**'Meddle Not With Them That Are Given to Change':**

**Innovation as Evil**

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# Abstract

Innovation has become a central value of modern society. It has not always been so. As a matter of fact, innovation had a pejorative connotation for centuries. This paper looks at one episode of the contested use of the category 'innovation'. It documents the first controversy on innovation in the seventeenth century. Starting in the mid-1620s, Henry Burton, a Church of England minister and Puritan, accused the bishops of innovating in matters of Church doctrine and discipline, contrary to His Majesty's instructions. In 1636, Burton published two of his sermons in a polemical form and was brought before the Court. His opponents produced answers accusing Burton himself of innovating. Burton had his ears cut and was sentenced to imprisonment.

The study of this controversy teaches us what innovation meant to contemporaries, the values it embedded, what uses were made of the category and what the context was from which Western representations of innovation emerged. One had to wait until the second half of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century for more positive evaluations of innovation. The study of the controversy teaches us about both the similarities and the differences in representations of innovation between the two periods.

The opinion of some private man prove not in my poore Logick an Innovation (…). To make an innovation (…), there must be an unanimous and general concurrence of minds and men, to let on foote the new and desert the old; not the particular fancie of one private man (P. Heylin, *A brief and moderate answer to the seditious and scandalous Challenge of H. Burton*, 1637, p. 124).

## 'Meddle Not With Them That Are Given to Change': Innovation as Evil [1]

## Introduction

In 1548, Edward VI, King of England (1547-53), issued *A Proclamation against Those that Doeth Innovate*. The proclamation placed innovation in context, constituted an admonition not to innovate and imposed punishments on offenders:

> Considereing nothing so muche, to tende to the disquieting of his realme, as diversitie of opinions, and varietie of Rites and Ceremonies, concerning Religion and worshippyng of almightie God (…); [considering] certain private Curates, Preachers, and other laye men, contrary to their bounden duties of obedience, both rashely attempte of their owne and singulet witte and mynde, in some Parishe Churches not onely to persuage the people, from the olde and customed Rites and Ceremonies, but also bryngeth in newe and strange orders (…) according to their fantasies (…) is an evident token of pride and arrogance, so it tendeth bothe to confusion and disorder (…): Wherefore his Majestie straightly chargeth and commandeth, than no maner persone, of what estate, order, or degree soever he be, of his private mynde, will or phantasie, do omitte, leave doune, change, alter or innovate any order, Rite or Ceremonie, commonly used and frequented in the Church of Englande (…). Whosoever shall offende, contrary to this Proclamation, shall incure his highness indignation, and suffer imprisonment, and other grievous punishementes.

The proclamation was followed the following year by the *Book of Common Prayer* (1549), which established the provision of a public liturgy which could teach the new doctrine of English Protestantism. The preface, written by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, deplored that the whole Bible was not read once every year in the church service because the order of the ancient Fathers "hath been so altered, broken and neglected by planting in uncertain stories and legends, with multitude of responds, verses, vain repetitions,

commemorations and synodals". "Here is set forth", Cranmer wrote, an order "cut off of anthems, responds, invitatories and such like things as did break the continual course of the reading of the Scripture". The preface contained one more rationale on the "diversity" and "multitude" of practices in the country's church service and ceremonies and opposed the "folly" and "innovations and new-fangledness" of some men. "Although the keeping or omitting of a ceremony, in itself considered, is but a small thing, yet the willful and contemptuous transgression and breaking of a common order and discipline is no small offence before God". The new order and discipline were enforced with the *Act of Uniformity* (1549) which established the First Prayer Book as the only legal form of worship. "The King's Majesty (…) hath divers times essayed to stay innovations or new rites (…) yet hath not had good success". The act established "uniform rite and order" in prayer (*Book of Common Prayer*) and ceremonies and punishments to "offenders" (both ministers and ordinary people) against the rules. [2]

Negative thoughts on innovation would reach their climax in mid-seventeenth century England. By the early 1600s Protestantism defined the English identity – although Catholics denied this. However, according to some, there still was no purity of Protestantism. The idea that innovation in doctrine, discipline and prayer constitutes superstition and idolatry was shared by many English divines from the Reformation onward. Innovation came to share a place with heresy in the vocabulary of orthodoxy. Pejorative representations of innovation (any kind of innovation) would remain the rule until the second half of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century.

