

*Semi-conformity, Idolatrous Pollution,
and Conversion*
The Permeable Self in Ben Jonson's Bartholomew Fair

Bartholomew Fair (1614) is, with the exception of the masques, Jonson's only play that was dedicated to James I. It was performed at court on 1 November 1614, one day after its premiere at the Hope Theatre, and its proximity to James' political programme has long been recognised. Jonson had returned to the Church of England in c. 1610 and evidently abandoned the oppositional stance that still informed *Sejanus His Fall*. *Bartholomew Fair*, with its conclusion that gestures towards the resolution of sectarian conflict and the integration of Puritans into society at large, has accordingly been read as an attempt to envision religious and social reconciliation.¹ Indeed, Jonson's play captures and propagates with remarkable faithfulness the ideology of conformity which Elizabethan political and ecclesiastical theorists had developed in the previous century in order to defuse religious conflict and which was also propagated by King James and other theorists of church government in the early seventeenth century.

However, this chapter aims to highlight the coercive aspects of this ideology of conformity as it is reproduced in *Bartholomew Fair* and argues that its rhetoric of moderation and inclusivity is more problematic than previous critics of the play have recognised. That is to say, the play's representation of outward conformity is also legible in terms of King James' authoritarian claim to rule over spiritual as well as secular matters, which Jonson ostensibly endorses. In addition, I argue that *Bartholomew Fair* is concerned not only with Puritan dissent, the predominant focus of previous criticism on the play, but also with questions concerning recusancy that deeply divided England's Catholic communities in the early seventeenth century.

The first part of this chapter makes a case that the play's belittlement of religious persecution is related to the controversy surrounding the Oath of

¹ See, for example, Pinciss; Preedy, 'Performance' 239; Donaldson, *Ben Jonson* 338; Walsh 54.

Allegiance, James' attempt to secure the loyalty of his Catholic subjects. In its historical context, Jonson's deflation of the claims to martyrdom that are voiced by several characters in the play is therefore not simply a critique of the sectarian mindset; it can also be understood as an attempt to undermine the discourses of martyrdom that legitimised Catholic resistance to the Oath of Allegiance. Next, I address the Jacobean ideology of conformity more generally, particularly its theological foundations in the notion of Christian liberty in things indifferent, that is, aspects of religious doctrine and ritual that were considered irrelevant for one's salvation. The notion of Christian liberty has hardly received any attention in scholarship on *Bartholomew Fair*. However, this chapter aims to demonstrate the fundamental importance of Christian liberty for the religious and literary politics of the play, from the Puritan Zeal-of-the-Land Busy's casuistic investigation of whether it is lawful to visit the fair to the legitimacy of the theatre itself.

In the last section of this chapter, I will discuss Busy's conversion, which, significantly, occurs during the performance of a puppet play. Arguably, the conversion is not a sudden change of heart, the consequence of Puppet Dionysius' superior skills in disputation, but the result of a long-term process. It is the constant exposure of the play's Puritan characters to the idolatrous spectacle of the fair and the community of 'worldlings' that gradually wears down their resistance and leads to their integration into society at large. In fact, Busy's warnings against the dangers of pollution and contamination at the fair with its seductive entertainments frequently highlight the parallels between the period's anti-Nicodemite and anti-theatrical discourses. For many Puritans, the anti-Nicodemite imperative was not restricted to refraining from or protesting against idolatrous worship. They perceived idolatry in a whole range of social and cultural activities and effectively propagated, as Karl Gunther points out, an anti-Nicodemite 'way of life'.² The Puritan critique of socialising with sinful worldlings, failing to display the requisite zeal for the advancement of the Gospel, or indulging in ungodly pastimes like the theatre was thus often underwritten by the same anti-Nicodemite arguments that were advanced against participation in idolatrous worship.

Importantly, Busy's concerns that outward pollution might subvert inward purity have to be taken seriously. They cannot simply be relegated to the province of Puritan spleen, but also loomed large in Catholic debates on conformity and recusancy. It is against the backdrop of such debates on conformity that I will finally discuss Jonson's reflections on the theatre as

² See Gunther, *Reformation Unbound* 117–30.

a controversial thing indifferent, its legitimacy in a Christian commonwealth, and its transformative effects on its spectators. Hence, even though *Bartholomew Fair* may seem to touch on concrete matters of church government only cursorily, it nonetheless offers a rich exploration of early modern anti-Nicodemite habits of thought. This chapter will therefore revisit many of the arguments made about toleration, persecution, and dissimulation throughout this book and point to the larger implications of the issue of religious dissimulation for early modern culture in general and the theatre in particular.

The End of Martyrdom

In his supra-confessional foreign policy as well as his professed rejection of religious violence, James I liked to style himself as a King who transcended narrow sectarianism.³ Even before ascending to the English throne, James was at pains to project an image of himself as a lenient and merciful ruler. Prior to Elizabeth's death, he assured Robert Cecil that 'I will never allow in my conscience that the blood of any man shall be shed for diversity of opinions in religion' and that 'I did ever hold persecution as one of the infallible notes of a false church'.⁴ In his address to parliament in 1610, he confessed once more that 'I neuer found, that blood and too much seueritie did good in matters of Religion' and proclaimed his 'sure rule in Diuinitie', namely, 'that God neuer loues to plant his Church by violence and bloodshed'.⁵ Indeed, he saw his power as 'ordeined by God *Ad aedificationem, non ad destructionem* [2 Cor. 13:10]⁶ – to edify, not to destroy. Jonson would likely have welcomed James' rejection of violent persecution and later described the ideal prince in similar fashion as someone whose 'punishments are rather to correct than to destroy'.⁷ In the happy resolution of *Bartholomew Fair* (5.6.93–4),⁸ the assiduous justice Adam Overdo likewise cites 2 Cor. 13:10 as a profession of the Pauline 'rejection of judicial authority in favour of Christian humility'.⁹

Rather than presenting a fully developed main plot, Jonson's comedy has as its main subject a rambunctious day at the fair and the many unlikely encounters which the fairground enables between a rich variety of characters and social milieus. However, despite the play's explicit satire of its Puritan characters, who are scandalised by the abuses of the fair, religious conflict

³ For James' irenicist foreign policy, see Patterson, *King James VI and I*; for a brief survey of James' policing of religious dissent at home, see Coffey 110–21.

⁴ James Stuart, *Letters* 204–5. ⁵ James Stuart, *Political Works* 322. ⁶ *Ibid.* 309.

⁷ *Discoveries*, CEWBJ 7:533, l. 712. ⁸ CEWBJ 4:420. ⁹ Shuger 72.

remains remarkably tame throughout. Other than in *Sir Thomas More* or *The Jew of Malta*, for instance, murderous religious violence is ostensibly banished to the past in *Bartholomew Fair* and merely invoked in historical and allegorical allusions. A case in point is the play's subplot revolving around Grace Wellborn, who is courted by several young men and whose name evidently carries allegorical connotations. When Quarlous and Winwife draw swords in their competition to win her favour, Grace declares: 'Gentlemen, this is no way that you take: you do but breed one another trouble and offence, and give me no contentment at all. I am no she that affects to be quarrelled for, or have my name or fortune made the question of men's swords' (4.3.1–4).¹⁰ As John Creaser notes in his edition of the play,¹¹ Grace's censure of her duelling suitors is in line with James' campaign against duelling. However, it also echoes Erasmus' rejection of religious controversy as fruitless fencing in *De libero arbitrio*,¹² which Jonson cites approvingly in *Discoveries*: 'Such controversies, or disputations, carried with more labour than profit, are odious, where most times the truth is lost in the midst, or left untouched. And the fruit of their fight is that they spit one upon another, and are both defiled. These fencers in religion I like not'.¹³ Grace's attempt to exert a moderating influence on her competing suitors can accordingly be read as an Erasmian critique of religious conflict.

It certainly helps that Grace turns out to be very amenable. When Winwife finally wins his wife, Grace complies without resistance: 'I desire to put it to no danger of protestation' (5.2.31).¹⁴ Her behaviour thus stands in notable contrast with that of the Puritans, who were accused of putting everything into 'danger of protestation'. In return, Grace is lenient towards her initial suitor, Bartholomew Cokes. Asking his servant Wasp about Grace's whereabouts, Cokes does not seem to be bothered too much by his loss: 'Did you see Mistress Grace? – it's no matter neither, now I think on't; tell me anon' (5.4.88–9).¹⁵ Winwife ironically comments: 'A great deal of love and care he expresses' (5.4.90).¹⁶ Grace, however, once again takes the matter to a political level in what sounds like an inversion of King Lear's test of loyalty: 'Alas! Would you have him to express more than he has? That were tyranny' (5.4.91–2).¹⁷ Grace thus reasserts the privilege of silence, which had been reduced to shambles in Jonson's earlier play *Sejanus His Fall*.

As the case of Grace Wellborn suggests, the scandals which Jonson dissects with such fervour in *Sejanus* have mostly lost their sting in the comedic register of *Bartholomew Fair*. In fact, Jonson's play can be read as

¹⁰ CEWBJ 4:366. ¹¹ Creaser, CEWBJ 4:367. ¹² Compare with Erasmus, 'Free Will' 6–7.

¹³ CEWBJ 7:535, ll. 753–7. ¹⁴ *Ibid.* 4:390. ¹⁵ *Ibid.* 4:402. ¹⁶ *Ibid.* ¹⁷ *Ibid.*

a systematic trivialisation of sectarian conflict. At the fair, Leatherhead's repertoire of puppet shows trivialises polemically charged subjects such as the destruction of Jerusalem, which was customarily involved in anti-Puritan polemics, and the Gunpowder Plot (5.1.6–10).¹⁸ Judging by the rude travesty of Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* in act 5, they may not have been terribly serious pieces of theatre either. Espionage, which is so central to the moral and political outrage of *Sejanus His Fall*, is likewise ridiculed in Overdo's dismal attempts to spy out 'enormities' at the fair. By parodying the motif of the magistrate in disguise and turning him into a spectacularly inept detective, Jonson also largely bids farewell to a notion of theatricality that flaunts the theatre's ability to grant privileged access to the inwardness of dissenters. Admittedly, this impulse is not entirely absent insofar as the convention of the stage Puritan is predicated on the exposure of Puritan hypocrisy. Unlike Marlowe, however, Jonson envisages the reintegration of Puritans into society not as dangerously misguided tolerance but as a triumph of conformity.

This is not to say that the spectre of religious violence is entirely absent from *Bartholomew Fair*. The St Bartholomew's Day Massacre of 1572, which shares its name with the fair, is repeatedly invoked in the play. When the irascible Wasp at one point attacks the disguised justice Overdo, the latter replies: 'Hold thy hand, child of wrath and heir of anger, make it not Childermas day in thy fury, or the feast of the French Barthol'mew, parent of the Massacre!' (2.6.115–19).¹⁹ To be sure, the allusions to the Biblical Massacre of the Innocents and the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre are absurdly disproportional to Overdo's well-deserved beating. As Kristen Poole puts it, '[i]n the Jacobean fair, as in the Jacobean state, it is pigs, not Protestants, that get roasted'.²⁰ However, Bartholomew Cokes' own evocation of martyrdom, even though equally inappropriate, hits closer to home. When he is thoroughly relieved by the thieves of the fair, he complains: 'an ever any Barthol'mew had that luck in't that I have had, I'll be martyred for him, and in Smithfield, too' (4.2.57–8).²¹ Smithfield, the location of the fair, was indeed a site of execution for Protestant martyrs during the Marian persecution, but also in the much more recent past. The anti-Trinitarians Bartholomew Legate and Edward Wightman were burned at the stake in Smithfield on 18 March and 11 April 1612, respectively. Beforehand, the King himself had, as the Whig narrative goes, 'struggled valiantly to convince

¹⁸ CEWBJ 4:388–9. On the destruction of Jerusalem in the context of Marlowe's anti-Puritan satire in *The Jew of Malta*, see Chapter 6.

¹⁹ CEWBJ 4:331. ²⁰ Poole 69. ²¹ CEWBJ 4:365.

