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THE SACHEVERELL RIOTS: THE CROWD AND THE CHURCH IN EARLY EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY LONDON *

THE TRAIL OF POPULAR DISORDER LEFT IN THE WAKE OF THE ILL-STARRED prosecution of Doctor Sacheverell in 1710 stretched in the end into many corners of England and Wales. The verdict of the House of Lords on 20th and 21st March, a moral victory for the Doctor over the Whigs who had impeached him, was violently celebrated by mobs as far apart as Wrexham, Barnstaple and Gainsborough.¹ Cathedral cities, clothing boroughs, even somnolent market towns erupted.² In midsummer, when the chaplain of St. Saviour's enjoyed for seven weeks a hero's progress, there were fresh outbreaks both in places on his route and in others far distant.³ In the autumn, Sacheverell mobs rampaged round many a hustings in the most tumultuous general election of the eighteenth century.⁴

None of these riots, however, could remotely compare in scale or violence with those accompanying the trial itself in London. For eight hours during the night of 1st-2nd March the capital experienced its second worst disturbance of the century. Seventy years later the Gordon Riots were to dwarf it, and all else, by their protracted

* This essay is an expanded and modified version of a paper first read at the Newcastle Conference on Social Control in January 1973. The author is grateful for comments and suggestions made at the time, particularly by Dr. W. A. Speck, Mr. J. Stevenson and Mr. Edward Thompson, and for help at a later stage from Mr. Clyve Jones and Mr. J. R. Sewell.

¹ Public Rec. Off., State Papers Domestic (hereafter S.P.) 34/12/14: Sir Joseph Jekyll to Lord Sunderland, Wrexham, 4 Apr.; Brit. Lib., Loan 29/238, fo. 320: George Whichcote to duke of Newcastle, Gainsborough, 27 Mar. (I am grateful to the duke of Portland for permission to make use of his papers, on loan to the British Library [Loan 29]); anon., *A Vindication of the Last Parliament: in Four Dialogues between Sir Simon and Sir Peter* (London, 1711; copy in Brit. Lib., Madan Coll.), pp. 298-9.

² For the rioting in Oxford, Exeter, Hereford, Frome, Cirencester and Sherborne, see Geoffrey Holmes, *The Trial of Doctor Sacheverell* (London, 1973) (hereafter Holmes, *Trial*), pp. 234-6.

³ Most notably, Bridgnorth and Ely: Lincs. Rec. Off., Monson MSS., 7/3/124; *The Flying-Post*, 13 and 22 July; Brit. Lib., Loan 29/321, Dyer's Newsletter, 31 Aug.; S.P. 44/109 and 34/37, no. 157: Henry St. John to Attorney-General, 29 Sept. 1710, and enclosed depositions.

⁴ See the eleven examples listed in M. Beloff, *Public Order and Popular Disturbances, 1660-1714* (Oxford, 1938), p. 55. To these may be added disorders at the county elections for Yorkshire, Kent, and Norfolk (where Walpole was roughly handled); and at the borough elections for Taunton — where William Coward (the Whig candidate) was "insulted and abused" — Northampton and Nottingham. W. A. Speck, *Tory and Whig: The Struggle in the Constituencies* (London, 1970), p. 42; W. Bisset, *The Modern Fanatick* (London, 1710); *The Observer*, 18-21 Oct.; *The Flying-Post*, 28 Oct., 2 and 4 Nov.

anarchy and horror.⁵ Other disorders were to cause more bloodshed than the Sacheverell riots, notably the so-called “massacre of St. George’s Fields” in 1768.⁶ But none until 1780 were as destructive, or as frightening to the government or the property-owners of London, as the “detestable tumults”⁷ of 1710.

Indeed it was miraculous that neither the great crowds on the streets nor the upholders of law and order suffered heavier casualties. Considering the danger, the toll of the Sacheverell riots was almost trivial: at most, two deaths;⁸ some fifty rioters wounded,⁹ several of them no more than cut by splintering glass; and a handful of soldiers bearing some marks of battle. Things might have been very different but for the exemplary discipline of the small number of regular troops used to disperse the mobs: they came from three crack Guards units — Lord Arran’s troop of Life Guards, the Coldstream Guards, and the Second Horse Grenadiers — and included a high proportion of soldiers seasoned in Marlborough’s campaigns. In this respect it was a mercy the City Trained Bands were not called out until the situation was under complete control; though it is arguable that if the militia had been put under arms twenty-four hours earlier there might have been no outbreak at all.¹⁰

Another blessing in disguise was the absence of any Riot Act on the statute-book. Up to July 1715 professional troops and militiamen alike — and any civilians who came to their aid — had to be very chary of killing or maiming in dealing with civil disturbances, since they were not legally indemnified if a victim subsequently proved to have been innocent; and even if they killed a genuine rioter they could be charged with murder at Common Law if his death was deemed the

⁵ For the Gordon Riots, which led to close on 300 fatal casualties among the mob, see G. Rudé, “The Gordon Riots: A Study of the Rioters and Their Victims”, *Trans. Roy. Hist. Soc.*, 5th ser., vi (1956), pp. 93–114; J. P. De Castro, *The Gordon Riots* (London, 1926).

⁶ G. Rudé, *Wilkes and Liberty* (London, 1962), pp. 49–52, notes eleven deaths.

⁷ S.P. 34/12/14: John Clifford *et al.* to [Henry Boyle?], 9 Mar. 1710.

⁸ For the first case, firmly authenticated, see A. Boyer, *History of the Life and Reign of Queen Anne* (London, 1722), p. 417; Blenheim MSS., Box VII, [bundle] 18: deposition of George Gosdin before Francis Negus, J.P., 6 Mar. (I am indebted to the duke of Marlborough for allowing me to use material from his family archive). For the second, more dubious, case, see H. C. Foxcroft, *A Supplement to Burnet’s History of My Own Time* (Oxford, 1902), p. 427; G. Burnet, *A History of My Own Time*, 6 vols. (Oxford, 1833 edn.), v, p. 444; Blenheim MSS., Box VII, 18.

⁹ According to L’Hermitage in his report to the States-General: Brit. Lib., Add. MSS. 17677DDD, fo. 432.

¹⁰ See Holmes, *Trial*, pp. 157–60, 175. The Lord Mayor, a Sacheverellite, made no attempt to summon an emergency meeting of the Lieutenancy Commission until forced to do so by a direct government appeal to the Lieutenancy. Corporation of London Rec. Off. (hereafter C.L.R.O.), Lieutenancy minute book, 1696/7–1714, p. 151 (despite the date, 1 Mar., on the official minute, there is strong evidence that the meeting took place after midnight, that is, six hours after the riots began).

result of an excessive, unnecessary use of force.¹¹ In such circumstances the flat of the sabre or the butt of the musket, reinforced by the size and muscular power of the cavalry charger, were likely to be preferred to the blade and the musket-ball, and scores of Londoners had good reason to be thankful for this in March 1710. In more than three hours of action after the troops first engaged the rioters in Lincoln's Inn Fields and Drury Lane not a shot was fired,¹² and it was only in dealing with stubborn pockets of resistance in the congested area between the lower end of Holborn and Fleet Street, and later in a fierce little engagement on and near the Fleet Bridge, that blades were used in earnest.¹³ Admittedly, law and discipline were not the sole inhibiting factors; for by the time the government secured the Queen's authority to deploy the few units of Guards available at St. James's and Whitehall, the situation was already so serious that the Secretary of State, Lord Sunderland, had no time to draft careful written orders specifying the degree of force to be used. The senior officer on duty, who was given command of all detachments, was no more than a captain and was only too conscious that "he ventured his neck by going upon verbal orders". In fact, Sunderland had frankly warned him that "he must use his judgement and discretion, and forbear violent means, except in case of necessity".¹⁴

But if the roll of dead and injured gives no true indication of the seriousness of the Sacheverell riots in London, there are other pointers which do. The alarm of the Queen and of both Houses of Parliament;¹⁵ the fact that the government on the following day called in reinforcements from Argyll's Troop of Horse Guards and from the

¹¹ Even the indemnity clause (III) in the notorious Act for preventing Tumults and Riotous Assemblies (1 Geo. I, stat. 2, *cap.* 5) did not remove a soldier's duty at Common Law "to fire with all reasonable caution, so as to produce no further injury than what is absolutely wanted for the purpose of protecting person or property". See, for example, Rudé, *Wilkes and Liberty*, pp. 54-6; C. Grant Robertson (ed.), *Select Statutes, Cases and Documents . . . 1660-1832*, 8th edn. (London, 1947), pp. 518-21, and p. 523 (extracts from the Bowen-Haldane-Rollit report on the Featherstone riots, 1893, from which the quotation is taken).

¹² As the crowds were fleeing from Drury Lane, some were heard to shout out, "Damn them, we will be even with them tomorrow night, they dare not fire upon us": T. B. Howell (compiler), *A Complete Collection of State Trials*, 33 vols. (London, 1809-26) (hereafter *State Trials*), xv, [col.] 659: evidence of Edward Orrell, Old Bailey, 20 Apr. 1710. See *ibid.*, xv, 662, for the use of the flats of swords.

¹³ Blenheim MSS., Box VII, 18: deposition of Thomas Hill before George Tilson, 8 Mar., and "The Information of Henry Purdon and Charles Collins taken upon oath . . . 2nd March 1709-10, before divers Justices there". For the action "near Fleet Ditch" in which the Life Guards "cut and slashed some of the most daring . . .", see Boyer, *Queen Anne*, p. 417.

¹⁴ A. Boyer, *The History of the Reign of Queen Anne digested into Annals*, 11 vols. (London, 1702-11), viii, p. 266. See also Boyer, *Queen Anne*, p. 417; E. Calamy, *An Historical Account of My Own Life, 1671-1731*, ed. J. T. Rutt, 2nd edn., 2 vols. (London, 1830), ii, p. 228.

¹⁵ Holmes, *Trial*, pp. 163 note, 176, 179.

First and Second Regiments of Foot Guards;¹⁶ the presence on the streets for three weeks thereafter of substantial forces of militia, and the willingness of London and Westminster ratepayers, despite some token Tory grumbling, to foot a heavy bill for keeping the trained bands under arms:¹⁷ all these reactions, together with the rigorous legal action taken at first against the rioters, testify to the deep impression which the events of 1 March 1710 made on both politicians and property-owners. It was an impression which was to leave its mark on many memories, not least on Robert Walpole's, for three decades and more. In any other country, the Prussian envoy cynically observed, men would have feared the onset of civil war; even in England, inured as she was to political instability, there were some who were reminded of "the beginning of the late troubles".¹⁸

An analysis of the Sacheverell riots, in as much depth as the surviving evidence permits, is thus long overdue:¹⁹ not simply for their intrinsic interest but to facilitate comparisons with other major London disorders of the century, already investigated.²⁰ Elsewhere I have told the story of London's "night of fire", following the third day of Sacheverell's trial; I have also briefly discussed the bearing on the outbreak of various material grievances, which by the autumn of 1709 had made the government highly unpopular with ordinary

¹⁶ S.P. 44/108, fo. 223: Sunderland to Argyll, 2 Mar., and endorsement.

