women, so auncient fathers, so grave and godlie matrons, doe favor?"<sup>49</sup>

### III.

What conclusions about the Elizabethan Familists' public image are suggested by these varied references? First, of course, the references support the familiar view that religious separatists as such were generally regarded as subversive of both church and state - a view evident not only in official documents but in books addressed to the 16th century reader generally. The modern reader who is surprised by the intensity of feeling shown against an insignificantly small group may reflect that, in an era when England's population could be assumed to contain no non-Christians, a group that seemed to threaten the integrity of the church would also arouse the feelings involved in xenophobia.

But, while many references to Familists confirm or illustrate the familiar, others have their surprising aspects. James VI might confound Familists with other religious dissenters, but most references to them show more discrimination. Though Familists were evidently regarded as quite as inimicable to orthodox Protestant England as Anabaptists or Roman Catholics were, the efforts of John Rogers to imply that Familists were almost the same as either of these do not seem to have convinced many other writers. Familists were at least conceded an identity of their own. Nor is significant attention given to the trait complained of in the royal proclamation: Familists' willingness to give a deceptive outer conformity when pressed.

These perceptions of the Family by outsiders also provide some hints as to how separatism may have gained public acceptance. References have been noted above that show aspects of Familism - its emphasis on interior religion, its appeal to common people - evoking a little grudging and well-concealed admiration from convinced opponents. These aspects have little to do with Familists' doctrines, however, which seem to have interested other Englishmen only to the extent that such beliefs confirmed already existing unfavorable views of the sect or could be used as arguments against Roman Catholics.

It is surprising also, in mid-Elizabethan England, to find how greatly such a sect's position has come to depend on the printed word as a means of communication. As noted earlier, the Familists themselves were very active in using the press for propaganda, being evidently aware (among other things) of how it could help the individual evangelist keep out of harm's way; taunts about this practice appear sporadically in the long tracts of the Family's principal opponents.<sup>50</sup> The more casual views of the sect expressed by outsiders also reflect this situation. Scarcely any of the references examined suggest that it derives from a face-to-face contact with a Familist. (Possible exceptions are some of the quotations from

Richard Greenham and Thomas Rogers a few paragraphs above). On the other hand, a number of these anti-Familist statements seem to have been based on John Rogers's printing of the 1561 deposition, and for one or two of these (notably the assertion that Familist congregations practiced economic communism) there is no other known source.

One must end by noting the tentative nature of these conclusions, which are based on dozens, not hundreds, of references and concern only a single sect, a sect in some ways far from typical. The Family's name, its unusual command of printing facilities, and possibly the adventitious circumstance of John Rogers's obtaining and printing the 1561 deposition about the Guildford congregation, all tended to give it special attention. Tending to keep Familists out of the public eye, on the other hand, was their conviction that true religion was so private a matter that they could - under duress - validly conform to the outward observances of the national church. There were no Familists burnt at the stake like the Dutch Anabaptists in 1575 and Francis Kett in 1589, or hanged like Henry Barrow, John Greenwood and John Penry in 1593. Sects by their very nature differ from each other as well as from the established church, but the Familist characteristic drawing heaviest attack in this period was that common to all sects: the simple fact of worshipping apart. It would be interesting - and historically useful - to see in detail how other early sects also were perceived by their countrymen.

#### NOTES

Besides those whose assistance on particular points is acknowledged below, I would like to thank Professor Leland H. Carlson for reading an earlier draft of this paper and for much helpful discussion of separatists generally.

1. Quoted in J. E. Neale, *Elizabeth I and her Parliaments, 1584-1601*, New York, 1957, p.289.
2. *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, ed. P. L. Hughes and J. F. Larkin. New Haven, Conn., 1964-69. II, p.474 f.
3. Using the *Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in English, 1475-1640*, London, 1926 (Abbrev. STC), as a rough yardstick, one finds nineteen items credited to Familist writers, as compared to nine for Henry Barrow, three for John Greenwood, two for Robert Browne and two for Robert Harrison.
4. Both continental and English Familists are briefly discussed in Rufus M. Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion*, London, 1909, pp.428-44, and George H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, London, 1962, pp.477-82, 788-90. The modern authority on the continental Family of Love is H. de la Fontaine Verwey; see particularly his "The Family of Love", *Quaerendo* VI, 1976, 219-71. See also J. van Dorsten, "Gartex Knights and Familists", *Journal of European Studies* IV, 1974, 178-88; Leon Voet, *The Golden Compasses, a History of the Officina Plantiana at Antwerp*, New York, 1969, I, 22-30. For specialized studies of the English Family, see Felicity

