Educating the ‘Unconstant Rabble’

Educating the ‘Unconstant Rabble’: Arguments for Educational Advancement and Reform during the English Civil War and Interregnum

By

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this book is to locate the discussions over educational advancement and reform within the wider political and religious debates taking place in England during the 1640s and 1650s in order to gain a fuller understanding of the importance of learning and education to those discussions. Paying particular attention to the contributions to these discussions by Samuel Hartlib, John Dury, Johan Amos Comenius, John Hall, John Milton and Marchamont Nedham it becomes clear that all of these writers regarded effective educational reform as important for the continued political and religious growth of the country. A strong theme emerging within the tracts discussed here is that an adequately reformed educational system will provide the state with an able and useful populace on which they can depend in times of crisis. Allied to this is the notion that the populace is entitled to receive a level of education appropriate to their abilities and talents and that the state bears a responsibility to play at least some part in providing that education, whether formally or through the dissemination of information through the printing press. As will be seen from the following study, the ideas and reforms suggested within the tracts to be discussed here were the continuation of an intellectual context in which the development of learning and the expansion of knowledge were seen as paramount. Drawing on the religious ideas of the millennium, as well as the philosophical ideas of Bacon especially, the writers to be considered here sought the reformation of the educational system, as well as a broader series of social reforms, in order to perfect the Reformation and make England ready for the new age.

INTRODUCTION

THE INTELLECTUAL AND IDEOLOGICAL CONTEXT OF EDUCATIONAL REFORM

The purpose of this book is to locate the discussions over educational advancement and reform within the context of other polemical and ideological exchanges taking place during the English Civil War in an attempt to gain a fuller understanding of the place and importance of learning and education in those exchanges. In order to do this however, we must consider a number of distinct, but related, questions. What was the ideological context in which these discussions emerged? In particular, what effect did changing religious and political opinions and practices have upon the approaches taken to educational reform by the authors studied here. What were the teaching theories, approaches and practices employed before and during the 1640s and 1650s, and in what ways did the contributors to these discussions envisage changing them? What effect did changing ideological contexts have on attitudes towards education and learning? We must also consider who the contributors to these discussions were and how their notions of educational advancement and reform were related to other contemporary debates.

The reformers of early modern English education to be discussed here are Samuel Hartlib, John Dury, Johan Amos Comenius, John Hall, John Milton and Marchamont Nedham, all of whom regarded effective educational reform as important for the continued political and religious growth of the country. All of these writers can broadly be described as parliamentarian in their political outlook with leanings towards the puritan end of the contemporary religious spectrum. The distinguishing feature of the writers studied here is their insistence on the importance of an adequate education to the living of a godly life. This can be seen especially in their insistence that all education should ultimately be useful to the commonwealth and that the foundations of a truly reformed political and religious society had to be laid within children at the very beginning of their education, regardless of their social position. This was in stark contrast to the opinions of other contributors to the educational discussions

who regarded the extension of educational opportunity beyond the governing elite as dangerous. Any ideas this group had for educational reform was concentrated on the Universities rather than schools, examples of which can be found in the exchanges between John Webster and Seth Ward,[1] institutions the writers under investigation here considered as impossible to reform without the foundations being laid much earlier in the educational process. For this reason, both the universities and the group of writers with whom Webster or Ward shared these ideas, will be considered here only insofar as it may illuminate a particular aspect of the reform writings of the authors mentioned above.

The main importance of the writers studied here and their ideas for educational reform is bound up with their express connection with the processes of education in use at the time. Hartlib, Dury and Hall were intimately involved in the education of their friends' children and members of the royal family, frequently receiving letters from correspondents requesting advice on the appointment of tutors. Milton, Comenius and Nedham, on the other hand, were all actively engaged in the educational process through their occupation as teachers at various times. Another important factor in the consideration of the ideas of these writers is their coterminous involvement in the ongoing polemical, religious and ideological exchanges of which these educational discussions form a part. It is necessary, therefore, to consider their contributions to the polemical, religious and ideological exchanges alongside their contributions to educational discussions in order to gain a fuller understanding of the interconnections between these seemingly disparate strands of discussion. William Petty and Sir Cheney Culpeper, frequent correspondents of Hartlib, were also involved, albeit peripherally, in these specifically educational discussions. For the figures studied throughout this project, educational reform is part of a broader programme of religious, political and social reform and communication, making the

[1] For a more detailed discussion of this topic see Allen G. Debus. *Science and Education in the Seventeenth Century: The Webster – Ward Debate*. London: MacDonald, 1970. Further discussions of the debate over reforming the universities can be found, among other places, in David Cressy. *Education in Tudor and Stuart England*. London: Arnold, 1975; Helen M. Jewell. *Education in Early Modern England*. Houndmills: Macmillan, 1998; Rosemary O'Day. *Education and Society, 1500-1800: The Social Foundations of Education in Early Modern Britain*. London: Longman, 1982; as well as in Victor Morgan. *A History of the University of Cambridge, Volume II 1546-1750*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004; and Nicholas Tyacke. *The History of the University of Oxford, Volume IV, Seventeenth-Century Oxford*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997.

provision of adequate and efficient education in childhood essential for laying the foundations of effective reform in other areas.

