The Sixteenth Century Apocalypse
The Fifth Monarchists

by Andrew Stumer

It has become something of a commonplace in recent studies to stress the congruency between the popular millenarianism of England during the seventeenth century and the beliefs of the sect known as Fifth Monarchists.[1] In particular, it has been argued that the thousand year Reign of the Saints, predicted in Revelation, was widely held to be imminent and that Fifth Monarchists differed from the mainstream current only by advocating violence to establish the Kingdom.[2] This emphasis tends to obscure the significant eschatological differences separating Fifth Monarchists from their contemporaries. Most important was the adherence by Fifth Monarchists to a doctrine of postmillenialism, in which the Second Coming of Christ was said to occur after a godly kingdom on earth had been inaugurated by the Saints themselves. In contradiction to this was the more prevalent premillenialist belief that the Reign of the Saints would be established by Christ at the time of his physical return. Both of these doctrines may be contrasted with preaching by dissidents such as Ranters, Quakers and Diggers who believed Christ's Second Coming was a purely spiritual descent upon the hearts of his true followers. In practice, these divergent philosophies were made manifest in Fifth Monarchist strivings to initiate the millennium, while the remainder of the population, radical and orthodox alike, disavowed activism in anticipation of a purely miraculous intervention. It is difficult to determine precisely the position of individual theologians, which often changed over time, but it suffices to say that it is wholly inaccurate to equate all forms of millenarianism with Fifth Monarchism.

The seventeenth century saw a revolution in apocalyptic thinking, breaking with the traditional view which treated Revelation as an allegory for the spiritual experience of individuals and a symbol of the bliss awaiting believers in heaven.[3] During Tudor times, John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* popularised the idea that the millennium, which began with the conversion of Constantine, was now over and that a period of persecution under Antichrist would conclude with the Second Coming and Last Judgment.[4] It became widely accepted in both the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that Antichrist was the Papacy[5] and it was sometimes suggested that England was the elect nation chosen to overthrow Rome.[6] However, in the

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[1]Larry H. Ingle, "George Fox, Millenarian" Albion, 24(2), 1992, 261-278 at 261; Christopher Hill, Antichrist in Seventeenth Century England (London: Verso, 1990), 1; Bernard Capp, The Fifth Monarchy Men: a Study in Seventeenth Century Millenarianism (London: Faber & Faber, 1972), 14, 20; Bernard Capp, "The Fifth Monarchists and Popular Millenarianism" in J.F. McGregor, B. Reay, eds, Radical Religion in the English Revolution (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 165-189 at 166; Richard Greaves, "John Bunyan and the Fifth Monarchists" Albion, 13 (2), 1981, 83-95

[2]Capp, Fifth Monarchy Men, 20

[3]Michael Ponsford, "Thomas Traherne, the New Jerusalem and Seventeenth Century Millenarianism" Durham University Journal, 87 (2), 1995, 243-250 at 245

[4]Richard Bauckham, Tudor Apocalypse: Sixteenth Century Apocalypticism, Millenarianism and the English Reformation (Oxford: Sutton Courtenay Press, 1978), 221

[5] Martin Luther, *Divine Discourses at Table*, (published in England in 1652); *Articles of the Church of Ireland*, (1615), cited in Hill, Antichrist in 17th Century England, 91, 33

[6] Thomas Adams, *England's Sickness*, (1629), cited in Patrick Collinson, "Biblical Rhetoric: the English Nation and National Sentiment in the Prophetic Mode" in Claire McEachern, Debora Shuger,

seventeenth century the Tudor idea that the millennium was in the past was discarded and speculation as to its imminent arrival began to mount. In 1641, a pamphlet was circulated telling the story of a 16 year-old Nottinghamshire girl who returned to life shortly before her own funeral and spent five days prophesying that a period of wars and disasters would be followed by a final age of peace.[7] It is well documented that Isaac Newton devoted many hours to studying Revelation and calculating the date for the beginning of the millennium.[8] These sorts of predictions received enormous impetus during the Civil War and Interregnum as the old order of monarchy and episcopacy was thrown down.

