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Metropolitan Puritans and the Varieties of Godly Reform in Interregnum Monmouth

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Oliver Cromwell’s opening speech to the Assembly of Saints (Barebones Parliament) on 4 July 1653 has been singled out as ‘the high-water mark of radicalism’ because his millenarian and reformist language revealed the influence of London-based Fifth Monarchists. But Cromwell began his speech not with biblical references but with ‘that case of Wales, which I must confess for my own part I set myself upon, if I should inform you what discountenance that business of the poor people of God there had’ by the Rump’s refusal to renew the Propagation Act ‘to the discountenancing of the honest people there’, despite the seemingly obvious proof ‘that God kindles a seed there . . . hardly to be paralleled since the primitive times’. In other words, Cromwell brought in the Saints because the Rump had refused to renew the 1650 Act for the Better Propagation and Preaching of the Gospel in Wales. The connection between Westminster politics and Welsh religion was certainly uppermost in Cromwell’s mind in 1653, even if this was not his main motivation. Indeed, metropolitan Puritans had a surprisingly intimate connection with Wales.

Early seventeenth-century Puritans viewed Wales as one of the ‘dark corners of the land’ in which error and superstition flourished. They

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3 Worden, Rump, esp. p. 345.
bemoaned the combination of clerical ignorance and poverty, the thriving traditional, festive culture, and the strength of Catholicism (at least in the area around Monmouth), and they called on Westminster to act. Godly reformers got their wish. In February 1650 the Rump Parliament imposed a new ecclesiastical system – some would argue a novel system of government – on to the region. The Propagation Act empowered lay commissioners for the next three years to receive charges and examine witnesses against any minister or schoolmaster for ‘Delinquency, Scandal, Malignancy, or non Residency’ and, if need be, to eject them. The commissioners also could appoint any minister or master recommended by a select body of ministers. Because the 1650 Act is one of the few pieces of legislation dealing with Wales in the early modern period, Welsh historians have seized on it as ‘a milestone’ in Welsh history.4 But its role in the history of the Republic is larger; godly hopes and fears throughout the Republic centred on Wales and on the Propagation Act.5 The very term ‘dark corner of the land’, instead of suggesting insignificance, pinpoints an important battlefield for hearts and minds.

Of course, most inhabitants of the ‘dark corners’ did not view themselves as needing rescuing. Interregnum history can be written as the history of local resistance to a ‘kind of minority rule’ from the centre: to the Rump, the Saints, the Protectorate, and the major-generals.6 Reactions against the Propagation Act and later disputes in Interregnum Wales underscore this division and reaction against metropolitan, godly interference. Yet Welsh reactions also reveal divisions within the localities

as well as *within* Westminster and London. As Derek Hirst reminds us, the ‘minority rule’ of the Republic still relied on the consent and alliances of a few in the centre and in the localities.\(^7\) Rather than a simple centre–periphery dichotomy, lines of influence and alliance connected metropolis and locality.

One can witness these ties in the history of Monmouth, a small regional market town (probably not above 2,000 inhabitants) where the modest River Monnow and the more navigable River Wye converge, some thirty miles north of Bristol across the Severn.\(^8\) For, in 1614, Monmouth became the focus of one metropolitan effort to reform Wales when it received a sizeable bequest that established a grammar school, an almshouse and a preaching lectureship, to be governed by the Haberdashers’ Company of London. A rich set of records kept by the Haberdashers, a later Chancery case involving the Monmouth school, and surviving correspondence and pamphlets by several protagonists allow us to examine metropolitan–Monmouth interaction from the early Stuart period to the highpoint of metropolitan Puritan interest in the Monmouth region during the early 1650s, and the ensuing competition between reforming ideals.

I

In his will composed in December 1614, William Jones, a wealthy Hamburg merchant, bequeathed £9,000 to build and maintain an almshouse and a grammar school, as well as to provide stipends for a lecturer or preacher (£66 per annum), a schoolmaster (£60), and an usher or master of the lower form (£30) in Monmouth. Jones left funds to support these institutions in the hands of the officers of his own London trade guild, the Haberdashers’ Company. The Monmouth school was to be free for all born within the town as well as for all born in the county (to a maximum of 100 places), saving only a 2s. entry fine. Jones gave the Haberdashers’ Court of Assistants oversight of the school and expected


\(^8\) Monmouth had about 400 hearths according to tax registers in the 1660s: K. E. Kissack, *Monmouth: The Making of a County Town* (1975), p. 50.
them to send inspectors to Monmouth annually, while he required the lecturer to examine the students’ learning twice a year and to report any deficiencies to the Haberdashers. The lecturer was not to engage in pluralism or ‘whoredom’. The almshouse had actually been built by September 1614, and Jones himself chose two of the first twenty residents. Henceforth the governors were to choose the poor people (in practice, virtually all aged) to inhabit the almshouses.9

Little is known about Jones. Yet his motivation can be considered Puritan both because he established lectureships and because he gave the Haberdashers responsibility for them. For lectureships were a way of emphasizing sermons over liturgy, and the Haberdashers were closely associated with Puritan lectureships. After Jones died in late 1614 or early 1615 in Hamburg, his London memorial sermon was preached before the Haberdashers by a famous Puritan, John Downham, whom the Haberdashers had appointed to fill the St Bartholomew Exchange lectureship which Jones had recently established.10 For his life, we have only rumours. One town ‘tradition’ from the early nineteenth century suggests that Jones was a native of Newland, Gloucestershire (three and a half miles south-east of Monmouth), but worked in Monmouth, before becoming first ‘shop-boy’, then clerk, then factor abroad for a London merchant, who eventually made him a partner.11 This tradition loosely fits that retailed much earlier in Thomas Fuller’s History of the Worthies of England (1662). Fuller suggested that Jones had not been worth ‘ten groats’ before leaving Monmouth for London and subsequently enriching himself in Hamburg, selling ‘Welch cottons’, a woollen good with a cotton-like nap.12 His home-town (or towns) memories seem to have

9 William Meyer Warlow, A History of the Charities of William Jones (Bristol, 1899), pp. 18–30; Guildhall Library [hereafter GL], MS 15,898; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson A351, p. 11 and deposition of Thomas Bridges.


been bitter-sweet. One tradition claims that Jones returned disguised as a beggar to Newland, only to be refused relief and advised to seek help in Monmouth. Jones's several bequests to the Haberdashers included £5,000 to support a preacher and poor relief in Newland. He appears to have distrusted Monmouth officials – neither his will nor the letters patent issued by James I confirming Jones's bequests mention any role for the Monmouth people in managing his charities. Thus, William Jones's action was especially Puritan because of whom he did and whom he did not want to oversee it.

