

9.14 *The trial of Dr. Henry Sacheverell*
(February 27 and March 3, 1710)¹⁵

The survival of the Revolution Settlement in Church and State depended on the outcome of the War of Spanish Succession. During the first half of the reign, victory followed victory, from the duke of Marlborough's brilliant defeat of the French army at Blenheim (1704), Ramillies (1706), and Oudenarde (1708), to the capture of Gibraltar in 1704 and Port Mahon, Minorca in 1708. Following the last, Lieutenant General James Stanhope wrote to Charles, earl of Sunderland upon the strategic significance of this prize: "her majesty being now mistress of the two best ports in the Mediterranean ..., makes me offer it as my humble opinion that England ought never to part with this island, which will give the law to the Mediterranean both in time of war and peace."¹⁶

But by the end of the decade polemicists like the Tory churchman (and future novelist) Jonathan Swift (1667–1745) began to allege in pamphlets like *The Conduct of the Allies* and periodicals like *The Examiner* that the Whig ministry was perpetuating the war to enrich new men, many of them Dissenters, at the expense of the old landed families. On November 5, 1709, in the wake of a decline in trade, bad harvests, and much war-weariness, Swift's fellow churchman, Henry Sacheverell (1674–1724), went farther, repudiating the Revolution itself. Marking the anniversary of both the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 and William's landing in 1688, Sacheverell preached a sermon, "The Perils of False Brethren, both in Church and State," asserting that "the grand security of our government, and the very pillar upon which it stands, is founded upon the steady belief in the subject's obligation to an absolute and unconditional obedience to the supreme power." What does this say about the Revolution of 1688–9?

If anyone missed the point, Sacheverell portrayed the Marlborough-Godolphin ministry, Whigs, Low Church Anglicans, and occasionally conforming Dissenters as "sworn adversaries to passive obedience, and the royal family ..., [in whom] the old leaven of their forefathers is still working in their present generation, and ... this traditional poison still remains in this brood of vipers to sting us to death. ... And what better could have been expected from miscreants, begot in rebellion, born in sedition, and nursed up in faction?"¹⁷

In December, the Whig ministry launched impeachment proceedings against Sacheverell. Was this wise? How might loyal Anglicans react to prosecution of a Church of England clergyman? The trial began in the House of Lords on February 27: how do the arguments for the prosecution and the defense differ? How different were their views of 1688?

¹⁵ CJ, 16: 258 (for the articles); and T. B. Howell, comp., *A Complete Collection of State Trials* (London, 1816), 15: 55–6, 202, 205–6.

¹⁶ 30 Sept., *The Byng Papers* (London, 1931), ed. B. Tunstall, 2: 301.

¹⁷ H. Sacheverell, *The Perils of False Brethren, both in Church, and State* (London, 1709), 22, 28, 30.

Articles of Impeachment (January 9, 1710):

- I. Henry Sacheverell, in his said sermon preached at St. Paul's, doth suggest and maintain that the necessary means used to bring about the said happy Revolution were odious and unjustifiable, that his late majesty, in his Declaration, disclaimed the least imputation of resistance; and that to impute resistance to the said Revolution is to cast black and odious colors upon his late majesty and the said Revolution.
- II. He ... doth suggest and maintain that the aforesaid Toleration granted by law is unreasonable and the allowance of it unwarrantable; and asserts that he is a false brother, with relation to God, religion, or the Church, who defends Toleration and liberty of conscience. ...
- III. He ... doth falsely and seditiously suggest and assert that the Church of England is in a condition of great peril and adversity under her majesty's administration; and ... doth suggest the Church to be in danger: and, as a parallel, mentions ... that the person of King Charles [I] was voted to be out of danger at the same time that his murderers were conspiring his death. ...
- IV. He ... doth falsely and maliciously suggest that her majesty's administration, both in ecclesiastical and civil affairs, tends to the destruction of the constitution. And that there are men of characters and stations in Church and State who are false brethren, and do themselves weaken, undermine, and betray, and do encourage, and put it in the power of others, who are professed enemies, to overturn and destroy the constitution and establishment. ...