An exegesis of the Books of Daniel and Revelation by the preacher Henry Archer was typical of a widely disseminated interpretation.[9] Archer explained that the four beasts in Daniel's vision[10] were four monarchies and he identified them as the Babylonian, Persian, Greek and Roman Empires. A Fifth Monarchy, ruled by "a son of man",[11] would overthrow the fourth beast and reign for 1000 years.[12] By adding 1260 years[13] to AD406, when the Little Horn[14] or Papacy come to prominence, Archer calculated that the Second Coming would occur in 1666.[15] An alternative means of determining the date of the millennium was by reference to the predicted conversion of the Jews which was to occur 1290 years after the "abomination that maketh desolate" was set up.[16] Archer explained that the "abomination" was the regime of the Roman Emperor, Julian the Apostate "who reigned in the year of our Lord 360 or 366 and set up Heathenism."[17] By this reckoning, the conversion of the Jews would occur in 1650 or 1656 and the Kingdom of Christ would follow shortly afterwards. Peter Sterry, John Tillinghast and John Rogers concurred in Archer's opinion that 1656 or 1666 were likely dates for the commencement of the Reign of the Saints.[18]

It cannot be overlooked though, that Archer believed Christ himself would come to establish the Kingdom and cautioned his readers that they could not hasten the day. Instead they were to prepare themselves for Christ's arrival and spend their time denouncing evil.[19] Fifth Monarchists did not merely add a violent element to this widely held belief but rather possessed a radically different theological conviction. What set them apart was their sense of responsibility for establishing a theocratic

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[7] eds, Religion and Culture in Renaissance England (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 15-45 at 19

[7] *The Wonderful Works of God Declared by a Strange Prophecy of a Maid (1641)*, cited in Capp, "The Fifth Monarchists and Popular Millenarianism", 179

[8] James Force, Essays on the Content, Nature and Influence of Isaac Newton's Theology (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1990), 3

[9] Henry Archer, *The Personal Reign of Christ Upon Earth (1642)*, cited in Philip Rogers, The Fifth Monarchy Men (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 11-13

[10] Daniel 7:1-7

[11] Daniel 7: 13; a title claimed by Jesus in Matthew 12:8, Mark 2:28, Luke 9:58, John 3:14

[12] Revelation 20:1-6

[13] Revelation 12:6

[14] Daniel 7:8

[15] 666 is the number of the Beast, Revelation 13:18

[16] Daniel 12:11

[17] Qtd in Rogers, The Fifth Monarchy Men, 13

[18] Peter Sterry, *England's Deliverance From the Northern Presbytery (1652)*; John Tillinghast, *Knowledge of the Times, or, the Resolution of the Question, How Long it Shall be unto the End of the Wonders (1654)*; John Rogers, *Sagrir or Doomsday Drawing Nigh (1666)*, cited in Christopher Hill "Till the Conversion of the Jews" in Richard Popkin, ed., Millenarianism and Messianism in English Literature and Thought (New York: Brill, 1988), 12-36 at 15

[19] Rogers, The Fifth Monarchy Men, 13

regime in which godly discipline would be exercised over the unregenerate masses, in preparation for the Second Coming.[20] Fifth Monarchism attracted its greatest number of supporters during the Barebones Parliament of 1653 when it seemed to many that England stood on the threshold of becoming "a land of saints, and a pattern of holiness to all the world."[21] However, after the 1653 Parliament was disbanded by Cromwell, support for Fifth Monarchism quickly dissipated and the movement only sparked again in 1657 and 1661 in desperate uprisings led by Thomas Venner. The eschatological perspective subscribed to by Fifth Monarchists was not adopted by any other religious group in England, not even the so-called radicals who came out into the open between 1641 and 1660 when strict censorship was removed.[22]

For example, Ranters, a group which came to prominence among the London poor in about 1649, expected no physical return of Christ and instead preached that his Second Coming was internal to believers.[23] This was in keeping with their general philosophy that God was in all things and that "the essence of God was as much in the ivy leaf as in the most glorious angel."[24] Attached to this belief was the antinomian teaching that Christians were not bound by any moral law. Lawrence Clarkson, a Ranter preacher, expressed this in his *Journal*: "Sin hath its corruption only in the imagination; therefore so long as the act was in God, or nakedly produced by God, it was as holy as God."[25] Many Ranters were former Levellers and when that movement failed to effect social revolution by force, their remnant instead began awaiting a miracle from God.[26] Abeizer Coppe declared that "the Lord of Hosts" was coming to remove all social and economic distinctions and Joseph Salmon called upon the Army to lay down their weapons lest they should stand in the way of Providence.[27] Since the Ranters identified themselves with God it is sometimes difficult to determine whether their invocations of divine wrath were threats of actual violence or merely warnings to the unrepentant.[28] However, there are no reports of Ranter uprisings and there was in any case no specific Ranter organisation capable of mounting a revolt.[29] Angered by the libertinism practised by many Ranters, Parliament passed an Act against them in 1650, leading to the jailing of their leaders, burning of books and the eventual suppression of the entire movement by mid-1651.[30]

