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Lucy Hutchinson's theological writings

Abstract: Lucy Hutchinson's religious commitments inform her writing across its variety of genres. Critics and historians have tended to identify her as a Baptist, following the rejection of infant baptism that she records in her biography of her husband, John Hutchinson. But the recent publication of her theological writings allows for a more complicated account of her changing religious views. In the *Life*, Lucy Hutchinson showed how her husband's theological commitments radicalised after the Restoration. His turn away from Protestant scholasticism towards a more independent engagement with the Bible facilitated his investigation of millennial theory. After his death, Lucy Hutchinson continued this autonomous theological exploration, and moved further from the orthodox mainstream. After the mid-1660s, she prepared a sequence of theological writings that evidence her increasingly eclectic religious style. These documents suggest that she did not resolve some of her most dramatic movements away from Reformed orthodoxy. In these writings, Hutchinson negotiated a critical distance from her husband's legacy, the Reformed confessional tradition, and the options available in any of the available dissenting congregations.

Lucy Hutchinson's theology developed as she engaged with the complex and sometimes contradictory legacies of English Reformed thought in the changing and challenging circumstances that followed upon the Restoration.¹ Over the last several decades, as her canon has been established, and as the publication of several volumes of *Works* has

demonstrated her extraordinary capacity across genres, scholars are becoming aware of the multiplicity of Hutchinson's voices, of her sometimes quite sophisticated intertextual range, and of her formidable learning – and that in several languages. They are also increasingly aware of her confidence and precision as a theological writer, as well as of the contingency of her religious practice and beliefs and the sometimes surprising conclusions at which she could arrive.² This article will contribute to this discussion of Hutchinson's religion by illustrating the complexity of her theological evolution after the mid-1660s, during the period in which she developed an independent theological voice by negotiating critical distance from the English Calvinist consensus, from the emerging denominational bodies within dissent, and from the doctrinal legacy of her husband. Hutchinson's commitment to engage with theological issues as a private individual was not unusual within the cultures of English puritanism. Nevertheless, in so decisively moving away from the English Calvinist mainstream, Hutchinson developed an idiosyncratic and not always coherent combination of positions, some of which she later revised in more orthodox directions. Nevertheless, in abandoning the mainstream consensus on some of the most important elements of protestant theology, however temporarily, and in taking up positions that prevented her identification with any of the period's emerging religious networks or denominational churches, Hutchinson demonstrated how effectively she could balance religious commitments by becoming a capable, challenging and always independently minded theologian.

I Lucy Hutchinson, Protestant scholasticism and her husband's faith

For all of her claims to base her religious convictions solely upon the Bible, Hutchinson never approached Scripture as an unmediated text. Her childhood catechesis had provided her with the categories and definitions that were characteristic of English Protestantism, and

which provided the paradigms by which religious and other ideas could be sorted and re-arranged.³ ‘When we are young ... the lovely characters of Truth should be impressed upon the tender mind and memory’, she considered in the preface to *Order and Disorder*, even as she elsewhere remembered that ‘I learnt my catechizes with as much attention as any of my age’, but her engagement with creeds and catechisms extended into her adulthood, past the publication of the Westminster Confession and Shorter Catechism, which circulated widely after their publication in the later 1640s, and which exercised enormous influence in her theological writing.⁴

Hutchinson’s engagement with the literature of post-reformation Reformed dogmatics was likely encouraged by her husband. John Hutchinson inherited his father’s interest in Protestant scholasticism, if only a portion of his father’s books, and he invested in the resources through which he would learn to read them. In her *Life*, Hutchinson remembered how her husband had employed a scholar as a companion in conversation, with whom to test his convictions about the contested and increasingly politicised topic of predestination.⁵ As his religious commitments deepened, John’s engagement with Reformed religion became increasingly serious, and went well beyond the formalism that he condemned in others. Lucy remembered that her husband ‘hated outsides in religion’.⁶ Despite his emphasis upon piety and practical Christianity, he ‘was never any man’s sectary’, and never committed himself in an exclusive way to any of the emerging religious communities.⁷ Lucy’s idealisation of her husband worked to differentiate him from the religious networks in which his conclusions were, more or less, normative – for there were religious bodies in which John Hutchinson could, in theory, have found a home. But in his wife’s representation, John Hutchinson was not only exemplary, but also distinct.

Hutchinson noticed how quickly her husband’s religion changed in the aftermath of the Restoration. With the failure of Thomas Venner’s rising (1661), the government clamped

down upon Fifth Monarchist and other religiously radical communities, and many puritans toned down or even abandoned the most controversial of their eschatological convictions, internalising their millennial theory in search of a ‘paradise within’ that might be ‘happier far’.⁸ But the Hutchinsons moved in the opposite direction, and ramped up their commitment to millennial theory.⁹ While they supported Thomas Palmer, an erstwhile Fifth Monarchist, whom they financed while he was in prison and whom after his release they invited to preach on their estate, they also began to commit their millennial convictions to writing.¹⁰ While these actions do not appear to have contributed to the charges of conspiracy to insurrection upon which John was arrested in 1663, they did expose the Hutchinsons to legal jeopardy, and, had they been more widely known, would certainly have marginalised them within an already persecuted dissenting community. This was merely the tip of the iceberg. The Hutchinsons’ interest in millennial theory developed alongside interests in other ideas that were never part of the puritan or dissenting theological mainstream and were sometimes abominated by it.