Close examination of the contributions of these writers to the discussions concerning educational reform reveals a broad consensus that extension of educational opportunity would be of benefit to the state through the provision of an educated populace. The state in the seventeenth century is understood here in Braddick's terms as

> a network of agencies distinguished by the kind of power that they exercise, rather than the precise form of these agencies (there is no insistence that they be bureaucratic, for example) or the ends to which they were employed.[2]

The power exercised by Parliament, for example, relied on a disparate collection of local agencies in order to be enforced. In other words, providing a clear, concise and unchanging definition of what constituted the state during the 1640s and 1650s is an arduous task, given the fluctuations of power and authority that took place throughout the period. While there was a broad consensus that education should be of benefit to the state, however defined at the time, there were, of course, disagreements over which sections of the populace were to be educated and to what extent, which reflected the different purposes to which each contributor thought education and learning should be put. For some, like Hartlib, Dury, and Comenius, the populace was entitled to a level of education appropriate to their station and function in life, a provision that the state should at least play a part in providing. Milton's views appear at first glance to be far more elitist, restricting the provision of educational opportunity to the governing elite but, as the discussion of Milton's educational theories will show, there was a far closer correspondence between his ideas and those of the Hartlib network than has previously been acknowledged. The importance of effective educational reform to the maintenance of a godly and virtuous population, however, was a point on which all the writers studied here agreed. So, who were these people and why was educational reform so important to them?

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[2] Michael J. Braddick. *State Formation in Early Modern England c. 1550-1700*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 6. See also Quentin Skinner and Bo Strath (eds.). *States and Citizens: History, Theory and Prospects*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Contributors to Educational Discussion

Samuel Hartlib was born in Elbing, in what was Western Poland, around 1600 and came to London around 1628.[3] He was a tireless reformer who spent his life attempting to draw together the works and ideas of those he considered the greatest minds of the age in an effort to provide as wide a body of knowledge as possible for readers. Nothing was beyond the scope of this collection and the archive he accumulated, now known as the Hartlib Papers, includes diaries, letters, manuscripts and printed tracts on a range of diverse subjects from agriculture to religion.[4] Hartlib's activities-sending, receiving, copying, and forwarding the correspondence he encountered–gave his network a semi-structured appearance with Hartlib acting as the collator and, in some instances, publisher of the ideas and information circulated among his associates. Indeed, Greengrass, Leslie and Raylor describe Hartlib as "form[ing] an important point of intersection" for a "disparate" "range of individuals":

> As well as affording a unity to a disparate group of scholars, projectors, politicians, educators and scientists, his [Hartlib's] activities offered unity to their disparate concerns: intellectual, social and technological. What makes the discussions within the Hartlib circle so important, therefore, is the commonality of their concerns, the sureness of their identification of the issues needing to be addressed, and the tenacity with which they were able to concentrate on them.[5]

Hartlib was the hub of a communicative network that stretched from London to the continent and beyond, and he was instrumental in the formation of many of the relationships that developed as a result of the

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[3] The basis of the biographical information we have on Hartlib is a letter from Hartlib to John Worthington, dated 3rd August 1660. The letter is reprinted in G. H. Turnbull. *Hartlib, Dury and Comenius: Gleanings from Hartlib's Papers*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1947, pp. 110-111, with further details being provided in chapter one of the same publication. A fuller account of Hartlib's life can be found in Mark Greengrass' article on his life in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (*ODNB*). Oxford: Oxford University press, 2004. Available online at: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/printable/12500.

[4] The surviving papers are held in the library of Sheffield University and have been made available on a cd-rom *The Hartlib Papers* 2nd Edition. Sheffield: HROnline, 2002.

[5] Mark Greengrass, Michael Leslie and Timothy Raylor (eds.). *Samuel Hartlib and Universal Reformation: Studies in Intellectual Communication*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 2.

exchange of information between his correspondents. The extent of this network necessitated a level of effective communication, the impact of which "should not be underestimated. Boundaries of language, territory, discipline, class and dogma could be, if not dissolved, at least (in the right climate) cut down to size."[6] While Hartlib's interest could be captured by a multitude of intellectual and academic topics, according to Turnbull "[t]he advancement of learning was an object that was very dear to Hartlib, and his schemes to encourage it cover the whole of his long life in England."[7] Since coming to England, Hartlib had been struck by the deficiencies within the existing educational provision. His correspondence with Comenius, which began as early as 1632, provided another avenue of intellectual exchange through which ideas of educational reform could be explored.[8] Hartlib had been trying to arrange for Comenius to visit England from the early 1630s onwards, spending a great deal of energy in raising funds to pay for the trip, which finally happened in 1641.[9]

Comenius, who had been born in Moravia in 1592, spent the majority of the 1630s in exile from his home, working as a teacher at the Gymnasium near Leszno in Poland.[10] Throughout his time teaching in Leszno he worked on developing his system of pansophic, that is universal or encyclopaedic, learning that was to become his trademark, often sending manuscripts to Hartlib for circulation and comment throughout his network of correspondents. It would appear that while Comenius' ideas did come in for some criticism during this period from a variety of sources, others interested in educational reform were only too happy to seek him out and ask his advice.[11] According to Turnbull Comenius was invited to visit Sweden in 1638 in order to reform their schools but declined on the grounds that he had already been invited to do the same in England.[12] It is true that invitations had been extended to Comenius to visit England as early as 1636 but the extent to which this can be regarded as a formal request for him to come over and reform the English education system is debatable.[13] It does, however, signal the growing importance that