At the time of his bequest Monmouth was hardly godly. Monmouth, which fell in overlapping jurisdictions – Monmouthshire, Hereford diocese, and the court of the Council in the Marches – also lay near parts of Llandaff diocese, Herefordshire, and the Forest of Dean. Perhaps because of competing authorities, the Monmouth region long continued a largely traditional religious practice, heavily influenced by Catholicism. Politically, socially and economically, Monmouth lay within the 'Raglan interest', an area controlled by the Somersets (earls and later marquesses of Worcester), who were perhaps the richest family in the kingdom, worth in the early Stuart period between £10,000 and £24,000 per annum. The holder of the title lived at Raglan Castle, not quite seven miles south-west of Monmouth, and controlled north Monmouthshire (and much of upland south Wales). Edward Somerset, fourth earl of Worcester (d. 1628) was of mildly Catholic or traditionalist sympathies; his son, Henry, fifth earl and first marquess of Worcester (d. 1646) was strongly Catholic.

Patrick Collinson, who defines Puritanism as 'one half of a stressful relationship', has also recently argued that the Wye valley, indeed most of the region west of the Severn, experienced intense religious cultural conflict during the early Stuart period, as the populace aggressively

13 Society of Antiquaries, MS 341/IV, f. 47. He would establish at Newland that upon the death of an almsperson, a meeting of parishioners would nominate three persons to the company who would choose one.
revived a traditionalist, festive culture. Among his examples are the violence which occurred at the ‘dauncing[,] Drinkinge[,] and other Idle ma[y]games’ in the Goodrich churchyard in Herefordshire just over five miles north-east of Monmouth during Whitsun 1608, and the more organized May games at Hereford of 1609. The Goodrich Whitsun dispute involved many from surrounding parishes such as Whitchurch (four miles from Monmouth) and pitted several revellers, including a publican, a gentleman, and one known to disparage ‘such as were of Civill and quiet lief and behaviouire and especially the ministers and professor[s] of the word of god’ against servants and friends of the Goodrich vicar. Though the violence threatened did not result in any lasting injury, the disputants feared its ‘evil example [to] others in that Countrey neare Wales’. The Hereford Whitsun games of 1609 ‘brought forth . . . a number of knights, esquiers, and Gallants . . . from many partes of the land, to meete at a horse-race neere Hereford . . . [as well as] running har[ ]es . . . , Cockes of the game . . . , [and] good store of money . . . to lay wagers’. Those attending were led by the Somerset clan, including Henry, Lord Herbert of Raglan, and his younger brothers. The celebrations also featured a morris dance of centenarians, including one from Llangarron, five and a half miles north of Monmouth.

A few years earlier, in Whitsun week 1605, another disturbance had begun when Catholics tried to bury a woman according to the traditional rites in south-west Herefordshire, only to face arrest. The Catholics released a prisoner from a constable at javelin point, and hundreds remained armed in a short-lived attempt to resist his re-arrest. As might be expected, neither the government nor later historians uncovered the exact instigators of the ‘riot’, but the investigation revealed north Monmouthshire ‘almost wholly corrupted’, and groups of disaffected Catholics up and down the Monnow valley at the Cwm, Llanrothal and

18 *Old Meg of Hereford-shire, for a Mayd Marian: And Hereford Towne for a Morris-daunce* (1609), esp. sigs. A4v, B1, B3.
the Darren (three, four and eight miles north-west of Monmouth respectively). A search of the region turned up no armed supporters, but dozens of ‘altars, images, books of superstition, relics of idolatry’. Indeed, Jesuits had probably already established themselves at the Cwm (and the Cwm would become the Jesuits’ hub when their mission was formalized as the college of St Francis Xavier in 1622). The Privy Council sent down to pacify the region Edward, fourth earl of Worcester, himself of Catholic sympathies and a largely Catholic family, who had granted the Jesuits lands at the Cwm, and who allowed Jesuits to minister to his own family at Raglan. Unsurprisingly, Worcester ‘tooke a more milde course’ with the disaffected.19

What do these Jacobean activities have to do with Jones’s benefaction? Simply that in the three valley lowlands surrounding and emanating from Monmouth – the isolated Monnow valley to the north-west towards the Golden Valley, and the Wye valleys to the north-east towards Ross, and south towards Chepstow – traditional, festive and recusant culture battled an incipient godly one (the 1605 Herefordshire Catholic disturbance began, according to one apologist, with ‘the Minister of the place most obstinately refusing to bury’ the recusant).20 Jones probably viewed Monmouth as in need of significant reform. Would a Hamburg merchant know of recent riots and disorders in the region? Perhaps. Several pamphlets published in London discussed the disturbances of Whitsun 1605. One, The Late Commotion of Certayne Papists in Herefordshire (1605), expressed concern that ‘Justices of Peace in those parts’ should allow ‘that Priests and Jesuites should swarme so thick [there, as] in any partes of England, or Wales’.21 And, in the wake of the Gunpowder Plot, even King James I

20 P. R. [Robert Parsons], A Treatise Tending to Mitigation towards Catholicke-Subjects in England (1607), p. 6.
noted ‘the rebellious behaviour used in Herefordshire’ (meaning the disturbances on the Herefordshire–Monmouthshire border).\textsuperscript{22}

In theory, then, Jones left moneys to the Haberdashers to spearhead godly, Puritan reform in the locality, to evangelize south Wales and the Wye valley. In practice, although the Haberdashers kept careful records and sent inspectors regularly to Monmouth until at least 1630, the company’s officers afforded Monmouth magistrates much influence in managing Jones’s bequest.\textsuperscript{23} For example, the Haberdashers appointed the first usher upon the recommendations of ‘the mayor and townsmen of Monmouth’.\textsuperscript{24} The Haberdashers even settled controversies with town officials through negotiation. Thus, in November 1617, when the company’s Court of Assistants learned that ‘great negligence’ by schoolmaster John Owen had caused enrolment to plummet, the Haberdashers summoned Owen to London to answer the charges, and also wrote to Monmouth’s mayor, bailiffs and common council to verify the accusation. In January, Owen came to London and resigned after admitting he had been negligent, and in March the Haberdashers named Humphrey Crewes as his replacement, after conferring with several London schoolmasters and preachers. One week later, however, Owen renounced his resignation and produced a letter of support from ‘diverse of the town’ on his behalf. The Haberdashers refused to overturn their appointment of Crewes, but in November they generously promised to pay Owen £20 per annum for three years, and even lend him £50, so that he could purchase a position for himself somewhere else.