¹⁷ Brit. Lib., Add. MSS. 47026, pp. 17-18. The bill anticipated was £10,000. It is impossible to say what the operation did cost the City, since the Trophy Tax accounts of the Commissioners of Lieutenancy have not survived for 1710. Initially all six regiments were raised, and the commanders of each regiment received £80 per double duty to defray their expenses. C.L.R.O., Lieutenancy minute book, 1696/7-1714, pp. 151-2, 206. (For these and other references to material in the Corporation Record Office I am indebted to the assistance of Miss Betty Marsden, the Deputy Keeper of the Records, and of Mr. James R. Sewell.)

¹⁸ Deutsches Zentral Archiv, Merseburg, Rep. XI England 35D, fo. 26; *The Wentworth Papers*, ed. J. J. Cartwright (London, 1833), p. 113. See also C.L.R.O., Repertory of the Court of Aldermen, vol. 114, pp. 153-6, 160-1, and Misc. MSS. 210.7: entry for 8 Apr. 1710.

¹⁹ Beloff, *Public Order and Popular Disturbances*, pp. 51-4, discussed the problem of whether the riots were spontaneous or organized, but had little to say about motivation and nothing about the social composition of the mob. The value of his interpretative comments and those of G. M. Trevelyan, *England under Queen Anne*, 3 vols. (London, 1932-4), iii, pp. 38, 55-7 (who did briefly discuss the motives of the rioters), is vitiated by the limitations of the evidence available to them.

²⁰ G. Rudé's pioneer investigations of the riots of 1736, 1768-9 and 1780, together with three later synoptic essays on the activities, motivation and composition of the London crowd, have been brought together in his *Paris and London in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1971). See also *idem*, "The City Riot of the Eighteenth Century", in his *The Crowd in History, 1730-1848* (New York and London, 1964). N. Rogers, "Popular Disaffection in London during the Forty-Five", *The London Jl.*, i (1975), pp. 5-27, utilizes and refines Rudé's techniques, but is concerned with individuals rather than "the crowd".

Londoners.²¹ The objects of the present essay are threefold: to probe more searchingly the nature of the riots and the motivation of the rioters; to consider the social composition of the crowd; and to enquire to what extent this great popular protest was incited and organized. We shall approach these questions separately, but aware that each has important connections with the others.

The nature of the 1710 disorders and the reasons why many thousands of Londoners took part in them²² are basic to all further inquiry. Eruptions of this magnitude were rare in the eighteenth century, despite the fearsome reputation the London mob had earned since 1641-2 and continued to enjoy. When they did take place, it is natural for historians to wonder why the normal controls and safety-valves of late Stuart and Hanoverian society failed to prevent them. And it is clear that in 1710 one must look primarily at the extraordinary identification — almost unique in London's history, except at election times — between violent popular feeling and the cause of the Established Church of England. London experienced her "Protestant" mobs, especially in 1680, 1688 and 1780; likewise her "Tory" or "Jacobite" mobs during the first half of the eighteenth century. But only once, in 1710, was a large area of the capital at the mercy of that strange contradiction in terms, a "Church" mob.

Why the Anglican Church became at this juncture the focus of their unruly loyalties we must presently discover. The Sacheverell rioters, however, demonstrated in support of a single clergyman, not just in defence of an institution. When John Pittkin, a carpenter, was seized by the Life Guards on the Fleet Bridge, he was carried off assuring friends and captors alike "that Sacheverell was much in the right of it". John Stevens, before taking to the streets, had told the patrons of the Lamb Inn in Clement Lane "that rather than Dr Sacheverell should suffer he himself would head a mob of ten thousand men to rescue him from the Parliament". John Taylor's zeal, under questioning in the Guard Room, carried him even further. After shouting "God bless the Queen and Sacheverell", he announced that Sacheverell was so worthy a man that he deserved to be made a king, "and that he would spend the best drop of blood in his body to put the crown in the right place".²³ Plainly, therefore, "the

²¹ Holmes, *Trial*, pp. 156-76, and "Note on the Economic Background to the Sacheverell Riots", pp. 177-8.

²² Exactly how many it is impossible to say with confidence. But the question of numbers is discussed briefly below, pp. 70-2.

²³ Blenheim MSS., Box VII, 18: "Copies of the Informations & Examinations of Several Persons concerned in the late Great Riotts and Tumults, etc", third entry (for Pittkin); deposition of John Austin of Coventry, Attorney at Law, before Charles Delafaye, 4 Mar.; deposition of John Kelson, Henry Glover, William Wilmott and William Dickenson before Owen Buckingham, 4 Mar.

Sacheverell riots" are not so labelled for nothing. And a first step towards understanding their motivation must be to set them in their immediate context. To ignore the remarkable series of events and the no less remarkable man with which they were associated would be perverse. "Sacheverell and High Church" were as quintessential to the riots of 1710 as were "Wilkes and Liberty" to those of 1768-9.

It was at the end of February 1710 that Dr. Henry Sacheverell, Oxford don and High Anglican parson,²⁴ was brought to trial in front of two thousand spectators in Westminster Hall. But the atmosphere of public hysteria enveloping the trial had been building up since the previous December, when at the instigation of the Godolphin-Junto administration the Whig majority in the Commons had impeached Sacheverell for "high crimes and misdemeanours" against the state. His offence was that in spite of an explicit ban from the Court of Aldermen he had published a seditious sermon, preached on Guy Fawkes's day before the City Fathers in St. Paul's Cathedral. On the anniversary, sacred to the Whigs, of a double deliverance from the horrors of Popery,²⁵ the preacher had chosen to ignore the accepted significance of the day and to take as his text the words of St. Paul in chapter eleven of the Second Letter to the Corinthians, "in peril among False Brethren". Then for an hour and a half he had run through his whole repertoire of exotic phraseology and theatrical gestures to embellish the theme that at that very time there were in high places, both in the government and in the hierarchy of the Church of England, notorious traitors to both. Although these men affected to be members of the Church, they were actually bent on undermining and destroying it, not least by selling out to the Protestant dissenters. By betraying the Church they were automatically subverting the State, of which the Church was the crucial prop. And he had made no bones about it, they deserved to burn in hell for their sins.²⁶

It is often said that Sacheverell was prosecuted for "preaching against the Revolution of 1688"; and so, up to a point, he was. In itself, however, this misses the gravamen of the charge against him. It is quite true that like several thousand other parsons who had reluctantly taken the oaths to the post-Revolution government, he had never abandoned the traditional High Anglican concepts of divinely appointed authority, and of Passive Obedience and Non-Resistance. It is also true that he was charged with maligning the "Resistance" of

²⁴ As well as being Fellow, Tutor and Bursar of Magdalen College, Oxford, he had been since May 1709 chaplain of St. Saviour's, Southwark.

²⁵ 5 Nov. was also the date of William of Orange's landing at Torbay in 1688.

²⁶ See Holmes, *Trial*, pp. 64-9, for the content of the sermon. The full printed version, as published by Henry Clements of London between 25 Nov. and 3 Dec. 1709, and in a series of pirated editions subsequently, was given the title, *The Perils of False Brethren both in Church and State*.

1688 in the St. Paul's sermon.²⁷ But ironically the real menace of Sacheverell, from the government's point of view, was that although he preached Obedience, he failed to practise it. The Doctor was a born demagogue; he had been recognized as such since he had first electrified Oxford with a savage attack on Occasional Conformity from St. Mary's pulpit in 1702. And being also a man of turbulent character and fierce ambition, he was fully prepared by 1709 to exploit both the pulpit, in which he excelled, and the popular passions, which in theory he deplored, to attempt to undermine a political régime and a religious toleration he loathed.

To anyone reading the St. Paul's sermon today the seditious intentions of the preacher seem undisguised. Certainly it is easy to understand why the Whigs found them so, and why the listening congregation on that November afternoon was, in the words of one clergyman present, "shaken . . . at the terror of his inveterate expressions".²⁸ In his peroration, for example, he exhorted both his several hundred auditors and his countless thousands of readers,²⁹ in a string of martial metaphors, to confront the false brethren by presenting "an army of banners to our enemies", by putting on "the whole armour of God", and by wrestling "not only against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places". Dr. Sacheverell, to use his own words in the St. Paul's pulpit, was "sounding a trumpet in Sion". And he had reason to hope that the blasts would provoke some response in ears already attuned, in some measure, to their notes. For in London in the winter of 1709-10 a growing disillusionment with the protraction of the War of the Spanish Succession by a Whig government and Parliament went hand in hand with a dislike and suspicion of dissenters. The links between these attitudes were more than tenuous; for many leading citizens, *habitués* of conventicles, had all too visibly prospered since the start of the war, and *post hoc* was naturally identified with *propter hoc*.

These interwoven antipathies were reinforced by strong threads of xenophobia. The development of public credit since the early 1690s, and the ever-growing sophistication during two long wars of the mechanisms of international finance, had led not only to the burgeoning of a novel "monied interest" among the City business community but to the increasing prominence within this interest of men of foreign extraction: Iberian Jews, Huguenots, Walloons and Dutchmen. Some of them, it is true, were third or even fourth generation

²⁷ In Article I: see Holmes, *Trial*, p. 99.

²⁸ *Remarks and Collections of Thomas Hearne*, ed. C. E. Doble, *et al.*, 11 vols. (Oxf. Hist. Soc., 1885-1921), ii, pp. 304-5: Rev. David Evans to Hearne, 10 Nov. 1709.