John Hutchinson may more rapidly than his wife have thrown himself into this taking of theological risks. After the Restoration, during his neo-Stoic withdrawal from public life, he turned away from his library of scholastic theology to concentrate almost exclusively upon reading the Bible. In this ‘more diligent study of the Scriptures’, he ‘attained confirmation in many principles he had before’, and his commitment to Calvinist soteriology was confirmed. But he also made some significant discoveries in other theological loci. His conclusion that the ‘kingdom of Christ’ would be ‘set up in visibility and glory over all the nations as well as over his saints’ developed alongside ‘greater enlightnings concerning the free grace and love of God in Jesus Christ, and the spiritual worship under gospel, and the gospel liberty which art not to be subjected to the wills and ordinances of men in the service of God’.¹¹ As his discoveries continued, his engagement with Bible reading intensified. ‘A Bible he carried in

his pocket, [to] mark upon all occasions’, his wife remembered.¹² He noted passages that he related to the ‘Glorious Kingdome of Christ and the restoration of the seed of Abraham to serue him’ as well as to ‘Christs exaltation in Power and second coming to reigne in Judgment’.¹³ John Hutchinson would have traced both of these themes in his reading of Romans, which many puritan exegetes believed referred to the latter-day conversion of the Jews as well as to final judgement.¹⁴ He expounded this epistle to his family and found it to be an important resource during his imprisonment.¹⁵ In prison, ‘his business and continual study was the scripture, which the more he conversed in, the more it delighted him; insomuch that his wife having brought down some books to entertain him in his solitude, he thanked her, and told her that if he should continue as long as he lived in prison, he would read nothing there but his Bible’.¹⁶ According to his wife, ‘this continual study of the scriptures did infinitely ravish his soul’.¹⁷ With his interest in millennial theory, and his ‘enlightnings concerning ... free grace’, John Hutchinson found himself involved in the same kind of private conventicling for which he had imprisoned his cannoneers while acting as the governor of Nottingham. At precisely the moment when he might most have needed allies, he set his face against the doctrinal consensus of the dissenters to pursue an intensely individual life of faith.

Lucy Hutchinson’s world changed rapidly after her husband’s death in 1664. It is not clear whether she continued to expound Scripture to her household, as her husband had done and as other Calvinist matrons continued to do. But she certainly developed the independent theological judgements that had marked his last years. While the dating of several of her theological writings remains elusive, it is possible that her explicitly doctrinal writing began with her very partial translation – which she describes as ‘notes’ – of one of the most accessible introductions to Reformed scholasticism. Hutchinson’s interest in translating Calvin’s *Institutes* and its aphoristic summaries was certainly unfashionable. The golden age

for English editions of Calvin had been in the previous century. London printers published the *Institutes* in Latin in 1576, 1579, 1583, and 1584, along with an edition of aphorisms in 1595; the Oxford university printer published the last Latin edition of the *Institutes* in 1655. London printers published Thomas Norton's translation of the *Institutes* in 1561, 1562, 1574, 1582, 1587, 1599, 1611, and 1634, while abridged editions of the text appeared in 1580, 1585, 1586, and 1587, with the English aphorisms in 1596. Other translations of Calvin were prepared as private exercises of devotion.¹⁸ But unlike many of these earlier translators, Hutchinson was a very critical reader of Calvin. She was more or less happy with the content of the first three books of the *Institutes*, but added a note to qualify the arguments of the fourth book, suggesting that Calvin's views of baptism and church government were unreliable.¹⁹ With this word of criticism, her translation went unfinished. It is not clear that the project stalled because of her disagreement with the arguments of the text. Perhaps she simply found it too difficult to continue working on a text that had meant so much to her husband. In her elegy, 'Musings in my evening Walkes at O.', Hutchinson observed that she could no longer delight in

... my bookes that vsd to be
The Sollace of my life while he
Was my Instructor & approued
The pleasant lines I chose & Loved (ll. 37-40).

Her thoughts were 'sick', and for her 'old delights' she had nothing but 'hate' (l. 42).²⁰ Perhaps the elegy is a direct reference to the Calvin translation, its aphorisms being the 'pleasant lines' that her husband had approved, and its source text among the 'bookes that vsd to be / The Sollace of my life'. Perhaps the Calvin translation fell victim to Hutchinson's

enduring and powerful grief. But this was also a period in which she was busy writing, preparing elegies (1663-64?), a memoir of her husband (1664-1667), and a sequence of increasingly radical theological works (1667-1668) through which she established her religious autonomy and a powerfully independent theological voice.

II Hutchinson's doctrinal statements

As time went on, Hutchinson's melancholy may have contributed to her movement away from Reformed scholasticism and towards the composition of simpler, less structured, and more idiosyncratic statements of faith. After her husband's death, Hutchinson moved beyond the theologians who had influenced him, as well as beyond the more radical of his later theological conclusions, to construct her own doctrinal statements that sometimes went far beyond the permitted boundaries of dissenting orthodoxy. In the order in which these texts appear in the second volume of the *Works*, which reflects a credible best-guess chronological arrangement, she moved increasingly away from the structures, categories and definitions that had been developed within Protestant scholasticism, from a locus of international Protestantism, Calvin's *Institutes*, towards what had been the doctrinal standards for English Protestantism during the late 1640s, the Westminster Confession of Faith and Shorter Catechism, with which she engaged much more extensively and which appears to have memorised, at least in part. But the text that represents her most radical statement of faith notably engages with neither of these sources, nor any other than I have been able to trace. Hutchinson's reflections upon the most significant statement of English Calvinism – the Westminster Confession – illustrates how quickly she moved from engagement into experimentation, and from corporate statements of faith into an unhesitating individualism, refusing to send her daughter a two-penny catechism when she could write tens of thousands

of words of theological exposition that, as her own conclusion notes, failed to include any reference to the resurrection – a concept that had, after all, been deemed of sufficient importance to be included in that rather shorter summary of Christian faith, the Apostles Creed.²¹ As this omission suggests, for all of her desire to stand aloof from the doctrinal disputes of the period's warring sects, Hutchinson's agenda was not to represent any form of historic or catholic Christianity, despite her occasional claims to the contrary.²² Instead, she re-invented the Christian faith in a series of theological writings by assembling ideas in a doctrinal bricolage that challenged some of the most important conventions of Reformed scholasticism at the same time as it overlooked concepts that were central to Christian faith in any of its historic expressions.

