

The Devil gets into the Belfry under the parson's skirts: *vox populi* and Early Modern Religion

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Popular wisdom in the form of proverbs and adages is a feature of most societies. In European and American contexts, proverbs have been both respected and ridiculed as vox populi, the 'voice of the people'. However, from about the fifteenth to mid-eighteenth centuries, proverbs were viewed and employed at all social levels as containing simple truths because they emanated from the unspoiled peasantry. Consequently, as an oral cultural form transmitted upwards through society, proverbs can show socio-political or religious ideas and developments at many levels of everyday life, often cynically, sometimes with anger, and generally without the risk of litigation. Using Maurice Palmer Tilley's collection of sixteenth and seventeenth century English proverbs, this paper examines attitudes to the Church of England, the Catholic Church and the clergy. Bearing in mind the historiographical problems of potentially abstract oral sources recorded and often edited by external elites, the paper argues nonetheless that proverbs provide valuable insights into popular opinion, in this case, in the challenges and changes of Early Modern Christianity.

The devil was sick, the devil a monk would be; the devil was well, the devil a monk was he.
Anon

A nation's proverbs are as precious as its ballads, as useful, and perhaps more instructive.
Quarterly Review, July, 1868

Patience, some say, is a virtue. To John Foxe the Elizabethan martyrologist, every trial had an end-point; hence, 'His saying was that, although the day was neuer so long, yet at last it ringeth to euensong.'¹ This, proverb collector Kelly noted, was 'spoken when Men now in Power oppress us, signifying that there may be a Turn.'² No matter how often (or whether) Early Modern men (and women) in power oppressed their subjects, proverbs provided an important means of criticism for the disempowered. They could be cited, orally and in print, in clear responses to social and political change, yet rarely led to legal action – and this, as Adam Fox has shown, at a time when charges of slander and libel had people from all walks and levels of life suing and counter-suing on a daily basis.³ Many proverbs are, to speak

¹ John Foxe, SR Cattle (ed), *Acts and Monuments*, XI, VII, 1563, 1583 edn., p. 346 in Morris Palmer Tilley, *A dictionary of the proverbs in England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: a collection of the proverbs found in English literature and the dictionaries of the period*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1966, p. 141.

² James Kelly, *A Complete Collection of Scottish Proverbs*, 1721, 337 in Tilley, *A dictionary of the proverbs*, p.142

³ Fox shows regular prosecutions for slander and libel, for example, in remarks uttered in public, and for slanderous accusations within ballads recited or sung across England. Age, gender and socio-economic status made no difference: offended parties in England's

proverbially, tongue-in-cheek: proverbs are used by most cultures in the same way.⁴

Proverbs were old long before some appeared in the *Old Testament* book of Proverbs: they are recorded as early as the Fifth Dynasty in Egypt, and can be safely assumed to have circulated orally for much longer.⁵ In pre-industrial Europe, as Obelkevich notes, they were most used by peasants.⁶ By the sixteenth century, however, proverbs were used at all levels of European society: having moved upward from the oral culture and its ‘face-to-face social relations’, proverbial wisdom had become a useful medium for the transmission of ideas.⁷ The ways in which proverbs were used to emphasise or justify a point, or make sense of a situation, appear often in Tilley’s collection of proverbs of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Unsurprisingly for such a span of time, many of Tilley’s proverbs provide insights into ideas about the Catholic Church and Church of England and their clergy. Some that mention God, the Devil, the church, priests or religion generally have been selected for this article.

While it is in their application that proverbs are most useful to a historian, there is also the potential problem that they can be selectively applied to suit personal philosophy. While bias can help us to situate the proverb user socially, religiously and politically, the fact that their contextual use comes to us mostly from a literate and privileged class excludes the greater populace from most historiographical citations of their use. Despite advances in our attitudes to and respect for oral history and significant research into proverbs in the past few years, Eurocentric evidence-based, chronological social history has little room for the vagueness implicit in this form of popular culture. We might argue that some proverbs have valence because of their international use: a Spanish proverb in 1659, for example, tells the same story as Howell’s 1660 version. Hence, ‘that which Christ has not the exchequer carries’ appears in Howell as ‘The Court and the clergy suck the greatest part of the fat, whence grew the Proverb, What the Cheque takes not, the church takes’.⁸ ‘Whence grew the Proverb’ implies that the proverb had popular currency; moreover, it had meaning across territorial borders.

litigious society went to court and demanded redress. Ballads might include proverbs, and one defendant used a proverb to explain his actions but singularly, proverb users were not prosecuted. Adam Fox, *Oral and literate culture in England 1500-1700*, Oxford, OUP, 2000, pp. 137-140, 307-309

⁴ Mieder argues that there ‘are over 700 “universal” proverb types.’ For more remarks on proverbs across cultures and nations, see Wolfgang Mieder, *Proverbs: a handbook*, Westport, Greenport Press, 2004, 22-25

⁵ Mieder, *Proverbs: a handbook*, pp. 144-146. Other resources include Isaac Meyer, *Oldest Books in the World: An account of the Religion, Wisdom, Philosophy, Ethics, Psychology, Manners, Proverbs, Sayings, Refinement etc. of the Ancient Egyptians*, 1995, 23-24. See also Claus Westermann, *Roots of Wisdom: The Oldest Proverbs of Israel and Other Peoples*, Louisville, Westminster John Knox, 1995; W. G. Lambert, ‘Celibacy in the World’s Oldest Proverbs’, *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, No. 169 (Feb., 1963), pp. 63-64

⁶ James Obelkevich, ‘Proverbs and social history’, in Peter Burke, Roy Porter, (eds), *The Social History of Language*, Cambridge, CUP, 1987, p.45

⁷ Obelkevich, ‘Proverbs and social history’, p.45

⁸ James Howell, *The Parley of Beasts II*, 1660, p. 18, in Tilley, *A dictionary of the proverbs*, p. 100

Historians customarily seek evidence of specific and contextual use that can be firmly historicised. In relation to oral traditions, James Obelkevich argues that '[t]o listen for the voice behind the text, to conjure orality out of literacy' is one of the historian's main tasks, but not an easy one.⁹ *Vox populi*, the voice of the people, can be heard in many ways; among these ('greetings, riddles, curses, jokes [and] tales'), proverbs are particularly useful in 'giving us what was said by many people on countless occasions in everyday life.'¹⁰ Obelkevich adds that proverbs are worthy subjects of study for historians: they are 'strategies for situations; but they are strategies with authority, formulating some part of a society's common sense, its values and way of doing things.'¹¹ Prominent in Early Modern literature and other records, proverbs provided evidence of the educated person's vocabulary and wisdom, while at the common and often illiterate level, they informed, cautioned and offered a library of knowledge resources. At all levels, proverbs also provided the means for softly-delivered subversion, in the sense that observations and ideas could be transmitted swiftly and with meaning from person to person and one community to another. The study of proverbs used in a particular place and context is consequently informative. Bacon's argument, made to James I, endures: the proverb, like other pieces of historical evidence, is an artifact that allows us to 'save and recover somewhat from the deluge of time' and merits recognition of its ability as (according to Bacon) an 'antiquity' or 'remnant of history' that speaks for the unrecorded and unheard.¹²