The Haberdashers continued to maintain their right to select school officers, lecturers and almshouse inmates. But they relied upon a few local advisers. When, in May 1637, the Haberdashers realized that the place of school usher was vacant, they waited upon advice from the Monmouth and Newland lecturers and the present master and his assistant (an \textit{ad hoc} position created to help aged masters) before proceeding to elect a new one. After the ancient Crewes died in 1638, the Haberdashers named his assistant to replace him only upon receiving recommendations from the Monmouth and Newland lecturers as well as from


\textsuperscript{23} Inspections are recorded for 1617, 1620, 1623, 1624, 1627, 1630; see GL, MS 15842/1, ff. 20v, 215r, 216r, 231r, 238r, 247v, 261v.

\textsuperscript{24} GL, MS 15842/1, fo. 192r–v; Warlow, \textit{Charities}, pp. 45, 343.
the mayor, bailiffs and ‘very many of the better sort’ in Monmouth. Through the 1630s, then, on basic administrative matters, London guild officers and clergymen shared a consensual vision with Monmouth magistrates.25 Ian Archer uses the example of William Jones’s charity to make the more general point that ‘because these endowments involved distributions to communities often remote from London, the capital was becoming more enmeshed with provincial society’.26 But such contact could be a point of fissure as well as fusion as the late 1640s and 1650s would show.

II

Stephen Roberts notes how the solidly Royalist affections of the southern Marches can be explained in part because the royalist Raglan interest dominated the region.27 Monmouth and the southern Welsh Marches quietly remained in the royalist back lines for several years, and became a military arena only from late 1644. Parliamentary forces seized Monmouth in September 1644 only to lose it again in November. Royalist troops from nearby Goodrich and Raglan Castles and Abergavenny, perhaps with the support of townspeople and under the command of Sir Trevor Williams of Llangibby and Lord Charles Somerset (younger brother to Edward, Lord Herbert of Raglan), recovered Monmouth for the king. But Sir Trevor would soon abandon the royalist cause. Not only did his mother’s family and that of his wife ally him to the region’s few parliamen­tarian supporters, but Williams also abhorred the king’s increasing reliance on Irish Catholics. In April 1645 Sir Trevor had sent Moore Pye, an Anglican cleric of Llantilio Crossenny (seven miles west of Monmouth), to inform the Committee of Both Kingdoms that he could assure Parliament of the support of the north Monmouthshire gentry. In late October 1645, Sir Trevor threw down his royalist commission and led a band to help parliamentary forces seize Monmouth town for Parliament, and the castle fell soon thereafter. In November, however, Sir Trevor had to

25 GL, MS 15842/1, ff. 203v, 206v, 207r, 209r.
beg for parliamentary reinforcements at Monmouth, as his ‘countrey’ irregulars (being instigated by some malignants in the Towne) began to draw homewards, telling Sir Trevor ‘that they did not come to keep garrisons’. Even as Parliament’s forces closed in on victory, Lord Charles Somerset led a series of savage royalist raids in the region in December 1645 and January 1646, and Parliament’s forces in Monmouth were almost betrayed to him. In August 1646, Raglan Castle was one of the last royalist redoubts to surrender, to be slighted and never rebuilt.

Perhaps because the ‘Raglan stranglehold’ on the religious and political make-up of the region collapsed without being replaced, tensions grew, not lessened, in the Monmouth region from the end of the First Civil War. By late 1645, Peter Gough, Monmouth school’s usher, had fled because of the ‘troubles’, and the Haberdashers replaced him with Moore Pye (Sir Trevor Williams’s erstwhile messenger) by June 1646. Sir Trevor made an unsuccessful bid for the Monmouth borough seat at a by-election at the end of 1646, and appears to have resented that Westminster ignored his political ambition. Although Sir Trevor (and north Monmouthshire) stayed aloof from the Glamorganshire royalist rising in 1647, his parliamentary allegiance would soon fall away. By late April 1648, many in south Wales armed again for the king. Some planned a royalist (or at least anti-parliamentarian) rising, and Sir Trevor seized Chepstow and decaying Monmouth castles briefly for the king in May, presumably now allying with the former ‘malignants in the

28 A Full Relation of the Desperate Design of the Malignants, for the betraying of Monmouth Towne and Castle (1645), pp. 2–3.


30 For extracts of the diary, missing since 1859, see Warlow, Charities, p. 97; Fred J. Hando, Monmouth Town Sketch Book (Newport, Gwent, 1964), pp. 39–41.

31 A list of prisoners taken, and those that were slain by colonell Horton in South-Wales (1648), pp. 2–3. For Sir Trevor Williams, see Roberts, ‘How the west was won’.
Towne’. But Cromwell himself marched through the area; and by the end of the month, Chepstow and Monmouth fell to parliamentarian troops, who arrested Williams and others.  

Monmouth was secured for the new Republic. Yet, those encouraged by Parliament’s second victory in south Wales to seek a new religious settlement for the Monmouth region might have despaired of the work ahead. In the 1640s, the Jesuit college at the Cwm housed perhaps two dozen priests, including one who kept a grammar school; its lands extended into Dixton parish adjacent to Monmouth; and every Saturday the Jesuits purchased at least a horse-load of provisions at Monmouth’s market. Further, Monmouth region remained a centre of traditional culture. In the hard winter of 1652, the Monmouth poor expressed their displeasure with the Rump and its taxes by tarring and feathering an excise farmer. They ‘made him swear on the Bible, that he should be an honest man’, before freeing the befeathered official.  