²⁹ The printed sermon can hardly have sold many less than 100,000 copies, and therefore reached an audience of between a quarter of and half a million.

immigrants, such as the Houblons, Desbouveries, Delmés and Lethieulliers. But far more were of the second or first generation: Sir Theodore Janssen, Sir James Bateman, Sir Justus Beck, Matthew Decker, Peter Fabrot and Jacob Jacobsen, among many others.³⁰ The Bank of England, the symbol of the recent financial revolution and therefore, for hostile propaganda, the symbol of war profiteering, numbered almost thirty immigrants among its leading stockholders in 1709, more than a third of its plutocratic élite, and several figured on its board of directors. And like hundreds of native-born London businessmen, most of the foreigners underlined their lack of conformity by keeping themselves and their families outside the pale of the Established Church. Leaving aside the Jewish, Dutch and Lutheran churches in the capital, there were by 1711 thirteen places of worship in the London suburbs alone catering for the needs of the Huguenots, from merchant princes to Spitalfields silk workers.³¹ Only a few months before Sacheverell preached at St. Paul's, the whole question of foreign Protestants in England had been given new dimensions: first by the passing of a General Naturalization Act against strong opposition by High Church clergy and Tory politicians, and secondly by the arrival, at the government's invitation, of 10,000 destitute Calvinist refugees from the Palatinate, most of whom were temporarily settled in the London area.³² Since it was an accepted popular, as well as Tory, assumption that one "scarce ever knew a foreigner settl'd in England . . . but became a Whig in a little time after his mixing with us",³³ this was all extra ammunition for those Highflying clergy in London who in 1709 were once again proclaiming from their pulpits that "the Church was in danger" under the present administration. It certainly helped to furnish the locker of "their chief gunner", Henry Sacheverell.³⁴

But of all the threats to the Church which Sacheverell and his like discerned,³⁵ none was more tangible, more easily grasped by the popular mind than the alleged threat from *native* Protestant Dissent. Even in a sermon concerned primarily with renegade Anglicans, as the 5th November sermon was, Sacheverell returned to his chief bugbears

³⁰ See the invaluable section on "Public Creditors", in P. G. M. Dickson, *The Financial Revolution in England . . . 1688-1756* (London, 1967), pp. 257-65.

³¹ See the report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons, 1711 (the "Fifty New Churches Committee"), in *House of Commons Journals*, xvi, pp. 582-3; C. E. Whiting, *Studies in English Puritanism from the Restoration to the Revolution* (London, 1931), ch. 7, esp. pp. 360-4.

³² The Naturalization Act was repealed by the Tories in 1712. On this and the Palatines, see H. T. Dickinson, "The Poor Palatines and the Parties", *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, lxxxii (1967).

³³ Bishop Francis Atterbury, quoted in John Toland, *A State Anatomy of Great Britain* (London, 1717), p. 15.

³⁴ See Holmes, *Trial*, pp. 45-7, for the "Church in Danger" campaigns of 1697-1709.

³⁵ The catalogue was comprehensive: *ibid.*, pp. 24-7, 35-41, 51-6.

again and again. Those “monsters and vipours in our bosom”, those “clamorous, insatiable and Church-devouring malignants”, “miscreants begot in rebellion, born in sedition, and nurs’d up in faction”, would need constant vigilance lest they “grow eccentric, and like comets that burst their orb, threaten the ruin and downfall of our Church and State”.³⁶

To many their “orb” already seemed to have swelled visibly since the institution of “the Toleration” by the Act of 1689. And just as London dramatized so many other features of national development in the early eighteenth century, so it highlighted with exceptional clarity the problem of Dissent. Out of approximately half a million Nonconformists in England and Wales by the time of George I’s accession — the number of congregations was some 30 per cent higher than in 1690 — it was believed (and, it now seems, rightly so) that at least 100,000 were living in London, Westminster, Southwark and their out-parishes.³⁷ In 1705, during a fierce debate on “the Church in Danger”, the Tory Member of Parliament for Worcestershire declared that already, “If I am rightly inform’d, there are 100 conventicles or thereabouts in and about London”.³⁸ But what irked him no less, and what surely struck the true Londoner at least as strongly as his visiting country cousins, was the fact that despite the civil disabilities which Dissent still legally incurred, especially in terms of office-holding and university entrance, there was no necessary correlation between religious conformity and privileged social status. Both the imposing structures which many London congregations were erecting for their worship and the social display at their doors offered abundant proof to the outsider that Dissent was thriving in more than mere numbers: “. . . the dissenters are still building more [meeting-houses]”, Sir John Pakington complained, “and . . . their conventicles

³⁶ H. Sacheverell, *The Perils of False Brethren* (London, 1709 octavo edn.), pp. 15, 19.

³⁷ The provenance of these statistics will be discussed in a separate paper which I hope eventually to publish on “The Strength of Protestant Dissent in Early Eighteenth-Century England”. Their basis is (1) the official record of dissenters’ places of worship licensed in the first year (1689-90) of the operation of the Toleration Act (cf. E. D. Bebb, *Nonconformity and Social and Economic Life* [London, 1935], App. I); (2) a collation of the results of two independent “censuses” of Nonconformist congregations and ministers, begun in 1715 and substantially completed by 1717 (Dr. Williams’s Lib., London, MS. 34.4, 34.5); (3) the report of the Select Committee of 1711 (see above, note 31) on the strength of Dissent in the London suburbs and in Westminster. From these and other sources, estimates and adjustments can then be made for (a) London within the walls, (b) the several hundred unenumerated congregations of Presbyterians, Independents and Baptists in the provinces, (c) the Quakers, (d) the lesser sects, (e) the foreign Protestants.

³⁸ Sir John Pakington’s speech on “the Church in danger” [8 Dec. 1705], printed as an Appendix to “An Anonymous Parliamentary Diary, 1705-6”, ed. W. A. Speck, in *Camden Miscellany*, xxiii (Camden Soc., 4th ser., vii, 1969), p. 83.

are now fuller than any of our churches, *and more attendance of coaches about them*".³⁹ Many of the "rich coaches, fine liveries, splendid equipages . . .", which another Tory member had earlier seen as the hallmark of the new breed of City financiers, were part of the "state and bravery"⁴⁰ kept up by known "fanatics". Their generous contributions to the construction of new chapels were but another manifestation of the same socio-religious phenomenon.

So it is unlikely to have been fortuitous that when the Sacheverell mobs, after two days of simmering, finally poured on to the streets on 1 March 1710, their original objective was the opulent Presbyterian meeting-house south of Lincoln's Inn Fields, opened in 1705 for a leading preacher of the day, Daniel Burgess.⁴¹ Neither was it coincidental that as the disorders reached their climax many of the rioters saw the firing of the Bank of England as a natural extension of their attacks on conventicles. Indeed, papers handed out among the crowd of several thousand in "the Fields" bore the slogan: "Down with the Bank of England and the Meeting-Houses; and God damn the Presbyterians and all that support them".⁴²

The Sacheverell rioters were no indiscriminating rabble. They had specific targets in mind as they warmed to their work. Some they located and scourged, others they failed to reach; but all are revealing indicators of their prejudices and impulses. Some factors they do conceal. But on the whole their message is transparent and thoroughly consonant with the general context of the disorders which we have just examined. Before it was finally dispersed, the crowd which took possession of much of London's west end on the night of 1st-2nd March, chanting "High Church and Sacheverell", accosting frightened citizens with shouts like "God damn you, are you for the Doctor", had sacked and partly demolished six of the best-known dissenting meeting-houses in the capital. They had made huge bonfires of their contents from Drury Lane in the west to Clerkenwell in the north and Blackfriars in the east. Earl's near the junction of Drury Lane and Long Acre, Bradbury's off Fetter Lane, Taylor's between Leather Lane and Hatton Garden, Hamilton's in Clerkenwell, and Wright's inside the city walls in Blackfriars, had all suffered in turn the fate of Burgess's; except that in the Meeting House Court in front of Samuel Wright's the pyre was never ignited. "They

³⁹ *Ibid.* My italics.

⁴⁰ Bodleian Lib., Oxford, MS. Carte 117, fos. 177-8: "The Speech of an Honourable Member of the House of Commons upon the Debate of the Malt Tax" [1702].

⁴¹ Burgess had brought his congregation to the new site from a former chapel in Russell Court, off Drury Lane, the lease of which had expired: Walter Wilson, *The History and Antiquities of Dissenting Churches and Meeting Houses . . . in London*, 4 vols. (London, 1808-14), iii, p. 492.

⁴² [John Toland?], *High Church Display'd* (London, 1711), p. 96.

burnt not only the joiners' work of those meeting-houses, which they destroyed", recorded John Dyer, writer of a best-selling Tory newsletter, "but also the fine clocks, brass-branches and chairs and cushions of the vestry rooms; and they seized the builder of that in Leather Lane and threatened to throw him into the fire, alledging his crime was very great, for by building such houses he drew people from the public worship of God in the National Church".⁴³

However, this is only part of the story. The mobs (the original concourse round Carey Street and Lincoln's Inn Fields having begun to split and fan out between 9.00 and 9.30 p.m.) were overtaken by the military while still in full cry: in Drury Lane well before midnight, in Blackfriars an hour to ninety minutes later, in Clerkenwell about 2.00 a.m. In each case they had other game in view, of which they made no secret, and some of it they would have bagged if the forces of law and order had not caught up with them first. The Drury Lane rioters had already threatened to make short work of a nearby chapel in Great Wild Street, which had only been by-passed in favour of Earl's because it was a mere "hen-roost" in comparison. And before the Life Guards clattered down Great Queen Street and came upon them, some of their ringleaders were canvassing the priorities of three further targets: the private residences of two notorious Whigs, Lord Wharton and John Dolben, and both the house and church of the Reverend Benjamin Hoadly.⁴⁴ There was nothing accidental about the selection. The earl of Wharton, cabinet-minister and Junco lord, was rightly suspected of having been a prime instigator of the impeachment,⁴⁵ and John Hodges, one of the incendiaries of Lincoln's Inn Fields, had boasted to his friends that "if he saw the said Earle he would run his fist down his throat".⁴⁶ Jack Dolben, who had chaired the committee which framed the impeachment articles, and who had narrowly escaped lynching earlier that evening,⁴⁷ was a classic example, as the son of a former archbishop of York, of the "false brothers" Sacheverell had denounced. And so in his own sphere was Ben Hoadly, the arch-latitude-narian rector of St. Peter-le-Poor, whom "Sacheverell was known to have the greatest enmity and rancour of mind against . . .".⁴⁸

⁴³ Brit. Lib., Loan 29/321, Dyer's Newsletter, 4 Mar.

⁴⁴ *State Trials*, xv, 554, 627, 657-8; Boyer, *Queen Anne*, p. 416; [Toland?], *High Church Display'd*, p. 96; J. Oldmixon, *The History of England during the Reigns of King William and Queen Mary, Queen Anne, King George I* (London, 1735), p. 434; Calamy, *An Historical Account of My Own Life*, ii, p. 228. See also Scottish Rec. Off., G.D. 205/4 (Ogilvie of Inverquharity MSS.): John Pringle to Sir William Bennett, 2 Mar. 1710.

⁴⁵ See Holmes, *Trial*, pp. 79-80, 84-5, 97-8.

⁴⁶ Blenheim MSS., Box VII, 18: deposition of Anne Corbière before Sir Henry Dutton Colt, 5 Mar. 1710. See also Matthew Bunce's evidence before the Lords, 4 Mar.: House of Lords MSS. 2665.

⁴⁷ Historical Manuscripts Commission (hereafter H.M.C.), *Portland MSS.*, iv, p. 532.