The sect known as Quakers, or the Society of Friends, held similar beliefs to Ranters but were less despised because they renounced antinomianism. Quakers were nevertheless explicitly millenarian and in 1658 George Fox openly pronounced: "The mighty day of the Lord is come, Christ Jesus is come to reign."[31] However, the focus of this declaration was an inward restoration of individuals that would sweep the

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[20] Tai Liu, <u>Discord in Zion: the Puritan Divines and the Puritan Revolution, 1640-1660</u> (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973), 63

[21] Richard Baxter, (1658), qtd in Ingle, "George Fox, Millenarian", 264

[22] A study of radical ideas in this period was made by Christopher Hill, <u>The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution</u> (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1975)

[23] Ibid, 208

[24] John Holland, *The Smoke of the Bottomless Pit (1651)*, a hostile account of Ranter doctrine, qtd in A.L. Morton, <u>The World of the Ranters</u> (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1970), 73

[25] Qtd in Morton, <u>World of the Ranters</u>, 77

[26] Ibid, 17

[27] Abeizer Coppe, *A Fiery Flying Roll (1650)*; Joseph Salmon, *A Rout a Rout: or some part of the Army Quarters beaten up by the day of the Lord stealing upon them (1649)*, cited in Morton, <u>World of the Ranters</u>, 17, 85

[28] Morton, <u>World of the Ranters</u>, 88

[29] Ibid, 92

[30] Ibid, 18

[31] George Fox, *To The Protector (1658)*, qtd in Ingle, "George Fox, Millenarian", 266

country, and not a call for the violent overthrow of the government.[32]   Although Christ's coming was spiritual, not physical, Quakers often expressed themselves with alarming military metaphors such as Edward Burrough's warning, "they shall conquer by the sword of the Lord."[33]   James Nayler and Richard Hubberthorne preached that Christians ought to be prepared to take up arms to fight a "Lamb's War".[34]   In 1656, Nayler made clear that Quakers would not plot against magistrates but nor would they obey them when they commanded that which was forbidden by God.[35]   After the Restoration of Charles II, the Quakers issued a statement distancing themselves from Fifth Monarchism and disavowed all violent activity to satisfy the King "or any that have any jealousy concerning us that all occasion of suspicion may be taken away and our innocence cleared."[36]

Generally speaking, Quakers were more concerned with moral revival and social justice than with millenarian activism. George Fox's *The Vials of the Wrath of God upon the Seat of the Man of Sin* was mostly a condemnation of football and wrestling[37] which Fox thought ought to be banned along with plays, pictures, horse-racing, bell-ringing, ballad singing, joke books and anything which would "feed people's pleasures".[38] Fox presented Parliament with a long list of social reforms in 1659 which, not surprisingly, were given little attention.[39]   These included the conversion of mansions, abbeys and even Whitehall into alms houses, the abolition of capital punishment for theft, a more humanised prison system, and the writing of laws in common language so ordinary people could represent themselves.[40]   Christopher Hill argues that the outrage caused by Quakers was mostly a result of their refusal to remove their hats in the presence of social superiors or to refer to gentlemen as "you" and not "thou".[41]   In Puritan circles though, there was also significant opposition to Quaker theology, such as the pantheistic idea that God was in all things.[42]

Pantheism was the central element in the religious teaching of Gerrard Winstanley, the founder of the Digger movement. Winstanley outlined his patently heretical doctrine in *The Saints Paradise*:

> "He that looks for a God without himself, and worships God at a distance, he worships he knows not what, but is... deceived by the imagination of his own heart... He that looks for a God within himself... is made subject to and hath community with the spirit that made all flesh, that dwells in all flesh and in every creature within the globe."[43]

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[32]Ingle, "George Fox, Millenarian", 266

[33]Edward Burrough, *The Camp of the Lord in England*, qtd in Hill, The World Turned Upside Down, 246

[34] Ingle, "George Fox, Millenarian", 266

[35] James Nayler, *Love to the Lost (1656)*, cited in Hill, The World Turned Upside Down

[36] George Fox et al, *A Declaration From the Harmless and Innocent People of God Called Quakers (1661)*, cited in Ingle, "George Fox, Millenarian", 277

