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### PROJECT

## Permanent Revolution: Surviving the Long English Reformation

The proto-Enlightenment of the late seventeenth century reverses all the central persuasions of illiberal evangelical religion of the early sixteenth century. Free will, the division of powers, non-literalist Biblical reading, aesthetics, and theatricality (for example) each reverse the cardinal positions of Lutheran and Calvinist religion. How? By ignoring them? No. By repudiating Protestantism? No. Then how?

Permanent Revolution argues that evangelical religion is not only a culture of revolution, but also of permanent revolution. Sixteenth-century Calvinism provides the model for many later revolutionary movements, on a global scale: unmediated power relations between highly centralized sources of power and atomized subjects; the imposition of punishing revolutionary disciplines on the laity by an elect, literate cadre; literalist reading; iconoclasm; born-again self-hood (for example): each of these features of later revolutionary movements is characteristic of early modern Calvinism. But Calvinism is not only a revolutionary culture; more dynamically, it is a culture of permanent revolution, ceaselessly repudiating not only competing religions, but also, much more energetically, forms of itself. Tradition is inherently negative for Calvinism, since it is tradition that obfuscates the Word. Tradition must be repudiated qua tradition. The proto-Enlightenment of the later seventeenth century is a cultural package designed to stabilize and render manageable the punishing disciplines of the permanent evangelical revolution.

### Recommended Reading

Simpson, James. *Under the Hammer: Iconoclasm in the Anglo-American Tradition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

-. *Burning to Read: English Fundamentalism and its Reformation Opponents*. Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007 (paperback edition 2010).

-. *The Oxford English Literary History; vol. 2: Reform and Cultural Revolution, 1350-1547*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002 (paperback edition 2004).

## Permanent Revolution: Surviving the Long English Reformation

The proto-Enlightenment of the late seventeenth century in England reverses all the central persuasions of illiberal evangelical religion of the early sixteenth century. Free-will, division of powers, non-literalist Biblical reading, aesthetics, theatricality (for example) each reverse the cardinal positions of Lutheran and Calvinist religion. How? By ignoring them? No. By repudiating Protestantism? No. Then how?

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### PUBLICATIONS FROM THE FELLOWS' LIBRARY

Simpson, James (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2019)

Permanent revolution : the Reformation and the illiberal roots of Liberalism

<https://kxp.k1oplus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1027218903>

Simpson, James (Oxford [u.a.], 2010)

Under the hammer : iconoclasm in the Anglo-American tradition

<https://kxp.k1oplus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=634813331>

The Clarendon lectures in English ; 2009

<https://kxp.k1oplus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=634813331>

Simpson, James (Cambridge, Mass. [u.a.], 2007)

Burning to read : English fundamentalism and its reformation opponents

<https://kxp.k1oplus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=898410053>