[February 27] *Attorney General Sir John Montague*: ... If what the doctor very frequently asserts in this sermon be true, that all are false sons of the Church, who assisted in bringing about the Revolution, or that joined in the opposition that was made to the encroachments which were begun by evil ministers in the reign of King James II, against our religion and liberties; let the doctor a little consider, how far his character of a false brother may be carried!

Everybody knows, that lived in those days, that the body of the clergy of the Church of England made a noble stand against the encroachments which were then making, and appeared as active as any of the laity.

And was it not by their writings, preaching, and example, that the nobility and gentry were animated to maintain and defend their rights, religion, and liberties? ...

[March 3] *Sir Simon Harcourt* (for the defense). ... I shall endeavor to satisfy your lordships, first, that the doctor's assertion of the illegality of resistance to the supreme power on any pretense whatsoever, in general terms, without expressing any exception, or that any exception is to be made, is warranted by the authority of the Church of England. And secondly, that his manner of expression is agreeable to the law of England. ...

My lords, is this doctrine of non-resistance taught in the homilies in general terms, in the same manner as Doctor Sacheverell has asserted it, without

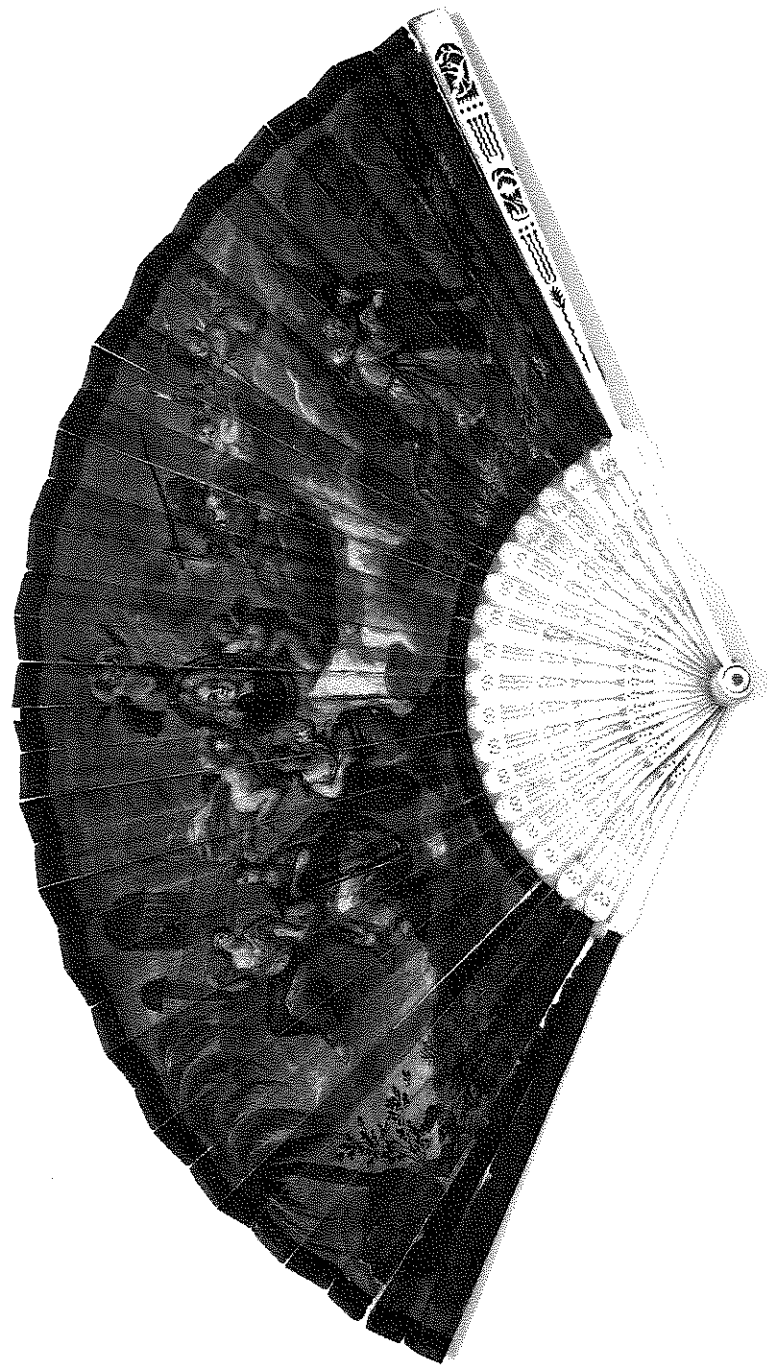


Plate 13 "A Happy Outcome for the Church of England and Queen Anne," a painted fan (ca. 1715). (Source: Helene Alexander Collection, The Fan Museum, London.)

The (in)famous preacher Henry Sacheverell (see documents 9.14 and 9.15) is protected by cherubs and goddesses. Who might the women surrounding him represent? In the lower right-hand corner, plotters conspire, presumably against Sacheverell and the Church (upper right). What groups do the plotters (one with dark, plain-clothes, another with habit and rosary) represent? Is this a Tory or a Whig fan? How do you know? Who might use such a fan? What does this say about gender and political culture?

expressing any exception? Do the articles of our religion declare the doctrine taught in the homilies to be a godly and wholesome doctrine? And will your lordships permit this gentleman to suffer for preaching it? Is it criminal in any man to preach that doctrine, which it is his duty to read? ...

That your lordships may not think this doctrine died at the Revolution, I shall humbly lay before your lordships the opinions of three archbishops, and eleven bishops, made since the Revolution, which will fully shew the doctrine of non-resistance is still the doctrine of our Church. ... I am sure it is impossible to enter into the heart of man to conceive, that what these reverend prelates have asserted, that any general position they have laid down concerning non-resistance, is an affirmance that necessary means used to bring about the Revolution were odious and unjustifiable. Why then is Doctor Sacheverell, by having taught the same doctrine, in the same manner as they did, to be charged for having suggested or maintained any such thing?