The Monmouth elite also sought to escape external influence over their social and religious affairs. It would be surprising if the relation between the town and the London overseers of the charity remained unaffected by the turmoil of the late 1640s. In 1649 a disagreement occurred over appointments of poor persons to the Monmouth almshouse. In August, as was customary, the town nominated three persons for a vacancy in the almshouse, of whom the Haberdashers selected one William Morris. In October, members of the company’s court visiting Monmouth (evidently resuming pre-war inspections) were surprised to discover that instead of Morris, the mayor and aldermen had placed in the vacancy James Philpot, who was not only aged and poor but also had formerly been mayor. The matter appeared to be resolved when the mayor and twelve aldermen signed a letter renouncing all claim to appoint almspeople, after which the company’s visitors agreed to allow  


34 *The Excise-mens Lamentation: or, An Impeachment in behalf of the Comons of this Nation, against their insulting Publicans, and cruell Oppressors and Extortioners* (1652), p. 5.
Philpot to retain his room and promised Morris that he would fill the next vacancy. Yet, the following July the Haberdashers would learn that the town mayor and bailiffs had again ignored their wishes, this time regarding a woman’s almshouse place.35

III

The almshouse dispute of 1649 presaged nearly a decade of misunderstandings, controversies and alliances between Monmouth and London/Westminster officials, as leading politicians and godly reformers interested themselves in Jones’s charitable establishment, Monmouth and the surrounding region. On 5 January 1652, Colonel Thomas Harrison, from August 1649 commander of all forces in south Wales and England west of the River Severn, and Captain John Nicholas presented to the Haberdashers’ court articles detailing the ‘scandal and malignancy’ of Robert Brabourne, lecturer for Monmouth, which articles Harrison and Nicholas asserted had already been proven.36 Harrison (henceforward major-general, a contemporary courtesy title) was just entering two dramatic years when his influence would become ‘second in the nation’ next to that of Cromwell. Harrison had urged passing the Propagation Act and, at the end of 1651, had hoped Parliament would be ‘relieving the oppressed, and opening a wider door to the publishing of the everlasting Gospel’.37 Brabourne’s malignancy had been proven before the commissioners for the propagation which Harrison headed and which included Nicholas (later an ejector for Monmouthshire under the Ordinance for Scandalous Ministers of 1654, assessment commissioner for the country throughout the 1650s, and deputy in charge of Monmouthshire under Major-General James Berry in 1655–6).38 Given that

35 GL, MS 15842/1, ff. 340v, 343r–v, 347r.
36 In December 1647, Brabourne supposedly had scuffled there with the chaplain of one of Cromwell’s officers; his general haunt was thought to be the Bear tavern: Warlow, Charities, p. 97.
Brabourne had served since 1617, and that the Haberdashers recorded
no complaint or 'scandal' against Brabourne since he began, and that
Brabourne later would return as schoolmaster in the town and minister
elsewhere, the charges may well have had more to do with the reforming
agenda of Harrison and his radical religious cronies than with Brabourne.

At the same meeting at which Harrison and Nicholas informed them
of Brabourne's 'malignancy', the Haberdashers read letters from both
another Council of State member, Lieutenant-General Charles Fleetwood,
and Lord General Oliver Cromwell himself nominating Roger Charnock
to replace the dismissed lecturer. Although the Haberdashers dragged
their feet by demanding a 'trial' sermon from Charnock, they did appoint
him in February 1652, albeit with a two-year probationary period. About
six months later Cromwell also recommended Walter Cradock for the
Newland lectureship. The Haberdashers, however, rejected Cromwell's
nominee and eventually awarded the appointment to one Samuel Fawcet,
a London-based 'company protégé', for whom they had provided a stipend
since 1632.39 Fawcet had preached before the Haberdashers in 1641,
when he had identified the troublemakers of Israel as including evil magistrates,
evil ministers, Jesuits, sectaries and evil livers. But not Puritans.

I heare sometimes in this City, some men cry out vehemently against
Puritans, puritans, what monsters they are . . . I am not yet learned enough
to interpret the meaning of that word Puritan, I know that with that
staffe, the prophane world beates all that are better than themselves.40

In the 1650s the London Haberdashers confronted a godliness – that of
Harrison and Cromwell, of Charnock and Cradock – much different
from Fawcet's and their own.

Why did these Westminster Independents and millenarians lobby the
Haberdashers so heavily over the Monmouth religious establishment?
Cromwell, through his paternal great-grandfather of Glamorgan and
through his connection with godly ministers from Monmouthshire in

39 GL, MS 15842/1, ff. 354r, 357r; Seaver, Puritan Lectureships, p. 162.
40 Samuel Fawcet, A Seasonable Sermon for these Troublesome Times. Preached to the
Right Worshipfull Companie of the Haberdashers, November 23. 1641 (1641), p. 24, passim.
1642, had a long-standing connection to south Wales. But his actions and those of his metropolitan allies stemmed more from recent regional reforms, exemplified by Charnock and Cradock. While nothing is known about Charnock’s career before Monmouth, he would later describe himself as Protector Cromwell’s ‘preacher’. Cradock, who had been born in Llangwm, south-west of Monmouth, in 1610, had spent much time in London. Cromwell was well aware of Cradock’s religious agenda.

Cradock had been an early follower of William Wroth’s Congregationalism in Llanfaches, the ‘Antioch’ of Welsh Dissent. In the 1630s the government censured Cradock’s speaking out against the Book of Sports and Sabbath-breaking, and during the 1640s he retreated from Wales to a London lectureship and subsequently became chaplain to the parliamentary general Sir Thomas Fairfax. From the summer of 1645, he was one of three itinerant preachers to whom Parliament gave £100 annually out of the revenues of the Welsh bishoprics. In July 1646 Cradock preached before the House of Commons on their thanksgiving for the surrender of royalist Oxford, and urged the Commons to support the godly in ‘poor contemptible Wales’: ‘[I]s it not a sad case that in thirteene counties there should not be above thirteene conscientious Ministers who in these times expressed themselves firmly and constantly faithfull to the Parliament?’ In 1648, Cradock told Parliament that Wales still lacked godly ministers and, indeed, those already in place ‘are drunkards [God] will throw them to hel[l]’. Yet, he hoped that God would impel the MPs ‘to joyne together to finde out a course, to send the Ministers of the Gospel to bring the glad tidings to poore people,

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that lie in the Mountaines of darknesse, and in the shadow of death’. Having recently visited his homeland, Cradock reported that he had ‘seen in the Mountaines of Wales the most glorious work that ever I saw in England, unless it were in London; the Gospel is run over the [Black] Mountaines between Brecknockshire and Monmouthshire, as the fire in the thatch.’ Such godly highlanders ‘have no Ministers’ but rather were served solely by godly laymen. And Cradock recognized the revolutionary nature of such an agenda: as he wrote in 1650, the year of the Propagation Act, ‘our main reformation is in pulling down, and not in setting up.’