Puritans, among others, took the king's injunctions seriously. Henry Burton, an English minister, used the king's declarations to attack the church hierarchy. "We are professedly", wrote Burton, "against all those usurpations and innovations, which the Prelates of later dayes have haled in by the head and shoulders, being besides and against the Law and the Land, and much more against the Law of God" (Burton, 1636b: 111). On November 5, 1636 Burton preached two sermons attacking the bishops for introducing

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[2] Both the 1549 Act and the preface to the Prayer Book are reproduced in Bray (1994: 266-76). Most other ancient documents used in this paper are original editions.

innovations into the Church of England regarding doctrine, discipline and worship. He launched a controversy on innovation, indeed the first such. [3]

This paper documents the controversy (1636-41). Seventeenth century England was a period of change in religion despite many decades of effort to establish a new orthodoxy (Protestantism). The Reformation was still in the making. Tensions, debates and war characterized the period. The conflicts led to the use of innovation as a category for the unorthodox, deviants, and transgressors of norms or heretics. Burton accused no less a personage than the Archbishop of Canterbury William Laud of innovating in matters of doctrine and discipline, contrary to the established rule. He used the category 'innovation' as a polemical weapon against his enemies. His opponents produced (just as polemical) answers to Burton's charges, using their arguments to call for censure by the High Commission, which led to Burton's imprisonment. Among these opponents were Peter Heylin and Christopher Dow, two "Laudian" devotees.

The first part of this paper discusses innovation according to this period of history, as discussed by Henry Burton. [4] It documents the innovations Burton accused the bishops of grouped under eight headings. The second part of the paper part analyzes what innovation meant to Burton and discusses why Burton stressed a use of the category different from the dominant one. The third part of the paper documents the rhetoric used by Burton's opponents to bring him before the court. The replies were exactly the opposite of Burton's arguments, and add up to accusing him of being the innovator, not they. The last part of the paper examines what innovation meant to his contemporaries and explains why it had a pejorative connotation.

No doubt some readers will be put off by the extensive use of cited passages from original sources, particularly when the texts are written in early modern English, which I

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[3] In the early 1600s, a "controversy" arose on "abuses" in the Church according to the bishops (*The Humble Petition*, 1603). King James rapidly settled the controversy: organizing a conference and issuing a Proclamation which minimized the "innovations" (James, 1603; Barlow, 1604).

[4] Two phamphleteers and sympathizers with Burton's views that I have not included here are John Bastwick and William Prynne. To a certain extent, the arguments used are the same as Burton's. For example, Prynne produced a pamphlet (*News from Ipswich*) which was often falsely attributed to Burton at the time (Prynne, 1636). The latter document is the only one which I have used here.

have chosen to leave in the original. My purpose is to give the readers a sense of the vocabulary used and the rhetoric developed for talking about innovation. One of my theses being that innovation during this controversy was essentially polemical, I have deemed it necessary to let the reader experience the 'tone' of the polemic. Too often historical work stops after summarizing the arguments of the time, thus leaving the reader with an appetite for a more detailed analysis. The intellectual history of concepts is that of words, their meaning and their uses. Certainly, such a history deals with the context and the values in which words are embedded and which 'determine' meanings and uses. I have tried to do this here. However, I believe that one cannot write the history of concepts if he does not, to a certain extent, let the actors speak for themselves. The reader may have a look at the Appendix before reading this paper. He will get a preliminary idea of Burton's language and the range and depth of how innovation is connected to established social values.

**Burton's Innovations**

The complaints against doctrinal innovations emerged in the 1590s and reached a climax in the 1630s. The 1590s were marked by a sense of change, decay and ferment in English religious affairs (Milton, 1995: 11). As Anthony Milton put it, the Reformation retained a structure of worship and administration which had not broken as decisively with the Roman past as had been the case in other Protestant countries. Unsettled issues were therefore a subject for constant reinterpretation and recriminations. The accusation of popery (a return to Rome's doctrine) characterizes the period. Following Peter Lake, Milton has suggested that "many of the religious controversies of the period relied on the manipulation and assimilation of the opponent's position into an anti-type of either anti-popery or Puritanism" (Milton, 1995: 4; Lake, 1989). To many divines, like the moderate Puritan Andrew Willet in the late sixteenth century, it was the duty of all the churches of England to unite against a common enemy – the Church of Rome (rather than against domestic enemies whom they called puritans). Opposition to Rome (anti-popery) served several purposes: manifesting one's commitment to true religion, preventing conversions to Rome and endearing puritans to the establishment.