9.15 *The trial of Daniel Dammarree for his role in the Sacheverell Riots (April 1710)*¹⁸

At the end of March 1710, the Lords found Sacheverell guilty by 69 to 52 votes. They suspended him from preaching for three years and ordered his sermons burnt by the common hangman. While this barely satiated Whig desires, it made him a martyr in the eyes of the Anglican populace (see Plate 13). For example, by November, papers carried advertisements for "Music just published. The True Loyalist's Health to the Church, Queen, Dr. Sacheverell, and the new Loyal Members of Parliament; price 2d."¹⁹ Even the queen had privately urged peers to find Sacheverell guilty, but to moderate his punishment. Damarie was a royal bargeman arrested for his part in the attack on meeting houses after the Sacheverell indictment was announced. Why might he have thought that attacking a Presbyterian meeting house was not inconsistent with his status as a royal servant? That is, why might he have thought that Anne, too, was for "High Church and Sacheverell"? Why did he lose his job? What does this case say about popular politics in the age of Anne? Compare it with the attack on a Ludlow meeting house from 1693 (document 9.10). Were these actions random or well organized? Were they spontaneous or planned – perhaps by members of the ruling elite? In light of these attacks, how convinced are you of the assertion made by some historians that the dawn of the eighteenth century saw a rise of secularism and a decline in religious politics? (Before answering that, you might want to read Locke's *Letter concerning Toleration*, document 9.23.)

¹⁸ A. Knapp and W. Baldwin, eds., *The Newgate Calendar* (London, 1824), 1: 59–60.

¹⁹ *The Post Boy*, no. 2415, Nov. 2–4, 1710.

Daniel Dammarree ..., waterman [bargeman on the River Thames] to Queen Anne ..., on the 18th of April 1710 was indicted for being concerned with a multitude of men, to the number of five hundred, armed with swords ..., clubs, [etc.], to levy war against the queen.

A gentleman deposed, that, going through the Temple, he saw some thousands of people, who had attended Dr. Sacheverell from Westminster Hall; that some of them said they would pull down Dr. [Daniel] Burgess's [Presbyterian] meeting-house that night; others differed as to the time of doing it; but all agreed on the act, and the meeting-house was demolished on the following night. Here it should be observed that Dr. Burgess and Mr. [Thomas] Bradbury were two dissenting ministers, who had made themselves conspicuous by preaching in opposition to Sacheverell's doctrine.