- Heal, "The Family of Love in the Diocese of Ely", in *Studies in Church History IX: Schism, Heresy and Religious Protest*, ed. D. Baker, Cambridge 1972, pp.213-22; Julia C. Ebel, "The Family of Love: Sources for their History in England", *Huntington Library Quarterly* XXX, 1966-67, pp.331-43; Jean Dietz Moss, "The Family of Love and English Critics", *The Sixteenth Century Journal* VI, 1975, pp.35-52, also "Variations on a Theme: the Family of Love in Renaissance England", *Renaissance Quarterly* XXXI, 1978, pp.186-95; J. W. Martin, "Elizabethan Familists and English Separatism", *Journal of British Studies*, XX, No.1, (Fall, 1980).
5. Folger Library (Washington) Loseley MS. L. b. 98.
  6. Printed without place of origin and usually with no date, these are attributed in the revised *Short-Title Catalogue*, London, 1976, to Nicholas Bohmberg of Cologne.
  7. *Acts of the Privy Council*, new series, ed. J. R. Dasent, London 1894-96, VIII, 338; IX, 94; X, 332, 344; XI, 138, 139, 362, 386, 444, 445; XII, 231-33, 250, 269, 317-18. The register has nineteen separate entries relating to Familists, some occurring in the same meeting.
  8. *Chronicle*, 1580, p.1184.
  9. *Commons Journals* I, 127-30; discussed in J. W. Martin, "Elizabethan Familists and other Separatists in the Guildford Area", *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* LI, 1978, 90-93.
  - 10 Folger MS. X. d. 30 (9).
  - 11 John Evelyn, *Diary*, ed. Bray, London, n.d., p.644, records James II's receiving a Familist delegation in 1687.
  - 12 The Bishop of Rochester, in his "Notes upon *Evangelium Regni*", (a principal Niclas work) remarked that much of it was merely Biblical history paraphrased (Wilkinson, *op. cit.*, sig A 2 r); Knewstub (*Confutation of heresies*, sig. \* 6 v - 7 r) and Wilkinson (f. 23 r, 46 v, 48 r) both twitted H. N. on the occasional inaccuracy and inaptness of his quotations from the Bible.
  - 13 Rogers, *Answere to a libel*, sig C 7 r.
  - 14 Niclas, *The first exhortation* (STC 18557), f. 11 r - 12 r.
  - 15 Familists fall into the category denounced by Calvin as Nicodemists. Niclas had maintained that "the secret bread of the Holy Woord doth not serve for everymans stomach" (*Epistolae HN* (STC 18552), p.163) and had defended public recanting in the face of overwhelming power by the analogy of Deuteronomy 22. 25-27's justification of a woman's submitting to rape in a situation where her cries could not possibly summon help *Dicta HN* (STC 18551), f. 26 r, v).
  - 16 Incidental remark in his letter of 8th August 1578, to Walsingham, *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign, 1578-79*, ed. Butler, London, 1903, p.126.

- 17 *Huberti Langueti Epistolae Publicae et Historicae ad Philippum Sidneium* Leiden, 1646, pp.397-99. I am grateful to Jan van Dorsten of Leiden University for this reference and for helpful discussions of the Familists.
- 18 H. de la Fontaine Verwey, "The Family of Love", *Quaerendo* VI, 1976, 260-61.
- 19 Pierpont Morgan Library (New York), MS. M A 409; printed by Carl F. Buehler in *Review of English Studies* XII, 1936, 67.
- 20 *A brief discours contayning certayne reasons why Catholiques refuse to goe to church*, Douai, 1580 (STC 19394), sig. † 3 r; f. 8 v; Parsons, *A brief censure uppon two bookes written in answere to M. Edmonde Campions offer of disputation*, Douai, 1581 (STC 19393), sig E 6 r, v. The "Epistle Dedicatorie (to Queen Elizabeth), from which the first quotation comes, is formally ascribed to John Howlett, a pseudonym for Parsons; Douai imprints are believed to be covers for surreptitious printing. I am grateful for these Familist references to Professor Doris Adler of Howard University, who noted these and a number of others while investigating a different topic in English printed books of 1579-81.
- 21 William Fulke, *A briefe confutation of a popish discourse*, 1581 (STC 11421), f. 13 v; see also Percival Wiburn, *A checke or reproof of M. Howlets untimely screeching*, 1581 (STC 25586), f. 16 r.
- 22 *A replie to a censure*, 1581 (STC 5007), P 1 v; see also Charke, *An answere to a seditious pamphlet*, 1580 (STC 5005), A 1 V; Fulke, *A retentive to stay good Christians*, 1580 (STC 11449), p.125.
- 23 See John Field, *A caveat for Parsons Howlet*, 1581 (STC 10844), D 4 r; also John Dyos, *A sermon preached at Paules Crosse the 19th of July*, 1579 (STC 7432), f. 61 r, 36 v.
- 24 *A sumarie answere to Master Darel*, 1601 (STC 6440), pp.207-08. I am grateful to Professor Jackson C. Boswell of the University of the District of Columbia for this and the reference from Bishop Cooper noted below.
- 25 Jones, *The arte and science of preserving bodie and soule in al health*, 1579 (STC 14724 a), O 3 r - 4 v; S 1 r.
- 26 Shakelton, (STC 22272), B 2 r - 5 r; B 7 r - 8 v.
- 27 *A golden chaine taken out of the rich treasures of the Psalms*, 1579, (STC 21235) sig a 3 r.
- 28 *The general session*, 1581 (STC 21233.3), p.16.
- 29 *A caveat for Parsons Howlett*, D 1 r. See also Field (translator), *Thirteen sermons of Maister John Calvin*, 1579 (STC 4457), preface, A 3 r; also Charke, *A replie to a censure*, P 2 r; Shakelton, *A blazyng starre*, B 7 v - 8 r.
- 30 *The Jesuites banner*, 1581 (STC 12746), sig a 3 r. See also Hanmer, *The great bragge and challenge of M. Champion*, 1581 (STC 12745), A 4 v; also Jones, *The arte and science*, p.91.