Frequently used proverbs were recorded and explained by several seventeenth and eighteenth century proverb collectors. In the latter case, the collectors acted because they perceived a shift from proverbs being a sign of wisdom to signifying coarseness and vulgarity; by the nineteenth century, as part of an elite separation from popular culture, they were rarely used in 'good' company. Yet, they persist in contemporary society: like songs, cartoons, car stickers and graffiti, proverbs enable the transmission of ideas. Sometimes social changes cause a shift in the targets or impact of the messages but proverbs are still used to defend, to justify or to explain events or to demonstrate religious, political or social affiliations, and (like other media), can still express socio-political resistance, just as they did in the Early Modern period, at a time of marked and contested religiosity and accelerated political change.

With those in power regularly subject to proverbial criticism, it is no surprise that the devil, the antithesis of goodness, was a popular proverbial figure in references to religious or social authority, hence: 'the Devil and the dean begin with a letter; when the devil has the dean, the kirk will be better' was recorded in 1641.¹³ 'The devil,' said country parson (and supporter of the Established Church) George Herbert, 'divides the world between

⁹ James Obelkevich, 'Proverbs and social history', in Peter Burke, Roy Porter, eds, *The Social History of Language*, Cambridge, CUP, 1987, p. 43

¹⁰ Obelkevich, 'Proverbs and social history', p. 44

¹¹ Obelkevich, 'Proverbs and social history', p. 44

¹² Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, 1605, II. Reprint of Cassell & Company, 1893, trans David Price, 2004, www.gutenberg.org/etext/5500

¹³ David Fergusson, E Beveridge (ed), *Fergusson's Scottish Proverbs from the Original Print of 1641 together with a Larger Manuscript Collection*, Glasgow, STS, 1924, no. 862, in Tilley, *A dictionary of the proverbs*, p. 150

atheism and superstition.’¹⁴ In that world, the devil knew no national boundaries: in 1659 Spain and 1732 England, he might get ‘up to the belfry by the vicar’s skirts’.¹⁵ After all, ‘the Devil is a busy bishop in his own diocese’: Bishop Latimer said in 1548, inverting the usual plaudits given to the preaching bishop, in that ‘[t]here is one that ... is the most diligent prelate preacher in all England ... I will tell you, it is the devil. He is the most diligent preacher of all other; he is never out of his diocess.’¹⁶ Ferguson cited this proverb in 1641; it was still in circulation almost a century later.¹⁷ From 1598, we hear that one should ‘go to the Devil and bishop you’, which Gillespie cited in 1637 thus: ‘He studieth not the Oracles of God, but the Principles of Satanicall guile, which he learneth so well, that he may go to the Divell to be Bishopped.’¹⁸

The bishop and the devil were often linked in proverbs. The churchman, biographer and antiquarian Thomas Fuller told a story of a boy, who ‘having gotten a habit of counterfeiting ... would not be undeveled by all their exorcisms, so that the priests raised up a spirit which they could not allay.’¹⁹ In this, he spoke of ‘the boy of Bilston’, who in 1616 purportedly participated in an attempted fraud in which Jesuit priests would appear to have conducted a successful exorcism.²⁰ Conducting an exorcism was a politically and religiously charged event in seventeenth century England, as the flamboyance of Catholic sacramentals contrasted with the prayerful exorcisms of the Church of England. As a Protestant, Fuller eyed Catholic ritual with suspicion and derision and was excited by the possibility of fraud.

The loyal Fuller’s wit and undoubtedly also his anti-Papist sentiments helped him keep his head throughout the Civil War, see the Restoration and become chaplain to Charles II. Fuller’s story was far from inflammatory, although he did manage to upset people on either side of politics at times: perhaps to be completely outrageous, one had to accept that ‘A complete Christian must have the works of a Papist, the words of a Puritan, and the faith of a Protestant’, as James Howell, ‘Historiographer

¹⁴ George Herbert, *Jacula Prudentum*, 1651, in A B Grosart (ed), *The Complete Works in Verse and Prose of George Herbert*, 1874, vol. 3, no. 369, in Tilley, *A dictionary of the proverbs*, p. 151.

¹⁵ James Howell, ‘Proverbs or Old Sayed-Sawes and Adages in the English Tovng; Some Choice Proverbs in the Spanish Tovng, British or Old Cambrian Proverbs, Divers Centuries of New Sayings’, in *Lexicon Tetraglotton, an English-French-Italian-Spanish Dictionary*, 1659, 20; Fuller, 1732, no. 4476, in Tilley, *A dictionary of the proverbs*, p. 151

¹⁶ Hugh Latimer, *Sermons* 6, 1548, in G E Corrie (ed), *Sermons by Hugh Latimer*, PS 27, 1844, no. 70 in Tilley, *A dictionary of the proverbs*, p. 151

¹⁷ Ferguson, no 814; Kelly in 1721, p.338, and Fuller in 1732, no. 4479, in Tilley, *A dictionary of the proverbs*, p. 151

¹⁸ Ferguson MS, no. 595, a1598; George Gillespie *A Dispute Against the English Popish Ceremonies Obtruded on the Church of Scotland, 1637*, Ep. Intro., s.A2v; refers to when Charles I attempted to impose a version of the Book of Common Prayer on the Scots church. See facsimile at Internet Archive, <http://www.archive.org/stream/EnglishpopishCeremonies/DisputeAgainstEnglishPopishCeremonies#page/n0/mode/2up>

¹⁹ Thomas Fuller, *The Church History of Britain from ; from the birth of Jesus Christ, untill the year M.DC.XLVIII*, (London: printed for Iohn Williams at the signe of the Crown in St. Paul’s Church-yard, Anno 1656), X iv, III 268, 1655, in Tilley, *A dictionary of the proverbs*, p. 156

²⁰ Fuller, *The Church History of Britain*, in Tilley, *A dictionary of the proverbs*, p. 156.