⁴⁸ Oldmixon, *The History of England*, p. 434.

Some three hours after the engagement in Drury Lane the Clerkenwell rioters, who had just burnt in St. John's Square the fittings of Hamilton's chapel, were surprised by the Grenadiers when in the very act of scaling the garden walls of Sir Edmund Harrison, a wealthy merchant and a leading London Presbyterian. Minutes earlier, likewise bent on destruction, they had been trying to locate the house of Gilbert Burnet, bishop of Salisbury, the most notorious Low Churchman on the bench. Burnet, whom they denounced as a "Presbyterian bishop" and the "rogue [who] had dirt thrown in his coach coming from Sacheverell's tryal", was bravely watching them from one of his windows which overlooked the square; it was as well for him that he was not identified before the troops arrived.⁴⁹

The timeliest military intervention, however, was in Blackfriars. From there three parties were preparing to move on: the first to deal with Nesbitt's meeting-house in Aldersgate Street, the second with the familiar premises of John Shower in Old Jewry, and the third to loot and burn the Bank of England in Grocers' Hall.⁵⁰ The mob's designs on the Bank had been known for several hours; the directors were in a state of panic; the Bank's offices had already been given a tiny garrison of Grenadier Guards. And although it was clear enough by midnight that the threat to the conventicles had become a general one — Dyer thought it "certain there had not been one left standing in the City and suburbs by the morning if the Guards had not prevented" — it was towards Grocers' Hall that the main body of troops was swiftly moving, at the instance of their guide, Captain Orrell, when they were providentially diverted by news of the tumult in Blackfriars. "Gentlemen", Orrell had urged as he led the party down Holborn, "it is better to have all the meeting-houses destroyed than the Bank. Pray, let us go thither". Not surprisingly, when further disorders were anticipated on the Queen's birthday, 8th March, the Lieutenancy posted detachments from two regiments of Trained Bands at Grocers' Hall, there to "keep guard for such time as the Governor or Deputy Governor of the Bank of England shall direct".⁵¹

⁴⁹ Brit. Lib., Lansdowne MSS. 1024, fo. 206; Scottish Rec. Off., G.D. 205/4: Pringle to Bennett, 2 Mar.; A. Cunningham, *The History of Great Britain from the Revolution in 1688 to the Accession of George I*, 2 vols. (London and Edinburgh, 1787), ii, p. 294; Calamy, *op. cit.*, ii, p. 228; Blenheim MSS., Box VII, 18: depositions of John Smith of Clerkenwell, vintner, before Robert Pringle, 4 Mar., and Joseph Bennett, lighterman, before Charles Delafaye, 4 Mar.; House of Lords MSS. 2665: MS. minute of Thomas Wilson's evidence before the Lords, 3 Mar.

⁵⁰ *State Trials*, xv, 556; [Toland?], *High Church Display'd*, p. 97; Brit. Lib., Loan 29/321, Dyer's Newsletter, 4 Mar. Shower's Presbyterian meeting-house was in the next street to the Bank.

⁵¹ Brit. Lib., Loan 29/321, Dyer's Newsletter, 4 Mar.; Boyer, *Queen Anne*, pp. 416-17; *State Trials*, xv, 554, 556; S.P. 44/108: Sunderland to the Lieutenancy of London, 7 Mar.; C.L.R.O., Lieutenancy Minute Book, p. 156, 8 Mar.

Here, then, are the manifestations of a great popular demonstration both positive and negative in its motivation: for a Church believed to be in peril; in violent sympathy with a clergyman thought to have been maliciously persecuted; against Whig politicians and their clerical champions; above all, against nonconformity to established patterns, religious or social. Yet almost as revealing as what the mobs attacked or proposed to attack is what they did *not* assault or damage. They were at such pains to avoid indiscriminate destruction that, with immense labour, they carried the heavy timber and metal work of some of the chapels a considerable distance in order to burn them with safety in open spaces or the broadest thoroughfares.⁵² The demolition party at Christopher Taylor's, having chosen the fashionable Hatton Garden in preference to the more convenient but narrow Leather Lane, even made three small bonfires there instead of one large one to reduce the risk to adjoining houses.⁵³ Had the rioters in general shown less respect for shops and residential property they could have accounted for twice as many meeting-houses in the time available. As it was, even during the worst hours of the riots, there is no report of any serious damage to a private house.

Equally significant, I have found no evidence of a single rioter even contemplating such targets as corn factors' warehouses or manufacturers' workshops. The Spitalfields weavers, a notoriously unruly element in recent years, seem actually to have been prepared to march against the mob.⁵⁴ The absence of the cruder types of social protest may appear hard to explain, at first sight. There can be little question that earlier this winter, before soaring grain prices had been brought under control⁵⁵ and before the schemes for settling the Palatine immigrants had come to fruition,⁵⁶ discontents of a basically economic nature had helped to create in the capital an uneasy atmosphere, decidedly unsympathetic to the administration. There was also another major cause of popular disenchantment in 1709 in the continuance of the seemingly never-ending war with France, with its toll of manpower, its demands on the pockets even of the poorer wage-earners through high indirect taxation, and its depression of some industries to the benefit of others. And although hopes of peace had

⁵² See the map of the riot area in Holmes, *Trial*, pp. 158-9.

⁵³ Blenheim MSS., Box VII, 18: deposition of Robert Culbridge before Samuel Blaikerby.

⁵⁴ Beloff, *Public Order and Popular Disturbances*, pp. 82-6; H.M.C., *Portland MSS.*, iv, p. 532.

⁵⁵ For example, by the Act of Dec. 1709, prohibiting corn exports for nine months: Beloff, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

⁵⁶ The 3,000 earmarked for Ireland were despatched from Chester between Sept. and Nov. 1709, and almost as many again had by then been settled at home, mostly in districts remote from London. Others had sailed for the West Indies or Carolina. But the final 3,000, intended for New York, were still at Plymouth awaiting ship when the Sacheverell brushwood caught fire in the New Year. Dickinson, "The Poor Palatines and the Parties", pp. 476-8.

revived shortly before Sacheverell's trial, so that there are no signs of any overt anti-war protest in the March disorders, one must assume it unlikely that every rioter on the streets made a clear distinction, for example, between Wharton the warmonger and Wharton the scourge of High Church.

On the other hand, the economic lot of London's poor had improved steadily over the second half of the winter. If widespread material grievances still persisted by March, it can only be said that they were extraordinarily muted. Nowhere among the scores of depositions taken by the magistrates after the riots, nowhere among the testimony of over fifty witnesses at the treason trials of Dammaree, Willis and Purchase, can one find so much as a solitary reference, however oblique, to the economic plight of the poorer citizens of London. It is an astonishing fact, but an inescapable one. Equally conclusive is the teeming literature of the Sacheverell affair. In roughly six hundred pamphlets, broadsheets and printed sermons appearing in 1710 which had some bearing on the Doctor and his case, there is only one which contains an allusion — and that of the briefest kind — to dear bread.⁵⁷ If the pamphleteers and the preachers were in no danger of confusing the real issues of the affair with questions of trade, taxation or the cost of living, neither was the crowd. In March 1710 it was, to all appearances, every bit as much a "Church crowd" as the Highflying preachers themselves had prayed for — and in some cases preached for.

The role of the Church of England itself, and more specifically of the London clergy, in the Sacheverell riots is both important and strange. The strangeness lies in its own contradictions. There was no doubt where the Church stood in theory on the issue of violent popular protest. Obedience to social superiors, based on religious obligation, was the keystone of the whole hierarchical, authoritarian view of society which had been championed with so much fervour by post-Restoration divines. As for popular protest against *political* authority, against the law of the land, which is what the fiery demonstrations of March 1710 essentially were, this should have been anathema to the parsons — and to the High Church parsons most of all. Were they not the natural heirs of the long Passive Obedience tradition of the Reformed Church of England? How, therefore,

⁵⁷ I owe this information to the researches of Dr. W. A. Speck, who kindly drew my attention to the solitary exception. In anon., *The World Bewitch'd, or the Devil in the Times. With a Certain Prophecy When It will Mend: In a Dialogue Between a Londoner and a Countryman*, printed possibly in mid-February 1710, the "Countryman" regrets that "Dr. Seacherwell" (*sic*) should have set the parish by the ears, when all he wanted was peace, three meals a day, and plum pudding for Sunday dinner:

London. No matter for that Clod, you'll see that Sacheverell will be soundly punished.

Country. I should be glad of it, if it will make bread ever the cheaper.

could they condone the seeking to deny by force to the dissenters a liberty granted by Act of Parliament, the "levying war against the Queen's Majesty" which was charged in the treason indictments? Yet, in the event, clergymen caught up like everyone else in the furious party conflict of their day, clergymen as convinced and fearful as Sacheverell himself of the spreading tentacles of Dissent, found it possible not merely to condone but positively to encourage such a protest.

One must appreciate that by 1709, the apogee of the Whigs in the reigns of William III and Anne, at least four-fifths of the parish clergy in England and Wales were convinced that the ruling party, given half a chance, would sell out the Anglican inheritance to dissenters and latitude-men, if not to the enemies of Christianity itself. Because of this conviction, and because they saw Sacheverell's case as palpable evidence that their Church was indeed in mortal danger in Whig hands, they closed ranks behind this unsavoury man from the moment of his impeachment. Naturally enough, it was the London clergy who were best placed to demonstrate their feelings. This they did, for one thing, by providing the Doctor with a black-gowned bodyguard, a hundred or more strong, on his various appearances before the Commons and the Lords between 14 December 1709 and 25 January 1710; and on the last occasion their presence played a calculated part in exciting the large crowd gathered in and round New Palace Yard to cheer the hero of the hour.⁵⁸ More provocatively, in their own church services, they embarked between mid-December and late February on a systematic, and frequently explicit, use of pulpit, prayer desk and psalms in Sacheverell's cause. This campaigning came to a remarkable climax between the services commemorating Charles I's martyrdom on 30th January, which touched new heights of frenzied emotion, and the opening of the trial on 27th February. For four Sundays in a row, not content with inflammatory sermons, the High Church priests of the capital publicly prayed for God's blessing on a man accused by the Commons of Great Britain of high crimes and misdemeanours, a man about to be tried by the supreme court of the nation.⁵⁹

One can scarcely overstress the contribution these parsons made to the hysteria which had taken possession of London by the end of February: the mood which produced, to begin with, the wild scenes on the first two days of the trial, as Sacheverell rode in cavalcade from the Temple to Westminster Hall and back,⁶⁰ and on the third day the great riot itself. The very men who, according to their professions,

⁵⁸ Holmes, *Trial*, pp. 90-1, 108-9.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 96-7, 118-19.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 128, 133-4, 156-60.

should have been pouring cold douches of ecclesiastical water on to the flames of popular emotion were plying the bellows instead.