Hutchinson's doctrinal independence took time to develop, and her earliest theological writings continually fell back on the structure of the Westminster Confession of Faith. Her identification with this confession was in some ways remarkable. Throughout the *Life*, she had dismissed Presbyterian 'priests' and those who idolised them.²³ In the period that she was describing, in the later 1640s, the Presbyterian party was using the doctrinal standards that had been agreed by the Westminster Assembly to clamp down upon theological variety, a political move that bore most fruit in the Blasphemy Act (1648). This act criminalised a series of religious options, including any public advocacy of doctrine that baptism was only for believers, a position that by the late 1640s the Hutchinsons had adopted as their own.²⁴ The Independent clergy and a significant body of opinion in the army understood this act to be directly threatening their religious interests – as it was intended to do. Yet by the 1660s, Hutchinson had found sufficient critical distance from the period she had been describing to begin to use the confession, quoting or re-arranging its statements, as the annotations in *Works* volume 2 illustrate. She came to identify with the confession that

had been used to criminalise her baptismal critique, and to refer to Westminster as ‘our Assembly of Devines’.²⁵

This identification with the Westminster Confession, which in the later 1660s retained its symbolic power as a touchstone of orthodoxy, may explain why Hutchinson did not often advertise her disagreements with it. One of her most consistent critiques of the confession related to its representation of the system of covenant theology that had developed within European Calvinism and was widely shared by English puritans. Summarising this tradition, the confession taught that ‘our first parents’ – both Adam and Eve – were the ‘root of all mankind’ who were guilty of eating the forbidden fruit; and because they were the ‘root of all mankind’, the ‘guilt of this sin was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity, descending from them by ordinary generation’ (6:1,3). The confession was clear – that Adam and Eve shared the responsibility for the fall and the horror of its consequences.²⁶ But Hutchinson did not agree with this formulation. In her account, while Eve was certainly not blameless, Adam alone stood as the ‘root of all mankind’. Hutchinson made this case consistently. In *Order and Disorder*, ‘Adam in his own likeness got a son / Infected with his own pollution, / Which wholly spread itself through all his race’.²⁷ In ‘My Own Faith and Attainment’, she made the point explicitly: ‘Adam being the root of all mankind the whole humane nature was so wounded and corrupted by his fall that all that ever issued from him by ordinary generation’ inherit original sin and liability to its punishment.²⁸ In ‘A Briefer Summe’, she repeated the claim: Adam was ‘the first roote of all mankind’, on account of whom ‘original sinne was propagated to all his posterity, descending from him by ordinary generation’.²⁹ In ‘Concerning Selfe-Examination’, Hutchinson described Adam alone as the first of the two roots of mankind, the other being Christ.³⁰ And in ‘On the Principles of the Christian Religion’, she made the point for the benefit of her daughter, stating that as a consequence of the fall, ‘Adam and all his posterity issuing from

him by naturall generation' became liable to the consequences of his sin.³¹ In each case, Hutchinson's language invoked the wording of the Westminster Confession ('root of mankind' and 'ordinary' or 'natural generation') in order to repudiate its association of Adam and Eve as both being the 'root of mankind'. In making this move, she had in her favour such passages as Romans 5, which contrasted Adam and Jesus Christ as the two 'federal heads' of humanity, representing the old and the new creations, as English Calvinist commentators put it: Eve is simply absent from the biblical *locus classicus* of this construal of covenant theology. Despite the apparent clarity of this passage, the confessional claim that nevertheless equated the responsibility of Adam and Eve was repeated in the revision of the Westminster Confession made by the Independents (1658) and the Particular Baptists (1677).

Hutchinson's decision to refer to Adam as the root of humanity, and not to make the same claim about Eve, revised the claims of English Calvinist theology. Her goal was not likely to exonerate Eve, who on account of her 'unexperience' was 'first and easier overthrown' in the world's first temptation, as Hutchinson elsewhere recognised, but to adhere more closely to the relevant biblical proof texts.³²

Hutchinson's engagement with a national confession tradition quickly turned to individualistic experimentation. Perhaps it is notable that while the *Life* recorded the family having hired a domestic theologian with whom John was to converse, as well as a Presbyterian chaplain who turned out to be an unreconstructed Scottish Covenanter, there are no records that the Hutchinson family employed any similar individuals as their fortunes declined after John's death.³³ After all, it would have been extremely difficult for Hutchinson to have found anyone – never mind an ordained minister – to endorse her idiosyncratic, evolving, and increasingly unorthodox faith. For all that she has been associated with the Baptists, there is no evidence that Hutchinson ever joined any congregation – nor that any of the period's diverse range of religious movements maintained the same articles of faith as she

advanced in her private doctrinal writing. In fact, it is not clear that any kind of congregation would have tolerated her diverse and evolving convictions.