Royal to Charles II' and younger brother of Thomas (Lord Bishop of Bristol) noted, possibly in a letter to the Earl of Pembroke.²¹ This latter proverb has no other written record: evidence perhaps that proverbs could be invented as a situation required and had currency at the highest levels, but Howell was also a dedicated proverb collector, and this may well have had less apparent origins. McLean argued that Howell called proverbs 'natural children, legitimated by prescription and long tract of ancestral time.'²² Yet a small change might adapt a proverb to a new situation without losing its meaning or ancient links.

Kings such as James I (at whom Gillespie's criticism was directed) might suffer such proverbial criticism, but one had to be careful in dealings with those more powerful: as the 'boy of Bilston' story showed, it was 'an easier matter to raise the devil than to lay him.'²³ The bishop could be just as much a worry, especially when he gave his blessing: 'when a thyng speadeth not well', the exegete and biblical translator William Tyndale said, 'we borrow speech and say "the byshope hath blessed it", because that nothyng speadeth well that they medyll withal.'²⁴

Tyndale was one of the earliest to attempt to translate the Bible directly from Greek and Hebrew texts and make it accessible to ordinary people: he wanted a bible that people outside the priesthood could access and understand. Although he is contextualised by the use of proverbs to express anti-episcopal sentiments, he used proverbs, or the 'borrowed speech' of allegory they contained to support his argument that translation into the vernacular was necessary.²⁵ The scriptures as they were, he saw as sometimes unclear: thus, 'the Apocalypse or Revelations of John are allegories whose literal sense is hard to find in many places.'²⁶ It was essential to identify those literal meanings:

Thou shalt understand therefore that the scripture hath but one sense which is the literal sense. And that literal sense is the root and ground of all, and the anchor that never faileth... and if thou leave the literal sense thou canst not but go out of the way. Neverthelater the scripture useth proverbs, similtudes, riddles or allegories as all other speeches do, but that which the proverb, similitude, riddle or allegory signifieth is ever the literal sense which thou must seek out diligently.²⁷

To Tyndale, the meanings of proverbs were so obvious that all recognised their implications; they were 'allegories borrowed of worldly matter' that clearly signified everyday truths, and he wanted to provide scriptures with as apparent literal meaning.²⁸

²¹ James Howell, *Epistolae Ho-Eliaanae. The Familiar Letters* II ii, II 402, 1635, in Tilley, *A dictionary of the proverbs*, p. 100

²² Vincent Stuckey Lean, *Lean's Collectiana volume III: A Compilation towards a Dictionary of Words and Phrases, old or disused*, London, JW Arrowsmith, 1903, 375.

²³ Fuller, no. 4000, 1732, in Tilley, *A dictionary of the proverbs*, p. 156

²⁴ William Tyndale, *The Obediance of a Chrystian Man*, 1828 in Tilley, *A dictionary of the proverbs*, p. 166 or see W Tyndale in David Daniel (ed), *The Obediance of a Christian Man*, London, Penguin, 2000, p. 156

²⁵ Tyndale, *The Obediance of a Chrystian Man*, p. 156

²⁶ Tyndale, *The Obediance of a Chrystian Man*, p. 156

²⁷ Tyndale, *The Obediance of a Chrystian Man*, p. 156

²⁸ Tyndale, *The Obediance of a Chrystian Man*, p. 157

To support his argument, Tyndale cited proverbs, placed here in italics, with relevance to events in and around his society and the Church:

We say *let the sea swell and rise as high as he will yet hath God appointed how far he shall go*: meaning that the tyrants shall not do what they would, but only that which God hath appointed them to do. *Look ere thou leap*, whose literal sense is, do nothing suddenly or without advisement. *Cut not the bought thou standest upon*, whose literal sense is oppress not the commons and is borrowed of hewers... If the porridge be burned too, or the meat over-roasted, we say, *the bishop hathe put his foot in the pot* or *the bishop hath played the cook*, because the bishops burn whom they lust and whosoever displeaseth them. *He is a pontifical fellow*, that is, proud and stately. *He is popish*, that is, superstitious and faithless. *It is pastime for a prelate*. It is a pleasure for a Pope. *He would be free and yet will not have his head shaven*. He would that no man should smite him and yet hath not the Pope's mark... Thus borrow we and feign new speech in every tongue. All fables, prophecies and riddles are allegories and Aesop's fables and Merlin's prophecies and the interpretation of them are the literal sense.²⁹

Tyndale's overt attacks on civil authority and the Church made him a hero in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*.³⁰ His proverbs provide an important insight into the way in which they were used in his time to express ideas about the Church, including the condemnation of its hierarchy but also the elucidation of its scriptures.

Just as importantly, Tyndale's words reflect the ideas of 'the commons': the ordinary people. Proverbs provided time-proven and flexible explanations for the joys and challenges of popular life. The proverb that spoke of rain could be turned around to speak of sunshine; with a subtle alteration, the proverb that explained misfortune could also explain good *hap*, or luck. Reminiscent of the ancient notions of a goddess Fortuna, these latter words represent ideas that had been gradually integrated into a Christian society and maintained the potential for chance or random events rather than those directed by God in a society where magical events were still accepted. Some Early Modern Christians were uncomfortable with the idea of explaining events by such means, and promoted the notion of Divine Providence instead: but old habits die hard, as the proverb says, and for the most part, Early Modern people saw proverbs as old but sensible knowledge in a world that was often unpleasantly unpredictable.³¹ Consequently, although some might have worried a little or a lot about resourcing extra-Biblical explanations, nearly all learned and used proverbs from early childhood so that they would both appear to have, and actually have, wisdom. Many of the examples used here in fact recall the words and church connections of educated and socially prominent sixteenth and

²⁹ Tyndale, *The Obedience of a Chrystian Man*, p. 157

³⁰ John Foxe, *Actes and Monuments of these Latter and Perillous Days, Touching Matters of the Church*, John Day, London, 1563. See online at Humanities Research Institute, University of Sheffield, 'John Foxe's Book of Martyrs', <http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/johnfoxe/index.html>

³¹ The notion of Divine Providence is sometimes ascribed particularly to Protestants. For an argument that it was not just a Protestant idea, see Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1999

seventeenth century characters according to their use of proverbs in histories, letters and other historiographical treasures. But whether proverbs were derided or encouraged, they were accepted as *vox populi* and we hear ordinary voices through these mediating discourses.