How many of those who made up the crowd on 1st March had actually listened to their prayers and sermons, or had sung such rousing psalm verses as "Break their teeth O God in their mouths; smite the jaw-bones of the lions, O Lord",⁶¹ we can have no means of knowing. London's lower orders were not conspicuous for devoutness or church-going; and in any event there were far too few churches to hold them. But how "vulgar", in the eighteenth-century sense, were the Sacheverell rioters? The surviving evidence bearing on their social composition presents a curious mixture of scarcity and rich plenty. The wealth sufficiently outweighs the poverty to allow certain conclusions to be reached with a degree of confidence.⁶² But it is as well to be aware from the start of the statistical limitations within which we must be content to work.

In the first place, it is impossible to estimate the size of the Sacheverell mobs of 1-2 March 1710. How, for that matter, does one define "the mob" in a disorder of this nature? Of the thousands who

⁶¹ Psalm lviii. 6.

⁶² On the debit side must be placed: (1) the disappointing yield of the Old Bailey Sessions records: Greater London Rec. Off., Middlesex (hereafter G.L.R.O., Midd.), [Sessions] R[oll] 2151, 9 Anne, 24 May [1710]; *ibid.*, MJ/GDB/299: Gaol Delivery Book, May 1710. Only 16 out of well over 100 persons arrested after the disorders were eventually brought to trial, and even then the indictments against those charged are inexplicably missing from the sessions roll. (2) The absence of any cases of popular disorder from the Treasury Solicitor's Papers, Public Rec. Off. (3) The loss of most of the private papers of one of the two Secretaries of State at the time of the riots, Henry Boyle.

On the credit side, however: (1) because the mob attacked meeting-houses their action could be construed by government lawyers as an attempt to change the constitution by force. Three of the alleged rioters (Dammaree, Willis and Purchase) therefore came to be charged not with "grand riot and *male gestura*" but with high treason; their trials at the Old Bailey spread over three days (20-22 Apr.), and there are verbatim reports in *State Trials*, xv, 522-690. (2) Two MS. volumes preserved at Blenheim Palace (Box VII, 18) among the papers of Boyle's secretarial colleague, Sunderland, contain many, though clearly by no means all, of the "informations" and depositions taken after 1 Mar. by a dozen overworked Justices of the Peace in London and Westminster: i.e. the raw material, gathered together by the zealous Sunderland, for the government's later prosecutions. (3) Important evidence was taken before the House of Lords, 2-4 Mar. (House of Lords MSS. 2665 and Lords' Committee Books; *The Manuscripts of the House of Lords*, new ser., viii, 1708-10, pp. 367-8). (4) There are some letters and affidavits of relevance among the official papers of the Secretaries of State (S.P. 34/12 and 44/108: the former (in-letters) includes a few letters and affidavits of relevance to the character of the mob). Of the many miscellaneous minor sources a particularly lucky survival is a contemporary printed broadsheet, of which I have seen only one copy, listing 105 names: anon., *A True List of the Names of Those Persons Committed to the Several Goals [sic] In and About Westminster . . . on Account of the Tumult, March the 1st* (London, 1710; copy in Brit. Lib., Madan Coll.). This has particular value as a social document, in those cases in which status, profession or occupation is indicated.

took to the streets that night, how many were actively rioting, destroying and looting, how many were cheering and egging on the activists, and how many were simply looking on from the fringes? Of course, there is no hope of our knowing. Even round figures from contemporaries are hard to come by. Francis Morgan, a Southwark pawnbroker, arrived in Lincoln's Inn Fields, as he thought between 10.30 p.m. and 11.00 p.m.; and though "it is almost impossible to be exact to half an hour", as Lord Chief Justice Parker reminded the jury on 20th April,⁶³ it is clear that Morgan arrived long after the first major exodus, to Bradbury's meeting-house, had taken place. When the Attorney-General asked him, "How many people do you think might be there [in the Fields] at that time", Morgan cautiously replied "I believe two thousand". But he later added that "the mob was so large, as to extend from the meeting-house to the fire [almost two hundred yards]; there were great numbers running to and again [sic]".⁶⁴ Edward Orrell, acknowledged on all hands as a most judicious witness, put the number of rioters in Drury Lane about 11.00 p.m. (many, though by no means all, of whom had come from the Fields) at two to three thousand, and about midnight we hear of "near 500 persons" still "gathered about" the fires in Hatton Garden, "stopping coaches and demanding money in a riotous manner".⁶⁵ The difficulty of making any kind of worthwhile estimate at night in such conditions, even by the glare of firelight, was underlined by the Lord Chief Justice's cynical comment to the jury at Dammaree's trial: "when they came to the fire, there was a great mob about it; and as you have heard from others of the witnesses that there were some thousands, you may imagine them some hundreds".⁶⁶

A further problem is that while a substantial core of rioters was itinerant, moving from site to site, at least as many and very likely more confined their activities to one meeting-house and one fire. Few mobsters had the stamina of William Watson, bricklayer's apprentice, who began at Burgess's as a roof-stripper, moved on to Bradbury's to demolish the chimneys, and finished the night as cheer-leader in Drury Lane;⁶⁷ or of William Collyer, butcher, who "bloody on the head and his knee very much cutt" from breaking windows at Burgess's, claimed to have been "the person that pulled the hands from the dyall in the riott . . . in Fetter Lane [Bradbury's]", and certainly ended up in Hatton Garden.⁶⁸ By contrast, even the two men ultimately convicted of treason, Dammaree and Purchase, could

⁶³ *State Trials*, xv, 602.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 560-1.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 555; Blenheim MSS., Box VII, 18: deposition of Barnett [or Barnard] Simpson, junr., of Grays Inn Lane, before Justice Ireton, 8 Mar.

⁶⁶ *State Trials*, xv, 601.

⁶⁷ See Holmes, *Trial*, pp. 165, 169.

⁶⁸ Blenheim MSS., Box VII, 18: Simpson's deposition.

only be proved to have participated in one riot, the former in Lincoln's Inn Fields, the latter in Drury Lane.

Let us suppose, however, for the purposes of our present inquiry that between 6.30 p.m. on 1st March and 2.00-3.00 a.m. on 2nd March there were at least five thousand Londoners active in varying degrees in the disorders (as opposed to those who were essentially inquisitive spectators): it would seem that this is the most conservative estimate possible. Of these it has proved possible to identify 182 by name⁶⁹ — a tally rather better than satisfactory, considering that the authorities incarcerated far fewer than this and instituted proceedings against little more than a sixth of the number. Such is the anonymity of the great urban crowd! With so few troops available for deployment, with the constables and the watch generally paralyzed until the final stages of the riot,⁷⁰ and the trained bands not under arms until the streets were already virtually clear, the overwhelming majority of rioters and prospective witnesses were able to melt away as swiftly as they had materialized, safe from recognition. Even Purchase, who had tried to run through an officer with his sword and should have been "cut to pieces" on Captain Horsey's orders, managed to make good his escape down Long Acre and through the back alleys to his lodgings, and he was only brought to justice because he was unfortunate enough to be recognized by George Richardson, an ex-colleague in the Horse Guards.⁷¹

The vast majority of those identified, 156 out of 182, can be considered fully-fledged rioters. But the total includes a group of eleven who, though claiming to be mere observers or at most constrained participants, were very probably actively involved, and a further fifteen who were known either to have incited the mob (though it could not be proved that they had openly participated in its work) or to have started as bystanders and come under suspicion of joining in, if only marginally. In 76 of the whole 182 cases we either know the occupation or the social status of the men concerned. Generally this information is precise; but in five instances⁷² status is deduced from, rather than explicit in, the

⁶⁹ See below, note 104, summarizing the status and/or occupations of identified rioters. Because of uncertainty over Christian names it is possible that the "Corbett" and "Read" listed there were the only two rioters of these names involved. The true total in that case would be 180.

⁷⁰ On the role of the constables and the watch, see *State Trials*, xv, 554, 674-5. Thomas Cave gave evidence (Blenheim MSS., Box VII, 18) that on the night of 1 Mar. — it must in fact have been after midnight — "he went to the watch house [in Clerkenwell] and told them the mob was setting the chapel on fire at St. John's. But they would not stir, for they had no orders". At least three constables, however — James Douxsaint, "Mr. Bull" and Edward Jones, Constable of St. Martin's — bestirred themselves to make some arrests once the troops were there to stiffen their resolution.

⁷¹ *State Trials*, xv, 659-63.

⁷² Those of Killett, Peter Brand, John Hodges, Robert Marsh and John Stevens.

evidence. All the social analysis that has been undertaken of the eighteenth-century urban crowd has had to rely perforce on "sampling". And there can be no more certainty in the case of the Sacheverell riots than in those of the other major London disorders of the Hanoverian period that what has survived is information on a *representative* cross-section. One can only say in this case that there are no reasons for believing it to be glaringly unrepresentative, and add that its value can be slightly enhanced by pooling with the named list a further list of fifteen offenders who are identified in the post-riot testimony by occupation but not by name; so that the "sample" numbers ninety-one all told.

Unless it is freakishly misleading, this would seem to suggest quite strongly that, in social terms, the Sacheverell riots were probably the most respectable urban disorder of the century. Certainly this was no protest of the miserably poor and inarticulate. Professor Rudé's researches into the character of the Wilkite and Gordon rioters⁷³ have led us to expect a preponderance of "the respectable working class" in those eighteenth-century London mobs which had a political or religious, as opposed to a purely economic, motivation. A clear majority — two out of every three in the Gordon riots — were wage-earners: journeymen and apprentices, domestic servants and labourers. Most of the remainder were small employers, independent craftsmen or tradesmen. Of the unemployed, the vagrant element, the dregs of the slums or the criminal underworld — in so far as it existed⁷⁴ — there was little sign either in 1768 or in 1780.

There was even less in 1710. Only two of our sample of "working-class" rioters were apparently unemployed; only two of those who made depositions affixed marks to them instead of signatures.⁷⁵ Predictably, apprentices were very much in evidence; there was a good deal of high-spirited hooliganism during the Sacheverell riots and this the apprentices in particular found congenial. The fourteen apprentices who can be identified either by name or occupation were drawn from the widest possible variety of trades. There were two in the joinery trade and two in bricklaying, the latter⁷⁶ both employed by the same master and highly conspicuous among the "pullers-down".⁷⁷ The rest were bound respectively to a glass grinder, a basket maker, a brass worker, a cooper, a clockmaker, a carver, a sawyer, a linen draper, a butcher and a poulterer. Several were in the

⁷³ See above, note 20.