[37]Hill, The World Turned Upside Down, 233

[38] George Fox, *To the Parliament of the Commonwealth of England, Fifty-Nine Particulars laid Down for the Regulating of Things* (1659) cited in Ingle, "George Fox, Millenarian", 276

[39]Ibid

[40]Ibid

[41]Hill, The World Turned Upside Down, 233

[42]Morton, The World of the Ranters, 73

[43]Qtd in Christopher Hill, The Religion of Gerrard Winstanley (Oxford: Past and Present Society, 1978), 3

Accordingly, Winstanley expected Christ's Second Coming as an internal event and told his followers that: "You must see, feel and know from himself his own resurrection within you, if you expect life and peace by him."[44] Winstanley was convinced that the time was at hand when Jesus would "dwell in every man and woman without exception."[45] When this happened, all people would learn the reasonableness of co-operation and establish a communal society without private property.[46] In 1649, Winstanley attempted to demonstrate the structure of the new society when he established an agricultural colony on St George's Hill near Cobham, taking symbolic possession of the common and waste lands. Other Digger communities arose at Wellingborough in Northamptonshire, Cox Hall in Kent, Iver in Buckinghamshire, Barnet in Hertfordshire, Enfield in Middlesex, Dunstable in Bedfordshire and Bosworth in Leicestershire.[47] Each of these communes lasted only a short time because the soil was generally unproductive and pressure was applied by local landholders. Winstanley continued to advocate his communistic platform though, insisting that human dignity could only be a reality when all people were free to work the land, without buying or selling of labour.[48] Within this belief system, Winstanley did not claim personal responsibility for establishing a more godly system of government; at most his duty was to convert others so that Christ could become manifest within them.

This sort of pantheism was of course an absolute anathema to Puritans, such as John Bunyan's congregation at Bedford. Bunyan however, possessed a well developed millenarian stance and some authors have claimed that in his youth he was sympathetic towards Fifth Monarchism.[49] Richard Greaves points to a passage in the *Advocateship of Jesus Christ*, published just before Bunyan's death in 1688, in which he wrote:

> *"I did used to be much taken with one Sect of Christians, for that it was their way, when they made mention of the Name of Jesus, to call him the Blessed King of Glory."[50]*

Greaves alleges the "Sect of Christians" referred to was the Fifth Monarchists.[51] This in itself is no evidence that Bunyan sanctioned a non-miraculous imposition of the Reign of the Saints, since he merely seems to be endorsing a particular title for Jesus. Greaves goes further though to assert that Bunyan had close associations with John Child, Henry Jessey and George Cokayne, three members of the Bedford congregation suspected of Fifth Monarchist ties.[52] Greaves argument is symptomatic of a trend linking all millenarian doctrines to Fifth Monarchism, without distinguishing between the premillenial and postmillenial varieties. Bunyan did indeed believe the Kingdom of Christ was imminent but, as even his earliest writings

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[44] Gerrard Winstanley, *The Mystery of God*, qtd in Hill, <u>Religion of Gerrard Winstanley</u>, 6

[45] Winstanley, *The Saints Paradise*, qtd in Hill, <u>Religion of Gerrard Winstanley</u>, 10

[46] Christopher Hill, <u>A Turbulent Seditious and Factious People</u> (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 95

[47] Christopher Hill, <u>A Nation of Change and Novelty: Radical Politics, Religion and Literature in Seventeenth</u> Century England (London: Routledge, 1990), 116

[48] Gerrard Winstanley, *The Law of Freedom in a Platform (1652)*, cited in Hill, <u>A Nation of Change and Novelty</u>, 134

[49] Richard Greaves, "John Bunyan and the Fifth Monarchists"; Hill, <u>A Turbulent Seditious and Factious People</u>, 99

[50] Greaves, "John Bunyan and the Fifth Monarchists", 83

[51] Ibid

[52] Ibid, 84

show, he expected it to be initiated by divine intervention from a physically-returned Jesus.