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[6] Greengrass *et al.*, *Hartlib and Universal Reformation*, p. 16.
[7] Turnbull, *Hartlib, Dury and Comenius*, p. 48.
[8] Greengrass, 'Samuel Hartlib', *ODNB*.
[9] Turnbull, *Hartlib, Dury and Comenius*, pp. 342-344.
[10] Mark Greengrass. 'Johannes Amos Comenius'. *ODNB*. Available online at: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/printable/67104.
[11] See Turnbull's discussion of the possible plans for Comenius to visit England before 1641 in his *Hartlib, Dury and Comenius*, pp. 342-344.
[12] Turnbull, *Hartlib, Dury and Comenius*, p. 342.
[13] See the letter from Pym to Hartlib, ref: 31/3/1A-2B. Turnbull also discusses these plans in his *Hartlib, Dury and Comenius*, pp. 342.

would be attached to the provision of adequate and effective education by both the contributors to these debates and their patrons both within and outside parliament during the civil war period.

The corner stone of Comenius' educational programme was the organisation of knowledge into logical systems that could be imparted to the student in the most beneficial and efficient order. A manuscript within the Hartlib papers entitled "Ad excitanda publice Veritatis et pacis (hoc est communis salutis) ope Dei studia"[14], which Turnbull believes to have been written by Comenius in 1641, gives a list of tasks to be completed in preparation for the reforming of the education system.[15] Firstly, he provides a list of sixteen "Books to be worked at for reforming the studies of the young". Secondly, he signals the need for "Public Deliberations", which Turnbull describes as "Consultations with pious and learned men about ecclesiastical peace and the advancement of learning already begun to be continued." And finally he comments on the need for "means to promote the preceding elaboration of books and continuation of deliberations."[16] The linking of "ecclesiastical peace and the advancement of learning" here is indicative of the belief of both Comenius and John Dury that the one cannot exist without the other; educational reform is necessary for ecclesiastical peace, while ecclesiastical peace will aid the maintenance of the reformed educational structures. According to Webster:

> Hartlib saw education as the key to the reform of religion and society …'the readiest way to Reform both Church and Commonwealth'. His closest collaborator, John Dury, thought likewise, 'without the reformation of the wayes of education in the schooles, it will not be possible to bring any other reformation to any settlement or progress of the whol Commonwealth'.[17]

Any reformation attained must be complete in order for it to be effective and lasting.

The growing concern over religious reform, in particular the role of the bishops in church government, was a particular pre-occupation of the

[14] A rough translation of the title is "To increase public truth and harmony (for the public good) through godly study".
[15] Turnbull, *Hartlib, Dury and Comenius*, p. 359.
[16] I am using Turnbull's discussion of the text for the basis of my analysis due to the lack of an available English translation. See Turnbull, *Hartlib, Dury and Comenius*, pp. 359-360.
[17] Charles Webster. *Samuel Hartlib and the Advancement of Learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970, p. 4.

literature produced during 1641-2.[18] The divisions and conflicts between the various sections of the Protestant church, the role of the bishops within church government and the doctrine of pre-destination being two of the most important and widely debated, were also of particular concern to John Dury, who spent the vast majority of the late 1630s and early 1640s touring the continent meeting with representatives of the various factions and attempting to broker some sort of peace between them. To this end he maintained frequent correspondence with divines such as John Davenant, Thomas Morton and Joseph Hall, whose writings he would later use in his attempts to unify the Protestant church. Dury was born in Edinburgh in 1596.[19] His family moved to the Netherlands in 1606 after his father was banished from Scotland, where he took up the position of Minister to the Scottish and English Presbyterians in Leiden in 1609. Dury studied at Leiden University from 1611 to c. 1615 when he attended the Huguenot academy in Sedan, France, before returning to Leiden in 1616. He became qualified for Reformed ordination in October 1624 and joined the clandestine Walloon Reformed Church in Cologne as their minister. In 1626 he resigned his position in Cologne and possibly returned briefly to Scotland. By 1627 however, he was in Elbing, Poland, where he met what were to become three of the most important contacts of his life: Thomas Roe, Samuel Hartlib and Johan Amos Comenius. Roe became the first in a long series of patrons on whom Dury depended, while, as we know, Hartlib and Comenius became his most important allies in his quest for Church unity and universal reform. Dury was another particularly active member of Hartlib's network of associates, frequently sending Hartlib reports of his activities on the continent for circulation, as well as acting as a conduit for the dissemination of material across Europe.

Forms of church government, and the roles of bishops within them, were also of great concern to another of the contributors to the discussions over educational reform, John Milton. Milton is best known for his poetry and controversial prose, such as *Paradise Lost*, *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* and *Areopagitica*. However, his contribution to this particular exchange, *Of Education*, is also a highly compelling piece of

[18] Even the simplest of title keyword searches on Early English Books Online (EEBO) for the word "church" between 1641-1642 produces around 500 separate publications the majority of which, while not dealing specifically with the issue of church governance, do allude to the issue in some form or another.