For some educated and more privileged individual, proverbs might have expressed the stupidity of the common person rather than their ability to reason through a situation. Physician Sir Thomas Browne for example demonstrated a commitment to the new sciences as he ridiculed the ordinary person and their beliefs in 1646, in his book *Pseudopodia Epidemica*, known as *Vulgar Errors*:

For being unable to wield the intellectual arms of reason, they are fain to betake themselves unto wasters and the blunter weapons of truth; affecting the gross and sensible waies of doctrine, and such as will not conflict with strict and subtile reason. Thus unto them a piece of Rhetorick is a sufficient argument of Logick, an Apologue of Aesop, beyond a Syllogism in Barbara; parables than propositions, and proverbs more powerfull than demonstrations.³²

Strongly anti-Catholic, Brown's fondness for calling upon Reason appears in his several other books and reveals his low-church beliefs.³³ Like so many of his peers, he also believed in 'sorceries, incantations and spells', and attended at least one witchcraft trial.³⁴ Browne was consequently no more or less than an educated man of his time: science, church and the devil were part of the daily life illuminated and framed by proverbial wisdom.

Proverb collections reveal that by the later-seventeenth century, political affiliation, royalist activity and proverbial wisdom could converge. 'It that God will give the devil cannot reave [rob us of]', the proverb says; 'spoken', Ferguson noted in 1598, 'when we have attain'd our End in spite of Opposition.'³⁵ If ever faith might waver, then royalist Roger L'Estrange, considered the first journalist in our terms, might have wondered about the truth in that proverb as he suffered imprisonment and censure both for his faith and the way in which he expressed his conviction that the King's way was the only one that was truly Godly. He had been to Oxford with Cromwell who eventually pardoned him; James II later knighted him, and L'Estrange went on to write, among other things, a version of Aesop's

³² Thomas Browne, *Pseudopodia Epidemica, or, Enquiries into very many received Tenents, and Commonly Presumed Truths. Book I*, London, Nath. Ekins, 1658, p. 6. Grace Frank used these remarks in 1943 to contend that proverbs had always been a sign of vulgarity. Recent research has shown her to be wrong in that perception. See Grace Frank, 'Proverbs in Medieval Literature', *Modern Language Notes*, Vol. 58, No. 7, 1943, pp. 508-515

³³ See Martin Ignatius Joseph Griffin, Richard Popkin, Lila Freedman, *Latitudinarianism in the seventeenth-century Church of England*, Leiden, E J Brill, 1992, pp. 45-46. Browne's religious perspectives are apparent in his 1643 book *Religio Medici*. See Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici*, London, Andrew Crooke, 1643 in James Fields, ed, *The Writings of Sir Thomas Browne*, Boston, Tickner and Fields, 1862, pp. 62-63. Browne's other works can be viewed at James Eason, 'Sir Thomas Browne', <http://penelope.uchicago.edu/>

³⁴ For discussions about the ways in which Browne's science and beliefs (such as in witchcraft) conflicted, see Malcolm Letts, 'Sir Thomas Browne and Witches', *British Medical Journal*, 1912, 1(2680), pp. 1104-1105

³⁵ Kelley, p. 320, in Tilley, *A dictionary of the proverbs*, p. 263

fables, with commentary.³⁶ In that, he remarked that '[i]t is a kind of Conditional Devotion for Men to be Religious no longer then they can Save, or Get by't ... the Moral is ... compriz'd in the Old Saying: He that serves God for Money, will serve the Devil for better Wages.'³⁷ L'Estrange was no angel, and supporting the Royalist cause during the English Civil Wars cost him and his family dearly, but this example demonstrates the way in which proverb users could use the sayings (and the credibility of their antiquity) to position themselves on a high moral ground.

It was also possible to use proverbial wisdom to undercut the authority of church and of Christian lives. 'Where God has his church', another said, 'the devil has his chapel'; this proverb appears many times between 1560 and 1688, with one reference substituting synagogue for chapel.³⁸ Martin Luther cited this proverb: there are few paragraphs in any of his writings that do not include proverbs, generally used with wit.³⁹ Robert Burton put another twist on the same proverb when he took it further in 1621: 'A lamentable thing it is to consider', he said, 'how many myriads of men this Idolatry and Superstition ... have infatuated ... For where God hath a Temple, the Devil will have a chapel.'⁴⁰ Oxford scholar and later Rector Burton was writing about melancholy, or depression as we know it now, as part of what (as a sufferer himself) he saw as a religious duty; hence, he said, '[a] good divine either is or ought to be a good physician, a spiritual physician at least.'⁴¹ With all respect to Burton though, proverbs show that others saw the church as a source of angst, not a place to be cured of it.

'A holy Habit', Herbert noted, 'cleanses not a foul soul.'⁴² 'Take heed', he added, 'of an ox before [at the front], a horse behind, of a monk [or parson] on all sides.'⁴³ Priest-collectors apparently honestly repeat proverbs where the church and clergy are not shown at their best, but their collections should not be seen as studies in objectivity. They are often edited, mostly of remarks deemed too foul or crude for publication: words that are often considered part of toilet humour now remain but as Samuel Pepys' diaries show, bodily functions and parts were not spoken of openly with today's discomfort. These remain, but some proverbs that their collectors deemed too carnal seem to have been edited, often leaving nonetheless a wry or self-deprecating humour. 'It is height makes Grantham steeple stand awry', said Fuller, explaining that 'Eminency exposeth the uprightest persons to exception; and such who cannot find faults in them,

³⁶ See George Kitchin, *Sir Roger L'Estrange. A contribution to the history of the Press in the seventeenth century*, London, Kegan-Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co. Ltd, 1913; see also Peter Hinds, 'Roger L'Estrange, the Rye House plot, and the regulation of political discourse in late-seventeenth-century London', *The Library*, 2002, 3, (1):3-31

³⁷ R L'Estrange, *Aesop's Fables*, 105, I, 100, in Tilley, *A dictionary of the proverbs*, p. 263

³⁸ Various, Tilley, *A dictionary of the proverbs*, p. 265

³⁹ Martin Luther, *Table Talk*, 1569, 67

⁴⁰ Robert Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy*, III IV i I, 1621, T 265; see at Project Gutenberg, <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/10800>

⁴¹ Burton in Algis Valiunas, 'Melancholy's Whole Physician', *The New Atlantis*, Summer 2007, 53-69. <http://www.thenewatlantis.com/docLib/TNA17-Valiunas.pdf>

⁴² Herbert, ? *The Temple*, in Tilley, *A dictionary of the proverbs*, p. 305. Herbert died in 1633.