Hutchinson developed her theological writing in a number of texts in a single notebook (Nottinghamshire Archive DD/HU3) that alluded to the Westminster Confession in order to reflect her increasingly individualistic style. 'My Own Faith and Attainment' is structured around text from chapters 1-6, 11-16, 25, and 27 of the confession, and supplies its own discussion of the other doctrinal loci in which its ideas run counter to those of the confession. 'A Briefer Summe' is less systematically organised and does not seem to refer or allude to the confession. 'Concerning Self-Examination', for all that it refers to 'good bookes & sermons', is more systematically organised to work through the standard theological loci but does not appear to refer or allude to any confessional text.³⁴ What may be Hutchinson's final theological discourse, 'On the Principles of the Christian Religion', quotes from the Westminster Confession and from the Shorter Catechism, but in a text that moves further than any of her other writing from the confessional tradition.³⁵ The often casual fluidity and occasional placement of Hutchinson's references to the confession and catechism suggests that she was working from her memory of the text as well as from the text itself. But her claim that 'here is nothing but what in substance you will find in every sound catechize', made to her daughter in the preface to 'On the Principles of the Christian Religion', simply cannot be taken at face value: it evidences either Hutchinson's ignorance of the confessional tradition or her misrepresentation of it.³⁶ And, given that she had evidently spent time working with the confession and catechism after their publication in 1646 and 1647, while also thinking through her relationship to these texts in her earlier theological writings in 1667, it is unlikely that her claims to orthodoxy can be explained by ignorance.

III Hutchinson's theological evolution

In 1667-1668, Hutchinson's religious opinions were unsettled and evolving. Her theological works show how her views became increasingly and then, in some respects, decreasingly radical. This trend is most apparent with regard to her discussion of the Trinity. While almost all dissenters maintained the catholic doctrine of one God subsisting in three persons, a number were prepared to think about the best language by means of which the doctrine should be expressed.³⁷ *Order and Disorder*, which cannot be definitively dated, quoted from Shorter Catechism answer 6 to describe the 'persons' of the Trinity as being 'equal' in 'power and glory'.³⁸ Hutchinson's earlier theological writing used traditional terminology without hesitation. In 'My own faith and attainment', she preferred 'subsistences' to 'persons', on the basis that the 'name of person is not so applied in scripture except it be in the Hebrewes where Christ is sayd to be the brightnesse of his fathers glorie and the expresse image of his person'. Nevertheless, she continued, 'as I shall not contend for words which are not found in Scripture so I shall not reject any which carry the true sence and intent of the Scripture and according to that make no scruple to acknowledge the 3 persons in the Godhead'.³⁹ The language of Trinitarian persons was retained in 'A Briefer Summe' – albeit in convoluted form – and was used throughout 'On the Principles of the Christian Religion'.⁴⁰ She had moved back from her hesitations about the language of persons.

Hutchinson's concern about non-biblical language was shared by many Particular Baptists. Their confession of faith, published by seven congregations in London in 1644, also avoided the language of 'persons' in its discussion of the Trinity.⁴¹ Of course, Hutchinson has often been considered as a Baptist, or as a fellow-traveller with the several new religious movements that proposed new views of baptismal practice, partly as a consequence of her response to the notes discovered in Nottingham Castle, as a consequence of reading which she persuaded her husband to abandon traditional sacramental practice.⁴² But Hutchinson's

later theological writings suggest that her identification with Baptists is misplaced. However else they differed, the several groups that advocated the baptism of believers developed an apologetic that proposed changes to the subjects and mode of baptism while taking for granted that its practise should continue.⁴³ Hutchinson raised questions about each of these claims. She made no reference to the debate about the mode of baptism – and her note in the preface to *Order and Disorder* that the ‘puddled water’ of the ‘profane Helicon of ancient poets’ had been ‘sprinkled about the world’ seems to refer to the traditional mode of affusion rather than to the custom of immersion that by the late 1640s had been normalised among the various baptistic movements.⁴⁴ Neither did she assume that baptism in water should continue past the apostolic age, nor that because adults had once been the only proper subjects of baptism that they should continue so to be. In ‘My Own Faith and Attainment’, Hutchinson was certain that it should ‘not ... be applied to infants’, but admitted that she was ‘not fully resolvd’ on the question of whether ‘water Baptisme were to continue longer than that [apostolic] age’.⁴⁵ This was why she had rejected the doctrine of infant baptism but had not been re-baptised.⁴⁶ Baptism was not necessary for infants, but it might not now be necessary for adults either. Her hesitations continued in ‘A Briefer Summe’, in which she had come to recognise that ‘washing of water’ was a ‘comfortable ordinance’, but ‘not so absolutely necessary’ that it ‘may not upon doubts be suspended so it be without contempt’.⁴⁷ Her recovery towards orthodoxy continued in ‘On the Principles of the Christian Religion’, in which she had no equivocation about the continuing practice of baptism, or its effect as a seal of the covenant of grace, picking up on the language of the confessional tradition.⁴⁸ By 1668, therefore, she had come to recognise that water baptism should continue to be practiced, that adults were its only proper subjects, but continued to believe that this practice was ‘not absolutely necessary’ and could be ‘suspended ... without contempt’. Hutchinson’s radical moves were partially reversed. But her concern about baptism and its unsettled resolution

were certainly not typical of ‘what in substance you will find in every sound catechize’, whatever her claims to the contrary, and certainly set her apart from the several communities of Baptists.⁴⁹

This tendency towards proposing and partially withdrawing less than orthodox positions may also be seen in Hutchinson’s millennial theory. This may have been another doctrinal interest that she had shared with her husband, whose support for the Fifth Monarchist preacher Thomas Palmer may have led to his arrest in 1663.⁵⁰ Hutchinson continued to think about millennial theory after her husband’s death, but moved away from any sympathy that he might have shown for the Fifth Monarchist programme of legal and political renewal, which referred to the Mosaic law in order to turn sins into crimes and to find appropriate biblical punishments for those crimes.⁵¹ Lucy Hutchinson had quite different opinions about when, how and by whom the world would be made subject to Christ’s power. ‘My Own Faith and Attainment’ was very concerned about those believers (like the Fifth Monarchists) who wanted to impose a Mosaic polity on the state, ‘making hast to sett up the kingdome of Christ before his comming’.⁵² ‘I thinke them too forward that goe about to set up his Kingdome by ways contrary to his commands’, she continued; ‘he will doe it himselfe and wee are to waite and to pray for it ... it shall not be carnall and sensuall but spirituall and holy and from the 20th of the Revelations wee may gather that it shall last 1000 yeares’.⁵³ And only after this discussion of the millennial reign, with its effusion of the Spirit reviving the cause of protestant Christianity, would Christ come to judge the living and the dead.⁵⁴ Hutchinson continued to advocate for this postmillennial view in ‘A Briefer Summe’, which argued that Christ would rule as ‘universall monarch of the world’, during which ‘Sathan shall be chaine up’, as Revelation 20 had suggested would happen for one thousand years. Only ‘then’ – after the one thousand year binding of Satan – would ‘the Lord Christ ... come from heaven to judge all the world’.⁵⁵ But for all that these ideas were highlighted in the