⁷⁴ Cf. Peter Linebaugh's argument that "the distinction between the criminal and the respectable working class is difficult if not impossible to locate" in the 18th century, in Report of the conference on "Eighteenth Century Crime, Popular Movements and Social Control", in *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History*, xxv (1972).

⁷⁵ *Viz.* John Burton, labourer, and John Foreman, seaman.

⁷⁶ William Watson and Edward Newton Hughes.

⁷⁷ See below, p. 82.

thick of things. The poulterer's apprentice, employed in Clare Market, was one of those who carried the great door of Burgess's chapel to the flames, and the sawyer's apprentice, a muscular young fellow named Henry Sanders, smashed down Earl's door with two or three blows of his pick-axe; while Thomas Hill, employed by John Clowes, a clockmaker in Russell Street, paid for his night out by being chased by two Life Guards from Holborn into Red Lion Court and slashed by a sabre on the head and the hands.⁷⁸ It is of particular interest that the one indisputable fatality of the riots, the young man killed by a falling casement outside Burgess's, was an apprentice of a very superior stamp — bound to a linen draper and, according to Abel Boyer, "heir to a good estate".⁷⁹

Of the remaining employees and wage-earners, domestic servants (sixteen) make up by far the most numerous batch, with known journeymen (two) very much less prominent.⁸⁰ Among the servants, coachmen and footmen appear to have been well to the fore. Michael Caldwell and John Clements went on the rampage from the house of their employer, John Snell, in Clerkenwell and later buried their plunder in his garden.⁸¹ The livery of a law-abiding master was clearly no guarantee of good behaviour on this night. The coachman of Mr. Serjeant Goodwin (Robert Pond) and both the coachman and the footman of one of the very Justices of the Peace taking the depositions after the riots, Whitlocke Bulstrode, were very active. Even the coachman of the Whig leader, Lord Halifax, was not above suspicion. As well as liveries there were uniforms in evidence. Among our sample of malefactors are two soldiers (plus a third, a busy plunderer at Earl's, who it was "suppose[d] was a soldier; he was in a looped waistcoat and white stockings"⁸²); also two sailors, one of whom led the way into Burgess's by clambering up the door and smashing a gallery window;⁸³ and in addition to a Queen's Waterman, the unfortunate Dammaree, there was a Yeoman of the Guard for good measure.⁸⁴

If the Sacheverell rioters had closely conformed to the social pattern of the great mobs of 1768 and 1780 one might reasonably have expected to find the employed — leaving aside servants of the Crown

⁷⁸ Blenheim MSS., Box VII, 18: Joseph Collyer's examination before Robert Pringle, 3 Mar., and depositions of John Clowes, 4 Mar., and Thomas Hill, 8 Mar., before George Tilson; *State Trials*, xv, 555; G.L.R.O., Midd., S.R. 2151: recognizance for Thomas Hill, 20 Apr. 1710.

⁷⁹ Boyer, *Queen Anne*, p. 417. See also above, note 8.

⁸⁰ It is very possible, however, that several more journeymen may be concealed by the rather vaguer information on the supplementary list of unnamed rioters, or even by loose description of occupations in one or two of the depositions.

⁸¹ See Holmes, *Trial*, p. 164.

⁸² *State Trials*, xv, 657.

⁸³ Holmes, *Trial*, p. 162.

⁸⁴ Though the bill against the latter was found *ignoramus* by Westminster Grand Jury: Brit. Lib., Loan 29/321, Dyer's Newsletter, 13 Apr.

— outnumbering the self-employed by roughly two to one. In point of fact the ratio between them is more nearly equal. A notable feature of the evidence bearing on the social structure of the mob is the unexpectedly high number of small masters, craftsmen, self-employed artisans and tradesmen who were involved. More strangely still there were shopkeepers: John Beale, for example, who kept a barber's shop in Chancery Lane and put up £100 for his own bail;⁸⁵ Martin Kneebone, a woollen draper, who seems later to have turned Queen's evidence; and Francis Morgan, a pawnbroker. If we include a handful who are described in various testimonies as the sons of men of this status, twenty-six of our ninety-one rioters fall into this broad grouping of the self-employed.

An odd man out among them is a yeoman from the village of Marylebone, who was probably in town visiting his brother and who is worthy of remark as one of only three identified rioters whom we positively know to have been domiciled outside urban London or Southwark. The more sophisticated craftsmen were represented by a clockmaker, a periwig-maker and a gunlock-maker. John Wells, a brickmaster with premises in St. Pancras parish, was apprehended by the Guards in Little Drury Lane and later bound over on bail of £40.⁸⁶ A Southwark cutler, the son of a dyer in Princess Street and a bedsteadmaker named Giles, "who keeps a shop in Maypole Alley where he is new sett up",⁸⁷ were but three of those with a respectable artisan background; while the presence of three carpenters and three shoemakers suggests that the humbler domestic trades were probably well represented. Not that their own connections were necessarily so very humble. Nicholas Munden, an unmarried shoemaker who lived with his parents in Gilbert Street, and who was "taken . . . in Dr. Burgess's meeting house, actually at work in demolishing the same", was able to bring as one of his sureties when he applied for bail a relative, Robert Munden "of the Penny Post Office".⁸⁸

A far more striking token of social respectability in the Sacheverell mob is the participation of an appreciable "white-collar" or professional element. At the bottom of this particular social group were an attorney's clerk named Rainer (possibly the conspicuous figure "in the light coat and short hair" who later admitted having led an advance party into Burgess's),⁸⁹ and two bailiffs. The presence of the latter

⁸⁵ G.L.R.O., Midd., S.R. 2151, 14 May 1710. The amount is a little conjectural because of fading in the MS. It could be £300, though this seems excessive for a barber.

⁸⁶ Blenheim MSS., Box VII, 18: "Minutes of what was done at St. Martin's Vestry, 2d March 1709/10". It seems that the magistrate in this case had some doubts as to whether Wells had been anything more than a "looker-on".

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, information of John Buckingham before Charles Delafaye, 3 Mar.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, "Minutes of what was done at St. Martin's Vestry"; G.L.R.O., Midd., S.R. 2151, "Memord. qd. 24 die May 1710".

⁸⁹ Blenheim MSS., Box VII, 18: information of James Haines of Coventry before Charles Delafaye, 9 Mar., and George Gosdin, basketmaker's apprentice, before Francis Negus, 6 Mar.

astonished another member of that fraternity, Jacob Broad, when at the Old Bailey he was called to give evidence bearing on the movements of George Purchase: "My Lord [he told the judge] . . . I am not a man that engage myself in mobs, for those of my employment generally suffer in mobs; I avoid them if I can; and if I meet them I give them all the good language I can".⁹⁰ Another name to note is "Eliad Mitcalf", who was one of those temporarily committed to New Prison by Justice Ireton after the riots. He might possibly be one and the same with the apothecary, "Mr. Metcalfe", mentioned in a statement from one of the rioters, Thomas Pomfret, footman to John Jermingham, Esquire.⁹¹ There was also the postmaster of Gosport in Hampshire, Richard Dennett, who found himself embarrassingly implicated in the riot at Blackfriars, from which he returned to his inn "in a great sweat, a little after two o'clock", and who procured an affidavit to his good character from his vicar and twenty-five more of his fellow townsmen.⁹²

Higher up the professional scale, we find two lawyers, a former banker and a physician. One of the lawyers, unfortunately anonymous, was described in the testimony of John Smith, a Clerkenwell vintner, as the "chief ringleader" of the crowd which attacked Hamilton's chapel in St. John's Square. The other was a man called Tresley⁹³ who was most probably an inciter rather than active participant but who was, in any event, sufficiently involved to feel it necessary to leave his lodgings — and London — immediately after the riots. Another gentleman who was seen in the early part of the evening furiously tearing up pews in Daniel Burgess's meeting-house was followed back to his house by an inquisitive witness, who found on inquiry that his name was Read, and that he was "formerly a banker in Lombard Street". Equally interesting is the evidence of the periwig-maker, Thomas Talboys. "He says that either Wednesday or Thursday morning last there came to his shop a footman belonging to Dr. Cooke, a Phisitian. This servant told him that his master was with the mobb the night before when Mr. Burgess's windows were broke". There is nothing directly to prove that the maverick doctor was actually on the streets during the great riot

⁹⁰ *State Trials*, xv, 671. Bailiffs did, of course, differ somewhat in social standing, but it will be recalled that Purchase, who was described as "a very civil fellow" when sober, "but when he is drunk . . . quite mad", carried a sword: see above, p. 72.

⁹¹ The statement, however, did not directly implicate the apothecary. See Blenheim MSS., Box VII, 18: St. Martin's Vestry minutes.

⁹² *Ibid.*, testimony of Charles Collins, gent., and Henry Pardon of the Inner Temple, gent; S.P. 34/12/14: John Clifford and 25 others to Thomas Jervoise, M.P. Hants, Gosport, 9 Mar.

⁹³ He was the "gentleman, well dressed and having a blue cloak", who figures so prominently in the vivid testimony of the widow Newth concerning the first attack on the New Court meeting-house. See Holmes, *Trial*, p. 162.

itself; but it seems likely that at very least he had a voice in its planning.⁹⁴ Lastly, there is a possible addition to the “white-collar” group of rioters, though not in one of the major professions, in the person of Peter Brand. His occupation is unknown, but we do know that he was a Roman Catholic, that he owned a house in Barmley Street, and that he was the only one of the sixteen rioters eventually brought to trial who was sufficiently confident and well enough advised to plead not guilty and prepare a defence. It was said that he told his anxious wife, on arriving home at 3.00 a.m. on 2nd March, that “he did not fear, for there was a nobleman would stand by them”.⁹⁵

There are fourteen names on our identified list of seventy-six still unclassified, and thirteen of them⁹⁶ form a group no less remarkable than the one just examined. In it is included one rioter, Silvester Stone, committed by Justice Ireton to the New Prison, who is described in one source as “Esquire”,⁹⁷ and no fewer than nine who are explicitly described by one source or more as “gentlemen”. One of them, Leonard Sandford, was seen on the roof of Burgess’s helping to demolish the chimney stack.⁹⁸ Another was the son of that same Mr. Serjeant Goodwin whose “coachman was wounded by the Guards”.⁹⁹ Yet another, John Berkeley, apprehended by the Guards in Drury Lane, was a country gentleman staying temporarily in town.¹⁰⁰ To these men and their fellows we can possibly add three others. Robert Marsh of Great Queen Street — a fashionable address — was discharged from prison on 2nd March after producing a “certificate”, so called, from Lord Rockingham’s brother. Then there was the “Mr. John Stevens” we noticed earlier, who was heard by two witnesses at the Lamb Inn to swear “that . . . he himself would head a mobb of ten thousand men” (“out of his own country”, one witness added) “to rescue” Sacheverell from Parliament. As with Henry Chivins, the son of Bartholomew Chivins of Duke Street, who privately admitted taking part in the demolition of Burgess’s, there are grounds for believing him to be of good family.¹⁰¹

⁹⁴ On the “council of war” on the night of 28 Feb., followed immediately by the preliminary attack on Burgess’s premises, see *ibid.*, p. 160. On Read and Cooke, Blenheim MSS., Box VII, 18: depositions of Martin Kneebone, 15 Mar., and Thomas Talboys, 4 Mar.