[19] John T. Young. 'John Dury'. *ODNB*. Available online at: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/printable/8323 Further biographical information on Dury can be found in Thomas H. H. Rae. *John Dury and the Royal Road to Piety*. Berlin: Peter Lang, 1998.

writing and displays Milton's internalisation of the humanistic principles to which he was exposed during his years at St. Paul's school in London. Born in December 1608, Milton spent his earlier years being taught at home by a number of tutors, including Thomas Young.[20] The exact date of his enrolment at St. Paul's is unknown, but he left there for Cambridge in 1625. From his later writings it becomes very clear that Milton regarded the education he received at Cambridge as severely lacking, indeed according to Campbell, Milton described the five years he spent in private study at Hammersmith as "making good the deficiencies of his Cambridge education".[21] His period of acting as schoolmaster to his nephews is further evidence of Milton's commitment to the importance of adequate educational provision, while his services to the interregnum government as Secretary for Foreign Tongues and newsbook licenser especially point to his pre-occupation with the dissemination of information beyond the governing elite. As a newsbook licenser Milton was responsible for the licensing of publications such as Hall's continuation of Nedham's *Mercurius Britanicus*, a further suggestion of his affinity with the ideas espoused by Hall and his contemporaries within the Hartlib network. Milton's most overt contribution to the educational discussions to be examined below, *Of Education*, was written at Hartlib's request and the frequent mention of his name throughout Hartlib's diaries of the period suggests a closer relationship between Milton and the network of intellectuals which congregated around Hartlib than has previously been thought.[22] The close correspondence between the ideas of Milton and other educational commentators connected with Hartlib's network also reinforces this suggestion of a closer relationship. The writings of John

[20] Gordon Campbell. 'John Milton'. *ODNB*. Available online at: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/printable/18800. For a fuller account of Milton's life see also Anna Beer, *Milton: Poet, Pamphleteer and Patriot*. London: Bloomsbury, 2008; Neil Forsyth, *John Milton: A Biography*. Oxford: Lion, 2008; Christopher Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution*. London: Faber & Faber, 1977; Barbara Kiefer Lewalski. *The Life of John Milton: A Critical Biography*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000; and William Riley Parker. *Milton: A Biography* 2nd Edition edited by Gordon Campbell. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996.

[21] Campbell, 'John Milton', *ODNB*.

[22] The tract is written in the form of a letter to Hartlib and Milton mentions Hartlib's request to receive his ideas towards the end of the first page of the pamphlet. For a discussion of the differences between the ideas of Milton and the Hartlib network see, for example, Dorian's notes to *Of Education* in the *Complete Prose Works of John Milton* (*CPWJM*) Woolfe, D. M. (ed.) New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953 volume 2.

Hall, in particular his *Advancement of Learning* (1649), provide evidence of a pronounced debt to the writings of Milton.

John Hall was born in Durham in August 1627, the son of Michael Hall, "*gent.*"[23] He was educated at Durham Grammar School, but his expected admission to Cambridge in 1640 was delayed by the mounting tension between the king and the parliament; he eventually matriculated at St. John's College on 26th February 1646.[24] He seems to have spent the intervening six years reading voraciously and acquiring an extensive education, albeit self-taught and requiring a great deal of "time & trouble".[25] Although it is far from certain, it seems probable that Hall gained access to the materials required for this self-education within the extensive library attached to Durham Cathedral.

Hall attended St. John's College, Cambridge from February 1646 until May 1647, when he definitely entered Gray's Inn in London. Hall left Cambridge when the university failed to offer him a fellowship, despite his reputation as a talented and promising scholar. Davies, a close friend of Hall's, describes the university's actions as "denying those honorary advancements which are as it were the indulgence of the university when there is an excess of merit".[26] This praise from a close friend may be considered biased or over-zealous, were it not for the comments made by other leading intellectuals of the period. Robert Boyle is reported to have commented that he was "a person that, trading antipodes to the strain of his contemporaries, has September in his judgement, whilst we can scarce find April on his chin". Thomas Hobbes had also apparently lamented the loss of this potential genius after his death at the early age of 29 in 1656

[23] More detailed biographical information can be found in John Davies' preface to John Hall's *Hierocles Upon the Golden Verses of Pythagoras: Teaching a Vertuous and Worthy Life* London, 1657. See also Anthony Wood. *Athenae Oxonienses* ed. Philip Bliss 4 vols. 1813-1820, 2:457-60; *Dictionary of Nation Biography* (*DNB*). vol. 8, pp. 955-956; A. K. Croston's introduction to Hall's *The Advancement of Learning* (1649). Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1953; Joad Raymond. 'John Hall's *A Method of History*: A Book Lost and Found (with transcription)'. *English Literary Renaissance* (*ELR*) 28 (1998): 267-298; and Joad Raymond. 'John Hall'. *ODNB.* Available online at: http://www.oxforddnd.com/view/printable/11969.

[24] There is evidence of Hall having registered at Gray's Inn in London as early as June 1643 although what he was doing in London during that year, or whether he ever actually studied there, is unclear at this time. See Raymond, *ELR*, p. 268, n.8.

[25] John Hall, *A Method Of History*, 3v, in Raymond, *ELR*, p. 287. All subsequent quotations from this tract are taken from the transcription contained within Raymond's article.