earlier theological writings, Hutchinson did not discuss them in 'On the Principles of the Christian Religion'. She recognised that her advice to her daughter included 'short mention ... of the resurrection of the body and the last judgement', despite the fact that these were 'fundamentals' of the faith, and excused their omission on the basis that she had simply run out of space.⁵⁶ But her concentration on postmillennial theory in two texts, and her virtual exclusion of eschatological themes from her longest theological statement, is indicative of the provisional and perhaps unstructured quality of much of the thinking that these writings represent. Outside the Savoy Confession, to which Hutchinson almost certainly had access, a virtually insignificant number of published confessions or catechisms explicitly referred to the millennium or omitted any discussion of the resurrection: despite her claims to orthodoxy, Hutchinson's doctrinal texts certainly did not represent 'what in substance you will find in every sound catechize' in its discussion of eschatology.⁵⁷

There were two areas in which Hutchinson's radicalism did not seem to move back towards orthodoxy. The first of these areas relates to church membership. One reason why she may resist denominational categorisation is that she determinedly set herself to reject the competing paradigms of the period's religious movements, and to reject any sense that she ought to identify with any of their distinctive sets of claims. Hutchinson seems to have regarded the church as existing in ruins, as a pale shadow of what it had been and what it would become again during the one-thousand year reign of Christ.⁵⁸ In 'My Own Faith and Attainment', she explained that the primitive order of the first-century churches could be 'imitated but cannot be restored' until the effusion of the Spirit during the millennium.⁵⁹ In making this claim, she rejected the restorationist agendas of Baptists and all other religious movements that sought to restore the order of the first-century churches. This was a radical move, identifying good practice in New Testament descriptions of proper church order while resisting any argument that believers in the seventeenth century should be bound by them.

Introducing this text in the second volume of the *Works*, David Norbrook recognises questions about the dating and even provenance of ‘Concerning Self-Examination’, but the text makes points that are consistent with those of Hutchinson’s other writings, arguing in particular that true believers should never so identify with any individual religious body that they lost sight of their primary loyalty to the universal body of Christ: ‘If you be in Christ you must love all the brethren and not cutt your selfe of from communion with any Christians wherein you may have communion with Christ’.⁶⁰ This observation may explain which groups Hutchinson was warning her daughter against in ‘On the Principles of the Christian Religion’. Barbara Orgil, sailing to the west Indies, was to resist being ‘seduced to factions and parties in religion from that Catholick faith and universall love wherein all that are true Christians must unite’.⁶¹ ‘Sects are a great sinne and Christians ought all to live in the unity of the spiritt’, Hutchinson continued.⁶² This turning away from congregational life to a life of private devotion reflected the culture of domestic piety within the Hutchinson household, but also her enduring sense of her status as part of a godly remnant in a hostile world: *Order and Disorder* remembered how ‘the Church alone in Noah’s house remained’, and how in different circumstances ‘men in woods and fields their maker praised’.⁶³ Hutchinson was not warning her daughter against any specific religious movement – she was warning her against identifying with the exclusive claims of any religious movement if it discouraged her primary loyalty to the universal church of the body of Christ.

Perhaps the most striking instance of Hutchinson’s autonomy as a theologian is her construal of the doctrine of justification. Justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, had of course been a central issue in protestant secessions from the Catholic church in the previous century. By the mid seventeenth century this central article of Protestantism had been subject to a huge amount of reflection. The Westminster Confession statement on justification was careful and nuanced, and reflected a consensus statement after

a protracted debate among the assembly members.⁶⁴ The point at issue related to the theory of imputation. Hutchinson had no doubt that, as the confession argued, the righteousness of Christ was imputed to believers in their justification. But she did wonder when this justification, and this imputation of righteousness, took place. In ‘My Own Faith and Attainment’, she drew upon the Westminster Confession for her definition of justification, but rewrote the confessional statement on how justification related to the decretive purpose of God.⁶⁵ The Westminster divines had agreed that ‘God did, from all eternity, decree to justify all the elect, and Christ did, in the fulness of time, die for their sins, and rise for their justification: nevertheless, they are not justified, until the Holy Spirit doth, in due time, actually apply Christ unto them’.⁶⁶ The confession took care to distinguish election in eternity from justification in time, but Hutchinson sought to improve upon its wording. ‘Justification is eternal before God in his decree’, she suggested, ‘which is not revealed and actually performed until the holy Spirit in due time apply Christ unto them that are chosen and called of God’.⁶⁷ This slight rewording anticipated more substantial revisions to the confessional doctrine in ‘Concerning Self-Examination’, in which Hutchinson argued that justification took place in eternity, not time, and therefore that the elect were never under the wrath of God for their sin: ‘in the eternal immutable love of God all the elect are justified before him & never under his wrath ... because God sees not by succession of time as we do but he at one view beholds all that are were or ever shall be in an unspeakable manner so that his beloved are never in a state of wrath as to him’.⁶⁸ In this extraordinary statement, Hutchinson tore up the confessional calibration of time and eternity, to argue that God’s existing in eternity meant that there could be no *ordo salutis* but that all elements of salvation were applied to the elect simultaneously. While the Westminster divines, like protestants generally, understood that members of the elect were under the wrath of God until that moment in time when they were regenerated, given the gift of faith, and were justified, Hutchinson insisted

that the elect were never under God's wrath because they had always been justified. Remarkably, given the strength of this claim, she did not follow up with any extended discussion of justification in 'On the Principles of the Christian Religion'. Hutchinson never recalibrated her most radical doctrinal argument.⁶⁹