Legate of his errors',²² but to no avail. James was eager to see Legate condemned and burned under the statute *De heretico comburendo*,²³ despite the statute's controversial legality.²⁴ Legate's namesake in the play, Bartholomew Cokes, would certainly have been an uncomfortable reminder of the anti-Trinitarians' execution two years earlier.²⁵

Nonetheless, the executions of Wightman and Legate were a significant watershed in the persecution of religious dissent. The two anti-Trinitarians were the last heretics ever to be burned at the stake in England. In fact, James' intention to 'commit [Legate] publicly to the fire, before the people, in a public and open place in West-Smithfield . . . for the manifest example of other Christians, lest they slide into the same fault' had backfired disastrously.²⁶ As Thomas Fuller recounts in his *Church History of Britain* (1655), the burnings did not have the intended effect and inspired sympathy rather than contempt for the heretics:

the purblind eyes of vulgar judgments looked only on what was next to them, the suffering itself, which they beheld with compassion, not minding the demerit of the guilt which deserved the same. Besides, such being unable to distinguish betwixt constancy and obstinacy, were ready to entertain good thoughts even of the opinion of those heretics, who sealed them so manfully with their blood. Wherefore king James politicly preferred, that heretics hereafter, though condemned, should silently and privately waste themselves away in the prison, rather than to grace them and amuse others with the solemnity of a public execution, which in popular judgments usurped the honour of a persecution.²⁷

The form of power which New Historicists have called 'the spectacle of the scaffold' had apparently run its course by the early seventeenth century, at least with regard to religious dissent.²⁸ Unlike executions for more ordinary crimes, heresy executions were ideologically sensitive because they

²² Jordan 2:44. ²³ 2 Hen. IV c. 15.

²⁴ In his *Acts and Monuments*, John Foxe denies that the Commons ever gave its assent to the statute (586) and argues that the statute was therefore without legal force. He repeats the same claim in his protest to the Privy Council against the burning of two Dutch Anabaptists in London in 1575, when he points out that heresy laws not only had been repealed under Edward and Elizabeth (1 Edw. VI c.12; 1 Eliz. c.1) but had never been valid to begin with (Foxe, 'Appendix to the Life' 31). Edward Coke agreed with Foxe that there was no statutory basis for the penalisation of heresy. However, Coke later suggested in his *Institutes of the Laws of England* that a heretic may be condemned with a common law writ *De heretico comburendo*: 'The Ecclesiastical Judge at this day cannot commit the person that is convict of heresie to the Sheriffe, albeit he be present, to be burnt; but must have the Kings Writ *De haeretico comburendo*, according to the Common Law' (3:43).

²⁵ See John Creaser's detailed note in his edition of the play (CEWBJ 4:426). For the trial and execution of Legate and Wightman, see further Coffey 114–5; Jordan 2:43–52.

²⁶ *Complete Collection of State Trials* 2:734. ²⁷ Fuller 10.4.14.

²⁸ For the Foucauldian roots of the 'spectacle of the scaffold', see Foucault 32–69.

bestowed the cultural capital of martyrdom on their victims – the ‘usurped honour of a persecution’.²⁹ It is not least for this reason that an emphatic rejection of religious conflict and factionalism could paradoxically function as a form of intolerance. Where there is no persecution – or, rather, where it is hidden from sight and where heretics ‘silently and privately waste themselves away in the prison’ – there is no martyrdom either. There is only the stubborn delusion of self-aggrandising troublemakers. In a state that professes to have stopped persecuting heretics, the blame for religious divisions is to be laid exclusively on the dissenter.

Such a deconstruction of martyrdom was already in full sway in James’ Catholic policies, especially in the context of the Oath of Allegiance controversy, when Jonson wrote *Bartholomew Fair*.³⁰ The Oath was a reaction to the Gunpowder Plot and prima facie a means to ensure the loyalty of James’ Catholic subjects. Its text required recusants to swear, among other things, that ‘our Sovereigne Lorde Kinge James is lawfull and rightfull King of this Realme’, and that the Pope does not have ‘any Power or Authoritye to depose the King . . . or to authorize any Forraigne Prince to invade or annoy hym or his Countries, or to discharge any of his Subjectes of their Allegiaunce and Obedience to his Majestie’.³¹ The enactment of the Oath in 1606 spawned a lengthy, international debate on whether Catholics could legitimately take it without violating their conscience, which reached its peak between 1609 and 1614. There is still considerable scholarly disagreement regarding its enforcement as well as its purpose.³² In the following, however, I limit myself to its implications for contemporary discourses of martyrdom.

King James contributed to the extended paper war himself and was at pains to denigrate the rhetoric of martyrdom which Catholic opponents employed in order to justify the refusal to take the Oath. In *Triplico nodo, triplex cuneus* (1608), James vehemently denies that the Oath constitutes

²⁹ For the widespread problem of unpredictable audience reactions to martyrdom, see Gregory 315–41; Lake with Questier, *Antichrist’s Lewd Hat* 269–80.

³⁰ For a helpful account of the controversy and its repercussions in contemporary drama, especially Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline*, see Hamilton, *Politics of Protestant England* 128–62. For the text of the Oath, as stipulated by the Popish Recusants Act (3 Jac. I c. 4), see SR 4–2:1074.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² A number of scholars have interpreted the Oath as a benevolent gesture, ‘a formal offer to moderate papists to accommodate themselves to the Jacobean regime by affirming their civil obedience’ (Fincham and Lake 181), which implied ‘a royal political theory that recognized the existence of loyal English Catholics’ (Ferrell 20) and may even have ‘enabled Catholics to become legitimate members of society’ (Okines 281). On the other hand, Michael Questier has argued that it was, in its ambiguous wording, ‘a diabolically effective polemical cocktail’ (‘Loyalty, Religion and State Power’ 311), designed to sow dissension among Catholics.

a form of religious persecution and that those who refuse it have any claim to the crown of martyrdom: 'I intended no persecution against them for conscience cause, but onely desired to be secured of them for ciuill obedience, which for conscience cause they were bound to performe'.³³ In his speech to Parliament in 1610, James further declares that 'the gallantnesse of many mens spirits, and the wilfulnesse of their humors, rather then the justnesse of the cause, makes them to take a pride boldly to endure any torments or death it selfe, to gaine thereby the reputation of Martyrdome, though but in a false shadow'.³⁴ What would be admirable constancy in the case of the true martyr is therefore arrogant obstinacy in the case of recusants.

In his defence of the Oath of Allegiance, James reproduced the Augustinian critique of martyrdom, which the church father had employed against the schismatic Donatists in his own day. Just as James questions 'the justnesse of the [recusants'] cause',³⁵ Augustine had claimed that it was the cause and not the punishment that makes the martyr.³⁶ Moreover, just as recusants, according to James, 'take a pride boldly to endure any torments or death it selfe, to gaine thereby the reputation of Martyrdome, though but in a false shadow', Donatists were, according to Augustine, suicidally enamoured of the prospect of martyrdom, which they prioritised over a concerted effort to promote true religion and abolish idolatry, as he writes in ep. 185 to Count Boniface:

[W]hen there was idol worship, they [i.e. the Donatists] used to come in great hordes to the crowded ceremonies of the pagans, not to break the idols, but to be killed by the worshippers of idols. If they had received authority to break the idols and tried to do it, then, if anything happened to them, they might have had some kind of shadow of the name of martyr, but they came solely to be killed, leaving the idols intact.³⁷

In *Bartholomew Fair*, Jonson is arguably complicit in James' Augustinian deflation of Catholic pretensions to martyrdom as a 'false shadow'.³⁸

³³ James Stuart, *Political Works* 72. ³⁴ *Ibid.* 322. ³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ See Augustine, ep. 204 to Dulcitus, a tribune who was charged with the legal persecution of Donatists: 'I have proved countless times, both by debate and by writing, that they cannot have the death of martyrs because they have not the life of Christians, since it is not the pain but the purpose that makes a martyr' (Augustine, *Letters* 5:5). See further Ployd. For the early modern application of the Augustinian principle and the sophisticated frameworks of interpretation that it generated, see Brietz Monta 9–78.

³⁷ Augustine, *Letters* 4:152–3.

³⁸ James Stuart, *Political Works* 322. Jonson's preoccupation with the Oath of Allegiance and questions of martyrdom has been noticed before, but mainly with respect to Morose as a 'martyr to noise' in *Epicene* (Dutton's 'Introduction' to Jonson, *Epicene* 26–42; Butler, 'Ben Jonson's Catholicism' 198; Donaldson, *Ben Jonson* 259–62). However, Alison A. Chapman has also suggested a connection between the Oath of Allegiance and the ridicule of martyrdom in *Bartholomew Fair* (63), which I further develop in the following.

When the deluded Overdo ‘cheerfully’ (4.1.28) puts his leg in the stocks, the watchman Bristle mocks his patience and willingness to suffer as follows: ‘O’ my conscience, a seminary! He kisses the stocks’ (4.1.29).³⁹ As Bristle suggests, the aptly named Overdo is enamoured of a pathos of martyrdom that has no grounding in reality, and his association with a Catholic seminary priest suggests that those who refused to take the Oath of Allegiance were no less risible.⁴⁰ We do not actually know whether Jonson himself took the Oath, but, given his refusal to take the sacrament before his re-conversion to the Church of England, he might well have been obliged to do so.⁴¹ Judging by his dramatic output, at least, it seems unlikely that he would have refused to take the Oath. In his *Catiline His Conspiracy* (1611), a play that offers numerous parallels to the Gunpowder Plot, Jonson has Cicero persuade the conspirator Curius to turn intelligencer (as Jonson himself had done after the Plot) by declaring that ‘no religion binds men to be traitors’ (3.2.135).⁴² According to Jonson’s Cicero, political and spiritual loyalty are scrupulously to be kept apart.

For his disavowal of the militant recusancy advocated by Cardinal Bellarmine and Pope Paul V, Jonson might well have taken his cue from his friend John Donne.⁴³ Donne likewise had a Catholic past to shed when he launched his ecclesiastical career with his *Pseudo-Martyr* (1610), in which

³⁹ CEWBJ 4:360.

⁴⁰ This is not to say that Overdo is supposed to be read as a recusant. On the contrary, his association with a seminary priest is highly ironic since Justice Overdo himself is tasked with ferreting out priests. In fact, he confesses that his informers ‘made me – yea, me – to mistake an honest zealous pursuivant for a seminary’ (2.1.25–6, CEWBJ 4:309). Presumably, Jonson’s ‘honest zealous pursuivant’ is an allusion to Anthony Munday, whom Jonson had already satirised in *The Case Is Altered* in the figure of Antonio Balladino and in *Every Man in His Humour* (quarto version) in the figures of the ‘Hall Beadle or Poet Nuntius’ (1.1.154, CEWBJ 1:133), titles that presumably refer to Munday’s occupations as pursuivant, messenger, and writer of city pageants. The reference to an ‘honest zealous pursuivant’ has possibly topical significance. Munday had served as a pursuivant up to the 1600s, and as late as 1612 Jonson’s Catholic friend Hugh Holland, who had contributed a dedicatory poem to *Sejanus*, was indicted for recusancy ‘ex testimonio Anthonii Munday’ (*London Sessions Records* 71). Munday’s behaviour, especially his sojourn at the English College in Rome, consistently raised doubts over his true confessional allegiance, which Martin Marprelate had already exploited to great comical effect (*Marprelate Tracts* 172). Similarly, the Puritan Giles Wigginton concluded that Munday ‘seemeth to favour the Pope and to be a great Dissembler’ (*Seconde Parte of a Register* 2:253). Overdo’s misidentification of the ‘honest zealous pursuivant’ as a seminary priest thus gains an additional layer of irony if read as an allusion to Munday’s dubious religious identity.

⁴¹ According to clause 8 of the Popish Recusants Act, any person ‘of the age of eightene yeares or above . . . which shall not have received the saide Sacrament twice within the yeere then next past, Noble men and Noble women excepted’, may be obliged to take the Oath by ‘any Bishop in his Diocese, or any two Justices of the Peace’ (SR 4–2:1073).

⁴² CEWBJ 4:94.

⁴³ Compare with Paul’s *breve* from 1606, reprinted in Dodd 4:cxl–xlII, and Bellarmine’s reaction to Archbishop Blackwell’s subscription to the Oath, printed in *A large examination taken at Lambeth* b1r–c4r.

he defended the Oath of Allegiance and rejected Catholic pretensions to martyrdom for the refusal to take the Oath.⁴⁴ As Donne warns in his treatise, the prospective martyr 'may suffer some infirmitie: yea, putrefaction, by admixture of humane and passionate respects, if when we are admitted to bee witnesses of Gods honour, we loue our owne glory too much'.⁴⁵ In *Bartholomew Fair*, the self-important Overdo, who 'kisses the stocks',⁴⁶ arguably likewise embodies what Donne calls 'an inordinate and corrupt affectation of Martyrdome'.⁴⁷ As we have already seen in *Sejanus*, Jonson is critical of martyrdom and contrasts Silius' heroic but pointless imitation of Cato with neo-Stoicist constancy as a form of inward retreat. In *Bartholomew Fair*, Jonson again dismisses a Stoicist interpretation of martyrdom when Overdo is mocked as a 'Stoic i'the stocks', a 'fool . . . turned philosopher' (4.6.81–2).⁴⁸ Jonson thus echoes Donne, who criticises the Jesuits, who strive to outdo Stoicist models of suicide, 'the Catoes, the Porciaes, and the Cleopatraes', in their 'hunger of false-Martyrdome'.⁴⁹ While Silius' suicide in *Sejanus* may be inefficient but at least morally admirable, Stoicist claims to martyrdom are subjected to merciless ridicule in *Bartholomew Fair*.