[26] Davies, quoted in *DNB*, p. 956.

and suggested that "had not his debauches and intemperance diverted him from the more serious studies, he had made an extraordinary person; for no man had ever done such great things at his age".[27] Hobbes is said to have visited Hall regularly and the "great things" referred to here would seem to be the extensive publishing activities carried out during his overly short life. [28]

The Master of St. John's during Hall's time there was John Arrowsmith and it was to him that Hall dedicated his collection of essays *Horae Vacivae*, which were published in 1646. A preface to the volume was given by his tutor, John Pawson, and is dated 12th June 1646. The essays within the collection discuss themes such as "Opinions, Preaching, Fame, Studies and Warre", a list that seems to signal Hall's developing interest in the educational and political exchanges of the period. These essays appeared to announce his genius and, if one is to believe the opinion of a close friend, they were greatly admired by the scholars of both Oxford and Cambridge, as well as being translated into French and exported to the continent. A. K. Croston has described these essays as being written in the Baconian style and Bacon's influence upon Hall, as well as the other contributors to the ongoing educational discussions, can be seen in his later works. [29] Hall also published a collection of poems in January 1647, while a treatise concerning the most effective course for the study of history of 1645 entitled *A Method of History*, previously believed to have been lost, has recently been discovered in a collection of manuscripts in the Bodleain Library.[30]

One of Hall's many other activities included political journalism. It appears that he was employed by John Lily to run the parliamentarian newsbook *Mercurius Britanicus* in 1648, a revival of the newsbook produced by Marchamont Nedham before he switched sides and began writing for the king. Hall was an official government pamphleteer from May 1649, receiving a pension of 100*l*. per annum, which was irregularly paid, causing him a substantial amount of financial difficulty for the remainder of his short life. Between 1650 and 1653 he apparently collaborated with Nedham, after he had returned to the parliamentary fold, on the production of *Mercurius Politicus*, as well as publishing various

[27] Both quotations can be found in Raymond, *ELR*, p. 267.
[28] *DNB*, p. 956.
[29] Croston, p. v.
[30] See Raymond, *ELR*, pp. 270-272 for a discussion of the tract's attribution and authenticity.

polemical tracts during the late 1640s and early 1650s.[31]

Marchamont Nedham was born in Burford in August 1620 to Margery Collier and Marchamont Nedham senior.[32] His father died a year or so after he was born and a year later his mother married Christopher Glynn, the vicar of Burford as well as the master of the free-school that had been founded there in 1571. Unsurprisingly, Nedham attended his step-father's school before entering All Souls in Oxford in 1634, receiving his BA on 24th October 1637. From there, Nedham moved to the Merchant Taylor's School in London were he took up a position as an usher with duties that included keeping the younger students in line and providing teaching assistance in Latin, Greek and History. Nedham remained at the school for roughly three years before becoming an under clerk at Grey's Inn in 1640, a position he occupied until he began editing *Mercurius Britanicus* in the summer of 1643. His reasons for leaving his position at the Merchant's Taylor School are unclear, although it may be fair to assume that the opinions he expresses in his dedicated educational tract *A Discourse Concerning Schools and School-Masters*, published in 1663 and which will be discussed in detail later in this study, were the result of personal experience of the teaching profession and the difficulties those employed within it faced.

After beginning his journalistic career, Nedham became one of the most prolific and widely read writers of the mid seventeenth century. Of course this does not necessarily mean that he was particularly popular in his day; in fact he was regarded as a time-server and his name became associated with some of the worst traits of newsbook writers. His involvement in newsbook production and his polemical pamphleteering, however, ensured his name was well known. Throughout the 1640s and

[31] The evidence for both these assumptions is not completely reliable as it consists of the comments made by Royalist writers in the battle being fought over public opinion and support. However, it would be surprising if, with regard to the working relationship between Hall and Nedham, two of the most prominent parliamentarian polemicists of the period did not collaborate to a certain extent.

[32] The basis of the biographical information we have for Nedham is Joseph Frank. *Cromwell's Press Agent: A Critical Biography of Marchamont Nedham, 1620-1678*. Lanham: University Press of America, 1980. See also J. T. Peacey. *Politicians and Pamphleteers: Propaganda During the English Civil Wars and Interregnum*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004; Joad Raymond's entry on Nedham in the *ODNB* available online at: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/printable/19847 and Blair Worden, ' "Wit in a Roundhead": the dilema of Marchamont Nedham', in Susan D. Amussen and Mark A. Kishlansky (eds.). *Political Culture and Cultural Politics in Early Modern England*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995, pp. 301-337.

50s, Nedham was involved in the production of some of the most successful newsbooks of the period. Between August 1643 and May 1646 he produced one hundred and thirty weekly editions of *Mercurius Britanicus*, a publication in support of parliament. Then from September 1647 until May 1649 he wrote around eighty-three editions of his royalist publication *Mercurius Pragmaticus*. After this he returned to the parliamentarian fold in June 1650 with *Mercurius Politicus*, which ran through six hundred and fifteen editions between then and April 1660.[33]

It is not only due to this change in allegiance from the parliament to the king and back again that Nedham has gained the reputation of a time-server; however; the very vocal and public nature of his attacks on his ideological opponents also play a part. Contemporary attitudes towards both the man and his work were far from complimentary: he was "transcendently gifted in opprobrious and treasonable Droll", according to James Heath.[34] His writing style, for other writers of the period, was also a cause for concern as, according to *Mercurius Britanicus His Welcome to Hell: With the Devil's Blessing to Britanicus*, a satirical poem probably by Sir Frances Wortley, *Britanicus*' style is the most recognisable and inflammatory of all the newsbooks. More so than its royalist rival *Mercurius Aulicus* or another of the more prominent parliamentarian publications the *Kingdom's Weekly Intelligencer*,

> Amongst all these (deare Son *Britanicus*)
> Th' hast shew'd thy selfe the best *Mercurius*.
> Thou hast out-slander'd slander, and prevail'd,
> And every railing rogue thou hast out-rail'd.[35]

While it is true that the style of Nedham's writing was highly irreverent and strongly satirical at times, the picture that has been painted of him as a man who changes his allegiance more often than his shirt, and that for purely mercenary or avaricious motives, appears to be rather too simplistic fully to account for the work he produced.