Captain Orril swore, that, on the 1st of March, hearing that the mob had pulled down Dr. Burgess's meeting-house, he resolved to go among them, to do what service he could to government by making discoveries. This witness, going to Mr. Bradbury's meeting, found the people plundering it, who obliged him to pull off his hat. After this he went to Lincoln's Inn Fields, where he saw a bonfire made of some of the materials of Dr. Burgess's meeting-house, and saw the prisoner [Dammarree], who twirled his hat, and said "Damn it, I will lead you on; we will have all the meeting-houses down. High Church and Sacheverell, huzza!"

It was proved by another evidence, that the prisoner having headed part of the mob, some of them proposed to go to the meeting-house in Wild Street; but this was objected to by others, who recommended going to Drury Lane, saying "that meetinghouse was worth ten of that in Wild Street."

Joseph Collier swore that he saw the prisoner carry a brass sconce from Dr. Burgess's meeting-house, and throw it into the fire in Lincoln's Inn Fields, huzzaing and crying, "High Church and Sacheverell."

[Dammarree was found guilty and sentenced to be hung, drawn, and quartered for high treason. The queen reprieved and subsequently pardoned him and restored him as a royal waterman. He was, however, terminated from this position at Anne's death in 1714.]

Landed Interest versus Monied Interest, and the Reformation of Ideas

9.16 *Celia Fiennes journeys to Tunbridge Wells* (written 1697–1702, pub. 1888)²⁰

As we shall see, late Stuart contemporaries were very concerned with the issue of wealth from cities and trade. But at least 80 percent of the population

²⁰ C. Morris, ed., *The Journeys of Celia Fiennes* (London, 1949), 132–5.

continued to live in the countryside around 1700. At the apex of the rural social structure still stood the landed interest: the relatively few nobles and the more numerous landed gentry. The gentry's influence (see Bucholz and Key, Conclusion) could be seen in art, dress, the architecture of country estates, and, increasingly, in the culture of country towns and spas. Celia Fiennes (1662–1741) traveled throughout much of England from the 1680s to the early 1700s, and her journal was published in the nineteenth century. About 1697, she visited one of these resorts. Why did the gentry visit Tunbridge Wells? What was most attractive about this tourist spot *vis-à-vis* London or the court? What is the significance of the gentry buying their own dinners? Is this the beginning of a consumer economy? What was the relationship between town and country?

They have made the wells very commodious by the many good buildings all about it and 2 or 3 mile round, which are lodgings for the company that drink the waters, and they have increased their buildings so much that makes them very cheap; all people buy their own provision at the market which is just by the wells and furnished with great plenty of all sorts flesh, fowl, and fish, and in great plenty is brought from Rye and Deal, etc., this being the road to London, so all the season the water is drank they stop here which makes it very cheap, as also the country people come with all their back yard and barn door affords, to supply them with, and their gardens and orchards which makes the markets well stored and provision cheap, which the gentry takes as a diversion while drinking the waters to go and buy their dinners it being every day's market and runs the whole length of the walk, which is between high trees on the market side for shade and secured with a row of buildings on the right side which are shops full of all sorts of toys, silver, china, milliners, and all sorts of curious wooden ware, which this place is noted for, [that is,] the delicate neat and thin ware of wood both white and Lignum vitae wood [inlay work]. Besides which there are two large coffeehouses for tea, chocolate, etc., and two rooms for the lottery and hazard board [gambling game with dice]. These are all built with an arch or pent house beyond the shops some of which are supported by pillars like a peasa [piazza], which is paved with brick and stone for the dry walking of the company in rain.

9.17 *Henry St. John on the monied interest (1709)*²¹

The great estates in the countryside depended upon careful management of land and marriage, especially as rental values remained depressed for about

²¹ G. Holmes, *British Politics in the Age of Anne* (London, 1967, 1987), 177, from Bodl., MS. Eng. misc.e.180, fols. 4–5.