Hutchinson's argument for justification from eternity was certainly radical. It reversed the order of faith and justification that was normative in protestant theology, and advanced a position that was typical of the antinomian theorists, although she always rejected antinomian claims to be beyond obligation to the moral law.⁷⁰ In the history of English Protestantism, the idea had been defended by a tiny handful of theologians, including John Eaton (c. 1574-1641), the author of *Honey-Combe of Free Justification* (1642), and Tobias Crisp (d. 1643).⁷¹ Thomas Goodwin, despite his membership of the Westminster Assembly, may also have maintained that justification precedes faith.⁷² But other members of the Assembly condemned the idea, including Samuel Rutherford, who had warned against eternal justification in his *Survey of Spiritual Antichrist* (1648), arguing that the decree to justify did not justify any more than the decree for the crucifixion of Christ had that event occur in eternity rather than in time.⁷³ Hutchinson's theory collapsed the distinction between time and eternity, undercut the agreed conclusions of the Reformed churches, and identified her with antinomian theorists – and she never retracted it.

Across the genres in which she operated, Hutchinson's writing does reflect the very high Calvinism that was suggested by her doctrine of eternal justification.⁷⁴ Her *Life and Order and Disorder* both referred to the division of humanity into two seeds, and noted the danger represented to the godly by the 'serpentine seed' of the reprobate.⁷⁵ In some ways, this high Calvinism provides a narrative thread that stretches across her corpus, from the distinction between the elect and reprobate established at the fall in *Order and Disorder* to the working out of the inevitable conflict between these 'seeds' in her husband's biography

and in her writing on religious theory. Her high Calvinism is also reflected in references to conversion as ‘gracious violence’ and ‘holy rape’, in which divine mercy takes the place of the aggression of the men of Sodom, and by means of which the elect are figured as the victims, and not merely the happy recipients, of salvation.⁷⁶ This insistent high Calvinism held together her multi-generic, erratic, unusual and always independently minded writing about theology.

III Hutchinson’s reversion towards orthodoxy

Hutchinson’s theological writing makes a number of radical gestures, not all of which she worked to rein in. The most theologically challenging of her texts appears to be ‘Concerning Self-Examination’. While being difficult to date and attribute, as noted above, it is the most individual of the texts in Hutchinson’s theological canon, in that it is the text that is least obviously dependent upon the Westminster Confession, and the text in which she makes her most daring revision of protestant theological norms, in relation to eternal justification.⁷⁷ Chronologically, taking the organisation of the manuscript notebook as evidence, it appears to have been followed by her writing of ‘On the Principles of the Christian Religion’, which generally reverts to more mainstream positions when it does not omit reference to such themes as justification and millennial theory, by means of which omissions it leaves these radical claims standing. This text’s occlusion of Hutchinson’s most radical convictions would be consistent with her expectation that Barbara Orgil’s husband might read this letter of advice – although his own religious views are otherwise unknown.

Of course, we need to remember that Hutchinson’s radical investments were followed by her attending and taking notes of preaching by John Owen, and of her translating large sections of his most complex and ground-breaking books, *Theologoumena pantodapa*

(1661).⁷⁸ It is not clear what her engagement with Owen and his work might have represented. It is tempting to see this moment as closure, as the end of a narrative arc, in which Hutchinson recovered from her radicalism and individualism within the fellowship of a congregation that was committed to maintaining the achievements of the confessional tradition under the guidance of one of the most eminent English Reformed theologians. But it is also possible that Hutchinson was in some ways like the religious dilettantes who attended Owen's preaching as a form of pious entertainment.⁷⁹ As with so many other aspects of Hutchinson's life, we are left to conjecture about what her actions mean. Nevertheless, as we might expect, there is no evidence that Hutchinson ever joined Owen's church.⁸⁰ While she depended upon the congregation's network, not least in placing her son in Robert Ferguson's school, there was perhaps no reason for her to suddenly commit herself to any congregation in an exclusive way.⁸¹

After all, as her theological writings demonstrate, Hutchinson did not fit any of the emerging denominational paradigms. Her rejection of infant baptism did not make her a Baptist; her suggestion that ordinances should not continue did not make her a Quaker; her insistence upon eternal justification did not make her an antinomian; and her hope that primitive church order would be restored in the millennium did not make her a Seeker. For Hutchinson was nothing in particular, and many things at once. Her theological work narrates her continuing engagement with the ideas that had driven her politics – and which drove her ever further from any community of dissent. In declining personal circumstances, and in discouraging social and political contexts, Hutchinson refused to give up her right to fashion her own changing styles of faith.⁸²

¹ Lucy Hutchinson, *Order and Disorder*, ed. David Norbrook (Oxford, 2001), 15:131 (p. 196). For consideration of theological variety within English dissent, see Peter Toon, *The Emergence of Hyper-Calvinism in English Nonconformity, 1689-1765* (London, 1967); David P. Field, *Rigide Calvinism in a Softer Dresse: The Moderate Presbyterianism of John Howe* (Edinburgh, 2004); and Dewey D. Wallace, *Shapers of English Calvinism, 1660-1714* (New York, 2011).