With his involvement in pamphleteering as well as newsbook production it is possible to see an overlap in what he saw as the main concern of both genres: the provision of information to his readers from

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[33] See Carolyn Nelson and Matthew Seccombe. *British Newspapers and Periodicals 1641-1700: Short-Title Catalogue*. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1987.

[34] James Heath. *A Briefe Chronicle of the Last Intestine War*, the second impression greatly enlarged. London, 1663.

[35] [Sir Francis Wortley]. *Mercurius Britanicus His Welcome to Hell*. London, 1647, p. 2.

which they could then form their own opinions and conclusions regarding the events taking place at the time. This is not to say that Nedham's current allegiance would have no effect on his presentation of this information, rather that his need to inform the populace overrides any other considerations of either duty or loyalty he may be faced with. His willingness to switch sides may also have aided him in his task of providing the necessary information to the reading public. As Blair Worden suggests "[a] writer on temporary and provisional terms with the beliefs he professes may be a more intelligent observer of rapid changes of political fortune than the inflexible partisan."[36] Nedham's apparent disassociation from the ideological stance with which he is engaged is far from a hinderance to his ability to keep his readers informed. Instead, it actually allows him to maintain a more detailed overall picture of the entire situation, without becoming enmeshed in partisan details.

Despite Nedham's lack of explicit contribution to the continuing educational discussion of the 1640s and 1650s, both his journalistic activities and his other prose works were aimed at the instruction and education of the populace at large. Nedham was not the only writer involved in this instruction of his readers: as shall become clear from the following discussion, in the hands of Nedham and the other newsbook editors and polemical pamphleteers such as Milton, Hall, and Dury, the printing press had become an instrument of education as well as a means of arguing for educational reform. The point is that, for Milton, Hall and Nedham especially, the printing press was the most important tool in the dissemination of information to the populace at large and should be used to a far greater extent than previously. This brought with it the necessity to improve access to and the efficiency of the educational practices in use throughout the country in order to ensure that the populace were able to understand and participate properly in the wider political, religious and ideological discussions taking place at the same time because the questions being debated within these discussions were of paramount importance to the lives of the populace in general, an idea I wish to explore in more detail in the following section.

Interaction between Educational and Polemical Pamphlet Discussions

The contributions of Hartlib, Dury, Comenius, Hall, Milton and Nedham to the educational discussions of the 1640s and 1650s are closely connected

[36] Worden, in Amussen and Kishlansky (eds.). *Political Culture*, p. 302.

with their contributions to the religious and political exchanges taking place at the same time and are very difficult to separate. Up until the abolition of the bishops the church was responsible for the licensing of schoolmasters. According to the Convocation of the Province of Canterbury in 1571

> the bishop shall approve no schoolmaster as worthy of the office of teacher, unless, in his judgement, he has sufficient knowledge (nisi quem suo judicio doctum invenerit), and unless he is recommended as worthy in life and morals by the testimony of pious men.[37]

By the 1640s, the abolition of bishops meant that the existing mechanisms for controlling the quality of teaching were completely ineffective, resulting in what was seen as a further deterioration in educational provision. Both the Root and Branch Petition and the Grand Remonstrance condemned the situation, citing "the gross and lamentable ignorance almost everywhere among the people" as a main cause of contention.[38]

A further, and perhaps more significant, difference during the civil war and interregnum is the emerging sense that it is the duty of the government to help solve these problems of ignorance.

> Reformers pressed for greater state intervention. Hartlib tried to get the first Protectorate Parliament to reform education by changing Latin teaching…The ejection of scandalous schoolmasters continued in the Protectorate and major-generals and commissioners granted licenses to teach, looking into political affiliation and fitness. From the Long Parliament through the Protectorate free schools and colleges benefited from regular rate exemption.[39]

As will be seen from the information that follows, those involved in the educational discussions, especially Hartlib and Nedham, managed to get the issue of educational reform onto the parliamentary agenda by using the printing press and the mechanisms of propaganda to great effect. The duty of the state to educate their populace, as well as the benefits they would receive once they had fulfilled this duty, became a refrain of the writings concerning the reform of the school system.

The emphasis placed upon what we would now describe as "primary"

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[37] Foster Watson. *The English Grammar Schools to 1660: Their Curriculum and Practice*. London: Frank Cass & Co., 1968, p. 18.
[38] Helen M. Jewell. *Education in Early Modern England*. Houndmills: Macmillan, 1998, p. 35.
[39] Jewel, *Education*, p. 36.

education by the authors considered here was based upon their belief that it was at this stage of development that the foundations for a moral and godly life should be laid. There was a strain of discussion concerning the reformation of the universities, a good example of which can be found in the exchanges between John Webster and Seth Ward, as mentioned earlier. The authors under consideration here, however, were of the opinion that it was essential to lay the foundations of an effective and efficient educational system in schools before any attempt could be made to adequately reform the universities. The same seemed to be the case for religious reform. Dury especially was concerned that religious and educational reform had to go hand in hand for either to be effective, a standpoint that can be demonstrated through a discussion of his prose concerning the unification of the Protestant church.