Perhaps, this transformation of ambivalence into ridicule is related to the fact that Jonson had, at least outwardly, changed sides in the meantime. Jonson returned to the bosom of the Church of England at around the same time that Donne published *Pseudo-Martyr*. His re-conversion was presumably triggered by the aforementioned assassination of Henri IV on 14 May 1610. Fearing a similar fate to that of the French King, James issued a proclamation on 2 June 1610 that barred Catholics from access to court.

⁴⁴ As Donne confesses in the preface, he is 'deriued from such a stocke and race, as, I beleuee, no family, (which is not of farre larger extent, and greater branches,) hath endured and suffered more in their persons and fortunes, for obeying the Teachers of Romane Doctrine, then it hath done' (Donne, *Pseudo-Martyr* ¶11). For Donne's Catholic origins, see Flynn, *John Donne*. For Jonson, the question of martyrdom may have been haunted by the ghosts of a past more distant than his own Catholic days. According to William Drummond, Jonson's 'father lost all his estate under Queen Mary; having been cast in prison and forfeited, at last turned minister' (*Informations*, CEWBJ 5:371, ll. 178–9), which suggests that Jonson's father may have suffered, unlike his son, for the Protestant faith (Donaldson, *Ben Jonson* 56).

⁴⁵ Donne, *Pseudo-Martyr* 14–15. ⁴⁶ Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair* 4.1.29, CEWBJ 4:360.

⁴⁷ Donne, *Pseudo-Martyr* 9. ⁴⁸ CEWBJ 4:385.

⁴⁹ Donne, *Pseudo-Martyr* 150. Jonson appears to have been familiar with Donne's equation of martyrdom with suicide. Mark Bland has argued that in 1609 Jonson transcribed Donne's *Biathanatos*, which likewise treats martyrdom as a form of suicide. In turn, it is worth pointing out that already by mid-1613 Donne seems to have been among those with whom Jonson shared an early draft of *Bartholomew Fair* and apparently found 'nothing obnoxious' in the play, except for Jonson's satire of Inigo Jones in the puppeteer Inigo Lantern, whose name Jonson subsequently changed to Lantern Leatherhead. See Bald 196–7.

Jonson's persistence in the Catholic faith would effectively have ruined his career as a court poet and might have had even worse consequences.⁵⁰ Henri's assassination was followed by an upsurge in anti-Catholic measures, including a stricter enforcement and wider application of the Oath of Allegiance, which surpassed the reaction to the Gunpowder Plot considerably.⁵¹ However, Donne and Jonson decided to launch, or save, respectively, their careers within the Jacobean establishment at this critical watershed. Hence, both had a personal stake in denigrating the road not taken.

Even though King James ostensibly offered Catholics an alternative to militant recusancy, church papists and Catholics who took the Oath of Allegiance were often subject to suspicion. Whereas recusants at least showed their true colours, the loyalty of conformists was, in the eyes of many English Protestants, only skin-deep.⁵² Jonson's satire of espionage in Overdo's self-important intelligence-gathering missions and his general tendency in *Bartholomew Fair* to tone down the paranoid obsession with the dangers of the hidden self, which was so common in the anti-Puritan satire of the early 1590s, are arguably related to a desire to ward off similar intrusions into the conscience of Catholic conformists. Jonson may ridicule recusancy, but *Bartholomew Fair* is certainly not a crudely anti-Catholic play. On the contrary, Jonson's concern with salvaging a sphere of inward dissent, which we have already encountered in *Sejanus*, arguably persists in a somewhat different, although equally pessimistic, register in *Bartholomew Fair*, as I will discuss in more detail later in this chapter.

Notably, Jonson does not only expose recusant claims to martyrdom; he also undermines the Puritan pathos of nonconformity in the person of Zeal-of-the-Land Busy. Like Overdo, Busy is put in the stocks and makes rather much of his suffering: 'the lion may roar, but he cannot bite. I am glad to be thus separated from the heathen of the land, and put apart in the stocks for the holy cause' (4.6.67–9).⁵³ Jonson, however, thoroughly deflates Busy's 'holy cause'. Busy may claim that he 'sitteth here to prophesy the destruction of fairs and May-games, wakes, and Whitsun ales, and doth sigh and groan

⁵⁰ Donaldson, *Ben Jonson* 272–4.

⁵¹ See Okines. For the significant extension of the scope of the Oath, see 7 Jac. I c. 6.

⁵² Milton, 'Qualified Intolerance' 105–6.

⁵³ CEWBJ 4:385. As Creaser has shown, Busy's proclamation is taken from Richard Bancroft's *Dangerous positions* and echoes a number of Biblical verses that associate lions with persecution (178). A noteworthy parallel is also offered in Richard Cosin's *Conspiracie, for Pretended Reformation*, according to which the self-proclaimed prophet William Hacket literally imitated Daniel in the lion's den. Allegedly, Hacket 'commanded to see the Lyons in the Tower, he tooke the fiercest of them by the head, and had none harme' (Cosin, *Conspiracie* 46).

for the reformation of these abuses' (4.6.71–3).⁵⁴ However, he is put in the stocks not for confessing Christ but for his drunken (3.6.39–40) vandalism of Joan Trash's gingerbread stand, which he condemns as 'the merchandise of Babylon' (3.6.72).⁵⁵ If it is the cause and not the punishment that makes the martyr, as Augustine put it, Zeal's claim to the crown of martyrdom is decidedly lacking.

There is a further twist to Jonson's satire of martyrdom. Hypocrisy, the central trait of the stage Puritan, stands, at first glance, in obvious contradiction with Puritan nonconformity. However, Jonson reconciles the two by expanding on James' denunciation of martyrdom as 'a false shadow', driven by a desire for the reputation of martyrdom rather than the real thing. Busy denounces his fellow-detainee Wasp, who manages to escape from the stocks, in the typical terms of Elizabethan anti-Nicodemism, as 'a halting neutral . . . that will not endure the heat of persecution' (4.6.91–2).⁵⁶ However, despite his claim that he 'rejoiceth in his affliction' (4.6.71),⁵⁷ Busy is, like Wasp, less than eager to suffer for his faith. When Bristle and the madman Troubleall start fighting and leave the stocks open, Busy declares this unexpected turn of events a 'miracle' (4.6.133) and seizes his chance to slip away.⁵⁸ In *Bartholomew Fair*, those who claim to suffer for their faith are either deluded or striking a transparently hypocritical pose of nonconformity.

Christian Liberty and the 'Violence of Singularity'

In *Basilikon Doron*, which was sold in London within days of Elizabeth's death, King James prominently set out the stakes of his ecclesiastical policy to his new English subjects for the first time. As James tells his son, 'your office is . . . mixed, betwixt the Ecclesiasticall and ciuill estate: For a King is not *merè laicus*, as both the Papists and Anabaptists woulde haue him, to the which error also the Puritanes incline ouer farre'.⁵⁹ The authority of Scripture may set limits to the monarch's authority in religious matters,⁶⁰ but it leaves some scope in the sphere of *adiaphora*, or things indifferent, in terms of which the debate on the Puritan liturgical reform platform was often framed. According to the doctrine of *adiaphora*, some questions

⁵⁴ CEWBJ 4:385. ⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 4:355, 357.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 4:386. Compare with Elijah's warning to Israel: 'How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, followe him: but if Baal be he, then go after him' (1 Kings 18:21). As Martin Butler notes more specifically, 'this phrase was the precise scriptural insult that was used on the Catholic side to stigmatize recusants who opted for conformity' (193). I will argue throughout this chapter that this superimposition of Catholic discourses of martyrdom and Nicodemism on the play's ostensibly anti-Puritan satire is indeed more pervasive than has previously been noticed.

⁵⁷ CEWBJ 4:385. ⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 4:387. ⁵⁹ James Stuart, *Political Works* 45. ⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 17.

concerning religious observance are indifferent to salvation, hence subject to Christian liberty.⁶¹ As I argue in the following, the Elizabethan and Jacobean debate on Christian liberty will help to demonstrate how Jonson's satire of the all too human failings of his Puritan characters is not simply a form of moralising social critique but also works to undermine the theological foundations of Puritan nonconformity.

As James declares in *Basilikon Doron* with respect to the controversies over the Prayer Book, especially the surplice, 'I am so farre from being contentious in these things (which for my owne part I euer esteemed as indifferent) as I doe equally loue and honour the learned and graue men of either of these opinions'.⁶² However, such indifference does not imply toleration or leniency towards Puritan nonconformity. On the contrary, the authority to regulate *adiaphora* belongs to the monarch alone, and not to the Puritans: 'if . . . they vrge you to embrace any of their fantasies in the place of Gods words . . . acknowledge them for no other then vaine men, exceeding the bounds of their calling; and according to your office, grauely and with authoritie redact them in order againe'.⁶³ Since salvation was not at stake in such outward matters, Puritans were to submit their private opinions to royal supremacy. Christian liberty could thus entail a political obligation of Nicodemism. To be clear, the scope of such a licence, or duty, of conformity was frequently perceived to be limited. Calvin, for instance, criticised Nicodemites who believed that 'toutes choses externes sont en la liberté du Chrestien'⁶⁴ and was adamant that participation in the Catholic Mass constituted an intolerable violation of the purity of faith.⁶⁵ From a political perspective, however, defining the scope of things indifferent as broadly as possible could be a means of extending the reach of secular authority in religious matters. The more easy-going a regime presents itself with respect to the minutiae of religious doctrine and ritual and the more it ridicules the 'precision' and stricture of religious dissenters, the more forceful its assertion of its own authority to regulate an expansive area of things indifferent might turn out to be.

This paradoxical authoritarianism reared its head, for instance, at the Hampton Court Conference in January 1604, when James first clashed with his new Puritan subjects. The double-faced nature of Christian liberty became apparent in the discussion of long-time Puritan grievances, such as the use of the sign of the cross in baptism. When the Puritan delegate John

⁶¹ For a good account of the different understandings of Christian liberty by Puritans and conformists, see Coolidge 23–54.

⁶² James Stuart, *Political Works* 8. ⁶³ *Ibid.* 17. ⁶⁴ CO 7:170.

⁶⁵ See also Calvin, *Institutes* 3.19.13; CO 7:355; CO 9:618.

Knewstub asked ‘how farre such an ordinance of the church was to bind them, without impeaching their Christian liberty?’, James was ‘much moved’ and said that Knewstub’s concern ‘smelled very rankly of anabaptism’,⁶⁶ just as he had argued in the *Basilikon Doron* that Puritan nonconformists were ‘agreeing with the general rule of all Anabaptists, in the contempt of the ciuill Magistrate’.⁶⁷ In other words, claiming Christian liberty was an affront to royal supremacy, and James ruled out, as a matter of principle, any tolerance for diversity in outward ceremonies: ‘I will none of that; I will have one doctrine and one discipline, one religion in substance and in ceremony: and therefore I charge you never to speak more to that point, (how far you are bound to obey,) when the church hath ordained it’.⁶⁸ As the Jacobean theorist of royal supremacy John Tichborne put it five years later, Christian liberty is not a liberty of the individual subject but the ‘the liberty of Christian Princes’ to regulate things indifferent as they see fit.⁶⁹

The concept of Christian liberty also lies at the heart of the religious and literary politics of *Bartholomew Fair*. Even though Christian liberty has been virtually ignored in the criticism of the play,⁷⁰ its simultaneously libertarian and authoritarian implications arguably account for the paradoxically moderate and inclusive form of intolerance of Jonson’s *Bartholomew Fair*, which is so easily misread as genuine toleration. Jonson was aware of the debates surrounding Christian liberty, as is suggested by the game of vapours in act 4 scene 4, according to the stage directions ‘nonsense: every man to oppose the last man that spoke, whether it concerned him or no’ (4.4.25–8).⁷¹ When Quarlous bursts into laughter while observing the game, he defends himself against Wasp as follows: ‘Sir, you’ll allow me my Christian liberty. I may laugh, I hope’ (4.4.94).⁷² However, when Christian liberty itself becomes the subject of the game of vapours, a potent symbol for the alleged contentiousness of the Puritans, Knockem ominously interferes, as if he were aware of the decades of vehement controversy on the subject: ‘No, that vapour is too lofty’ (4.4.100).⁷³ It was not up to anyone but the King to claim Christian liberty. Already at the Hampton Court Conference, James had warned the

⁶⁶ Quoted in Cardwell 198. ⁶⁷ James Stuart, *Political Works* 7. ⁶⁸ Quoted in Cardwell 198–9.

⁶⁹ Tichborne 106.

⁷⁰ For an exception, see the brief and isolated discussion of Busy’s use of the concept as ‘a satire on clerical puritan attitudes to outward conformity’ by Lake with Questier, *Antichrist’s Lewd Hat* 587.

