

Introduction

DURING THE FIRST DECADES of the seventeenth century in England, a remarkable number of small religious groups began to adopt elements of Jewish ceremonial law. In London, in South Wales, in the Chilterns and the Cotswolds, congregations revived the observation of the Saturday Sabbath.¹ Thomas Woolsey, imprisoned for separatism, wrote to his co-religionists in Amsterdam to 'prove it unlawful to eat blood and things strangled.'² John Traske and his followers began to celebrate Passover seders.³ Thomas Tillam announced the restoration of the practice of circumcision.⁴ James Whitehall was sent down from Oxford for holding 'Jewish errors' before later reappearing in Wexford, still 'infected' with these opinions.⁵ Anne Curtyn practiced circumcision on 'young boys.'⁶ Hamlet Jackson travelled to Amsterdam to be circumcised by a *mohel*.⁷ Robert Bacon, encountered a group of pilgrims on the road to Marlborough who also believed that they 'must be circumcised.'⁸ William Everard and Abiezer Coppe referred to

1. Ball, *English Connection*, 1–22; *Seventh-Day Men*, 1–30; Katz, *Sabbath and Sectarianism*, 1–21; Parker, *English Sabbath*, 161–64.

2. Reynolds, *Godly Reformers and Their Opponents*, 92.

3. See Traske, *Christ's Kingdome Discovered; Treatise of Libertie from Iudaisme; True Gospel Vindicated*; Pagitt, *Heresiography*, 163–214; Falconer, *Briefe Refutation of John Traskes*; Fuller, *Church-History of Britain*, 17:76–77; Greene, 'Trask in the Star-Chamber, 1619,' 8–14; Como, *Blown by the Spirit*, 138–75; McDowell, 'Stigmatizing of Puritans as Jews,' 348–63; Smith, 'Christian Judaizers in Early Stuart England,' 125–33.

4. Katz, *Sabbath and Sectarianism*, 21–48; *Philo-semitism and the Readmission of the Jews*, 33–34; Tillam, *Banners of Love; Temple of Lively Stones*; Whitley, 'Rev. Colonel Paul Hobson,' 307–10; Goadby, *Bye-paths in Baptist History*, 22, 251; Kenworthy, *History of the Baptist Church at Hill Cliffe*, 43–49; Payne, 'Thomas Tillam,' 61–66; National Archives, SP 29/181 f. 150; SP 29/236, f. 28.

5. National Archives, SP 14/180, f. 133; SP 63/237, f. 142.

6. 'Recognizances and Indictments from the Sessions of the Peace Rolls,' 186–87.

7. Pagitt, *Heresiography*, 181; Sprunger, *Trumpets from the Tower*, 71.

8. Bacon, *Taste of the Spirit*, 41.

themselves as ‘Jews,’ while Thomas Totney identified himself as ‘a Jew of the tribe of Reuben.’⁹ Seventeenth-century Judaizing, James Shapiro writes, was ‘a new and unprecedented phenomenon.’¹⁰ Lamenting this trend in 1642, the pseudonymous puritan ‘T. S.’ wrote:

Have you ever heard such a thing? That necessary truths having
lyen hidden sixteen-hundred years, should after be revealed and
preached by witnesses?¹¹

These developments took place in the context of a Godly revolution in devotional practice, a revolution that led to some of the Godly being labelled by their contemporaries as ‘Jews.’ While the first generation of Puritans were identifiable with the political project of fully reforming the Elizabethan Church, the Puritanism of the early Stuart period had become an identity, constructed from a variety of ritual, dramaturgical, discursive materials, which rendered the Godly themselves identifiable and (as the Laudian crisis emerged) deviant. In the context of the rise of Laudianism, a Puritan public sphere began to emerge, a culture within which a variety of theological positions were entertained. For Peter Lake and David Como, it was this ‘public sphere,’ which provided the context for the emergence of, what some scholars have described as, the radical Puritanism of the interregnum. Throughout this period, Puritanism was associated in English culture with Judaism. For Shapiro, this ‘labelling’ process, spoke to ‘deep, cultural anxieties’ about difference and cohesion.¹²