Cradock manned the radical godly front line. Indeed, when Charles II descended with his royalist rebels on Worcester in the summer of 1651, Harrison had actually put preachers Cradock and Vavasor Powell at the head of a Welsh militia. At the end of March 1652, Cradock wrote from his Usk valley home, Trevala, to Cromwell to secure government jobs for ‘saints’ Rice Williams of Newport and Richard Creed (Cradock’s son-in-law, and former servant to Harrison). Cradock wrote to Cromwell, he claimed,

> with a flood of affections, a conjunction of love, joy, delight, and earnest desire to salute you with a few unfeigned lines; all which . . . are [otherwise] dam’d up, as having no vent but in prayer and praises, which sometimes I make my business . . . in your behalf.

It was unsurprising, then, that the Protector nominated Cradock for the Newland lectureship within five months of Cradock’s fawning letter.

But it was also unsurprising that Cradock became a lightning rod for critics of the Rump’s religious policies in Wales. By December 1651, complaints circulated in London about the excesses of the propagation

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45 Cradock, *Glad Tydings from Heaven; To the Worst of Sinners on Earth* (1648), pp. 36, 49–50.
commissioners, and in March 1652 several gentlemen attempted to petition the Commons, complaining that ‘all or most of the Ministers of South-Wales, together with the County of Munmouth, have been (and stand) ejected from their Benefices’ by the commissioners with few or none supplied in their places.\textsuperscript{49} The Rump declined to renew their commission on 1 April 1653, and the commissioners’ authority under the Welsh Propagation Act ended, although within the month Cromwell urged the propagators ‘to go on cheerfully in the work as formerly’, despite the fact they had \textit{no} commission.\textsuperscript{50} Also on 1 April, the Rump ‘excused’ Cradock from his appointment to preach before them.\textsuperscript{51}

The Rump’s refusal to renew the propagators had two direct results. First, as is well known, Cromwell, Harrison and their soldiers forcibly dissolved the Rump and tried a new, if abortive, experiment of godly rule at the centre with the Assembly of Saints.\textsuperscript{52} Second, even after the Saints’ rule had ended and Fifth Monarchist Harrison had been put under surveillance, the religious experiments continued to affect the Welsh localities. In March 1654, the Protectorate Parliament appointed commissioners for the approbation of public preachers. In August, they appointed both commissioners for ejecting scandalous, ignorant and insufficient ministers and schoolmasters (ejectors), and clergy serving as commissioners to try the sufficiency of any such ministers or schoolmasters accused (triers).\textsuperscript{53} The Monmouth-region triers included both Charnock and Cradock.\textsuperscript{54}

Roger Charnock’s brief tenure as Monmouth lecturer proved notably divisive. In May 1654, after his two-year trial period as lecturer, one Monmouth group wrote asking to have his position confirmed, while another complained that he had not administered baptism or the Lord’s Supper since he arrived, and, indeed, that some of his own children were not baptized. Such an obvious expression of belief in adult baptism

\textsuperscript{49} The Petition of the Six Counties of South-Wales, and the County of Monmouth, Presented to the Parliament of the Common-wealth of England (1652), sig. A2.

\textsuperscript{50} Woolrych, Commonwealth to Protectorate, pp. 32, 58, 60, 133.

\textsuperscript{51} Worden, Rump, p. 327.


must have shocked many locals. The Haberdashers deferred the decision to hire him permanently for another year, hoping against hope that he would gain ‘the general love . . . of the people’.

In September 1655, the Haberdashers returned to the ‘diverse debates about Mr Charnock’ and his refusal to administer baptism and the Lord’s Supper to all deserving parishioners. Bolstered by new testimonials on Charnock’s behalf, including one from Cromwell, now Lord Protector, the Haberdashers finally confirmed Charnock. For his part, Charnock grudgingly agreed to administer the sacraments ‘to such as were meet to receive the same’.

A few months earlier the Haberdashers had been informed that former lecturer Brabourne had been performing service as school usher ever since the last one had vacated the post. The Haberdashers would later take advice from Charnock along with that of Fawcet, which suggests that they had accommodated themselves to the new religious regime. But for most of Monmouth’s townsfolk, who supported no established conventicle before the eighteenth century, Charnock’s very restrictive view of a church of saints must have been anathema.

Charnock’s small coterie of radical godly in Monmouth received a fillip when, in February 1656, Major-General James Berry spent a week there. Berry’s deputy lieutenant for Monmouthshire, John Nicholas, had worked with Harrison, and served as a local commissioner under the Propagation Act in 1650 and as an ejector from late 1654. Berry himself, before the Civil War, had been a friend and even housemate of moderate Puritan Richard Baxter, although Baxter had been shocked by the radical and anti-Puritan ‘new light’ views Berry acquired during the 1640s, ‘when Cromwell had made [Berry] his favorite’. As Major-General for Wales, Berry told Vavasor Powell that his ‘heart had been towards the poor people in Wales’, although in December 1655 at Wrexham he despaired that ‘reformation . . . here wants matter’, that is, the local godly lacked social weight.

At Monmouth, Berry ‘reproved the mayor sharply’ for imprisoning Quakers and, about the same time, despaired that godliness would ever enter Monmouth. Berry’s foremost charge was security, and although he recognized that those who had

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55 GL, MS 15842/2, fo. 10r.
56 Ibid., fo. 22r.
57 Reliquiae Baxterianae, quoted in Firth and Davies, Regimental History, I, p. 60.
58 Quoted in Fletcher, ‘Oliver Cromwell and the localities’, pp. 15, 21.
served on both sides during the Civil Wars remained powerful locally, he thought they would be acquiescent as long as the decimation tax did not hit former royalists too hard. Berry was not impressed with the self-proclaimed loyalty of Sir Trevor Williams, but thought the security issue might be solved to the government’s satisfaction. The same could not be said for godly reform.

I am much troubled with these market townes every where, vices abounding, and magistrates fast a sleep. I have caused the bayliefes of this town [Monmouth] to be called into question for some miscarriages concerning alehouses; and they have submitted to the censure of the mayor and common councell, who have fined them in 20 nobles apeece, imprisonment dureing pleasure, put them downe from selling ale &c. which makes a great noise with us, who are in this place a pittiful people.59

Alehouses – ‘nurseries of all vice and wickedness’, according to one early Stuart magistrate – had long worried the gentry. And alehouse licensing schemes were increasingly common between 1600 and 1680. Where Berry differed was by viewing local magistrates as enemies rather than allies in the tedious business of alehouse licensing through petty or alehouse sessions.60 Berry’s vision of a ‘pittiful people’ of godly purpose battling against idle magistrates and bailiffs illuminates a cultural division.