- 31 *A blazyng starre*, B 7 v - 8 r.
- 32 Bateman, *The golden book of the leaden goddes*, 1577 (STC 1583), f. 53 r - 35 v; Thomas Cooper, *An admonition to the people of England*, 1589 (STC 5683), p.74. See also Richard Greenham, "Fifteenth Sermon" in *Works*, 5th ed., 1612 (STC 12318), p.362; also Bateman, *The doom warning all men to judgement*, 1581 (STC 1582), p.414.
- 33 *The great bragge and challenge*, A 4 r.
- 34 Charke, *Replie to a censure*, P 1 v; Wiburnd, *A checke ... of M. Howlett*, f. 16 r.
- 35 Philip de Mornay, *A notable treatise of the church*, trans. Field, 1579 (STC 18159), A 5 v. See also Field (trans.), *Four Sermons of Maister John Calvin*, 1579 (STC 4439), A 4 v; Jones, *The arte and science*, O 4 v.
- 36 Jones, *The arte and science*, O 3 v.
- 37 Dyos, *A sermon ... the 19th of July*, (STC 7432), f. 62 r.
- 38 Barnabe Rich, *The Straunge and wonderfull adventures of Don Simonides*, 1581, (STC 21002), T 2 r.
- 39 See William G. Johnson, "The Family of Love in Stuart Literature: a Chronology of Name-Crossed Lovers", *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*.VII, 1977, 95-112.
- 40 *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Oxford, 1887, p.148.
- 41 *Basilikon Doron*, (STC 14349) sig.B 4 v; b 1 r - 2 r.
- 42 Folger MS L. b. 51; Folger MS L. b. 589.
- 43 See "Grave counsels and godly observations", *Works*, 5th ed., p.3; "Of prophesie and preaching", *Works*, p.770.
- 44 Heal, *op. cit.* (in n.4 above), p.220.
- 45 *Works*, p.453. The passage occurs in his long "Exposition on the 119 Psalm" and, unlike most things in Greenham's collected works, can be accurately dated, there being a marginal notation, "1580 & 1581".
- 46 *Works*, p.720.
- 47 *An excellent and godly sermon ... preached at Paules Crosse*, 1578 (STC 4924), C 5 r.
- 48 In Rogers's work, *The Catholic Doctrine of the Church of England*, published in stages from 1585 on, index references to Familists in the standard 19th century edition (ed. J. S. Perowne, Cambridge, 1854) outweigh all competing entries except "papist".
- 49 *The general session*, pp.23, 24.

50 See Wilkinson, *Confutation of certaine articles*, Preface to the reader, sig l r, v; John Rogers, *Displaying on an horribe secte* (1579 ed.), second sig A e r, sig D 3 v.

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## IN THE STUDY

From Scripture through the historical tradition to the theological enterprise, its neo-orthodox and liberation expressions, and its pastoral outworking. It should be an interesting journey. Six books claim to offer assistance on the way.

At 9p a page the first study<sup>1</sup> has to be unusually worthwhile to justify itself. Its central theme - the nature of discipleship/"following" in relation to Jesus - is clearly of significance for Christian origins and might be held to have implications for the contemporary church. What then can be said by way of positive assessment?

It need hardly be emphasised that the scholarship is meticulous. Discussion begins with close exegesis of the saying, "Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead", leading to the conclusion that we are dealing with so radical a reversal of law, piety and custom that the proclamation of the imminent kingdom of God must be in issue. Investigation proceeds to expound the motif of "following" in terms of Israel's story, of messianic figures in first century Palestine, of Hellenistic wonderworkers or philosophers. It is argued that the discipleship of total renunciation is found to belong to extra-establishment situations where old forms are disintegrating and charismatic leaders emerge. Such a one was John Baptist. Is it in such a succession that Jesus is properly located?

So to the examination of the central figure of the gospels. He does not seem to fit within the teaching tradition of Judaism. He is more akin to the Cynic preacher than the Jewish rabbi. Following him means committal to a dangerous destiny rather than entrance into the conventional pupil-teacher relationship. Political messianic leadership frames do not fit either. It is the charismatic and prophetic features that obtrude. They point to a unique eschatological messianic authority and mission in which, in some sense, the disciple is called to participate as he enters the service of the dawning kingdom of God.

Now the mouse brought forth by this mountainous travail is surely a familiar one. The interest lies in the spadework rather than the product. Even there I am not sure how far the use of the adjective "charismatic" - with a throwaway reference to Max Weber - really assists precision. Perhaps perplexity is illumined by the recognition that this study dates from 1967. As a partial counterblast to Hans Dieter Betz it may have been