The question, posed by ‘T. S.,’ retains some validity today. Why, after one and a half millennia of dormancy, was the spectre of ‘Judaizing’ awakened in England in the seventeenth century? Focusing on three illustrative examples—John Traske, Thomas Totney and Thomas Tillam—this book attempts to provide an answer to this question. In doing so, it will uncover the complex and profound affinities these figures had with each other, despite more superficial differences on matters of ecclesiology. As such, it will describe Judaizing—not as a ‘shopping list’ of different doctrinal

9. Whitelock, *Memorials of the English Affairs*, 383; Coppe, *Some Sweet Sips, of Some Spirituall Wine*, A2r–3r; Tany, *Nations Right in Magna Charta Discussed*; *Theauraujohn His Aurora in Tranlogorum in Salem Gloria*, 9, 28, 42; *Theauraujohn His Theos-ori Apokolipikal*; *Theauraujohn High Priest to the Jewes*; *I Proclaime from the Lord of Hosts the Returne of the Jewes*; *Second Part of His Theos-ori Apokolipikal*; *High-Newes for Hierusalem*; *My Edict Royal*; *Tharam Taniah*; Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, 56, 190–92, 304–7; Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought*, 129–39; Hessayon, *Gold Tried in the Fire*.

10. Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews*, 8.

11. Pagitt, *Heresiography*, 168.

12. Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews*, 8.

positions—but rather as an identity, a culture, ‘constructed,’ like Puritanism itself, ‘out of a variety of discursive materials by a number of different groups and individuals.’ The development of Judaizing ‘the thing,’ I contend, was a process, which intertwined with the development of Judaizing ‘the label,’ the latter creating ‘resources’ that could be ‘reconstructed and redeployed by those whom the very terms had been intended to marginalize and defame.’¹³

At the heart of most accounts of the development of Judaizing in seventeenth-century England is the assumption that Judaizers were—to a greater or lesser degree—philo-semitic.¹⁴ This has been attributed to a number of factors: the renewed presence of ‘real-life’ Jews in England; renewed awareness of Jews in foreign countries via the medium of travel literature; renewed interest in Judeocentric eschatology; renewed interest in Hebrew texts arising from Renaissance humanism; a more literalist understanding of the biblical Law; a more typological understanding of the topos of Israel. Each approach takes for its starting point the presumption that Judaizers like John Traske, Thomas Tillam and Thomas Totney thought positively of the Jews and because of this chose to appropriate ‘Jewish’ practices. This study takes an alternative approach, examining Judaizers (to paraphrase Peter Lake) through the lens provided by anti-Judaizers.¹⁵ I contend that the Judaizers understood the pejorative meaning of such practices and adopted them as a designation of difference or resistance. Judaism, as we shall see, functioned as a cipher for otherness in this period. At times, the otherness of the Jewish people contributed to philo-semitic feeling, at other times it was manifest in anti-Semitic feeling. At all times, it was manifest in allo-semitic feeling.¹⁶ The pervasiveness of allo-semitism in early modern England has been explored in detail, in recent times by Andrew Crome.¹⁷ In other words, Judaizers adopted Jewish practices in part *because* they knew that Jewish practices were considered ‘deviant’ not in *spite of* this fact. Moreover, I argue that the practices adopted by Tillam, Totney and Traske—circumcision, Sabbatarianism and the ‘division of meats’—all functioned (both

13. Lake, ‘Anti-Puritanism,’ 86–87.

14. Philo-semitism, it has been suggested in recent scholarship, is something of a misnomer. Certainly the positivity of feeling that various Christian groups have historically exhibited towards Jews—which has been referred to as ‘philo-semitic’—is not an uncomplicated phenomenon. Nonetheless, its usage is descriptive. For the purposes of this study, I will use the word to refer to a trope, defined by Adam Sutcliffe and Jonathan Karp as ‘a tendency towards the admiration of the Jews,’ which is nevertheless frequently combined with a ‘conversionist desire ultimately to erase Jewish distinctiveness altogether’ (Sutcliffe and Karp, *Brief History of Philo-semitism*, 1–4).

15. Lake, ‘Anti-Puritanism,’ 85.

16. Bauman, ‘Allosemitism,’ 143–56.

17. Crome, *Christian Zionism and English National Identity*, 11, 22, 24.