⁴³ Herbert, 1640, no.894, Tilley, *A dictionary of the proverbs*, p. 305

will find faults at them, envying their advancement'.⁴⁴ Fuller was remarking on the history of Lincolnshire (and the impressive spire of St Wulfram's Church in Grantham) in his *Worthies of England*, the Early Modern equivalent of a traveller's guide: his comments incorporate and explain proverbs that were popular in many localities and show that proverbs can make subtle or open political comment. Cleveland explained the Grantham steeple proverb as 'No churchman can be innocent and high...' at the end of his *Elegy to Archbishop Laud*.⁴⁵

Many proverbs carry their meaning to the present: we must all have heard that 'The road to Hell is paved with good intentions', or one of its other versions, such as 'Hell is full of good meanings and wishings'; the latter being explained further by the puritanical William Gurnall, whose popular sermon collections are notable otherwise for having one of the longest titles of the time.⁴⁶ To this proverb many added 'but Heaven is full of good works.' Gurnall did not directly: *The Christian in Complete Armour* conveyed that message throughout. Nonetheless, when he explained that 'The Proverb saith, Hell is full of good wishes, - of such, who now, when it is too late, wish they had acted their part otherwise than they did', he might have meant himself, having been ostracised by many of his peers after signing the Act of Uniformity in 1662 and subscribing to the re-established authority of the English episcopate, but in doing so, he retained his Ministry and began a connection with the new Church of England.⁴⁷ This proverb is also expressed as 'Hell is paved with priests' shaven crowns and great men's headpieces', as for example by John Trapp, who sided with Parliament during the Civil War.⁴⁸

Whether in regard to monk or bishop, proverbs adapted to the shifting sands of politics. John Harrington (or Harington), flushing-closet inventor and a favoured but troublesome godson of Queen Elizabeth, experienced royal favour and disfavour from both Elizabeth and James I. On the title page of a book he gave to his pupil, Henry Prince of Wales, he

⁴⁴ Fuller, *History of the Worthies of England*, II, reprinted P Austin Nuttall, London, Thomas Tegg, 1840, p. 268, 1662, Tilley, *A dictionary of the proverbs*, p. 306

⁴⁵ John Cleveland, *Elegy upon the Archbishop of Canterbury*, I. 50, (1687)p.63: *Poems*, p. 153, 1658, 1677, T 306 http://books.google.com.au/books?id=X0mtS_bi59YC&pg=RA1-PA151&lpg=RA1-PA151&dq=Cleveland,+Elegy+upon+Archbishop&source=bl&ots=I3R3WXpcW7&sig=J AQ2stryNLG-MkpZdD9XGkrHmG0&hl=en&ei=ThZLS-nyAYzU7APhoYzXCw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=2&ved=0CAkQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=Cleveland%2C%20Elegy%20upon%20Archbishop&f=false

⁴⁶ William Gurnall, *The Christian in Complete Armour, or, a Treatise Of the Saints' War against the Devil: The saint's war against the Devil, wherein a discovery is made of that grand enemy of God and his people, in his policies, power, seat of his empire, wickedness, and chief design he hath against the saints; a magazine opened, from whence the Christian is furnished with spiritual arms for the battle, helped on with his armour, and taught the use of his weapon; together with the happy issue of the whole war*, London, L B Seeley, (1655-62) 1821 edn' in Tilley, *A dictionary of the proverbs*, p. 307

⁴⁷ Sylvanus Urban, *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 9, January – June, 1838, London, William Pickering; John Bowyer Nichols and Son, 598-99

⁴⁸ John Trapp and Hugh Martin, *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*, London, 1654, I Cor I, V 520, T 307. See Roger D Lund, 'The Ghosts of Epigram, False Wit and the Augustan Mode', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 2003, 27(2):67-95. See also Philip Schaff, *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, Vol XI: Son of Man – Tremellius, 11, 501

noted that it was ‘written for the private use of Prince Henry, upon occasion of that Proverb, Henry the Eighth pull’d down Monks and their Cells. Henry the Ninth should pull down Bishops and their Bells.’⁴⁹ Interestingly, but perhaps unsurprisingly, this is the only known reference to that proverb. It is however noteworthy as a proverb which can be historicised. Harington, although known later in the seventeenth century as an anti-episcopal writer, intended his commentary for Henry Prince of Wales to warn against the puritan agitation then abroad in the Church of England for the abolition of the episcopate.⁵⁰ Other proverbs associated with both the houses of Tudor and Stuart (and like Harington's citation, alluding to the transition from Tudor to Stuart in 1603) can also be related to actual historical events. Similarly, there is only one known mention of the adage that ‘In Henry was the union of the roses, in James of the kingdoms’.⁵¹ It occurs in another Puritan sympathizer, Thomas Adams, who cites it thus: ‘[w]e are not shuffled into a popular gouernment, nor cut into Cantons, by a headless, headstrong Aristocracie: But Henricus Rosas, Regna Iacobus: in Henry was the vnion of the Roses in Iames of the Kingdomes.’⁵²

While these writers were not shy when it came to their opinions on society, religion and politics, ordinary people in their use of proverbs could be just as blunt. ‘Is the priest hande ith honyepot yet?’, appears in an unflattering farce on English society in about 1560; a similar version was shown earlier in Tyndale and it appears also as ‘the Hog is got into the Honeypot’.⁵³ Such sayings were intended to humble an exalted person, as is evident in ‘[h]ere is a device to find a hole in the coat of some of you Puritans’, which appears in the Martin Marprelate tracts in 1588; to find a hole in that sense meant to seek and find fault, and this was certainly attempted with gusto in the Marprelate attacks on the Episcopacy.⁵⁴ In the Marprelate case, legal action did ensue: the works were so vehement that modest Puritans found them embarrassing, and although the tract authors were never conclusively identified, two men died because of hunts conducted by Bishop Richard Bancroft of London.⁵⁵ The proverb itself appears often in the late sixteenth and throughout the seventeenth century:

⁴⁹ Refers to his annotations on Francis Godwin's *A Catalogue of the Bishops of England* (1601), later published by Harington's grandson as *A Briefe View of the State of the Church of England*, Tilley, *A dictionary of the proverbs*, p. 309 .

⁵⁰ Marcus Harmes, “Orthodox Puritans and Dissenting Bishops: The Reformation of the English Episcopate, ca. 1580-1610”, *Comitatus*, vol.39, 2008, pp.119-218.