⁷¹ CEWBJ 4:372. ⁷² *Ibid.* 4:374.

⁷³ *Ibid.* Later on, Knockem does indeed associate the game of vapours with Puritan intransigence, when he comments on Busy’s seditious tirade against the theatre: ‘Good Banbury-vapours’ (5.5.19).

Puritans 'never to speak more to that point'.⁷⁴ Any argument about Christian liberty would bring the players directly into the heart of a religious controversy that ever threatened to undermine the Church of England and the monarch's supremacy over it.

This is the only explicit reference to Christian liberty in the play, but the concept can be fruitfully applied to Busy's meditations on whether it is lawful to visit the fair. The subject comes up as John Littlewit urges his pregnant wife, Win, to feign a sudden longing to eat pig so that they may go to the fair, where Littlewit's puppet play will be performed. Win's godly mother, Dame Purecraft, consults Busy, who first rejects the Bartholomew-pig as 'a spice of idolatry' (1.6.44).⁷⁵ However, Purecraft asks him again to 'make it as lawful as you can' (1.6.49–50),⁷⁶ and Busy displays considerable theological ingenuity when he invokes Christian liberty in order to justify the visit to the fair. In doing so, he also prepares the ground for the larger questions of church government that underlie Jonson's treatment of Puritanism in *Bartholomew Fair*.

Initially, Busy admits that going to the fair 'hath a face of offence with the weak, a great face, a foul face' (1.6.56).⁷⁷ Busy's terminology, especially his 'spice of idolatry', and his worries about causing 'offence' are indebted to 1 Corinthians, in which Paul warns against offending the weak brethren by eating pagan sacrificial meat (*idolythes*), that is, meats that were consecrated to idols before they were consumed. Even though eating them is indifferent per se and subject to Christian liberty, Paul expresses his concern that doing so might be misunderstood by the weak, that is, those who do not understand that the act is indeed indifferent, as a *carte blanche* for indulging in idolatry:

For if any man se thee which hast knowledge, sit at table in the idoles temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weake, be boldened to eat those things which are sacrificed to idoles? And through thy knowledge shall the weake brother perish, for whome Christ dyed . . . Wherefore if meat offend my brother, I will eat no flesh while the worlde standeth, that I may not offend my brother. (1 Cor. 8:10–13)

This concern about causing offence was frequently cited by Reformed theologians such as Calvin, Bullinger, and Vermigli in order to forestall a Nicodemite interpretation of Christian liberty.⁷⁸ In Elizabethan England, it also featured prominently in Puritan discourses of nonconformity. Paul's

⁷⁴ Quoted in Cardwell 199. ⁷⁵ CEWBJ 4:306. ⁷⁶ Ibid. ⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ See, for example, CO 6:548; Calvin, *Commentarie* 89r; Bullinger, *In omnes Apostolicas epistolas* 177–8; Vermigli 2.4.32.

sacrificial meats were accordingly perceived as a Biblical equivalent for the controversial clerical vestments in the debates between Puritans and conformists.⁷⁹ Thomas Cartwright, for instance, closely adapts 1 Cor. 8 to the Elizabethan context, when he argues that the surplice may not be strictly idolatrous but nonetheless cause offence to weaker brethren:

[A]lthoughe I haue knowledge / and knowe that the wearing of a surplice is lawfull for me / yet an other whyche hath not knowledge / is by my example edified / or strengthened to weare a surplice / whereof he can tell no grounde whye he shoulde weare it / and so synneth agaynste hys conscience: and for thys cause S. Paule concludeth / that that whych a man may doe in respecte of hymselfe / maye not be done / and is not lawfull to be done / in respecte of other [*sic*].⁸⁰

The ingenuous Busy in *Bartholomew Fair*, however, finds a way to mitigate this nonconformist imperative in his case for eating pig. Using a sartorial metaphor that seems to echo Cartwright's link between Paul's sacrificial meats and the Puritan rejection of certain clerical vestments, Busy means to 'have a veil put over' (1.6.57) the offence by eating 'with a reformed mouth, with sobriety and humbleness, not gorged in with gluttony or greediness' (1.6.59–61).⁸¹ In this regard, Busy's rejection of 'gluttony or greediness' also resonates with Calvin's discussion of Christian liberty in the *Institutes*, where the Genevan reformer warns that when things indifferent 'are coveted too greedily, when they are proudly boasted of, when they are lavishly squandered, things that were of themselves otherwise lawful are certainly defiled by these vices'.⁸² By claiming to eat pig with a 'reformed mouth', Busy steers his case in the direction of the loophole implied in Calvin's argumentation, namely, that Christian liberty may indeed be lawfully enjoyed if its enjoyment is free from greed and other vices.

However, Christian liberty is not only a liberty to participate in indifferent ceremonies. It is also a liberty, and sometimes even a duty, of nonconformity. Despite all his scruples concerning the right use of Christian liberty, Calvin notes with regard to Jewish ceremonial law that 'it is sometimes important for our freedom to be declared before men'.⁸³ The point is that Christ has freed us from the law and that allegedly excessive legalism obscures Christ's justification by faith. Paul may have circumcised Timothy in order not to offend the Jews (Acts 16:3), but he also rebuked Peter for excessive accommodation of Jewish dietary laws (Gal. 2:11–14) and refused to circumcise Titus (Gal. 2:3) so 'that the truth of the Gospel might

⁷⁹ Coolidge 41. ⁸⁰ Cartwright, *A replye to an answer* 52. ⁸¹ CEWBJ 4:306–7.

⁸² Calvin, *Institutes* 3.19.9. ⁸³ *Ibid.* 3.19.10.

continue with you' (Gal. 2:4).⁸⁴ While Christian liberty could be marshalled in the service of outward conformity in things indifferent, as apologists of royal supremacy did from the vestments controversy onwards, it could also serve as a justification, even duty, of nonconformity, as Puritans emphasised.

In *Bartholomew Fair*, what makes Busy's use of Christian liberty so brilliant is that, in a second step, he gives his tenuous justification of conformity a specious air of nonconformity. Even more, he does so by using the anti-Puritan stereotype of Jewish legalism to his own advantage. Thus, Busy justifies the eating of pig as a declaration of Christian liberty in order to pre-empt the charge of Judaism, which was levelled against Puritans for their strictness in ceremonial questions: 'In the way of comfort to the weak, I will go, and eat. I will eat exceedingly, and prophesy. There may be a good use made of it, too, now I think on't: by the public eating of swine's flesh, to profess our hate and loathing of Judaism, whereof the Brethren stand taxed. I will therefore eat, yea, I will eat exceedingly' (1.6.74–8).⁸⁵ Taking up Calvin's caveat that Christian liberty can be 'endangered in weak consciences' by inflexible strictness in outward ceremonies,⁸⁶ Busy conjures the spectre of Judaism so that he may heroically proclaim the liberating message of the Gospel by eating pig '[i]n the way of comfort to the weak', just as Paul censured Peter for accommodating Jewish dietary laws and refused to circumcise Titus.

Busy's oscillation between conformist and nonconformist interpretations of Christian liberty reflects the Puritan emphasis that there can be no strict rule about the enjoyment of Christian liberty in things indifferent, which depends in any given case on whether it serves to edify or causes offence.⁸⁷ However, his case of conscience is entirely opportunistic and, as he freely admits, 'subject to construction' (1.6.55).⁸⁸ Busy has condemned the fair as idolatrous just a few lines earlier, and his words, 'now I think on't', reveal that his brilliant invocation of Judaising is an improvised rationalisation of his carnal desires (to eat pig). Busy thus plays into the hands of conformist theologians, who accused Puritan nonconformists of anarchy and arbitrary wilfulness. According to Richard Hooker, for instance, the Puritan attitude to Christian liberty 'shaketh universallie the fabrick of government, tendeth to anarchie and meere confusion'.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ Compare with Calvin, *Institutes* 3.19.12. ⁸⁵ CEWBJ 4:307. ⁸⁶ Calvin, *Institutes* 3.19.12.

⁸⁷ Compare with 1 Cor. 9:19–22 or 1 Cor. 10:23. As Calvin comments on Paul's supposed inconsistency in his changing attitude towards conformity with Jewish rites, '[h]ere was a diversity of acts but no change of purpose or mind' (*Institutes* 3.19.12). For the importance of Christian liberty and its Pauline foundations for Puritan nonconformity, see Coolidge 27–43.

⁸⁸ CEWBJ 4:306. ⁸⁹ Hooker 2:374.

Hence, '[t]hose things which the Law of God leaveth arbitrarie and at libertie are all subject unto possitive lawes of men, which lawes for the common benefit abridg particular mens liberties in such thinges as farre as the rules of equitie will suffer. This wee must either maineteine or els overturne the world and make everie man his own commander'.⁹⁰ Jonson, who would later single out Hooker's *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* as the pre-eminent English work 'for church matters'⁹¹ and praise its author as one of England's 'great master[s] of wit and language',⁹² offers in *Bartholomew Fair* a splendid case of such pernicious individualism in the Puritan Busy, who is 'of a most lunatic conscience and spleen, and affects the violence of singularity in all he does' (1.3.108–9).⁹³

Still, a number of critics have found that *Bartholomew Fair* is not entirely unsympathetic towards Puritan revulsion against the abominations of the eponymous fair. Jonson's unflinching portrayal of the petty criminality, ruthless competition, and generally sordid *mores* of the fair raises the question of whether Puritans do not have a point in abstaining from such ungodly pastimes.⁹⁴ However, if the fair is, as Busy's case of conscience suggests, a sphere of Christian liberty, where one may eat pig and freely indulge in other kinds of debauchery, its unappealing sides simply prove the conformist case that Christian liberty needs regulation and cannot be enjoyed at one's individual discretion. The play thus corroborates the authoritarian conclusions of theorists of church government such as John Bridges, who emphasises in his *Defence of the government established in the Church of Englande for ecclesiasticall matters* (1587) that God does not allow 'a varying and vnbrideled licence' in things indifferent; instead, he has 'moderated the libertie which he gauē' in the form of 'the godly lawes of the Church, in which discipline and order is conteyned'.⁹⁵

Significantly, Bridges uses the term 'moderation' not in the sense of reticence in government but in support of a strong assertion of discipline and order. Historians such as Lori Anne Ferrell and Ethan H. Shagan have shown that the Elizabethan and Jacobean rhetoric of moderation was an authoritarian ideology of government control and coercion rather than an expression of a desire for peace or reticence in state violence.⁹⁶ The same is

⁹⁰ Ibid. 2:374–5. ⁹¹ *Informations*, CEWBJ 5:366, l. 102.

⁹² *Discoveries*, CEWBJ 7:530, ll. 651–2. ⁹³ CEWBJ 4:293–4.

⁹⁴ See, for example, Barish 135; Marcus, 'Of Mire and Authorship' 176–7; Collinson, 'Theatre Constructs Puritanism' 160; Slights 5–6; O'Connell 122–5.

⁹⁵ Bridges 671.

⁹⁶ Ferrell; Shagan, *Rule of Moderation*. With regard to the Stuart defence of holiday pastimes, Leah Marcus identifies a similar style of authority that asserts itself, paradoxically, in the language of

true for Christian liberty, which had nothing to do with individual freedom when it was invoked by King James and other theorists of royal supremacy. On the contrary, Christian liberty was an authoritarian ideology of government, which justified the suppression of dissent in an always controversial area of things indifferent. Part and parcel of this ideology was the claim that things indifferent *needed* regulation because individual liberty without moderation was always liable to degenerate into licence.

More specifically, this alleged need for moderation as regulation also served to buttress hierarchical forms of secular as well as ecclesiastical government. The Presbyterian model of church government, based as it was on bottom-up principles of election and representation throughout the ranks of its ecclesiastical structure, was frequently criticised by conformist theologians for lacking the hierarchical control that could prevent its degeneration into chaos and anarchy. As Shagan has shown, this point was often made with reference to the supposedly unbridled and licentious Puritan individual, in whom reason likewise fails to exercise proper hierarchical control over the passions and the body: 'For if the puritans themselves were dangerously ungoverned, it followed that the Presbyterian programme for the Church was a form of *ungovernment*, a release rather than a moderation of sinful affections'.⁹⁷ The lack of moderation on the level of the individual, which is so conspicuously on display in Busy's 'violent singularity', calls for moderation as a governmental measure of repression.