IV

Despite Berry’s perspective, the Monmouth magistrates were not sitting idly, for they had made a novel effort to gain influence over their town’s social institutions. In July 1655, the Haberdashers received a ‘large petition’ from Monmouth about establishing a poor relief ‘workhouse’

59 Thomas Birch (ed.), A collection of the state papers of John Thurloe ... Containing authentic memorials of the English affairs from the year 1638, to the restoration of King Charles II (1742), IV, pp. 525, 545.
for the knitting of Monmouth caps. The petition noted that William Jones’s charities had provided for two groups – ‘the aged poor’ (the almshouse) and ‘a great part of the younger sort’ (the school) – but lacked provisions for ‘setting the younger sort of poor there on work’. The town had long been famous for fashioning the eponymous, small round caps for soldiers and sailors, though the industry had migrated to Bewdley by mid-century. The town sought to use the tenement named ‘Teague’s house’ on the River Wye and owned by the Haberdashers (purchased separately from the Jones benefaction) to re-establish the trade. The Haberdashers at first agreed, ‘by the persuasion and advice of . . . Mr Milborne’, to lease the house to trustees chosen by Monmouth. Henry Milborne, recorder for Monmouth who had been briefly ousted by the revolutionary regime, played a dramatic role in the history of the Monmouth region, and his background mirrors that of the benefactor William Jones.

Henry Milborne, who was born about 1611, the fourth son of a Protestant father and a Catholic mother, and who was raised at Wonastow two miles south-east of Monmouth, at first practised law in London. Henry had attended Monmouth School, presumably among the first classes there, and perhaps suffered from the inattention of Master Owen, for Henry recalled ‘not profiting there, our Father . . . removed my Brother, Charles, and my self to Abergavenny, and placed us under one Mr Lewis, who was indeed a Romanist, but the best School-master in all those parts’. In December 1627, at the age of sixteen, he matriculated at Brasenose College, Oxford, where he recalled being taught by ‘great opposers of Popery’, and then he spent time at the Middle Temple.
where he claimed to have taken the sacrament.\textsuperscript{66} He probably returned to Monmouthshire briefly during the 1630s, and then again at the outset of the Civil Wars, although he alternated living between London and Monmouth through the 1640s and 1650s.\textsuperscript{67} His eldest brother John, who defended Wonastow in 1644 against parliamentarians, died about 1660, as did his brother Charles of Llanrothal, and both Wonastow and Llanrothal passed to Henry. Henry later recalled that he tired of housekeeping and so let his house to a cousin, saving a room or two for himself, suggesting that he remained single. Certainly he had no children.

Milborne's links with the Monmouth region were just as strong as his links with London. He had several sisters and many aunts and nephews living in the Monmouth region. He would later claim that he worked to convert these relatives from Catholicism, while at the same time admitting to sheltering and sustaining them. His own fervency, and attestations from ministers in Restoration Llanrothal and Whitchurch, suggest that he was an Anglican, but one that took seriously the support of his largely Catholic clan. Given that he eventually settled at Llanrothal less than a mile from, and virtually within eyesight of, the Jesuit mission at the Cwm, at the very least he could live peaceably, side-by-side with Monnow valley Catholics. In his will of 1692 he left £400 to his 'godson' Henry Lord Herbert of Raglan, £100 to 'Lady Rebecca Marchioness of Worcester to buy herself a jewell', and £100 to a spinster niece living at Llanrothal, which reminds us of his ties to the Monnow valley and to the Raglan interest.\textsuperscript{68} He was recorder to Monmouth, perhaps in the 1640s and certainly again from 1658; and he would become steward to Henry, marquess of Worcester's lands in Monmouthshire.

But in 1656 Milborne was working with the mayor, Charles Beale, to establish a 'pulling manufacture' (fulling or thickening) for capmaking at Teague's house. Beale asked Milborne to petition the company for assistance in this 'great opportunity ... for ... employing our poor', adding the appropriate puritanical flourish for his audience, 'which will be a


\textsuperscript{67} NLW, Milborne Collection, nos 302, 311, 1748–50, 2431.

\textsuperscript{68} Society of Antiquaries, MS 790/37, abstracts of wills of Milborne family.
chief outward means . . . of reformation amongst us'. 69 By early 1657, the Haberdashers had leased out Teague's house 'for the carrying on the trade of capping in . . . Monmouth for the benefit of the poor' to a group of Haberdashers rather than town trustees, although they later added Milborne to the lease. 70 Indeed, Milborne's surviving papers include cap-making accounts and correspondence. Milborne, with his metropolitan legal background, clearly was an influential go-between for the company and Monmouth. 71

Beale had successfully appropriated the boilerplate language of godly 'reformation' to sell Milborne's scheme to the Haberdashers, but some Westminster officials envisioned a more extreme reformation for the southern Welsh Marches. Upon Charnock's death in 1657, Cromwell once again nominated Walter Cradock to the Haberdashers, this time as Monmouth lecturer. But criticism of Cradock's brand of godly reform had grown in the region since 1653. In 1654, Alexander Griffith charged that the commissioners had ejected fifty-three ministers in Monmouthshire alone, leaving twenty or fewer 'approved . . . Ministers, resident', in the county's 140-plus parishes, and fewer than three schoolmasters. 72 Also in 1654, an anonymous tract rejected Cradock's 1646 assertion that there had been then 'not thirteen painfull Preachers in . . . Wales'. It also noted that 's]ome of our owne Nation (for a man's worst foes are of his owne Household)' had pushed for the Propagation Act as a way of bringing national resources to bear on their own efforts to influence Welsh society. In this way, godly reformers such as Cradock sought 'to bring this Trojan horse' of ecclesiastical reform 'into their Countrey'. 73

The Trojan horse metaphor points to the anomalous role of Cradock (and Jones) as both a metropolitan and a south Walian. From a different perspective, more radical Welsh preachers such as Vavasor Powell saw the lapse of the Propagation Act, the demise of the Saints and the institution of the Instrument of Government as the abandonment of