⁵¹ Tilley, *A dictionary of the proverbs*, p. 309

⁵² Thomas Adams, ‘City of Peace’ in *The Workes of Thos Adams. Being the Symmee of his Sermons, Meditations, and Other Divine and Morall Discourses. Collected in One Volume*, 1629, p. 1009 in Tilley, *A dictionary of the proverbs*, p. 309. See John Brown and Thomas Adams, *The Sermons Of Thomas Adams: The Shakespeare Of Puritan Theologians*, Cambridge, CUP, 1909; see also William Mulder, ‘Style and the Man: Thomas Adams, Prose Shakespeare of Puritan Divines’, *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 48, No. 2, 1955, pp. 129-152

⁵³ Anon, *Misogonus*, II, iv 180. See F. S. Boas, in A. W. Ward and A. R. Waller, (eds), *The Cambridge History of English and American Literature in 18 Volumes (1907–21), Volume V*, Cambridge, 1910

⁵⁴ Martin Marprelate, *Epitome: Marprelate Tracts*, p. 119

⁵⁵ See Joseph Black, ‘The Rhetoric of Reaction: The Martin Marprelate Tracts (1588-89), Anti- Martinism, and the Uses of Print in Early Modern England’, *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (Autumn, 1997), pp. 707-725, and John Lewis, *The Marprelate Tracts 1588-1589*, The Anglican Library, <http://www.anglicanlibrary.org/marprelate/#intro>

Gurnall used it in *The Christian in Complete Armour* in 1655, remarking that '[n]or is it hard for Satan to pick some hole in the saint's coat, when he walks most circumspectly'; in 1659-60, Elizabeth Pepys worried about someone whom she believed wanted to 'pick some hole' in Samuel's coat and in 1732, Fuller warned that '[w]hen a Man's Coat is Thread-bare, its [*sic*] an easie Thing to pick a Hole in it.'⁵⁶ It could be said that Fuller's version took the proverb out of context: but there is a proverb even for this.

Imagine an accident or sword injury that deprived a person of their nose in older times: such a disfigurement would curtail one's social life, but in part might have been remedied enough to regain some social acceptance by the application of a wax nose. 'Might' is the better word, for wax is not the best solution for a lost nose: noses of papier-mâché and later, metal, seem to have been preferred to something malleable and affected by heat.⁵⁷ Nonetheless, somewhere in time, the idea of a wax nose entered the popular vocabulary, and eventually came to mean something that could be turned in any direction. In this respect, it also came to be 'an expression applied to the practice of wresting the Scriptures from their context.'⁵⁸ Thus, Tyndale said ca 1530 that '[i]f the scripture be contrary, then make it like a nose of wax, and wrest it this way and that, till it agree.'⁵⁹ Others concurred, with many similar uses of the proverb until the 'charismatic preacher at the Savoy' (as he has been called) Anthony Horneck used it in 1686.⁶⁰ Horneck turned it on proverbial wisdom itself, referring to '[o]ral tradition, that Nose of Wax, which you may turn and set any way you list.'⁶¹ By that time, although fear of Papism survived for Horneck and his friends, proverbs were beginning to lose favour as a religious didactic tool in the sermon, tracts and pamphlets. In the interim, they had more to say about the church and its characters: from several perspectives.

'And this proverb ariseth not without cause', said Hoby in 1561, 'The habit maketh not the Monke.' Monks, friars and priests: all were targeted by the overwhelmingly un-Papist proverb collectors cited here, who also attacked the hierarchy of the reformed Church of England. Yet ample criticism and proverbs came from those on the Catholic side, and probably also from those among the everyday folk who took no sides and wanted no more than predictability and calm in their lives. Another proverb matter-of-factly expresses the realities of the dissolution of the monasteries: 'Hopton, Horner, Smyth and Thynne, when abbots went out, they came in'.⁶²

⁵⁶ Gurnall, Gurnall, *The Christian in Complete Armour*, p. 57; Samuel Pepys, *The Diaries of Samuel Pepys*, 1659-60, January 27, I 35; Fuller, no. 5538 in Tilley, *A dictionary of the proverbs*, p. 314

⁵⁷ See James Atkinson, *Medical Bibliography A and B*, London, John Churchill, 1834, pp. 191-2

⁵⁸ Tilley, *A dictionary of the proverbs*, p. 315

⁵⁹ Tyndale in George Latimer Apperson, M. Manser, *Dictionary of Proverbs*, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth, 1993, p. 56, Tilley, *A dictionary of the proverbs*, p. 315

⁶⁰ Tony Claydon, *William III and the Godly Revolution*, Cambridge, CUP, 1996 (2004 edn), pp.65, 66-68

⁶¹ Anthony Horneck, *The crucified Jesus: or, A full account of the nature, and, design and benefits of the Sacraments of the Lord's Supper*, London, A Lowndes, 1686, p. 107 in Tilley, *A dictionary of the proverbs*, p. 315. For more on Horneck, see Scott Thomas Kisker, *Foundation for Revival: Anthony Horneck, the Religious Societies, and the Construction of an Anglican Pietism*, London, Scarecrow Press, 2007

⁶² Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, I, 1669-96, p.279

Mentioned in John Aubrey's *Brief Lives*, the proverb speaks of individuals who benefitted from the dissolution of the monasteries.⁶³ One of those characters lives on in nursery rhymes as *Little Jack Horner* who found a plum in his Christmas pie, a story that may be based in historical fact. If so, it developed a life of its own that probably incorporates a proverb or two and suggests another aspect of proverbs: their ability to encapsulate an historical event using the mnemonic device of rhyme, which is a characteristic of oral culture.⁶⁴ Another proverb also might apply to this rhyme, for 'the Devil makes his Christmas pie [or salad] of lawyers' tongues and clerks' fingers.'⁶⁵ Aubrey found a related tale amusing: 'Sir Robert Pye, attorney of the court of words... happened to dye on Christmas Day: the newes being brought to the serjeant, said he The Devil has a Christmas Pye.'⁶⁶

Proverbs were hard on those perceived to rise above their status and lose all humility. Thus, 'The Parish priest forgets that ever he was clerk' is 'meant of proud starters up [upstarts].'⁶⁷ If less than completely proper in his ways, such a priest might be referred to contemptuously as a 'Pancridge Parson'.⁶⁸ Perhaps some parsons were just naïve: an unmarried pregnant daughter might 'come home like the Parson's cow, with a calf at her foot';

⁶³ Chris Roberts, *Heavy words lightly thrown: the reason behind the rhyme*, London, Granta Publications, 2004, pp.3-5