Milton and Nedham likewise discussed educational reform in a political context, while at the same time making use of educational language within their polemical prose concerning religious and political reform. Milton's repeated references to "teachers" and the clergy "teaching" the populace the word of God is only one example of this trend that can be detected throughout his writings. Those involved in the pamphlet debates of the 1640s and 1650s "agreed that securing popular support involved 'educating' the people".[40] Religion, politics and education became so intertwined that a discussion of any one aspect was never completely free from association with one of the others. It cannot be denied that the majority of the material produced by the printing press was primarily done so for the purposes of propaganda and in an attempt to garner popular support for one faction or another. Alongside this, however, there was an emerging sense that a growing number of the authors concerned also viewed their actions as attempts to provide the populace with the information they required in order to fully understand the issues being discussed and make informed decisions about where their allegiances lay. Related to this was an increasing sense that the populace were entitled to gain access to this information and for the authorities, whether in the form of the king or the parliament, to deny them access to the ideas and information that were in circulation was a dereliction of their duty towards the populace.[41] The inadequacies of the existing educational

[40] Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers*, p. 39.

[41] See Sharon Achinstein. *Milton and the Revolutionary Reader*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994; Sharon Achinstein. *Literature and Dissent in Milton's England* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003; David Norbrook *Writing the English Republic: Poetry, Rhetoric and Politics, 1627-1660* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999; Peacey, *Politicians and*

provision only heightened this necessity making the printing press a necessary educational tool that the authors considered here had to use in an attempt to solve the problems they had identified, as well as their knock on effects. It is interesting to consider, however, that not all of the interventions of the Hartlib network to the educational discussions are printed, with some of the later, and possibly more important or influential of their contributions remaining in manuscript, a point I will return to during my discussion of the texts concerned. The fact that Hartlib, Dury and Comenius especially were concerned to secure some level of state funding for educational provision only strengthens this connection between politics and educational reform. The basis for this demand by the 1640s was an emerging sense that the populace were entitled to the opportunity to fulfil their potential and that it was the state's duty to help provide that opportunity. In order to understand this fully however, we must turn our attention to the ideological and intellectual context from which these ideas emerged.

Ideological and Intellectual Context

The ideological context within which these discussions concerning educational advancement and reform were taking place was one of conflict between "an impulse which stressed the importance of understanding and conscience in human behaviour" and a set of "social, political and professional imperatives which stressed unqualified obedience and the expediency for the elite of keeping those over whom they rule in ignorance".[42] The accepted mode of spiritual salvation and, in the secular domain the dissemination of information, was based on the belief in a hierarchy of being that had been challenged by the Reformation.

> The Deity no longer ruled the universe by delegating His powers to a hierarchy of spiritual beings, each with a degree of authority which decreased as the scale was descended…[He] was a moving spirit, present in all things and in all men; 'He is the incomprehensible spirit, Reason'.[43]

Pamphleteers; and Joad Raymond. *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

[42] Christopher Brooks, 'Professions, Ideology and the Middling Sort in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries', in Jonathan Barry and Christopher Brooks (eds.). *The Middling Sort of People: Culture, Society and Politics in England, 1550-1800*. London: Macmillan, 1994, p. 122.

[43] S. F. Mason. 'Science and Religion in Seventeenth-Century England' in Charles Webster. *The Intellectual Revolution of the Seventeenth Century* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974, pp. 203-211.

According to the writers studied here God and his word should be available to everyone who had the ability to exercise their reason in an effective and efficient way. Anyone who could read the word of God should be able to interpret it for him or herself, thereby removing the power of the clergy to insist that they were the only route to true understanding and therefore salvation. This concept could be extended to the secular world as well with the power of the governing elite to restrict access to information being called into question.

Bound up with this idea of "God as Reason" was the increasing prevalence of millenarian ideas being expressed within the literature of the period. There was a growing sense throughout the 1630s that the dawning of the "new age", the "millennium" or the "Reign of Christ" was imminent and that in order to be ready, England must work towards a universal reformation and revival of learning. By the 1640s two prevalent themes of the intellectual revolution had come together, that is millenarian eschatology and a belief in the revival of learning. Millenarian eschatology suggested that God had sanctioned the Reformation and would eventually grant the reformed church a complete victory over the Catholic church, and therefore the antichrist. The newer concept of the revival of learning came to occupy an increasingly important role in the Puritan consciousness.

> The recent reaction against the corrupt philosophy of the heathens and the search for a new philosophy based on experience appeared to seventeenth-century protestants to be thoroughly consistent with the religious reformation…Thus the advancement of learning became an important dimension of the general millennial scheme and by this means science, medicine and technology were assured of an integral part in the mentality of the English Puritans throughout the revolutionary decades.[44]

According to the writers studied here God's sanction of the Reformation meant that it was now the duty of the state to continue and perfect that Reformation, which included the advancement of learning and, for the authors considered within this study, the extension of educational opportunity beyond the governing elite. This required the communication and exchange of information across various networks of intellectuals in the fields of religion, science, medicine and technology, which would then result in the significant expansion of existing boundaries of knowledge. Crucially for our writers, especially John Dury and Johan Amos Comenius, the completion of this programme of reformation would enable

[44] Charles Webster. *The Great Instauration: Science, Medicine and Reform, 1626 – 1660*. London: Duckworth, 1975, pp. 1-2.

the peaceful co-existence of the various Protestant denominations. In order for this to be both effective and lasting, however, "all social institutions [must be] subjected to critical scrutiny, with a view to securing a higher plane of perfection."[45] In other words, a programme of universal reformation that included the education system, as well as the church, legal system and potentially even the mechanisms of government of the country was the only way to ensure the attainment of this "higher plane of perfection".