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69 NLW, Milborne Collection, no. 1748, 19 August 1656, Beale to Milborne. See also ibid., nos 1749–50; GL, MS 15842/2, ff. 31r, 37r.
70 GL, MS 15842/2, ff. 37r, 52v, 54r.
71 Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson A351, deposition of Robert Blayney.
73 Gemitus ecclesiae Cambro-Britannicae (1654), p. 3.
serious reform efforts. And Powell and the supporters of the north Wales itinerants subscribed a petition criticizing Cromwell’s new Protectorate regime. Amidst this swirl of controversy, Cradock, who had preached before Cromwell in 1654 and 1655, in 1656 engineered a loyal address from ‘the General Churches and Christians in South-Wales, and Monmouth-Shire’ criticizing Powell’s address and supporting the Protector, who again responded to Cradock’s allegiance as a would-be patron.74

And yet, the Haberdashers declined the Protector’s request that they install Cradock as Monmouth’s lecturer, and instead backed Samuel Fawcet, whom they had previously appointed as their Newland lecturer over the Cromwell-backed Cradock. The Haberdashers had known and depended upon Fawcet since before the Civil War. In the locality, however, the Monmouth magistrates ignored both Cradock and Fawcet and instead wrote a letter subscribed by ‘diverse’ townspeople nominating Francis Ford. The Haberdashers appointed Fawcet to the lectureship and gave his Newland post to Ford. This decision neatly defined the opposing corners of a religious triangle. The Haberdashers resisted Cromwell’s nomination of Cradock, but they were unwilling to bend to the desires of the Monmouth magistrates, seeking instead what must have been the compromise course. But Monmouth was not easily placated. An unnamed, acting vicar of Monmouth (presumably one Charles Harcourt, later vicar of Dixton, who kept Monmouth parish registers on loose papers between 1651 and 1662) refused to let Fawcet preach there and when, in January 1658, Ford died, Fawcet retreated back to Newland.75

The town’s machinations with regard to the pulpit evidently riled the Haberdashers. In October 1657, about the same time as the struggles over town clerical appointments, the Company ordered a brass plaque to be placed over the entrance to the Monmouth school inscribed with both Jones’s name and his likeness, as well as the company’s arms sewn on all arms of the cloaks for Newland’s almspeople. These orders neatly symbolize both the Haberdashers’ control and the fact that this was

74 The Humble Representation and Address to His Highness of Several Churches & Christians in South-Wales, and Monmouth-Shire (1656); Richards, Religious Developments, pp. 6, 180–5; Wilbur Cortez Abbott (ed.), The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell (Oxford, 1945, reissued 1988), III, pp. 228, 668.
75 GL, MS 15842/2, f. 43r; Mathias, Whitsun Riot, p. 52.
Jones's, not the town's, school. In addition, they ordered Jones's portrait to be hung inside the Monmouth school, with the legend: 'Mr William Jones Merchant Adventurer & Free of the Company of Haberdasers [sic] gave eighteene thousand pounds for Charatable [sic] uses moste of which hee commi tted to the care of this company.' If this symbolic action was too subtle for the Monmouth magistrates, in December the Haberdashers broached 'the sale of Teague's house in Monmouth', and authorized Fawcet 'to make it known that it is probable the company will incline to sell the premisses'. If the town magistrates did not cease blocking the Haberdashers' rightful patronage, then they could expect no assistance with the capping scheme.

At the end of 1657, the Haberdashers chose John Cragge as lecturer, although both unnamed Westminster forces and 'several gents in Monmouth-shire' disapproved of Cragge and the Whitehall commissioners for approbation of public preachers never allowed his appointment. Though some country gentlemen opposed Cragge, he had local supporters. Cragge, a preacher at Llantilio Pertholey just north of Abergavenny, had defended infant baptism in public debate at Ross and Abergavenny in 1653. In 1656, he published the Abergavenny debate, and dedicated it to local MPs ('Worthy Patriots . . . in that Sanhedrin of Angels Tutelar of three Nations'), including Henry Lord Herbert and John Scudamore of Kentchurch in the Monnow valley. His opponent, Baptist John Tombes, responded with an attack on Cragge's 'frothy, unconcocted Sermon, calculated for the ignorant and superstitious common people, and the profane and loose Gentry, who mind not godliness in earnest, and for the blind Teachers of those parts . . . From whom the Lord deliver the dark parts of this Land.' But Cragge's supposed 'profane and loose'

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76 Quotation is from painting which remains at Monmouth School today, reproduced in Warlow, Charities (our emphasis). For this paragraph, see also ibid., pp. 180, 316, 318; Richards, Religious Developments, pp. 22–3; A. T. Bannister (comp.), Diocese of Hereford. Institutions. etc. (AD 1539–1900) (Hereford, 1923), p. 36; GL, MS 15842/2, fo. 43r; ODNB, 'Somerset, Henry'.
77 GL, MS 15842/2, fo. 46v.
78 Ibid., ff. 47v, 50r, 52v, 6 January–16 July 1658.
79 The Arraignment, and Conviction of Anabaptism; or a Reply to Master Tombes His Plea for Anti-paedobaptists (1656), sig. A3, pp. 7, 102, 236.
80 John Tombes, A Plea for Anti-Paedobaptists, Against the Vanity and Falshood of Scribed Papers, Entituled, The Anabaptists Anatomiz'd and silenc'd in Publique Dispute at Abergavenny in Monmouth-shire Sept. 5. 1653 (1654), p. 54.
gentry patrons included Sir Trevor Williams and his wife, Elizabeth; Sir Trevor’s in-laws, Thomas and Elizabeth Morgan of Machen; and William and Margaret Williams of Llantilio Pertholey. And he preached before the parliamentarian army during the Second Civil War. \(^{81}\) This was a moderate bloc, and Cragge would have been an antidote to Charnock. Later, in early 1661, he would preach in support of \textit{The King’s Supremacy in All Causes Ecclesiastical, and Civil} at the Monmouth assizes. Cragge urged election of representatives to what would become the Cavalier Parliament who were ‘neither biassed to Popery . . . nor any sect, or schism’. \(^{82}\) That is, Cragge called for centrist ‘Patriots’ at a moment when most Restoration preachers urged retribution on the Presbyterians as well as the radical \textit{Hydra}. Cragge, then, appears to have been on the low-church edge of the Anglican spectrum. \(^{83}\)

In September 1658 the Haberdashers learned that Cragge was willing to drop his bid for the Monmouth lectureship. Two weeks later they discussed Fawcet’s recommendation that one Nicholas Cary be appointed lecturer ‘to make up and heal the many sad breeches which are among them’. \(^{84}\) That Cary, who refused to conform to the Uniformity Act in 1662, succeeded in establishing himself as lecturer where his supporter Fawcet had not reminds us that Fawcet had come to represent the Haberdashers’ interest at the expense of that of the town. In any case, by backing Cary, the Haberdashers appear to have closed ranks with townsmen and local gentry once again. \(^{85}\)

Tensions between Monmouth and London continued into the 1660s. The capping project soon foundered. In October 1661 the Haberdashers would express concern that the original terms of the lease were not being honoured, and in 1663 they turned out nine boys from the deteriorating tenement, ended the scheme and leased the lot to a new tenant. \(^{86}\)


\(^{82}\) \textit{The King’s Supremacy in All Causes Ecclesiastical, and Civil; Asserted in a Sermon Preached at the Assises at Monmouth . . . March 30. 1661} (1661), p. 24. See also ibid., dedication, pp. 12, 18.