⁶⁴ The nursery rhyme arguably refers to a Mr Horner, steward to the Abbot of Glastonbury who supposedly by reprehensible means obtained the deeds to Mells Manor during the dissolutions. Chris Roberts argues that Horner was sent with a pie for Henry VIII containing twelve manor deeds in an attempt to persuade him not to take Glastonbury; along the way, Horner extracted the deed for Mells Manor. The ruse failed: Whiting was executed and the king took Glastonbury, but the Horner family still has the manor. See Chris Roberts, *Heavy words lightly thrown: the reason behind the rhyme*, London, Granta Publications, 2004, pp.3-5. There are several problems with this story; for example, the Horner who obtained the 'plum' Mells Manor was not Jack, but Thomas, and the Horners claim that the property was legally acquired. John Leland wrote in the 1530s that 'There is a praty maner place of stone harde at the west ende of the chirche. This be likelihod was partely buildid by Abbate Selwodde of Glasteinbyri. Syns it servid the fermer of the lordship. Now Mr. Horner hath bouthe the lordship of the king', in Lucy Toulmin Smith, ed, *The Itinerary of John Leland in or about the Years 1535-1 543*, X, London, G Bell and Sons, 1906, pp. 6-7, Internet Archive,

http://www.archive.org/stream/itineraryofjohnl05lelauoft/itineraryofjohnl05lelauoft_djvu.txt. However, this anomaly could invoke yet another proverb in relation to the upwardly mobile Horner, for 'Jack' was a popular name for anyone below the rank of Gentleman, and proverbially, 'Jack would be a Gentleman', as in Tilley, *A dictionary of the proverbs*, p.344. Hence, Starkey says in 1538 that 'Wyth the intaylyng of landys, euey Jake wold be a gentyman, and euey gentyman a knight or a lord.' See T Starkey Dialogue I iv 429: Eng in Reign Hen VIII II, p. 112. Baret adds in 1580 that it is '[a] prouerbe aptly to be applied to those which are aduanced from a base state vnto an high dignitie: and as our vulgare phrase is, Jacke is become a Gentleman.' A Jack eventually came to mean someone deceitful; Samuel Pepys recorded in 1668 that 'Sir R Brookes overtook us coming to town; who hath played the jacke with us all, and is a fellow that I must trust no more.' Pepys, Diary Feb 23, VII p. 337

⁶⁵ Tilley, *A dictionary of the proverbs*, p. 152

⁶⁶ Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, I 422, in Tilley, *A dictionary of the proverbs*, p. 152

⁶⁷ Howell, *English Proverbs*, p.1; Ray 1670, p.133.

⁶⁸ Nathaniel Field, *A Woman is a Weathercock*, in WC Hazlitt, R Dodsley (eds), *A Select Collection of Old English Plays*, II I, 1875, p.33, in Tilley, *A dictionary of the proverbs*, p. 523; see also Wilberforce Jenkinson, *London Churches before the Great Fire*, London, Society For Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1917, pp. 272-4

but respect was just as likely.⁶⁹ ‘Parsons’, Herbert noted (perhaps with vested interest) ‘are souls’ wagoners’: although the same proverb could be seen as ‘fools’ Waggoners’, another again says that ‘Ministers are the chariots of souls.’⁷⁰ Students might disagree just as passionately: despite centuries of amicable rivalry, relationships between two prominent London schools soured during Henry VIII’s reign (in which time one remained identified as Roman Catholic, and the other linked to the new church) and remained so despite the conciliatory efforts of Edward VI. Strype notes that:

Nevertheless, howsoever the Encouragement failed, the Scholars of Paul’s meeting with them of St. Anthony’s, would call them St. Anthony’s Pigs; and they again would call the other, Pigeons of Paul’s; because many Pigeons were bred in Paul’s Church, and St. Anthony was always figured with a Pig following him: And mindful of the former Usage, did for a long Season (disorderly in the open Street) provoke one another.... And so proceeding from this to Questions in Grammar, they usually fell from Words to Blows, with their Satchels full of Books, many times in so great Heaps, that they troubled the Streets and Passengers; so that finally they were restrained, with the Decay of St. Anthony’s School.⁷¹

From such antagonism there swiftly arose the phrase ‘Paul’s pigeons and St Anthonie’s pigs’, which was derogatory from either perspective. Sayings such as this were designed to take people a ‘peg [or buttonhole, or hole] lower, as John Lyly said ca1589 in a response to the Martin Marprelate Tracts: ‘[N]ow haue at you all my gaffers of the rayling religion, tis I that must take you a peg lower.’⁷² Samuel Butler threw it back after the Restoration in *Hudibras*, an anti-Puritan poem probably intended to impress Charles II into giving him a pension.⁷³ *Hudibras* portrays the enemy through his main character, the Puritan Sir Hudibras, who is often shown as pretending to be educated and righteous, but is anything but; in fact, Sir Hudibras often seems, from Butler’s perspective, common, in deed and word. Butler used lines such as:

And for the churches, which may chance
From hence, to fpring a variance,
And raife among themfelves new fcruples.
Whom common danger hardly couples.
Remember how in arms and politics.
We still have worfted all your holy tricks;
Trepann’d your party with intrigue.

⁶⁹ 1670, Ray in Tilley, *A dictionary of the proverbs*, p.209

⁷⁰ Herbert no 932; N R, p. 87, Tilley, *A dictionary of the proverbs*, p. 523

⁷¹ John Strype, *A Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster*, p. 124; Julia Merritt, ed., HRI Online, <http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/strype/tableOfcontent.jsp#Preface> This is a post-Great Fire edition of John Stow’s *A Survey of the Cities of London*, 1598, p. 75

⁷² Lyly *Pappe with an Hatchet. Alias, a figge for my God sonne. Or cracke me this nut. Or a countrie cuffe, that is, a sound boxe of the eare, for the idiot Martin to hold his peace, seeing the patch will take no warning. Written by one that dares call a dog, a dog, and made to preuent Martins dog daies*, in *The Complete Works of John Lyly* III 394

⁷³ Butler, *Hudibras*, II, ii 520, p.174

And took your grandees down a peg;⁷⁴

Yet, as heartfelt as the poem's criticism seems, it appears that Butler was quieter about his views during the events that inspired the poem: not wealthy, he spent part of the Civil War as a clerk in the employ of 'fanatical Puritan' and Cromwellian colonel Sir Samuel Luke, on whom he may have based his *Hudibras* character.⁷⁵ While Butler apparently began *Hudibras* during the war, he is also rumoured to have painted a portrait of Cromwell during that time.⁷⁶ The author of the introduction in a later edition of *Hudibras* explained the situation by saying that:

For, though fate, more than choice, seems to have placed him in the service of a Knight so notorious, both in his person and politics, yet, by the rule of contraries, one may observe throughout his whole Poem, that he was most orthodox, both in his religion and loyalty. And I am the more induced to believe he wrote it about that time, because he had then the opportunity to converse with those living characters of rebellion, nonsense, and hypocrisy, which he so livelily and pathetically exposes throughout the whole work.⁷⁷

Ashley Marshall contends that Butler was 'less concerned with the vanished Cromwell regime than with ongoing sectarian controversy in the 1660s and 1670s.'⁷⁸ Nonetheless, in Butler's and probably some other cases, the outward expression of personal religious beliefs may have been tempered by a desire to survive.