² See in particular the careful and detailed annotations contained in *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, vol. 2: *Theological Writings and Translations*, part 2: *Commentaries, Bibliography, and Index*, eds Elizabeth Clarke, David Norbrook, and Jane Stevenson (Oxford, 2018), which summarise and extend beyond this scholarly tradition.

³ For a recent study of the purpose and achievements of catechetical learning, see Paula McQuade, *Catechisms and Women's Writing in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 2017).

⁴ 'Preface', in Hutchinson, *Order and Disorder*, 4; Hutchinson, 'On the Principles of the Christian Religion', in *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, 2:193. The influence upon Hutchinson of the Westminster Confession of Faith and Shorter Catechism will be discussed later in this article.

⁵ Lucy Hutchinson, *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson*, ed. N H. Keeble (1995; rpr London, 2000), 32-33, 53.

⁶ Lucy Hutchinson, 'To my Children', in Hutchinson, *Memoirs*, 25.

⁷ Hutchinson, *Memoirs*, 208.

⁸ B. S. Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men: A Study in Seventeenth-Century English Millenarianism* (Totowa, NJ, 1972), 195-227; John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 12:587. For a survey of puritan millennial theory, see Crawford Gribben, *The Puritan Millennium: Literature and Theology, 1550-1682* (Dublin, 2000).

⁹ The assumption that Restoration dissenters dis-engaged from apocalyptic speculation has been challenged by Warren Johnston, *Revelation Restored: The Apocalypse in Later Seventeenth-Century England* (Woodbridge, 2011).

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- ¹⁰ Hutchinson, *Memoirs*, 296
- ¹¹ Hutchinson, *Memoirs*, 286.
- ¹² Hutchinson, *Memoirs*, 300.
- ¹³ Nottinghamshire Archives DD/HU4, appendix.
- ¹⁴ Gribben, *The Puritan Millennium*, 39-50.
- ¹⁵ Hutchinson, *Memoirs*, 297, 304.
- ¹⁶ Hutchinson, *Memoirs*, 321.
- ¹⁷ Hutchinson, *Memoirs*, 328.
- ¹⁸ For a survey of Calvin publication, see Crawford Gribben, 'Calvin and Calvinism in Early Modern England, Scotland, and Ireland', in R. Ward Holder (ed.), *John Calvin in context* (Cambridge, 2019), 383-90.
- ¹⁹ Lucy Hutchinson, 'Translation of the *Centum aphorismi*', in *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, 2:94.
- ²⁰ David Norbrook, 'Lucy Hutchinson's 'Elegies' and the Situation of the Republican Woman Writer (with text)', *English Literary Renaissance* 27:3 (1997), 510.
- ²¹ Hutchinson, 'On the Principles of the Christian Religion', in *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, 2:191, 274.
- ²² Hutchinson, 'On the Principles of the Christian Religion', in *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, 2:189.
- ²³ See, for example, Hutchinson, *Memoirs*, 184, 186.
- ²⁴ 'May 1648: An Ordinance for the Punishing of Blasphemies and Heresies, with the Several Penalties therein Expressed', in *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642-1660*, eds C. H. Firth and R. S. Rait (London, 1911), 1133-1136.
- ²⁵ Hutchinson, 'On the Principles of the Christian Religion', in *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, 2:232
- ²⁶ For the broader theological context to this claim, see Harrison Perkins, "Reconsidering the development of the covenant of works: A study in doctrinal trajectory," *Calvin Theological Journal* 53:2 (2018), 289-317.
- ²⁷ Hutchinson, *Order and Disorder*, 6:55-57 (90).
- ²⁸ Hutchinson, 'My Owne Faith and Attainment', in *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, 2:104.
- ²⁹ Hutchinson, 'My Owne Faith and Attainment', in *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, 2:128.
- ³⁰ Hutchinson, 'A Briefer Summe of What I Believe', in *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, 2:135-36.
- ³¹ Hutchinson, 'On the Principles of the Christian Religion', in *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, 2:210.
- ³² Hutchinson, *Order and Disorder*, 4:170, 179 (58).
- ³³ Hutchinson, *Memoirs*, 221.
- ³⁴ Lucy Hutchinson, 'Concerning Selfe Examination', in *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, 2:145.

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- ³⁵ Shorter Catechism answer eight, ‘God executes his decrees by the workes of creation and providence’, may be found in Hutchinson, ‘On the Principles of the Christian Religion’, in *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, 2:205.
- ³⁶ Hutchinson, ‘On the Principles of the Christian Religion’, in *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, 2:191.
- ³⁷ For discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity in this period, see Paul Lim, *Mystery Unveiled: The Crisis of the Trinity in Early Modern England* (New York, 2012).
- ³⁸ Hutchinson, *Order and Disorder*, 1:88, 92 (9).
- ³⁹ Hutchinson, ‘My Owne Faith and Attainment’, in *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, 2:97-98.
- ⁴⁰ Hutchinson, ‘A Briefer Summe of What I Believe’, in *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, 2: 128; Hutchinson, ‘On the Principles of the Christian Religion’, in *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, 2:214, 215-16, 226.
- ⁴¹ *The Confession of Faith of those Churches which are Commonly (though Falsly) called Anabaptists* (1644).
- ⁴² Hutchinson, *Memoirs*, 210.
- ⁴³ For a recent survey of these emerging contexts, see Matthew Bingham, *Orthodox Radicals: Baptist Identity in the English Revolution* (Oxford, 2019).
- ⁴⁴ ‘Preface’, Hutchinson, *Order and Disorder*, 4.
- ⁴⁵ Hutchinson, ‘On the Principles of the Christian Religion’, in *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, 2:122-123.
- ⁴⁶ Hutchinson, ‘On the Principles of the Christian Religion’, in *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, 2:123.
- ⁴⁷ Hutchinson, ‘A Briefer Summe of What I Believe’, in *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, 2:133.
- ⁴⁸ Hutchinson, ‘On the Principles of the Christian Religion’, in *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, 2:213.
- ⁴⁹ Hutchinson, ‘On the Principles of the Christian Religion’, in *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, 2:191.
- ⁵⁰ Hutchinson, *Memoirs*, 296.
- ⁵¹ Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men*, 157-71.
- ⁵² Hutchinson, ‘My Owne Faith and Attainment’, in *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, 2:118.
- ⁵³ Hutchinson, ‘My Owne Faith and Attainment’, in *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, 2:126.
- ⁵⁴ Hutchinson, ‘My Owne Faith and Attainment’, in *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, 2:126-27.
- ⁵⁵ Hutchinson, ‘A Briefer Summe of What I Believe’, in *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, 2:132.
- ⁵⁶ Hutchinson, ‘On the Principles of the Christian Religion’, in *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, 2:274.
- ⁵⁷ Hutchinson, ‘On the Principles of the Christian Religion’, in *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, 2:191.
- ⁵⁸ Hutchinson, ‘My Owne Faith and Attainment’, in *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, 2:126.
- ⁵⁹ Hutchinson, ‘My Owne Faith and Attainment’, in *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, 2:121.