In 1656, a year when England was struck by a wave of millennial hysteria, Bunyan confidently prophesied that Christ would soon arrive "in flaming fire".[53] In *The Holy City*, published in 1665, Bunyan emphasised the reality of an earthly millennium in which the Church would reign. However, it was not the responsibility of Christians to impose this rule themselves:

> *"The return of Zion from the tyranny of her afflictions, and her recovery to her primitive purity, is no head strong brain-sick rashness of her own, but the gracious and merciful hand and goodness of God unto her, therefrom to give her deliverance."[54]*

Bunyan's millennial convictions were made clear in *The Holy War* in which Emmanuel, the barely disguised figure of King Jesus, leads the Saints in battle to capture the city of Mansoul.[55] This book may also be interpreted as an allegory of the spiritual conflict between good and evil.[56] While awaiting the millennium, Christians were to be mindful of the dichotomy separating the reward or punishment which followed immediately after death. *A Few Sighs From Hell*[57] and Bunyan's most famous work, *The Pilgrim's Progress,*[58] involve symbolic depictions of heaven and hell. In Bunyan's theology, which was widely popular, if not quite orthodox,[59] Fifth Monarchist agitation to hasten the millennium was an exercise in futility, since Christ himself would establish the Kingdom. Christians were to prepare for the millennium by seeking doctrinal and spiritual perfection, without engaging the secular world.[60]

However, in the period from the execution of Charles I to the dissolution of the Barebones Parliament in 1653, religion and politics became abnormally intertwined under the influence of a loosely definable Fifth Monarchist faction.[61] During this time it is difficult to distinguish between those people who categorically advocated the establishment of Christ's thousand year reign, and others who merely desired the laws of England to reflect a greater degree of Christian morality.[62] The confusion was multiplied because similar rhetoric was employed by groups who had different interpretations of the form Christ's Kingdom would take.[63] The Independent Puritans believed that Christ would physically return to establish temporal sovereignty. In the meantime, the Kingdom would exist within the Church as it progressed towards a perfect state where each of its members would be spiritually controlled without the need for bishops or prelates.[64] Some men, for example John Owen and William Strong, vacillated between this view and the more revolutionary

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[53] John Bunyan, *Some Gospel Truths Opened (1656)*, cited in Greaves, "John Bunyan and the Fifth Monarchists", 85

[54] Qtd in Greaves, "John Bunyan and the Fifth Monarchists", 88

[55] John Bunyan, <u>The Holy War</u>, eds Roger Shamrock, James Forrest (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980)

[56] Ibid, xxv

[57] John Bunyan, *A Few Sighs From Hell (1658)*, cited in Greaves, "John Bunyan and the Fifth Monarchists", 85-86

[58] John Bunyan, The Pilgrim's Progress (London: Scripture Union Press, 1978)

[59] Bunyan, <u>The Holy War</u>, xi

[60] Ingle, "George Fox, Millenarian", 264

[61] Liu, <u>Discord in Zion</u>, 65

[62] Rogers, <u>The Fifth Monarchy Men</u>, 134

[63] Liu, <u>Discord in Zion</u>, 5

[64] Ibid, 6

Fifth Monarchist perspective, but both Owen and Strong were stressing the spiritual character of the Kingdom by 1652.[65] Chaplains in the New Model Army at times made militaristic overtures to the effect that the Saints in the Army were best suited to rule the nation, "for they seek not their own, but other's good."[66] Exhortations to establish the Kingdom of Christ, by violence if necessary, were enhanced by the course of the Revolution and the vacant throne after the execution of Charles I.

The high-water mark of Fifth Monarchism came in 1653 when, on April 20, Oliver Cromwell expelled the Rump Parliament. Cromwell was hailed as a second Moses and John Spittlehouse urged that he be given absolute power as God's lieutenant on earth.[67] John Rogers encouraged Cromwell to organise England after the pattern of the Israelite nation with a ruling body similar to the Jewish Sanhedrin.[68] After consideration, Cromwell decided to replace the Rump with a Council consisting of members nominated for their religious and moral virtues. In his inaugural speech to this Council, named the Barebones Parliament after one of its constituents, Cromwell quoted from the Books of Daniel and Revelation.[69] Spittlehouse told Parliament that "the sickle of divine justice" had removed Charles I and the accession of King Jesus "took place as soon as the fatal blow was given."[70] The Barebones Parliament was the closest the Fifth Monarchists came to realising their vision of rule by the Saints, with about 60 members out of 140 supporting some form of religiously based legal reforms.[71] The number in favour of wholesale introduction of Biblical law was considerably lower though.[72] John Rogers was frustrated by the protracted debates over law reform: "Why are there so many perplexable cares about the Laws. Hath not God given you a Book of Laws ready to your hand? and can men make laws better than God?"[73] Eventually, the moderates, with Cromwell's backing, conspired to dissolve the Parliament rather than accede to radical religious rule.[74] On December 12, 1653 soldiers were summoned to expel any Parliamentarians who refused to leave and the experiment in rule by the Saints came to an end.