Butler's work contains many proverbs, of which an analysis is overdue.⁷⁹ Another seventeenth century character's pragmatic attitudes to religious turmoil inspired a proverb: '[t]he Vicar of Bray will be Vicar of Bray still' which came to represent a turncoat, although some might call such a person a realist. According to Fuller in 1662, it referred to:

The vivacious Vicar hereof living under King Henry the Eighth, King Edward the Sixth, Queen Mary, and Queen Elizabeth, was first a Papist, then a Protestant, then a Papist, then a Protestant again. He had seen some

⁷⁴ Samuel Butler, *Hudibras. A Poem in Three Cantos*,

http://www.archive.org/stream/hudibraspoeminth01butl/hudibraspoeminth01butl_djvu.txt

See C M Webster, 'The Satiric Background of the Attack on the Puritans in Swift's a Tale of a Tub', *Modern Language Association, PMLA*, vol. 50, no. 1, 1935, pp. 210-223

http://www.archive.org/stream/hudibraspoeminth01butl/hudibraspoeminth01butl_djvu.txt

⁷⁵ William Francis Smith in AW Ward and A R Waller, eds, *The Cambridge History of English and American Literature*, VIII, New York: Putnam, 1907-21, New York, Bartleby.Com, 2000 <http://www.bartleby.com/218/0203.html>

⁷⁶ Smith in Ward and Waller, *The Cambridge History of English and American Literature*, p. 13, fn.

⁷⁷ Samuel Butler, *Hudibras*, <http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext04/hdbrs10.txt>

⁷⁸ Ashley Marshall, 'The Aims of Butler's Satire in *Hudibras*', *Modern Philology*, 105, no.4, 2008, pp. 637-65

⁷⁹ This was remarked upon in 1880, and probably on other occasions; an entire article could be written on them. For 1880, see RGW, 'Perverted Quotations; Misapprehension and Misrepresentation of Great Authors. The Author of *Hudibras*, St. Paul, St. Peter, Bulwer, Shakespeare Made Responsible for what they did not write', *The New York Times*, February 22, 1880, p. 8, http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?_r=1&res=9C0DE1D71E31EE3ABC4A51DFB466838B699FDE

martyrs burnt (two miles off) at Windsor, and found this fire too hot for his tender temper. This vicar being taxed by one for being a turncoat and an inconstant changeling, "Not so," said he, "for I always kept my principle, which is this, to live and die the Vicar of Bray."⁸⁰

Far from being a curio briefly relevant to a time past, the story in this proverb so appealed to the popular humour that it continued to be used as a proverb, but also developed into a ballad and (by the eighteenth century) a song, followed by a nineteenth century comic opera.⁸¹ In 1841, a ship of the Whitehaven style was also named after the resilient Vicar, who, in the story had by this time extended his tenure to the time of George I. The ship could be argued as being less or equally durable: she lays a wreck on the Falkland Islands, the only survivor of James Hardy's Whitehaven line and a rotting remnant of a once grand empire.⁸² This acknowledgment of the lure of a proverbial tale reveals the way in which a simple story was being melded into a legend. In the early twentieth century the story became a film starring Stanley Holloway in which the vicar became a hero who placed the interests of his parishioners before his own.⁸³ In 1936, Royal Doulton issued a Toby mug depicting the vicar, by which time the ballad had attained the status of a national song, which, in this century, is recognisable to most English people and can be seen in several versions on YouTube.⁸⁴ Thus, even the most seemingly innocuous a proverb can have a life far beyond its original relevance. The YouTube clip speaks loudly of the enduring ability of the proverb as signifier. Just as important are the viewer comments pasted below it; hence, 'Agrgurich' remarks that the clip is a '[g]reat performance of a very amusing song which contains something for all of us to ponder.'⁸⁵ 'Endearabia' responds: '[i]ndeed. Oh the church will reap from what they sowed, their heathen ways.'⁸⁶

⁸⁰ Fuller continues: 'Such many nowadays, who though they cannot turn the wind will turn their mills, and set them so, that wheresoever it bloweth their grist shall certainly be grinded.' See Fuller *Worthies* 1662 I, 79; from Tilley, *A dictionary of the proverbs*, p. 697. The Vicar of Bray has been argued as being Simon Aleyn, Simon Simonds or Francis Carswell. See William Wightman Wood, Richard S. Chattock, *Sketches of Eton: Etchings and vignettes by Richard S. Chattock, and descriptive notes by W. Wightman Wood*, London, Chadwyck-Healey Ltd, 1874, p.52; see also Anon, *Notes And Queries For Literary Men, General Readers, Etc.*, Twelfth Series, vol 50, 1916, Internet Archive, http://www.archive.org/stream/s12notesqueries01londuoft/s12notesqueries01londuoft_djvu.txt

⁸¹ Sydney Grundy, Edward Solomon, *The Vicar of Bray*, London 1882

⁸² See Tim Latham, 'Vicar of Bray', *Through Mighty Seas. A Maritime History Page*, <http://www.mightyseas.co.uk/marhist/whitehaven/vicarofbray.htm>

⁸³ Henry Edwards, (dir) *The Vicar of Bray*, Riverside Studios, London, 1937

⁸⁴ English national songs - The Vicar of Bray, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VYIlgT3yuAdQ>

⁸⁵ 'Agrgurich', text comment, January 2009; 'English national songs - The Vicar of Bray, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VYIlgT3yuAdQ>'. In email contact, this writer said that 'I found it bizarre & hilarious to play that tune at a wedding. If I were the vicar or the priest, I'd object to having a song played depicting me as a time-serving unprincipled hack.' 'AJG', pers. corr., 15 Jan 2010

⁸⁶ 'Endearabia', text comment, February 2009; 'English national songs - The Vicar of Bray, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VYIlgT3yuAdQ>'

Proverbs convey basic lessons in life and common sense and do so over extended periods of time: they might tell a person whose knowledge was encapsulated and resourced in their memory to remember to lock the sheep up when the sky was very red or to prepare to plough when the birds or animals acted a certain way. The messages showed here, while related, nonetheless helped in other ways; they made the seemingly inexplicable make sense, reminded individuals of social perimeters and empowered by allowing critical social comment without fear of punishment at a time when heads were easily separated from shoulders. Proverbs thus offered survival skills: learn from experience; actions have consequences; do not trust those in power and expect duplicity – and never ignore the memory or power of the commons. Since proverbs were a critical knowledge component of the uneducated and educated, poor and comfortable, common or noble alike, they eventually made their way from the oral tradition into writing. As such, they are worthy of ongoing contextual analysis from a historiographical perspective.