Bridges, for instance, prominently employs this analogy between the individual and the church in his call to moderate Christian liberty with 'the godly lawes of the Church',⁹⁸ when he claims that the Puritans' 'immoderate heate of their inconsiderate zeale' has 'inflamed their passions and patience againste the lawfull authority of the Bishops'⁹⁹ and that they 'haue ouer-shot themselues' in 'this their humor for this Presbyterie'.¹⁰⁰ Such emphasis on the imbalance of the Puritan individual is a staple of anti-Puritan writings. Also the idea of a specifically Puritan 'humour' is evident as early as in 1585, when the vice-chancellor of the University of Cambridge, Andrew Perne, wrote to Burghley and warned him against the Puritans' 'fantastical humours daily given to dangerous innovations' and emphasised the need 'to bridle and restrain the licentious affections of the youth of the university at this day'.¹⁰¹ For anti-Puritan polemicists, there was a clear connection between a lack of governance within the human body,

permission and liberty as opposed to the alleged strictures of the Puritan opposition; see Marcus, *Politics of Mirth*.

⁹⁷ Shagan, *Rule of Moderation* 116. ⁹⁸ Bridges 671. ⁹⁹ *Ibid.* 1315. ¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* 1054.

¹⁰¹ Quoted in Lake, *Moderate Puritans* 63.

manifesting itself in unbridled passions and humoral imbalance, and the lack of governance in church affairs, 'this their humor for this Presbyterie'. In the induction to Jonson's *Magnetic Lady* (1632), Probee likewise draws a parallel between moderation in the microcosmos of the body and moderation in the macrocosmos of the church, when he compares the reconciliation of humours to 'the reconciliation of both churches' and argues that 'the quarrel between humours' is 'the root of all schism and faction, both in church and commonwealth'.¹⁰² Puritan humours were not only a matter of personal ethics, a conventional anti-Puritan slur exposing their moral shortcomings, but the bedrock for the justification of authoritarian church government and its extension over things indifferent.

Bartholomew Fair reproduces this long tradition of alleged Puritan immoderation. In Busy's Christian liberty of eating pig, for instance, moderation is conspicuously absent. Busy's announcement that he will 'eat exceedingly' suggests that his is everything else but a 'reformed mouth'. Indeed, he ends up eating two and a half pigs all by himself (3.6.39).¹⁰³ His drunken railing, which eventually lands him in the stocks as a martyr for the 'holy cause', confirms what Bridges calls the Puritans' 'vnbrideled licence'.¹⁰⁴ In turn, when Quarlous paints the horrors of a Puritan household before the eyes of Winwife, who has set his ambitions on wooing the godly widow Purecraft, he mocks the Puritan ideal of ecclesiastic self-government. As Quarlous imagines the faithful assembly, it is 'the matron, your spouse [i.e., Purecraft], who moderates with a cup of wine, ever and anon, and a sentence out of Knox between' (1.3.73–4).¹⁰⁵ The inversion of gender hierarchies vividly demonstrates the lack of government implied in the Puritan reform programme and echoes King James, who likewise denigrated Puritan government in *Basilikon Doron* by comparing it to Xanthippe's misrule in the household of Socrates.¹⁰⁶ Jonson's satirical vision of Puritan discipline as a wine-drenched gynaeocracy conveys a sense of inverted hierarchies and disorderly procedure, which makes only too clear that Puritan moderation is no moderation at all.

Since Busy conceptualises the fair as a contested site of Christian liberty in his initial casuistry, it is only fitting that it is a site of the spiritual excess and ecclesiastical disorder associated with Puritanism. The fair brings out the worst dissenting instincts in Busy, such as his iconoclastic vandalism against gingerbread men, but especially his claim to divine inspiration and the gift of prophecy. Even before the Littlewit household departs to the

¹⁰² CEWBJ 6:421, ll. 86–9. ¹⁰³ *Ibid.* 4:355. ¹⁰⁴ Bridges 671. ¹⁰⁵ CEWBJ 4:291.

¹⁰⁶ James Stuart, *Political Works* 24.

fair, Busy proclaims: 'I will eat exceedingly, and prophesy' (1.6.74–5).¹⁰⁷ His abuse of Christian liberty manifests itself not only in his gluttonous gorging on pig but also in his prophetic aspirations as an unlawful arrogation of spiritual authority. His dietary incontinence is thus a visible symbol for his spiritual incontinence.

As a prophet, Busy reflects the tendency of anti-Puritan polemicists to denigrate Puritans as some sort of misguided, spiritualist Anabaptists, who make rather too much of individual inspiration in their refusal to submit Christian liberty to royal authority.¹⁰⁸ Already at the Hampton Court Conference, for instance, James recalled the case of the Scottish Presbyterian John Black, who 'would hold conformity with his majesties ordinances for matters of doctrine, but for matters of ceremonie, they were to be left in Christian liberty to every man, as he received more and more light from the illumination of God's Spirit; even till they go mad, quoth the king, with their own light'.¹⁰⁹ Busy too 'is more than an elder'. He is 'a prophet' (1.3.91),¹¹⁰ who 'does dream now, and see visions' (1.3.93),¹¹¹ and who 'derides all antiquity; defies any other learning than inspiration' (1.3.112–13).¹¹² Warming up for his disputation with the puppet Dionysius, Busy invokes the Spirit in most dramatic terms: 'I will not fear to make my spirit and gifts known. Assist me, zeal, fill me, fill me, that is, make me full!' (5.5.33–4).¹¹³ Busy thus confirms James' view that Puritan nonconformists were nothing but 'brain-sicke and headie Preachers',¹¹⁴ better suited for Bedlam than the pulpit.

Adiaphora and Apostasy

As I have argued so far, Jonson's portrayal of Puritan derailment and licentiousness is to be understood in the context of polemical attacks on the Presbyterian platform and Puritan claims to Christian liberty. Puritan ideals of church government are, as *Bartholomew Fair* suggests, the product of misguided hubris, blind to the obvious need for governmental control over the church in order to moderate its excesses. At the same time, however, the play strikes a highly ambivalent note on the relationship between Christian liberty and conformity. The ease with which Busy and his companions are absorbed into the larger world represented by the fair and eventually lose their nonconformist ethos, culminating in Busy's 'conversion' in the theatre, is not

¹⁰⁷ CEWBJ 4:307.

¹⁰⁸ For the most ambitious attempt to link Puritanism to Anabaptist sedition, as it manifested itself in the Anabaptist uprising in Munster in 1534–5, see Ormerod.

¹⁰⁹ Quoted in Cardwell 198. ¹¹⁰ CEWBJ 4:292. ¹¹¹ *Ibid.* ¹¹² *Ibid.* 4:294.

¹¹³ *Ibid.* 4:412. ¹¹⁴ James Stuart, *Political Works* 7.

simply proof of their supposed hypocrisy. Busy's initial fears of idolatrous infection were also a common theme in anti-Nicodemite warnings against outward conformity and anti-theatrical writings that condemned the stage as a source of infectious corruption.

Anti-theatrical as well as anti-Nicodemite discourses were predicated on the notion of a permeable and unstable self, in which – unlike in neo-Stoicist conceptions of selfhood, which Jonson explores in *Sejanus* – the distinction between inward and outward self was always liable to collapse. With Busy's conversion during a puppet play, Jonson suggests that the theatre might be an institution capable of establishing community and religious unity by transforming its spectators. However, Jonson represents this process in the language and conceptual categories of anti-theatricality and anti-Nicodemism. As I will argue in the following, this negative attitude towards the theatre's powers of transformation is probably owed not only to Jonson's conflicted view of the theatre but also to a residual nonconformist sensibility that registers the parallels between Puritan and Catholic concerns about conformity, which affected Jonson's own religious identity.

Despite Busy's nonconformist zeal, his initial insistence on a separation between external profanity and internal purity, as expressed in his claim that 'we may be religious in midst of the profane' (1.6.59),¹¹⁵ soon collapses once he has taken up the scent of the Bartholomew pig. Ironically, Busy is very much aware of the danger of idolatrous infection. He is accordingly worried about how much Win Littlewit enjoys herself at the fair, as he tells her mother: 'Sister, let her fly the impurity of the place swiftly, lest she partake of the pitch thereof' (3.6.34–5).¹¹⁶ Already in Chapter 6, I briefly touched on the danger of infection against which both Catholic and Protestant anti-Nicodemite writers warned. The proverbial pitch (Eccles. 13:1), to which Busy alludes and which is famously cited by Falstaff (1H4 2.4.400–4), was prominent in such admonitions. For instance, Vermigli warns in his discussion of 'dwelling among Infidels' that 'our nature is so framed, by reason of naturall or originall sinne, as we be subiect on euerie side to corruption'; hence, 'the vices of other men are likened vnto pitch, the which sticketh wonderfull fast to the fingers and garments of them which touch it'.¹¹⁷ Catholic writers such as Gregory Martin, Robert Parsons, and Henry Garnet cautioned against the corrupting influence of conformity in very similar terms. Garnet, for instance, moralises the conversion of the former church papist Thomas Bell to Protestantism as

¹¹⁵ CEWBJ 4:306. ¹¹⁶ Ibid. 4:355. ¹¹⁷ Vermigli 2.4.16.

follows: 'This is the miserable progression of lamentable Schismatickes, who trusting too much to their owne cleannes, aduerture to touch pitch'.¹¹⁸ Jonson arguably dramatises such concerns in *Busy*, whose initial intention to remain 'religious in midst of the profane' (1.6.59) is belied by his eventual conversion.¹¹⁹

Puritan debates on nonconformity were closely mirrored by their Catholic counterparts, which drew on the same Biblical precedents, fears of pollution, and Pauline theology of *adiaphora* and Christian liberty.¹²⁰ Unsettling parallels can be drawn between the trajectory of *Busy*'s conversion and Jonson's own biography. As a Catholic, Jonson himself had exposed himself to the danger of infection by practising a form of semi-conformity before he fully returned to the Church of England. Jonson and his wife were cited before the consistory court of London on 10 January 1606, not for failing to go to church but merely for refusing to take the sacrament,¹²¹ a controversial, but apparently widespread practice among Catholics at the time. On the occasion of his second citation on 16 April 1606, Jonson claimed to have gone to church 'this halfe year'.¹²² In *Bartholomew Fair*, *Busy*'s stance towards the idolatrous fair might likewise be described as a form of semi-conformity. *Busy* is adamant that '[o]nly pig was not comprehended in my admonition' (3.6.22)¹²³ and that the fair's temptations are otherwise to be shunned or at least condemned. However, as Littlewit tells his wife, '[n]ow you ha' begun with pig, you may long for anything' (3.6.7).¹²⁴ *Busy* and the Littlewits fully succumb to the sensual temptations of the fair, just as anti-Nicodemite writers predicted. Equally fond of the 'diet-drink of Satan's' (3.6.24-5)¹²⁵ as *Busy*, Jonson too

¹¹⁸ Garnet, *Apology against the defence of Schisme* 118–19. For further references to pitch in the context of religious conformity, see, for example, Parsons, *Brief discours* 6v–7r; Martin, *Treatise of schisme* A2r.

¹¹⁹ CEWBJ 4:306.

¹²⁰ Like a Puritan nonconformist, Gregory Martin insists that the Pauline notion of things indifferent does not excuse conformity if it causes offence (F7v–G3v). Similarly, Robert Southwell alludes to 1 Cor. 8 when he warns against the danger of 'confirming the beleefe of heretikes, in weakening the faith of Catholickes, in quite ouerthrowing the faynte harted and wauering Schismaticks [i.e., conformists]', and mentions 'the daunger of infection by theyre contagious speeches, that crepe like a canker, which to neglect and not to consider is willful blindnesse' (*Epistle of comfort* 171). A manuscript treatise written by either Alban Langdale or William Clitherow, on the other hand, sanctions church attendance precisely because of its status as a thing indifferent: 'if the bare going be, but in his [*sic*] owen nature a thinge indifferent, let every wise man weighe his owen case' (Crosignani et al. 128). This distinctly Pauline argumentation, which centred, like the Puritan debate on conformity, on 1 Cor. 8 (see Crosignani et al. 129), was also adopted by Bell (discussed in Walsham, *Church Papists* 52, 56) and, in the 1600s, by Thomas Wright (Crosignani et al. 366–7). For the authorial attribution of the Langdale/Clitherow treatise, see Crosignani et al. 116–17. Langdale was the chaplain of Viscount Montague, and Clitherow was the brother-in-law of the martyr Margaret Clitherow, both of whom I have already discussed in Chapter 4.