From this point on, enthusiasm for Fifth Monarchism quickly faded and as early as 1654 the movement was being denounced as a concoction by "ill-made brains and disturbed fancies, strongly tinctured with a hypochondrical melancholy."[75] In 1656, former Fifth Monarchists William Aspinwall and John Simpson declaimed disobedience to the government and began preaching that the millennium was not to be expected until the personal coming of Jesus.[76] Edmund Chillenden, who in 1653 had led his congregation to London to petition for the establishment of the Kingdom of Christ, gave a dismissive answer when he was told that a Middlesex candidate in the 1656 elections was not godly: "Pish, let religion alone: give me my small

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[65] Ibid, 73

[66] Thomas Collier, (1649), qtd in Liu, Discord in Zion, 63

[67] John Spittlehouse, *A Warning Piece Discharged (1653)*, cited in Capp, "The Fifth Monarchists and Popular Millenarianism"

[68] John Rogers, *A Few Proposals Relating to Civil Government (1653)*, cited in Liu, Discord in Zion, 82

[69] Capp, "The Fifth Monarchists and Popular Millenarianism", 171

[70] John Spittlehouse, *The First Addresses to his Excellency the Lord General with the Assembly of Elders (1653)*, qtd in Capp, "The Fifth Monarchists and Popular Millenarianism", 170

[71] Liu, Discord in Zion, 87

[72] Ibid

[73] Ibid, 94

[74] Ibid

[75] John Hall, *Confusion Confounded (1654)*, qtd in Capp, The Fifth Monarchy Men, 15

[76] Louise Brown, The Political Activities of the Baptists and Fifth Monarchy Men in England during the Interregnum (New York: Burt Franklin, 1964), 104

liberty."[77] The only remaining Fifth Monarchist body of any significance was a group led by a wine cooper, Thomas Venner. This was the sect responsible for two violent uprisings in 1657 and 1661, in attempts to substitute a theocratic regime for the secular government.

In 1656, Venner distributed pamphlets declaring that he and his followers constituted a separate state, with the inherent right to defend themselves.[78] He began making plans for an upheaval but had difficulty attracting recruits and even former Fifth Monarchist leaders refused to join him.[79] On April 9 1657, the date set for a revolt, Venner and 23 of his supporters were captured in a house, leaving a remnant of the force to engage in minor street fighting. Venner was released in 1659 as an act of clemency by the new Lord Protector, Richard Cromwell. He quickly resumed plotting and issued a new manifesto in which he outlined a detailed scheme for "a well ordered Commonwealth, ruled by the best men."[80] Venner's millenarian quest was not to be limited to England but rather to "go on to France, Spain, Germany and Rome to destroy the beast and the whore... to bring not only this but all the nations to the subjection of Christ."[81] On January 9 1661, Venner and 50 others clashed with soldiers and around twenty men were killed on each side.[82] Upon their apprehension, the rebels were indicted for murder and high treason and were executed by hanging on January 17.

At the time of these events, Fifth Monarchism had fallen well outside the mainstream of political and religious thought. Venner's revolutionaries were most certainly extremists but whether they may be characterised as a "lunatic fringe" is more of a value judgment than a question of fact.[83] Throughout the period of the Civil War and Interregnum, Fifth Monarchists did not simply attach additional elements to millenarian beliefs, but rather took a radically different approach to eschatology. What made them unique was the conviction that they were religiously bound to establish the temporal Kingdom of Christ on earth. Other groups, while eagerly anticipating the millennium, expected miraculous intervention either in the form of spiritual revival or the glorious Second Coming of Jesus in person. Premillenialism allowed the majority of English Puritans to keep a degree of separation between their religious and secular philosophies, since responsibility for inaugurating the Reign of the Saints rested primarily with Christ. Fifth Monarchism necessitated the fusion of Church and State without direct assistance from God. In the eyes of contemporaries, this divergence represented the distinction between truth and heresy. It should not be overlooked or painted over in a modern study of the period.

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[77] Liu, Discord in Zion, 144

[78] Thomas Venner, *The Banner of Truth Displayed (1656)*, cited in Brown, Baptists and Fifth Monarchy Men, 111

[79] Brown, Baptists and Fifth Monarchy Men, 115

[80] Thomas Venner, *A Door of Hope (1661)*, cited in Rogers, The Fifth Monarchy Men, 111

[81] Ibid

[82] Rogers, The Fifth Monarchy Men, 116

[83] Christopher Hill argues such a label would be arrogant and inaccurate, Hill, Antichrist in the 17th Century, 1

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