⁹⁵ G.L.R.O., Midd., MJ/GDB 299; Blenheim MSS., Box VII, 18: deposition of Hannah Wetherall before John Pringle, 5 Mar.

⁹⁶ The exception is the bailiff’s follower, William Hedges.

⁹⁷ Anon., *Daniel Danery’s (The Queen’s Waterman) Letter to the Lord Treasurer: Concerning a Discovery of the Ring-Leaders of the Late Tumult* (London, 1710); cf. *A True List . . . of Those Persons Committed to the Several Goals*.

⁹⁸ Blenheim MSS., Box VII, 18: Kneebone’s deposition.

⁹⁹ House of Lords MSS. 2665: evidence of Henry Bendish.

¹⁰⁰ Described by Delafaye and John Wace in an Obligation of 4 Mar. 1710 as “de Spencely in Com. Wigern, Gen[t]”: S.P. 29/12/7; S.P. 34/12/5: affidavit of Jacob Pullen before Robert Pringle, 3 Mar.

¹⁰¹ Blenheim MSS., Box VII, 18: St. Martin’s Vestry minutes, 2 Mar., depositions before Charles Delafaye of James Haines, 3 Mar., and John Austin, 4 Mar.; evidence of Joseph Paine, upholsterer’s apprentice, n.d.

Out of the ten certain and three possible “gentlemen mobsters” whose names are known, two admittedly had disreputable connections. Walter Corbet was an Irish Catholic whose striking figure and dress were noticed by many onlookers in Hatton Garden and Clerkenwell (he is one of five identified Papists who lent their assistance to a “Church mob”¹⁰² for the sake of embarrassing a Whig ministry and spiting — as one of them said — those “king-killing rogues”, the Presbyterians). He was known to one witness only as “a very idle person in no manner of business”, but others made it clear that he preserved the façade of gentility by an income from gambling. John Crump, the son of “Mr. Crump of the Herald’s Office”,¹⁰³ was also thought “a person of loose character”. Elsewhere, however, there are no hints of shady circumstances, no pointers as to why in these particular cases the civilized veneer should have cracked.¹⁰⁴

It goes without saying that the very presence of so marked a professional and leisured element even among the named rioters, those actually caught or known to the authorities, has more than social implications. It surely offers *prima facie* grounds for supposing that the events of 1st and 2nd March owed not a little to incitement from above (quite apart from the crucial preparatory role of the parish clergy, already discussed), and that they owed even more to advance

¹⁰² The other four were Peter Brand, Henry Chivins, Thomas Pomfret and William Watson, who was server to a Catholic priest.

¹⁰³ Leonard Crump, Portcullis Pursuivant.

¹⁰⁴ The status and/or occupations of those rioters who have been identified by name can be summarized as follows (the sources are as listed above, note 62, with the exception of the contemporary broadsheet *Daniel Danery’s (The Queen’s Waterman) Letter to the Lord Treasurer*): *Esquires*: 1 (Silvester Stone). “*Gentlemen*”: 8 (Richard Bembridge, of Red Lion Square; John Berkeley, “de Spencely in Com. Wigern”; Walter Corbett; John Crump, “near Doctors’ Commons”; George Hawkins 1 [a second George Hawkins, “committed to the Compter by Sir Cha. Speares”, appears to be a different person]; [—] Read, of Red Lion Square, former banker; John Sallow; Leonard Sandford). *Gentlemen’s sons*: 2 (Henry Chivins of Duke Street [see above, p. 77]; [—] Goodwin, son of Thomas Goodwin, Serjeant-at-Law). *Possible gentlemen* [see above, p. 77]: 2 (Robert Marsh of Great Queen Street; “Mr. John Stevens”). *Physicians*: 1 (Dr. Cooke). *Lawyers*: 1 ([—] Tresley, “lodging at the Ball Inn, Rogue Lane”). *Possible Professional Men*: 2 (Peter Brand, householder of Barnley Street [see above, p. 77]; “Mr” Killelt, “lodged in Shoe Lane” [the fact that he was lodging with a master carpenter is to be noted, however]).

Also: an apothecary (see above, p. 76), postmaster, attorney’s clerk, woollen draper, 2 bailiffs and a yeoman; a brickmaster, tallow chandler, pawnbroker, periwig-maker, barber, bedstead-maker, cutler, gunlock-maker, clockmaker, farrier and waterman; a dyer’s son, joiner’s son, pastry cook, butcher, 2 carpenters and 3 shoemakers; 2 journeymen (1 brickmaker, 1 trade unknown, employed by Jackson of Stanhope Street), a labourer, stocking-presser, private soldier and 2 seamen; a bailiff’s follower; 3 coachmen (to John Snell, gent., Mr. Serjeant Goodwin and Lord Halifax), 2 footmen, a footboy, 7 other domestic servants (2 to gentlemen, one to an M.P.’s sister), 11 apprentices.

Occupation unknown: 105 (of whom John Anderson was bailed on the £50 surety of a button-seller, and Philip Gardner absconded after the riots — sometimes an indication of means).

planning and to on-the-ground organization. And there is indeed abundant supporting evidence from more than a score of informants, deponents and trial witnesses: evidence which, however miscellaneous and difficult to collate, is cumulatively too substantial to ignore. It becomes easy to see why the Whigs became firmly convinced within twenty-four hours of the riots that they had been the result of "a general design" (as the Attorney General put it) that was not "accidental"; and that behind those actively demolishing and burning stood many more "accomplices, adherents, abettors and advisors".¹⁰⁵

For one thing, quite apart from rioters identified by name, statement after statement from eye-witnesses is studded with references to anonymous individuals or groups, "in the habit" or "with the mien" of gentlemen, wearing "long wigs", carrying swords, but concealing elegant garments under voluminous cloaks or "great coats"; men who were either seen exhorting from the wings, or supervising on the stage, or directly involved in the various actions. Doubtless the garish firelight and the general atmosphere of frenzy and confusion heightened some imaginations. But for every piece of evidence which might be dismissed as vague or impressionistic there is another which carries too much circumstantial detail to be lightly set aside. One might incline to be sceptical of the testimony of Jacob Pullen, who lived in a house adjoining Earl's meeting-house off Drury Lane, that he saw "several gentlemen" among the mob after eleven o'clock, and "a minister, as he believes, having a minister's habit on"; but scepticism even here must be considerably tempered by the discovery that Pullen was no ignorant witness but a silk-dyer and part-owner of the very meeting-house under attack. The evidence bearing on the Leather Lane-Hatton Garden riot, though it varies from the vague and cryptic to the solid and specific, and is not without some inconsistencies, leaves little room for doubt that the mob here had firm direction as well as some active help from men of degree. Charles Fairhills, a coachmaker whose yard was next to that in which Taylor's meeting-house stood, saw three gentlemen — one waving a sword — run into his yard while the chapel was under attack; while William Grove, a local baker, observed at the chapel itself "two persons in their waistcoats without their coats, with their hatts edged with silver and with swords by their sides, worke very hard and laboured extremely in exciteing the mob". John Lunt of Little Kirby Street remembered seeing only one person who "appeared to be a gentleman" closely involved in this attack — he had a sword in one hand and a piece of wood in the other; but then, Lunt prudently watched from the safety of his doorway and there must have been much that he missed. Far more explicit was Henry Bendish, a Treasury official who had all too

¹⁰⁵ *State Trials*, xv, 550-1; *London Gazette*, No. 4660: proclamation of 3 Mar. 1710.

clear a view from his front windows when the rioters poured into Hatton Garden with their fuel. "He observed among the mob some persons in good dress that had the mien of gent, and others with good clothes under old coats, and 2 or 3 with old red coats who seemed to direct and govern the rest and caused them to make three fires and to take some of the stuff from the first fire, and with that and other stuff made [an]other two, the middlemost of which was before the deponent's house. These persons after some time went off¹⁰⁶ and left the ordinary people to themselves".

If, however, the evidence of incitement and of some measure of organization in the riot at Taylor's is convincing enough (as indeed is that concerning the later riot in Clerkenwell),¹⁰⁷ that bearing on the original "tumult" in New Court and Lincoln's Inn Fields is overwhelming.¹⁰⁸ Those presumed friends of Dammaree who sought to secure his release on bail by printing an open letter to the Lord Treasurer claimed that the waterman could not only supply valuable information on several important persons already arrested on suspicion of complicity in the Fields' riot, including Timothy Andrews and George Hawkins, "gentlemen", and Silvester Stone, Esquire, but that he also knew "several persons concern'd that at present think themselves secure, and those none of the meanest rank". Lincoln's Inn Fields was particularly public, surrounded on three sides by fashionable houses and on the fourth by the Inn itself, and the efforts at disguise or concealment here were rather more serious, and at times theatrical. We hear, for example, of "several men with red coats, long wigs, and footmen attending them" who were "seen among the mob, and damn'd some boys that held candles and other lights, lest it should have discovered them". Benjamin Johnson saw "several persons, I believe 6 or 7, with swords in their hands" outside Burgess's, cultivating anonymity under "shaby wigs". And Ward Gray Ashenhurst told a cloak-and-dagger story to the House of Lords about a mysterious coach "with the windows drawn up" which stood by the edge of the Fields, its liveried coachman huzzaing for High Church and Sacheverell. "And it being moved to go to Fetter Lane he took a hackney coachman into the box with him to drive to Fetter Lane",¹⁰⁹ and later on drove on to the fire in Holborn. Other testimony differs in detail, but conveys the same general message.

¹⁰⁶ Tipped off, it would seem, that the troops were out and already in action further west.

¹⁰⁷ For this, see Holmes, *Trial*, p. 174.

¹⁰⁸ See Blenheim MSS., Box VII, 18: depositions of John Lunt, Joseph Collyer, Sarah Sawery, William Grove, Arlidge, Thomas Mason, Charles Fairhills, Jacob Pullen; *State Trials*, xv, 554: Orrell's evidence; *Daniel Danery's (The Queen's Waterman) Letter*; House of Lords MSS. 2665: testimony of Henry Bendish, Ward Gray Ashenhurst, Benjamin Johnson and Matthew Bunce; [Toland?], *High Church Display'd*, p. 96.

¹⁰⁹ Presumably to be sure of not losing the way.