¹²¹ HSS 1:220–1. ¹²² HHS 1:221. ¹²³ CEWBJ 4:354. ¹²⁴ *Ibid.* ¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

eventually gave up his scruples concerning the Lord's Supper and, 'in token of true reconciliation' with the Church of England, 'drank out all the full cup of wine' in the communion.¹²⁶

Jonson's semi-conformity was, as Peter Lake suggests, primarily a gesture of political obedience.¹²⁷ Proponents of semi-conformity suggested that going to church was not so much a religious as a political act. As the manuscript treatise ascribed to either Alban Langdale or William Clitherow puts it, 'yf I pray not with them, if I sett whan they knele, if I refuse theire communion', there is no religious act involved, but only a 'signum distinctivum betwene a trew subiect and a rebell'.¹²⁸ Bell, the subject of Garnet's condemnation, had even set down a formula to be declared in such a case: 'Good people I ame [*sic*] come hither not for any lykinge I have of any sacramentes, service, or sermons accustomedly used in this place, or to exhibite any reverence to the same, but only to give a sygne of my allegiance and true loyalty to my prince, This is the only cause of my cominge and no other'.¹²⁹ Jonson's friend, the ex-Jesuit Thomas Wright, set down a similar formula and argued that it was lawful to attend Protestant sermons, albeit one should abstain from the sacrament and common prayer. Wright was, in fact, the most prominent proponent of semi-conformity in the 1600s and the primary target of Paul V's *breve* from 1606, which condemned the Oath of Allegiance and any sort of conformity.¹³⁰ Wright's influence might thus well have played a previously underappreciated role in Jonson's semi-conformity after the Gunpowder Plot.¹³¹

Semi-conformity was by no means necessarily a form of dissimulation. As Alexandra Walsham has pointed out, 'regularly attending church papists were often anything but fencesitters. In a sense, a church was the most appropriate forum in which to dramatise one's ridicule and repudiation of the Reformation'.¹³² Even a hardliner like Gregory Martin conceded that one might avoid giving offence to one's fellow believers by turning one's presence in church into a performance of protest: 'A very learned Doctor of Diuinitie, and sounde Catholike may lawfully come to heretical sermons

¹²⁶ *Informations*, CEWBJ 5:375, ll. 241–2.

¹²⁷ Lake, 'Jonson and the Politics of "Conversion"' 167–8. ¹²⁸ Crosignani et al. 128.

¹²⁹ Quoted in Walsham, *Church Papists* 57. ¹³⁰ Crosignani et al. 386n.290.

¹³¹ For the text of Wright's formula, see Holmes, *Resistance and Compromise* 98. Wright's recently discovered manuscript treatise on the subject, *De adeundis Ecclesiis Protestantium* (1606?), and the following epistolary exchange with Parsons are reprinted and translated in Crosignani et al. 352–400. The Papal *breve* is reprinted in Dodd 4:cxl–lii. For Jesuit disapproval of Wright's semi-conformity, see also *Records of the English Province* 4:284, 4:372.

¹³² Walsham, *Church Papists* 89.

for the better confuting of them'.¹³³ In *Bartholomew Fair*, Busy might almost be read as a parody of Martin's 'very learned Doctor of Diuinitie', whose holy duty it is to heckle the Protestant service. Busy's semi-conformity too amounts to a dramatisation of dissent, as he 'cannot be silent' (3.6.61),¹³⁴ engages in iconoclastic vandalism, and ends in the stock to 'sigh and groan for the reformation of these abuses' (4.6.73).¹³⁵ What is true for the Catholic semi-conformist is therefore just as true for the semi-conformist Puritan: 'Separation within the Church involved a constantly maintained witness of social and cultural distinctiveness practised against neighbours with whom the godly were in daily face-to-face contact and with whom they met in church communion'.¹³⁶ Parallels between the Puritan Busy and the ideal of the Catholic semi-conformist, both of whom paradoxically dramatise their dissent in the very forum whose abuses they denounce, are not necessarily far-fetched and might indeed be meant to shed a critical light on Catholic as much as on Puritan semi-conformity. In an attack on Bell from c. 1588, one I. G. (John Mush?), for instance, argues that Catholic semi-conformists could hardly be distinguished from their Puritan counterparts when they dramatised their dissent among the infidels:¹³⁷

the protestacion which our comfortoure [i.e., Bell] settethe do[w]ne . . . may be made as well by a puritane as by a catholyke, for ther is not one word in yt to signifie the protester a catholyke, and the puritantes [*sic*] resort to protestantes service not for any lykinge they have of it but merelye for to shewe a sygne of ther temporall loyaltie as the catholykes doe.¹³⁸

However, Busy shows no sign of political loyalty, which might be owed not only to the stereotype of the inherently seditious Puritan but also to a pessimistic assessment of the possibility of loyal dissent as such. The events of 1610 had put considerable pressure on the sort of compromise that Jonson himself had practised in the preceding years. Tellingly, the year of Jonson's re-conversion to Protestantism also saw Wright's final departure from England, 'probably convinced that his long years of cooperation and concessions to the Government had proved fruitless'.¹³⁹ Wright's project of semi-conformity had failed, leaving only the choice between martyrdom

¹³³ Martin, *Treatise of schisme* G2v. Martin's loophole was also taken up by later proponents of semi-conformity such as Bell (Walsham, *Church Papists* 57) and Wright (Crosignani et al. 369).

¹³⁴ CEWBJ 4:356. ¹³⁵ *Ibid.* 4:385. ¹³⁶ Collinson, 'Cohabitation' 62.

¹³⁷ I. G. has traditionally been identified as John Gerard. See Holmes, *Resistance and Compromise* 238n.10. However, Lake and Questier attribute the treatise to John Mush, Clitherow's biographer (*Trials of Margaret Clitherow* 117–24).

¹³⁸ Crosignani et al. 221. ¹³⁹ Stroud, 'Test Case for Toleration' 208.

and conversion, whether sincere or not. As Jonson too suggests in his portrayal of Busy, who falls from one extreme into the other, there is no middle ground.

It is no coincidence that Busy finally converts during the performance of a puppet play, the climax of the fair's entertainments. In fact, the notion of Christian liberty in things indifferent and its Scriptural foundations in the Pauline corpus are equally central to debates on the legitimacy of the theatre as they are to debates on outward conformity. Jonson neatly combines the two issues in Busy's seditious defiance of royal authority towards the end of the play. The play thus offers a paradigmatic instance of the close associations between early modern conceptions of theatricality and debates on outward conformity, which I have traced throughout this entire book.

Because of the theatre's origins in Pagan sacrificial ritual, anti-theatrical writers such as Stephen Gosson argued that 'such men as are erectors of Stage Playes among Christians . . . communicate with the sacrifices and idolatry of the Gentiles'.¹⁴⁰ Hence, going to the theatre is 'Apostacy'¹⁴¹ – or at least an illicit form of Nicodemism, which violates the imperative 'to avoide eury thing that hindereth the outwarde profession of Christianitie'.¹⁴² Notably, even Gosson has to admit that plays 'are naughte of them selues',¹⁴³ just as Paul had declared that 'an idol is nothing in the worlde' (1 Cor. 8:4) and that the eating of sacrificial meats technically falls within the scope of Christian liberty. Like Puritan nonconformists, however, Gosson protests that 'the outward vse of things indifferent, as meats, [is] to be tied to the rule of charitie, and not to be taken, when they offende the consience [*sic*] of the weake'.¹⁴⁴ While few critics were as explicit as Gosson in tying the question of outward conformity to the question of the legitimacy of playgoing, the same Pauline language and argumentation is omnipresent in debates on the legitimacy of the theatre. John Northbrooke, for instance, argues that even if the theatre were indifferent, one ought to refrain 'also from such things as might bee called indifferent, partly least anye of the weaker christians shoulde be corrupted'.¹⁴⁵ As in Busy's concern not to offend the weak brethren, the criterion of edification or offence, respectively, clinches the argument. In his *Vertues Common-wealth* (1603), Henry Crosse likewise concedes that plays 'are not simply forbidden in expresse words' in Scripture, but nonetheless wishes 'to thrust them out as things indifferent, and make them simply vnlawfull'.¹⁴⁶ With reference to 1 Cor. 8, Crosse

¹⁴⁰ Gosson Cir. ¹⁴¹ Ibid. B8r. ¹⁴² Ibid. ¹⁴³ Ibid. B8v. ¹⁴⁴ Ibid. ¹⁴⁵ Northbrooke 72.

¹⁴⁶ Crosse P2r.

notes: 'If indifferent things giue offence to the weake, they ought to bee remooued: for the freedome of those things giueth courage to the defect of grace, to be more vngracious'.¹⁴⁷

In turn, apologists of the theatre pointed out that Scripture does not explicitly condemn the theatre. Thus, Thomas Heywood asks why Christ and his apostles 'were content to passe them ouer, as things tollerated, and indifferent', and condemns 'over-scrupulous heads', who 'carpe at that, against which they cannot finde any text in the sacred Scriptures'.¹⁴⁸ Heywood's argument is picked up by the actor and playwright Nathan Field, son of the Puritan leader John Field and Jonson's protegé. In a letter from 1616, Field points out that 'in God's whole volume (which I have studied as my best part) I find not any trade of life except conjurers, sorceres, and witches, *ipso facto* damned; nay, not expressly spoken against, but only the abuses and bad uses of them'.¹⁴⁹

Despite Jonson's merciless ridicule of Busy's anti-theatrical invective, the play as a whole suggests that there actually is something to the anti-theatrical concern with idolatry. Busy's conversion, or apostasy, during the performance of a puppet play confirms the fear of idolatrous pollution that was voiced by anti-Nicodemite polemicists. Anti-theatrical writers such as the author (Munday?) of *A second and third blast of retrait from plaies and Theaters* likewise frequently point out the theatre's powers to corrupt actors as well as spectators: 'It is maruelous to consider how the gesturing of a plaier, which *Tullie* termeth the eloquence of the bodie, is of force to moue, and prepare a man to that which is il'.¹⁵⁰ Therefore, '[t]here commeth much euil in at the eares, but more at the eies, by these two open windowes death breaketh into the soule'.¹⁵¹ Gosson rehearses the same concerns in the language of idolatry and religious purity that is so prominent in anti-Nicodemite literature: 'yf we be carefull that no pollution of idoles enter by the mouth into our bodies, how dilligent, how circumspect, how wary ought we to be, that no corruption of idols, enter by the passage of our eyes & eares into the soule?'.¹⁵²

Busy similarly warns against the temptation of vision and, like Gosson and *A second and third blast*, to a somewhat lesser degree, against the

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. ¹⁴⁸ Heywood, *Apology* C1r. ¹⁴⁹ Quoted in Pollard 277.

¹⁵⁰ Munday, *A second and third blast* 95. Salvianus, whose *On the Government of God* makes up the 'second blast' of Munday's *Second and third blast*, likewise notes that 'al other euils pollute the doers onlie, not the beholders, or the hearers . . . Onlie the filthines of plaies, and spectacles is such, as maketh both the actors & beholders giltie alike' (Munday, *A second and third blast* 3). For a further patristic precedent for this argument against the theatre, see Tertullian, *De spectaculis* 16.

¹⁵¹ Munday, *A second and third blast* 95–6. ¹⁵² Gosson B8v.

temptation of sound. Arriving at the fair, Busy urges his company to avoid its attractions as best as they can: ‘So, walk on in the middle way, foreright; turn neither to the right hand nor to the left; let not your eyes be drawn aside with vanity nor your ear with noises’ (3.2.24–6).¹⁵³ The fair is, like the theatre, a contagious spectacle whose visual powers of infection are to be avoided at all costs. Initially, Busy repeatedly warns his company with exhortations such as ‘Look not toward them, hearken not’ (3.2.32),¹⁵⁴ or ‘you must not look nor turn towards them’ (3.2.36–7).¹⁵⁵ Dame Purecraft admonishes her son-in-law John Littlewit in similar terms: ‘Son, were you not warned of the vanity of the eye?’ (3.2.57).¹⁵⁶ Jonson is likely alluding to *The vanitie of the eie* (1608) by George Hakewill, the brother of William Hakewill, Jonson’s friend and a fellow-member of the Mermaid Club.¹⁵⁷ In *The vanitie of the eie*, Hakewill anticipates both Busy’s obsession with idolatry and his opposition to the theatre. For instance, Hakewill discusses ‘Howe Idolatry hath a kinde of necessarie dependance vppon the eie’ (title of ch. 2)¹⁵⁸ and argues that ‘the popish religion consistes more in eie-seruice then the reformed’ (title of ch. 25).¹⁵⁹ This iconophobic stance also informs Hakewill’s objections to the theatre. Thus, plays ‘tie the eie in such manner vnto them, as they withdrawe the minde from the contemplation of [God’s] glorie’.¹⁶⁰ Moreover, the theatre also exerts a corrupting influence on the specators’ morals. As Hakewill asserts with reference to the church father John Chrysostome, ‘whiles thou accustomest thy selfe to see such spectacles, insensibly, & by degrees, bidding adue to shame & modestie, thou beginnest to entertaine and practise the same’.¹⁶¹ The boundary between inwardness and outwardness is, as Busy would agree, nowhere more precarious than in vision.

If the eyes are the gateway to external corruption, vision poses a fundamental threat to Busy’s tenet in *Bartholomew Fair* that ‘we may be religious in midst of the profane’ (1.6.59).¹⁶² But, of course, Littlewit has a point when he protests that one cannot just navigate through the fair with eyes closed: ‘how shall we find a pig, if we do not look about for’t? Will it run off o’the spit into our mouths, think you, as in Lubberland, and cry, “Wee, wee”?’ (3.2.59–61).¹⁶³ Hence, it does not take long until the company

¹⁵³ CEWBJ 4:333. ¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 4:334. ¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.* ¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 4:335.