\(^{83}\) Cragge did praise a ‘well-composed Liturgie’ and ‘a well-ordered Hierarchie’: ibid., p. 26.

\(^{84}\) GL, MS 15842/2, ff. 55v, 56r.


\(^{86}\) GL, MS 15842/2, ff. 84v, 89v, 93v, 99v.
capping scheme failure further soured relations between London and Monmouth. When Thomas Fuller wrote the Monmouth section of his *History of the Worthies*, not only did he retail the canard that William Jones had not been worth ‘ten groats’ before leaving Monmouth for London and Hamburg; he also stressed the quality of ancient Monmouth capping.\(^{87}\) Fuller’s chief local informant was Henry Milborne.

V

We can see in the desire of Monmouth folk-like Milborne to try to gain control over local preaching, schooling and poor relief for the youth and the aged a rejection of efforts by the metropolitans such as William Jones, Walter Cradock, the Haberdashers’ Company and Cromwell to reform Wales in their own image. Jones and Cradock were, of course, from south Wales, but their power – Jones’s fortune, Cradock’s ties to Cromwell – was based elsewhere. Jones structured his charities in such a way as to give Monmouth townspeople no power over them. He withheld control of both purse strings and decision-making (on hiring lecturers and school teachers, on appointing almspeople) from Monmouth magistrates, because he found Monmouth to be a decidedly ungodly place. Godly reform failed in seventeenth-century Wales, because it failed to link with any local power base. Cragge’s influential patrons – Sir Trevor Williams, the Morgans – were sympathetic to godliness in north Monmouthshire, but the likes of Cradock and Charnock made little effort to appeal to them.

James Berry and Henry Milborne shared a common concern to clean up the localities which was rooted in the late Elizabethan and early Stuart thinking that had inspired Jones. Milborne would hardly qualify as a ‘magistrate-asleep’. While the concern for local order was of long standing, what was new was a split in local popular cultures west of the River Wye. It can be argued that a fledgling popular ‘Puritan’ culture developed in the Monmouth region by the mid-seventeenth century. Not popular in terms of numbers, but popular in terms of a small, dedicated group of commoners sharing a culture with a few of the middling sort and gentry. Competing popular cultures help explain how

Berry and Milborne, who should have been on the same side of reforming the poor, youth and the disorderly, were poles apart.

Hopes for godly reform remained high through the 1650s, even as, according to most historians, elite conservative rule in the localities and at the centre was being restored. Baxter remained hopeful: ‘I find that we never took the rightest course to demolish the Kingdom of Darkness till now’ (Gildas Salviatus, 1656); and he discussed with Berry the possibility of a Welsh university in 1657. And yet, overall, Puritan evangelical and social reform failed. The Monmouth evidence suggests that one reason for this failure was that success could only come at the price of some other organized group’s failure. Jones and the Haberdashers could succeed only by dampening traditional cultural and religious experience in the region; Cradock and Charnock had to fight both the traditional religion and the Elizabethan Puritan ideals of the Haberdashers; Berry sided with the Quakers who later caused Cradock and his supporters such headaches in south Monmouthshire; Powell and Harrison would want to go further than Cradock. There was no united godly front.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, godly disunity left little lasting impression in the Monmouth region. Hirst claims that ‘[t]he rooting of Dissent in the northern uplands and in Wales says much for the success of the wandering evangelists of the 1640s and 1650s’. Yet the evidence of the rooting of Dissent, of Cradock’s success in the Black Mountains, is much less evident in the foothills around Monmouth. The religious census of 1676 reveals the following for the parishes along the Monnow south from Kentchurch: Garway, 176 conformists and 71 papists; Llanrothal and Welsh Newton, no response (but neighbouring Llangarron, 300 conformists, 13 papists); Dixton, 55 conformists, 11 nonconformists; and Monmouth, 620 conformists, 37 papists and 13 nonconformists. Thus, of our sample for the Monnow valley in the late seventeenth century, of 1,296 (probably adult males, rather than total population), there were 121 papists (a little over 9 per cent) and 24 nonconformists (about 2 per cent).

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88 Hirst, ‘The failure of godly rule’, 43.
89 Ibid., 65.
Godly reform efforts by those with ties to the centre of national commercial and political power failed to take root in Monmouth because moderates and traditionalists alike saw them as a Trojan horse. Some of the godly, like Jones and Cradock, might be called 'metropolitan-locals', that is, those who sought to bring resources from London to south Wales. The efforts of Oliver Cromwell's regime, over a generation after Jones's first reforming impulse, took these efforts to a new level. They did not succeed, and spread resentment in their wake. In 1668 one Monmouthshire petty constable would present Cradock as 'the chief man... in putting ministers out of the churches and livings', even though Cradock had died in 1659!91 Monmouth-region magistrates, clergy and many commoners knew well the road from Monmouth to London; but they resented metropolitan-inspired experiments more at the end of the century than at the beginning.

If Monmouth-region godliness split, so too did its metropolitan counterpart. The Haberdashers continued to dance to an older tune of godly reform, while godliness changed radically from Westminster with the propagators and then the triers and ejectors. In Monmouth, Cromwell's policies aimed to empower radical preachers like Cradock and Charnock, who undermined the authority of members of the traditional local magistracy. In response, Milborne and other Monmouth magistrates began exploring for ways to gain control over their town's institutions, steps that would lead to intense conflict with the Haberdashers' Company of London. Godly experiments in the mid-1650s set Milborne and others on a course that would help usher in the first age of party.92

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91 Historical Traditions and Facts Relating to the County of Monmouth (Newport, 1885), VI, pp. 73–4.