This included, to a certain extent, a re-distribution in the balance of power throughout the country, especially in relation to the availability of education and the uses to which that education was put once attained. Throughout the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries there was a growing belief that those in possession of an education had a duty to use the potential power it gave them for the benefit of the commonwealth as a whole. "An oft-repeated tenet of Christian humanism was that the powerful should not use their strength to oppress the weak."[46] Instead, they should strive, through the influence of their positions within the governing bodies of the country, to improve the lives of those less fortunate than themselves. For the humanists, one of the most important aspects of the attainment of an education was the use to which that education was put, that is the benefit of the community at large. However, "[i]f we wish to be of benefit to our community, we must never withdraw from public life and dedicate ourselves to abstruse or speculative pursuits."[47] Instead, it is up to those in possession of the required skills to immerse themselves in the practice of the *scientia civilis*, a concept:

> the humanists largely derived their understanding of…from the classical theorists of eloquence, and above all from the opening sections of Cicero's *De inventione*, a discussion to which they endlessly returned.[48]

The ideas of Sir Francis Bacon are also highly influential in this context, especially in relation to the need for the commonwealth to improve the lives of their populace through adequate educational provision and to have an educated government and advisers with which to do this. The education of the nobility was one of the main concerns for Bacon in

[45] Webster, *Instauration*, pp. 7-8.
[46] Brooks, in Barry and Brooks, *The Middling Sort*, p. 125.
[47] Quentin Skinner. *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 68.
[48] Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric*, p. 2.

his *Advancement of Learning* published in 1605. Within this text Bacon exemplifies the uses and advantages of an educated monarch:

> yet so much is verified by experience, that under learned princes and governors there have been ever the best of times: for howsoever kings may have their imperfections in their passions and customs; yet if they be illuminate by learning, they have those notions of religion, policy, and morality, which do preserve them and refrain them from all ruinous and peremptory errors and excesses; whispering evermore in their ears, when counsellors and servants stand mute and silent.[49]

It can be seen from Bacon's text that an educated monarch is a necessity for a godly and peaceful country. They must be able to set an example to the populace in both piety and morality; they should also be able to demonstrate to the people that they have the ability and authority to govern by doing so in a just and moderate manner. The presence of well educated advisers is essential to the continuation of their peaceful rule in the sense that they must have access to the best advice in the event that they begin to lose the ability to perform their function in the proper manner. This is an idea that can be traced throughout the educational reform and polemical literature to be discussed below. For example, Milton expresses a similar concern in his *Of Reformation* in 1641 when he comments that "[i]t is a work good, and prudent to be able to guide one man; of larger extended virtue to order wel one house; but to govern a Nation piously, and justly, which only is to say happily, is for a spirit of the greatest size, and divinest mettle."[50] For example, Charles I's decision to govern without calling a parliament between 1629 and 1640 could be seen as a classic example of this necessity: without the benefit of parliamentary advice Charles had to rely on the advice of those within his household or social circle. Without fit and reliable counsellors the sovereign left the way clear for accusations of corruption and favouritism. In order to avoid these accusations, the monarch, or other governing bodies, had to make use of the skills and talents of the educated members of society to which they had access.

There were a number of ways in which these scholars could actively be of benefit to their community, either through employment as "personal advisers or counsellors to the leaders of their communities, princes and

[49] Sir Francis Bacon. *The Advancement of Learning*. London, 1605, p. 33.
[50] John Milton. *Of Reformation touching Church-Discipline in England: And the Causes that hitherto have hindered it.* London, 1641. *CPWJM*, 1:571. All subsequent quotations from Milton tracts will be taken from the *CPWJM*.

nobles" or as "public and political figures in their own right".[51] However that service to the community was provided, it was important that the inherent skills of the individual were combined with a high level of rhetorical skill. Those involved in these activities:

> must of course have been men of reason and thus of wisdom. But…they must at the same time have been masters of eloquence. 'Wisdom in itself is silent and powerless to speak', so that 'wisdom without eloquence cannot do the least good for cities'.[52]

It was not enough to have the ability to construct solutions to problems, the able counsellor or politician must also have had the ability to convince others of their point of view or the viability of their solutions. In order to achieve this training in the arts of rhetoric and eloquence at the most basic level was required. To this end:

> the schoolboys of late Tudor and early Stuart England continued to be drilled in a basically Roman tradition of secular rhetoric, according to which the point or purpose of studying the *ars rhetorica* was civic and political in character. Without the mastery of this art, it was argued, no one can hope effectively to discharge the most important duties of nobility or citizenship.[53]

Without this ability to communicate opinions, ideas and solutions in the most effective and efficient manner, the adviser is incapable of performing their function properly, which leaves those relying on their advice at a disadvantage when it comes to making decisions that affect the ruling of the commonwealth, and therefore the livelihood and well being of the populace.

Alongside the ability to communicate ideas and opinions effectively in the context of advising the state, the humanists regarded the dissemination of knowledge and information to the wider populace as equally important. For our authors this too was one of the most important aspects of their proposed reforms. Unfortunately, the existing educational practices used were far from adequate to provide the level of education the populace required to interpret this information. When discussing the work of Thomas Phaer, an "Oxford-educated physician and lawyer", Brooks reminds us that part of the humanist "inspiration was the conviction that the information [they] possessed was potentially useful for all ranks of

[51] Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric*, pp. 70-72.
[52] Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric*, p. 2.
[53] Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric*, p. 67.