¹⁵⁷ Donaldson, *Ben Jonson* 264. ¹⁵⁸ Hakewill, 13–7. ¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 225–8. ¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 18.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.* 40–1. ¹⁶² CEWBJ 4:306.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.* 4:335. One might argue that Littlewit’s question metaphorically draws attention to the difficulties in demarcating the clear boundaries of semi-conformity, of which Wright’s Jesuit opponents were aware as well. The Jesuit Robert Jones, for instance, pointed out that restricting one’s church attendance merely to the sermon was difficult ‘because sermons are not commonly but

succumbs to the temptations of Smithfield. Remarkably, seeing turns out to be just as pleasurable as eating, recalling Gosson's warning that the 'passage of our eyes & eares' is even more susceptible to idolatrous pollution than 'the mouth'.¹⁶⁴ For instance, Littlewit tells his wife that she 'may long to see as well as to taste' (3.6.10)¹⁶⁵ and to '[l]ook, Win, do, look, a God's name, and save your longing. Here be fine sights' (3.6.48–9).¹⁶⁶ Busy's temptation is likewise as much visual as it is gastronomic: 'He eats with his eyes, as well as his teeth' (3.6.40).¹⁶⁷ Busy's conversion thus already begins with his mere presence at the fair, where '[i]dolatry peepeth out on every side' (3.6.36) and inevitably pollutes its onlookers.¹⁶⁸ When Busy announces that he 'will become a beholder' (5.5.93) after the completion of his conversion, he merely concludes a process that was initiated much earlier.¹⁶⁹

Even though Jonson ridicules Busy's vociferous condemnations of idolatry and the theatre, the Puritan's worries turn out to be quite justified. In addition, Jonson's portrayal of his eventual assimilation into society at large in the language of theatrical corruption and the dangers of (semi-)conformity renders this process highly ambivalent. On the one hand, the theatre's powers of temptation, especially through its visual appeal, may have allowed Jonson to conceptualise it as an institution that undermined sectarianism and promoted an inclusive stance towards religious unity, as Jeffrey Knapp has suggested.¹⁷⁰ Some apologists of the theatre did indeed highlight the theatre's transformative powers, its ability to convert its spectators, one is tempted to say, which they flaunted as proof of the theatre's moral salubrity. As Heywood puts it, 'so bewitching a thing is liuely and well spirited action, that it hath power to new mold the harts of the spectators'.¹⁷¹ On the other hand, critics such as Huston Diehl and Michael O'Connell have shown that playwrights such as Marlowe, Shakespeare, and Jonson displayed a heightened sensibility and ambivalence towards the visual medium of the theatre and its impact on its audiences.¹⁷² Even Heywood seems ambivalent about the theatre's powers of transformation when he

at service-time, it cometh to pass that infinite multitudes run to service and sermons' (*Records of the English Province* 4:372). See also Parsons' reply to Wright, in Crosignani et al. 381. The Jonsons may well have done the same, as is suggested by their presentment on 10 January 1606. According to the court records, 'they refuse not to Come to diuynе seruis but have absented them selves from the Co[mmun]ion' (HSS 1:220).

¹⁶⁴ Gosson B8v. ¹⁶⁵ CEWBJ 4:354. ¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 4:356. ¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 4:355. ¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 4:415. ¹⁷⁰ Knapp 23–57. ¹⁷¹ Heywood, *Apology* B4r.

¹⁷² Diehl, *Staging Reform*; O'Connell. For Jonson's deeply ambivalent attitude towards the theatre in terms of 'a Christian-Platonic-Stoic tradition that finds value embodied in what is immutable and unchanging' (Barish 143), see especially Barish 132–54.

describes them as ‘bewitching’, and such unease with the theatre’s powers to undermine self-determination is also palpable in Jonson’s comedy.¹⁷³

The manner in which the theatre united its spectators in a shared bond of community was especially problematic for religious dissenters. During his years as a Catholic, for instance, Jonson faced the challenge of demarcating and maintaining a sense of religious identity that set him apart from the larger communities with which he nonetheless interacted on a daily basis. As I have argued in Chapter 5, one way in which religious dissenters could conceptualise such a demarcation was with reference to neo-Stoicist conceptions of selfhood, which allow for a radical split between inward and outward self. However, the viability of such a double self seems much more questionable in *Bartholomew Fair*, which gives its due to the concerns of religious nonconformists. Jonson’s characterisation of the theatre’s transformative powers in the language of anti-theatrical and anti-Nicodemite discourses arguably betrays not only a deep-seated scepticism towards the manner in which the theatre could subvert its spectators’ inward sovereignty and sense of selfhood but also a concomitant, residual nonconformist sensibility, an acute awareness of the difficulties of remaining ‘religious in midst of the profane’, with which Catholics wrestled just as much as Puritans.

Authority and Judgement

In the epilogue for the court performance, Jonson ties his concern with religious conformity even closer to the theatre. *Bartholomew Fair* can be read as a portrayal of abused Christian liberty, a failure of the Puritan characters in particular ‘to obserue a meane that there may be a difference betweene libertie and lycence’,¹⁷⁴ which questions the viability of Presbyterian self-government and makes apparent the need for the strong hand of authority in the form of an episcopal polity under royal supremacy. The epilogue spells out this argument more explicitly – but with respect to the theatre, which, as a thing indifferent, is likewise in need of moderation.

In the light of the danger that players might turn the ‘leave’ that is ‘given them’¹⁷⁵ into ‘licence’,¹⁷⁶ Jonson’s epilogue grants the privilege to decide on the scope of the theatre’s liberty entirely to the King, who ‘[c]an tell / if

¹⁷³ For the actual proximity of Heywood’s argumentation to that of his anti-theatrical opponents, see Barish 117–21. For an intriguing contextualisation of the anti-theatrical fear of the loss of selfhood in the context of early modern witchcraft discourses, see Levine.

¹⁷⁴ Calvin, *Commentarie* 92v. ¹⁷⁵ CEWBJ 4:420, l. 4. ¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.* l. 5.

we have used that leave you gave us well, / Or whether we to rage or licence break'.¹⁷⁷ Jonson emphatically states: 'This is your power to judge, great sir, and not / The envy of a few'.¹⁷⁸ As Creaser notes, the play's court performance was presumably staged in the Banqueting House, 'the King's audience-chamber and place of state and judgement',¹⁷⁹ which makes Jonson's deferral to James' judgement particularly pertinent. Jonson thus extends his Erastian claim for the royal 'charge' of 'all things divine' to the realm of literature,¹⁸⁰ acknowledging James' triple office as king, priest, and poet.¹⁸¹ In his attack on the theatre, *Busy* therefore blatantly disregards the King's prerogative to judge things indifferent, not only in religious but also in theatrical affairs.

Like the anti-theatrical writers cited earlier in this chapter, in *Bartholomew Fair* *Busy* styles his attack on the stage as an attack on 'that idol, that heathenish idol' (5.5.4).¹⁸² As Patrick Collinson has pointed out,¹⁸³ *Busy*'s rallying cry 'Down with Dagon, down with Dagon!' (5.5.1)¹⁸⁴ links him to a bill of complaint in the Star Chamber concerning a notorious iconoclastic episode in the Puritan stronghold Banbury, *Busy*'s hometown, on 26 July 1600.¹⁸⁵ Evidently, Jonson is at pains to align opposition to the theatre with Puritan disruption and sedition. When *Leatherhead* replies, 'Sir, I present nothing but what is licensed by authority' (5.5.11) and 'I have the Master of the Revels' hand for't, sir' (5.5.13),¹⁸⁶ *Busy* does not back down in deference to authority. On the contrary, he is just warming up and counters with great verve:

The Master of Rebels' hand, thou hast: Satan's! Hold thy peace: thy scurrility, shut up thy mouth. Thy profession is damnable, and in pleading for it thou dost plead for Baal. I have long opened my mouth wide, and gaped, I have gaped as the oyster for the tide after thy destruction, but cannot compass it by suit or dispute, so that I look for a bickering ere long, and then a battle.¹⁸⁷ (5.5.14–18)

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.* ll. 5–7. ¹⁷⁸ CEWBJ 4:420, ll. 9–10. ¹⁷⁹ Creaser, CEWBJ 4:257.

¹⁸⁰ *Discoveries*, CEWBJ 7:533, l. 707.

¹⁸¹ Compare with Jonson's epigram 4 'To King James', in which he acknowledges James as both a political and a literary authority: 'How, best of kings, dost thou a sceptre bear! / How, best of poets, dost thou laurel wear! . . . Whom should my muse then fly to, but the best / Of kings for grace, of poets for my test?' (CEWBJ 5:114–5, ll. 1–2, 9–10).

¹⁸² CEWBJ 4:410. ¹⁸³ Collinson, 'Theatre Constructs Puritanism' 160–2. ¹⁸⁴ CEWBJ 4:410.

¹⁸⁵ According to the bill, the Queen's High Cross was reportedly demolished by a mob among cries: 'God be thanked, Dagon the deluder of the people is fallen down!'. Iconoclastic deprecations against Dagon were rare in the period. Since *Busy* happens to be from Banbury as well, a deliberate connection between the incident and Jonson's play is likely. See Collinson, 'Theatre Constructs Puritanism' 160–2.

¹⁸⁶ CEWBJ 4:411. ¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

By equating anti-theatricality with Puritan disregard for royal authority, Jonson shrewdly builds a case that brands any opposition to the theatre as sedition. Indeed, opposition to the stage inevitably implied opposition to the King, considering that James had practically established a royal monopoly over the theatre by taking four of the five acting companies in London under the patronage of the royal household.¹⁸⁸

Significantly, Busy's condemnation of the theatre is inseparable from Puritan discontent with the government of the Church of England, not only in his iconoclastic attack on 'Dagon' but also in his threat of a 'bickering' and a 'battle'. As Creaser has shown, Busy's tirade is largely lifted from Richard Bancroft's anthology of statements of Puritan sedition in *Dangerous positions* (1593).¹⁸⁹ Bancroft credits John Field with the following, seditious statement: 'Tush, holde your peace: seeing we cannot compass these things, by suite nor dispute: it is the multitude and people, that must bring them to passe'.¹⁹⁰ The second part of Busy's threat is provided by Giles Wigginton, whom we have already encountered as the hapless victim of the 'zealous pursuivant' Munday: 'wee look for some bickering ere long, and then a battel: which cannot long endure'.¹⁹¹ Both statements are combined in *Bartholomew Fair* in Busy's threat: '[I] cannot compass [thy destruction] by suit or dispute, so that I look for a bickering ere long, and then a battle' (5.5.17–18).¹⁹² Of course, Jonson thoroughly deflates the anti-Puritan paranoia from the 1590s with his satirical portrayal of Busy's seditious rage against puppet players. Omitting Field's more serious threat of a popular uprising by the 'multitude and people', Busy is reduced to a Quixotic, lone warrior against the fair's idolatries. Nonetheless, this invocation of Puritan sedition in the sphere of the theatre makes clear that Busy's refusal to acknowledge royal authority over the theatre is part and parcel of the more general nonconformist refusal to acknowledge royal authority over things indifferent, also in matters of religion.

To be sure, the following 'disputation' (5.5.24)¹⁹³ between Busy and the Puppet Dionysius is nothing 'but hinnying sophistry' (5.5.51).¹⁹⁴ Busy's charge that 'thou hast no calling' (5.5.38) is deflected with specious wordplay:

¹⁸⁸ Dutton, *Licensing, Censorship and Authorship* 9. ¹⁸⁹ Creaser, 'Jonson's "Bartholomew Fair"'.
¹⁹⁰ Bancroft 139. Remarkably, Field's son Nathan, whose defence of the theatre I have already cited (see text relating to note 149) and who is explicitly referenced in *Bartholomew Fair* (5.3.67, CEWBJ 4:397), probably played Cokes or Littlewit in early performances of the play and would have heard his father's words cited by Busy on stage. For the fraught dynamic between Jonson as author and Field as actor in *Bartholomew Fair*, see Johnson 57–63.

¹⁹¹ Bancroft 147. ¹⁹² CEWBJ 4:411. ¹⁹³ *Ibid.* ¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.* 4:412.

'You lie! I am called Dionysius' (5.5.39).¹⁹⁵ Eventually, the debate over the profanity of the theatre degenerates into a mere shouting match:

PUPPET DIONYSIUS. *It is not profane!*

LEATHERHEAD. It is not profane, he says.

BUSY. It is profane.

PUPPET DIONYSIUS. *It is not profane.*

BUSY. It is profane.