Proof that some of these men, with others, had actually hatched a conspiracy to “pull down the meeting-houses”, as the government’s lawyers alleged, was naturally more difficult to pin down. What was to prove the crucial testimony on the Crown side, by Thomas Talboys, who almost certainly turned Queen’s evidence, tells of a “council of war” outside Doctor Sacheverell’s lodgings in the Temple on the evening before the “grand rebellion”, a council “composed of some reputable men, they appearing as such to me by their dress”. In retrospect it seems insecure, even suspect testimony, at some points, although it is hardly to be doubted that some discussion did take place there.¹¹⁰ Other evidence, however, from a rather more detached source, points to the likelihood that some of the ringleaders, among them Richard Bembridge and other “disaffected” gentlemen, had used the Rose and Crown tavern at Temple Bar as a headquarters and may have planned at least some part of the operation from there. One wonders whether Tresley, the lawyer, was one of this group, for when he received the news hard by, in Sheer Lane, that the advance party had broken into Burgess’s and were pulling the pulpit down, he was heard to exult, “snapping his fingers”, “*Then . . . we have done it*”.¹¹¹ But in any event the Rose and Crown conspirators were unlikely to have been the only ones making plans, for apart from the debate in the Temple court on the evening of the 28th, Joseph Paine, an employee of Rawsey, an upholsterer in Bath Street, overheard a knot of twelve people gathered near Burgess’s meeting-house about 9 o’clock the following morning talking of “pulling it down”.¹¹²

However, the certain conviction that there was — indeed that there had to be — a considerable measure of organization in the early stages, at least, of the riot, stems not so much from evidence of this kind, nor even from the known involvement of so many men of affluence and status. It is rooted in the sheer logic of the problem which faced the rioters. After all, the internal demolition, and partial external demolition, of buildings as large and as well-appointed as most of these meeting-houses were (Burgess’s and Bradbury’s each had three spacious galleries, and they were probably not exceptional in this) was a major operation involving an exceptional labour problem. To strip out and carry away, in some cases a distance of several hundred yards, dozens of pews and hundreds of floorboards, together with doors, gallery rails, casements, wainscoting, pulpit, candle branches and clocks, not to mention tearing off tiles or slates and pulling down chimneys, needed not only gangs of men working

¹¹⁰ *State Trials*, xv, 552-3, 655; Blenheim MSS., Box VII, 18: Thomas Gray’s evidence before Robert Pringle, 4 Mar. (that Talboys had himself been in the “Council”); S.P. 34/12/14: Talboys to Henry Boyle, endorsed 7 Mar. 1710.

¹¹¹ Blenheim MSS., Box VII, 18: evidence of Peter Varnier, gentleman trooper of the Horse Guards, and Ann Newth.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, Paine’s deposition.

methodically as well as furiously at every point,¹¹³ but also men *with the proper tools*.

Perhaps the most significant fact to emerge from the mass of evidence provided by deponents and trial witnesses is that right from the start these tools were forthcoming. Many of the apprentices, journeymen and tradesmen who started from the Temple Bar up Sheer Lane early that Wednesday evening had arrived on the scene bringing their own tools with them: crow-bars, pick-axes, smiths' hammers, woodmen's axes and carpenters' tools. It is hard to believe that many of these men had no idea what they were about until they were spontaneously swept along. For that matter, we know that some of them — the two bricklayer's apprentices, Hughes and Watson, for instance — admitted receiving money for their night's work.¹¹⁴ And the accounts of their subsequent activities at Burgess's, and even at Bradbury's, make it absolutely clear that many must have been allocated specific roles. William Watson explained proudly to his friends the following day "that there were pullers down and carriers, meaning those who pulled down the pews and those who carried the wood to the fire". And indeed in the first part of the evening the proceedings had such an air of a drilled operation about them that no-one could fail to be struck by it. Captain Orrell told the court at the Old Bailey that he was staggered at what had been achieved at Bradbury's in the three-quarters of an hour or so before he arrived ("Lord have mercy upon mee, said I, it is all down"). Indeed, when the Queen herself heard from her physician "of the order in which the mob moved in pulling down the meeting-houses, each acting their proper part, some pulling down, others carrying away, and some burning, and all this so quickly as an argument of its being designed beforehand, she seemed greatly concerned".¹¹⁵

But one must be careful not to stretch the evidence too far. Beyond the sacking and burning of the meeting-houses in New Court and off Fetter Lane few if any firm plans seem to have been made beforehand; and from 10.00 o'clock or so, as the narrative is pieced together in all its marvellous detail, the overriding impression conveyed is of an increasingly improvised undertaking. There are still some curious facts to be accounted for. Where, for example, did both Arlidge, the carpenter, and William Grove, the baker, get their advance "information that the meeting-house in Leather Lane", as well as that in

¹¹³ At Taylor's alone, not by any means the largest of the chapels, we are told that there were 150 men, "as hard at work as they could be".

¹¹⁴ "Doe your work well", Joseph Burgess heard Watson call out to a working party in one of the galleries of the New Court chapel, "or else you shall not be paid": Blenheim MSS., Box VII, 18: information of Burgess, journeyman brickmaker, before Charles Delafaye, 18 Mar.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Sarah Sawery's evidence; *State Trials*, xv, 656; Herts. Rec. Off., Panshanger MSS., Diary of Sir David Hamilton, *sub* 27 Feb.

Fetter Lane, "was likely to be attacked", so that Arlidge was able to send his servant, Tomlin, well beforehand "to see if the mob had come there" and Grove managed to give Mr. Bishop, Clerk of the Leather Lane meeting, half an hour's warning "to remove what he could out of the said meeting-house"?¹¹⁶ On the other hand, as the original core of rioters doubled, trebled and quadrupled its numbers, it was quite impossible that the early cohesion should last. And certainly a succession of incidents in the Fields, in Great Queen Street and in Drury Lane from 10.30 p.m. or so, onwards, illustrates most forcibly the tendency to fragment and to improvise. The apprentice Joseph Collyer told revealingly how in Lincoln's Inn Fields "about eleven of the clock" two gentlemen who had "encouraged the mobb in these their proceedings and gave them money to goe on with their work" persuaded a party "to goe thence to the Meeting House near Fetter Lane"; but on discovering *en route* that it had already been accounted for by another party they led the way back westwards to Drury Lane. On Edward Orrell's evidence, however, Drury Lane must already have been reached by this time by another large squadron which went directly from the Fields, a move preceded by the famous running debate before Powis House and in Great Queen Street, presided over by Dammaree, which Orrell described so vividly in court.¹¹⁷ He also told on a later occasion, during Purchase's trial,¹¹⁸ how this vanguard had some difficulty locating Earl's meeting-house, and several times threatened to break down the wrong door, a circumstance which speaks for itself no less than the clamorous arguments we noticed earlier, about what the next targets should be.¹¹⁹

The decline of organization had one perfectly natural corollary. As the element of improvisation increased, so too did the level of looting, hooliganism and sheer drunken revelry. Whatever the solider citizens felt about High Church and Sacheverell, it is quite apparent that the scores of taverns in the riot area provided as the night went on a multitude of muddle-headed reinforcements.¹²⁰ It is equally clear that many of the younger sparks, especially the apprentices — even some of those who had been organized — went along most of all for the pure devil of it. The final word could most appropriately be spoken by the ubiquitous William Watson, who arrived in Drury Lane just before eleven, having already spent four hours that evening, first stripping many of the tiles off Burgess's roof, then personally demolishing every chimney at Bradbury's with an

¹¹⁶ Blenheim MSS., Box VII, 18: depositions of Tomlin and Grove before Bulstrode and Blaikerby, 2 and 3 Mar.

¹¹⁷ Holmes, *Trial*, p. 168.

¹¹⁸ *State Trials*, xv, 657.

¹¹⁹ See above, p. 65.

¹²⁰ Dammaree had been drinking half the evening before he came on the scene at Burgess's, and Purchase had literally been drinking all day and could barely stand.

iron crow-bar. When he reached the site of Earl's bonfire (as he related next day with no little pride) he "was so tyred with what he had done before that he could not meddle with nothing [there], but was forced to content himself with being a looker on; but he hollowed and laught with them, for there was such havock, he never saw such pastime in his life".¹²¹

To the questions posed early in this essay, therefore, certain answers can be suggested with confidence. The great London crowd of March 1710 was indeed a *Church* mob, moved to riotous protest in defence both of the "establishment", in a corporate sense, and of its flamboyant individual champion of the hour. This fact is as evident from the nature of the mob's carefully-selected targets, most notably the meeting-houses, as from its patent lack of economic motivation and the insistent cries of "High Church and Sacheverell" which stimulated it in its destructive work. That it was also a *party* mob, a Tory mob, is demonstrable, in part, by its identification of Whig and immigrant Bank directors, along with dissenting preachers, as symbols of a hated nonconformity. It may also be reflected in its social composition: in the fact that, of all the London crowds of the eighteenth century, this was the nearest to a "white-collar" crowd (at least, it would seem that a significant proportion of the Sacheverell rioters were men more accustomed to the desk and the counter, or even to the coffee-houses of the leisured, than to menial toil). But most of all is the party element reflected in the incontrovertible evidence of incitement and *malice prépense* in the riots. The first three and a half hours of the disorders on the night of 1st March went more or less according to a plan — a plan which showed every sign of having been hatched by London Tories, men of some rank or local standing, with the deliberate object of exploiting, to the government's embarrassment, the great popular shibboleth of "the Church in danger".

That the subsequent cost of their mischief-making — in blood if not in money — was so low was due to some extent to the nature of their undertaking; but in the main (since the riots inevitably developed their own momentum, beyond the control of their organisers) it was owing to the marvellous disciplined efficiency of the troops belatedly deployed against the crowd. Authority learned its lesson, however, from "the night of fire" of 1-2 March 1710. At the next hint of serious trouble in the capital, in November 1711,¹²² Oxford's ministry moved with

¹²¹ Blenheim MSS., Box VII, 18: Sarah Sawery's evidence.

¹²² The Whig leaders planned to raise an anti-peace and No-Popery mob on 17 Nov., the anniversary of Queen Elizabeth's birthday. Among the effigies due to be burned, but seized by government messengers on the 16th, was one of Doctor Sacheverell. Boyer, *Queen Anne*, p. 524; H.M.C., *Dartmouth MSS.*, i, pp. 307-8; Berks. Rec. Off., Trumbull MSS., vol. 11: T. Bateman to Sir W. Trumbull, 19 Nov. 1711.

decisive alacrity to nip it in the bud. In 1715 came the Riot Act, in the wake of High-Church/Jacobite election disorders early in George I's reign. Not until there emerged another charismatic hero-figure, championing a cause as popular as Sacheverell's, if very different, was London to experience again a storm approaching in intensity that of 1710. And two generations of politicians, and of Londoners, had come and gone by then.

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