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- ⁶⁰ Hutchinson, ‘Concerning Selfe Examination’, in *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, 2:152. For Norbrook’s concerns about the dating and provenance of this text, see ‘Introduction’, in *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, 2:33-35.
- ⁶¹ Hutchinson, ‘On the Principles of the Christian Religion’, in *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, 2:189.
- ⁶² Hutchinson, ‘On the Principles of the Christian Religion’, in *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, 2:191; see also Hutchinson, ‘Concerning Selfe Examination’, in *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, 2:143-44.
- ⁶³ Hutchinson, *Memoirs*, 304; Hutchinson, *Order and Disorder*, 7: 241 (114), 15:20 (193).
- ⁶⁴ Elements of this debate about justification are described in Chad B. Van Dixhoorn, *A Day at the Westminster Assembly: Justification and the Minutes of a Post-Reformation Synod* (London, 2005).
- ⁶⁵ Hutchinson uses the Westminster Confession of Faith 14-15 in ‘On the Principles of the Christian Religion’, in *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, 2:111-113.
- ⁶⁶ Westminster Confession of Faith 11:6.
- ⁶⁷ Hutchinson, ‘My Owne Faith and Attainment’, in *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, 2:109.
- ⁶⁸ Hutchinson, ‘Concerning Selfe Examination’, in *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, 2:136.
- ⁶⁹ John Bunyan moved from more orthodox views of justification to make a similar argument in *Discourse upon the Pharisee and the Publican* (1677); Richard Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory: John Bunyan and English Dissent* (Stanford, CA, 2002), 532-33.
- ⁷⁰ Christopher Haigh, ‘“Theological Wars”: “Socinians” v. “Antinomians” in Restoration England’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 67:2 (2016), 325-50.
- ⁷¹ Robert J. McKelvey, ‘“That Error and Pillar of Antinomianism”: Eternal Justification’, in Michael A. G. Haykin and Mark Jones (eds), *Drawn into Controversie: Reformed Theological Diversity and Debates within Seventeenth-Century British Puritanism* (Gottingen, 2011), 223-62; David Como, *Blown by the Spirit: Puritanism and the Emergence of an Antinomian Underground in Pre-Civil-War England* (Stanford, 2004), 201-203.
- ⁷² Carl Trueman, *The Claims of Truth: John Owen’s Trinitarian Theology* (Carlisle, 1998), p. 28; Mark Jones, *Why Heaven Kissed Earth: The Christology of the Puritan Reformed Orthodox Theologian, Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680)* (Gottingen, 2010), 230-38.
- ⁷³ Samuel Rutherford, *Survey of Spiritual Antichrist* (1648), 2:19.
- ⁷⁴ For discussion of high Calvinism, and its relationship to antinomianism and the doctrine of eternal justification, see Hans Boersma, *A Hot Pepper Corn: Richard Baxter’s Doctrine of Justification in its*

Seventeenth-Century Context of Controversy (Zoetermeer, 1993); Tim Cooper, *John Owen, Richard Baxter and the Formation of Nonconformity* (Aldershot, 2011); and Ryan McGraw, *John: Trajectories in Reformed Orthodox Theology* (London, 2017).

⁷⁵ Hutchinson, *Memoirs*, 322; Hutchinson, *Order and Disorder*, 5:80 (67); Hutchinson, 'A Briefer Summe of What I Believe', in *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, 2:131.

⁷⁶ Hutchinson, *Order and Disorder*, 13: 110, 117 (172).

⁷⁷ Hutchinson, 'Concerning Selfe Examination', in *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, 2:144, 147-8, 151.

⁷⁸ On the relationship between Owen and Hutchinson, see Crawford Gribben, 'John Owen, Lucy Hutchinson, and the Experience of Defeat', *The Seventeenth Century* 30 (2015), 179-90. See also Crawford Gribben, 'The Experience of Dissent: John Owen and Congregational Life in Revolutionary and Restoration London', in Michael Davies, Anne Dunan-Page and Joel Halcombe (eds), *Church Life in Seventeenth-Century England: Pastors, Congregations, and the Experience of Dissent* (Oxford, 2019), 119-35.

⁷⁹ See, for example, *The Diary of Ralph Thorseby, F.R.S.*, ed. Joseph Hunter, 2 vols (London, 1830), 1:5.

⁸⁰ T. G. Crippen register records membership in Owen's congregation, and in the congregation with which it merged, in 1673; 'Dr Watts's Church-Book', *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society* 1 (1901-04), 29.

⁸¹ *ODNB*, s.v.

⁸² Hutchinson, *Order and Disorder*, 15:131 (196).