PUPPET DIONYSIUS. *It is not profane.*¹⁹⁶ (5.5.53–8)

Some of Jonson's contemporaries perceived that more was at stake in this disputation than just the theatre. Jonson's friend John Selden read the scene as an allegory of religious controversy: 'Ben Jonson satirically expressed the vain disputes of divines by Rabbi Busy disputing with a puppet in his Bartholomew Fair. It is so: it is not so: it is so: it is not so; crying thus one to another a quarter of an hour together'.¹⁹⁷ Without the lack of an authoritarian decision, there is no way to end the debate: 'One says one thing, and another another; and there is, I say, no measure to end the controversy'.¹⁹⁸ Ever since the dispute between Luther and Erasmus, this had been the classic Catholic argument against the relativist implications of *sola scriptura*.¹⁹⁹ However, Jonson's play suggests that an appeal to royal supremacy might resolve the dispute – if only Busy could acknowledge that the play is 'licensed by authority'. Similarly, Seldon draws explicitly Erastian conclusions from the exegetical impasse which he perceived to be allegorised in the disputation: '*Question.* Whether is the church or the scripture judge of Religion? *Answer.* In truth neither, but the state'.²⁰⁰ Again, Jonson's submission of the theatre to royal judgement is closely aligned to the claim for royal supremacy over church government.

Nonetheless, Leatherhead/Dionysius eventually does win the debate when he answers the charge that cross-dressing is prohibited by Mosaic Law.²⁰¹ As Dionysius points out, puppets do not have a gender, which Dionysius proves when it lifts its garments and cites Gal. 3:28: '*we have*

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. ¹⁹⁶ Ibid. 4:413.

¹⁹⁷ Selden 164–5. Selden's account of Jonson's satirical intention is probably well-informed. As already noted, Jonson later changed the name of Inigo Lantern to Lantern Leatherhead. The presence of the former name in Selden's *Table Talk* (164n.17) suggests that Jonson shared an early draft of the play with him.

¹⁹⁸ Selden 164.

¹⁹⁹ Jonson's Jesuit friend Thomas Wright, for instance, makes the same argument in his *Certaine articles or forcible reasons* from 1600 (B2r–B4r).

²⁰⁰ Selden 162.

²⁰¹ 'The woman shal not weare that which pertaineth vnto the man, nether shal a man put on womans raiment: for all that do so, are abominacion vnto the Lord thy God' (Deut. 22.5).

neither male nor female amongst us (5.5.83).²⁰² It is only then that Busy admits defeat: 'I am confuted; the Cause hath failed me' (5.5.90).²⁰³ Ironically, Dionysius' argument echoes the radicalism of his Puritan opponent, as can be gathered from the full verse which Dionysius cites: 'There is nether Iewe nor Grecian: there is nether bonde nor fre: there is nether male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Iesus' (Gal. 3:28). Just as Busy declares his Christian liberty and refutes the charge of Judaizing by eating pig, a practical affirmation of Paul's claim that '[t]here is nether Iewe nor Grecian', the puppet reveals its Christian liberty by lifting its garments, thus demonstrating Paul's claim that 'there is nether male nor female'.²⁰⁴ In a striking parody of his Puritan opponent, Dionysius goes on to declare that '*I speak by inspiration as well as he*' (5.5.88) and that '*I have as little to do with learning as he*' (5.5.88–9),²⁰⁵ which is, in a meta-theatrical sense, equally true for the puppet as its transcendence of the gender binary. In this farcical, meta-theatrical appropriation of the Puritans' insistence on Christian liberty and their alleged spiritualism, Jonson reduces Busy's attack on the puppet play *ad absurdum*. The Puritan is beaten with his own weapons.²⁰⁶

Compelle Intrare

As I have argued in this chapter, *Bartholomew Fair* draws attention to a considerable overlap between debates on religious conformity and the theatre's legitimacy, insofar as both are concerned with their status in relation to idolatry and Christian liberty. In his deference to the King's 'power to judge' plays, Jonson explicitly spells out with respect to the theatre what he exemplifies with respect to religion throughout the whole play, namely, the need to prevent liberty from degenerating into licentiousness. Moreover, *Bartholomew Fair* establishes a concrete connection

²⁰² CEWBJ 4:414. ²⁰³ Ibid 4:415.

²⁰⁴ For a reading of the verse as a declaration of Christian liberty, see, for example, Luther's influential commentary on Galatians: 'Wherefore, with these words, There is neither Iew, &c. Paul mightily aboliseth the law . . . Where Christ is put on (saith he,) there is neither Jew, nor circumcision, nor ceremonie of the law any more' (Luther 176r). Unlike his radical offspring (and Dionysius), however, Luther qualifies this egalitarian impulse: 'there is a difference of persons in the lawe and in the worlde, and there it ought to be: but not before God' (168r–v). To the same effect, see also Calvin, *Sermons upon the Epistle of Saincte Paule to the Galathians* 176r–77r.

²⁰⁵ CEWBJ 4:414.

²⁰⁶ However, Jonson took the issue of cross-dressing seriously, as is attested by his later inquiry to Selden concerning 'the literall sense and historicall of the holy text usually brought against the counterfeiting of sexes by apparel' (quoted in Rosenblatt and Schleiner 44). As can be gathered from Selden's reply from 25 February 1616, Deut. 22:5 reflects a prohibition of idolatrous worship that included cross-dressing. See Rosenblatt and Schleiner.

between the two issues in the person of Busy, who not only arrogates authority to himself in matters of religion in his claims to inspiration and prophecy but also disregards the royal prerogative to license or ban plays in his anti-theatrical riot in the fair. The play's literary politics are thus intricately related to its religious politics.

Bartholomew Fair may trivialise many of the concerns about religious dissent voiced by Elizabethan and Jacobean opponents of religious toleration and reproduced in the plays discussed so far. In *Bartholomew Fair*, inward dissent is no longer perceived to be a threat to political stability, and those who make it their business to spy on others, such as Justice Overdo, are ridiculed for their obsession with imaginary seminary priests and other 'enormities'. Self-proclaimed martyrs are not dangerous subversives, but deluded at best. Jonson, one might argue, lowers the stakes of religious conflict by transposing it into a comic register. Nonetheless, I have argued that the inclusive stance of Jonson's comedy has often been mistaken for a tolerant impulse. G. M. Pinciss believes that Jonson propagates a 'liberal position' with 'profounder, Christian implications',²⁰⁷ and Shuger observes that the play offers a lesson in 'cosmic humility', where 'the hypocrites must throw off their oversized masks and (like true Christians) sit down to dinner with thieves and publicans'.²⁰⁸ Similarly, Brian Walsh concludes that 'inclusiveness is enabled by a leveling effect produced by the revelation of a spectrum of Puritan behavior, whereby the sins of Puritans are gradually revealed to blend into a more generalized portrait of human misdoing'.²⁰⁹ However, Quarlous' reminder in *Bartholomew Fair* that even Adam Overdo is but 'flesh and blood' (5.6.80)²¹⁰ is not only a gesture of humility but also a means of cutting the Puritans and their Presbyterian ambitions down to size.

Universal fallibility does not justify egalitarian politics. On the contrary, it calls for the strong hand of authority. As Shagan puts it, 'the conformist position was based upon the premise that the Church was incapable of self-restraint and thus had to be moderated externally by magistrates who settled disputes and set firm rules to regulate *adiaphora*'.²¹¹ By the same token, the integrative stance of Overdo's invitation to supper at the end of the play is by no means a reconciliation on equal terms, but requires that the Puritans give up their spleen. The play is thus an instance of Ferrell's observation that Jacobean anti-Puritan polemic 'aimed at silencing the moderate Puritan voice within the Church', and not just 'the extreme

²⁰⁷ Pinciss 356. ²⁰⁸ Shuger 73. ²⁰⁹ Walsh 41. ²¹⁰ CEWBJ 4:419.

²¹¹ Shagan, *Rule of Moderation* 112.

sectarian voices outside it'.²¹² The fragile social harmony at the end of *Bartholomew Fair* can likewise only persist if Busy keeps his mouth shut – which he does. The Puritan, who declared earlier that 'I cannot be silent' (3.6.61),²¹³ does not speak a single line after his defeat.

When Overdo invites the whole company to supper, he cites the Pauline verse (2 Cor. 13:10) that is so crucial to the debate between Puritans and conformists and that James had already quoted in his address to parliament in 1610: '[F]or my intents are *ad correctionem, non ad destructionem; ad aedificandum, non ad diruendum*' (5.6.93–4).²¹⁴ Edification was the decisive criterion for the Puritans in the question of whether Christian liberty licensed conformity or required a stand of nonconformity. Far from advancing 'an ostensibly generous philosophy of moral healing',²¹⁵ the characterisation of the secular magistrate as an agent of edification therefore amounts to an Erastian coup. By claiming edification as the prerogative of the secular magistrate, Overdo and James countermines the nonconformist appeal to edification as a criterion for rejecting royal supremacy. Hence, the Jacobean appeal to edification does not imply 'a more tolerant policy in matters of religion'.²¹⁶ On the contrary, James cites Paul in his 1610 speech to Parliament in the context of a reassertion of his royal power, which also includes his right to 'apply sharpe cures, or cut off corrupt members, let blood in what proportion [he] thinks fit, and as the body may spare'.²¹⁷ When James ordered that 'the rotten contagious member', the anti-Trinitarian Bartholomew Legate, 'be cut off from the church of Christ',²¹⁸ he demonstrably had no scruples about asserting his right to do so, even if the legality of the procedure was controversial.

If [t]he social reassimilation of the Puritans in *Bartholomew Fair* offers a more hopeful vision than that found in Jonson's earlier comedy *The Alchemist*,²¹⁹ we may therefore have to ask for whom. Much criticism of the play rests on the implicit assumption that 'absolute religious segregation'²²⁰ is a sign of intolerance and that Jonson's alleged 'desire to break down sectarian walls'²²¹ is, in turn, a tolerant impulse. However, when revisiting the intuitively liberal connotations of terms such as 'Christian liberty' and 'moderation' and recovering their authoritarian

²¹² Ferrell 7. ²¹³ CEWBJ 4:356.

²¹⁴ CEWBJ 4:420. In the Geneva Bible, Cor. 13:10 is translated as follows: 'Therefore write I these things being absent, lest when I am present, I shulde vse sharpenes, according to the power which the Lord hath giuen me, to edification, and not to destruction.'

²¹⁵ Walsh 53. ²¹⁶ Pinciss 351. ²¹⁷ James Stuart, *Political Works* 308.

²¹⁸ *Complete Collection of State Trials* 2:734. ²¹⁹ Preedy, 'Performance' 239. ²²⁰ Walsh 54.

²²¹ Knapp 45.

ideological uses, *Bartholomew Fair* appears to offer a far more intolerant take on religious dissent than has usually been recognised. The play's ridicule of martyrdom as deluded religious fanaticism with no grounding in a society that has transcended the bloody persecutions of the past is not to be taken at face value, but needs to be understood in the context of Jacobean attempts to devalue Catholic resistance to the Oath of Allegiance. While plays such as *The Jew of Malta* embody an exclusive form of intolerance by demonising, exposing, and punishing dissenters on stage, the intolerance of *Bartholomew Fair* can be characterised as inclusive in its pointed refusal to acknowledge the moral and spiritual stakes of religious dissent and its simultaneous insistence that dissenters be integrated into society at large. If there is a dominating image for the play's religious politics, it is Jesus' banquet parable (Luke 14:12–24), especially his command *compelle intrare* (compel them to come in), which has ever been the watchword of outward conformity since Augustine cited it in his conflict with the Donatists and which is re-enacted in the conclusion of *Bartholomew Fair*.²²²

Despite its inclusive and apparently welcoming character, such hospitality remains a mode of coercion, as Hooker makes all too clear in his application of the banquet parable to religious dissent: 'what cause have wee given the world to thinke that we are not readie . . . to use any good meane of sweet compulsion to have this high and heavenly banquet larglie furnished?'.²²³ Indeed, James came to prefer 'sweet compulsion' over the Foucauldian 'liturgy of punishment'.²²⁴ As Busy's conversion in *Bartholomew Fair* suggests, the theatre, with its corrosive effect on non-conformity, might just be such a form of 'sweet compulsion' – a form of non-violent social discipline that undermines its spectators' inward sovereignty even while appealing to an inclusive sense of liberty from Puritan stricture. Fittingly, therefore, Bartholomew Cokes wishes to 'ha' the rest o' the play' (5.6.95)²²⁵ in the communal and inclusive setting of Overdo's edifying dinner party, who 'will have none fear to go along' (5.6.92–3).²²⁶ And, since *Bartholomew Fair* is a comedy, go along they must.

²²² See Brown. For early modern reproductions of Augustine's argumentation, see also Bunny 23–6; Sandys 192; Savage 110–12.

²²³ Hooker 2:356. ²²⁴ Foucault 49. ²²⁵ CEWBJ 4:420. ²²⁶ Ibid.