According to Milton, in order to understand the controversies of the period we must first "understand how contemporaries understood orthodoxy in the first place and under what circumstances they were likely to believed they were threatened" by their opponents' heterodoxy (Milton, 1995: 4). The anti-papal religious controversy prompted the systematic formulation of differences. There was a broad spectrum of different religious views, but they were portrayed and understood in a dualistic terminology. Anti-popery was "a polemical tactic aimed at undermining the position of a rival faction in the struggle for power and influence" (Milton, 1995: 55), "a channel through which the church's own internal conflicts found expression" (Milton, 1995: 92). In this context, any contrary idea to the established doctrine (the *jure divino* theory of the government of bishops – prelates rule the church by divine authority and right –, predestination, justification, salvation) like those of conformist Richard Hooker or Archbishop Richard Bancroft, easily led to accusations of popery and … novelty.

Then, in the 1620s, a more skeptical assessment emerged. Anti-popery might be undermining the Church of England itself. It might be a potential front for seditious activity and encourage people to uncover popery within the English Church. As a matter of fact, anti-popery was a label extended to any and all opponents; it conflated an opponent's position with that of Rome. Almost all churchmen endured accusations of anti-popery at one time or another. As a reaction, from King James I (1603-25) onward, fear of popery thus began to shift to more toleration. The much criticized William Laud (1573-1645), Archbishop of Canterbury (1633-45) was a pure representative of this view of 'negative popery'. He invoked an anti-Romanist opposition against which he defined himself, because anti-popery threaten to frustrate his efforts to revive and re-establish old doctrines as well as neglected and more reverent forms of worship and ceremonies. As a matter of fact, Laud was more preoccupied with the dangers of profanity and sacrilege than with anti-popery. His campaign against anti-popery was aimed at avoiding offending potential converts, above all the aristocracy and gentry. The agenda of Laud and the Laudians combined Arminian views on salvation by works with strict uniformity in

worship and an increased emphasis on ceremony and the importance of episcopacy. [5] In the light of this agenda, the charge of popery was soon raised against Laud himself and his reforms. Laud was accused of reintroducing popery, namely of 'innovation'.

It is here that Henry Burton (1578-1648) enters the story – and that my small contribution to the study of the period is situated. From 1612 onward, Burton was Clerk of the Closet to young Prince Charles. When the Prince became King in 1625, Burton "became concerned that the new King was showing too much favor toward Catholic sympathizers" (Auchter, 2001). The King dismissed Burton, who became minister at Saint Matthew where he continued attacking the church hierarchy with sermons and pamphlets, particularly against Laud. In 1637, he was arrested and brought before the Star Chamber to explain himself, together with two other puritans and pamphleters (William Prynne and John Bastwick). Burton's sermons were said to contain "seditious and factious" passages. "These scandalous and seditious pamphlets", stated Heylin, "are now growne so rise, that every day doth produce new Monsters; there being more of them divulged at this present time, then any former age can speak of" (Heylin, 1637: 191). "It hath been found at other times as necessary, that the tongue which speaketh proud words be cut off for ever" (Heylin, 1637: 192).

The innovation controversy was launched in 1636 when Burton produced a pamphlet *For God and the King*, the sum (with additions and enlargements) of two sermons preached on November 5 "to teach my people obedience to both" God and the King in these times of disobedience and of "innovations tending to reduce us to that Religion of Rome". "How frequentlie and Solemlie" wrote Burton, "hath your Majestie made most Sacred Protestations to all Your loving Subjects, that you would never suffer the least innovation to creep unto Your Kingdome". But innovations continued, according to Burton. "All which well considered, how audacious, yea how impious are our Innovatours, how feareless of Your Majestie, how regardless of Your Royall Honor, that in their innovations made such havocke, commit such outrages". Burton asked the King to stop "the course of all innovators".

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[5] For an excellent analysis on the 'logic' of laudianism, see Lake (1992; 1993).

*For God and the King* is based on Proverb 24, 21: [6] *My Sonne, feare thou the Lord, and the King, and meddle not with them that are given to change. For their calamity shall rise suddenly; and who knoweth the ruine of them both*? Burton's text proceeded in two steps. In the first half of the pamphlet, Burton conducted an exegetical analysis of the proverb. In the second part, he launched accusations against the church hierarchy.

To Burton, the proverb is a threefold lesson. First, it is an exhortation: the object is fear of both God and the king. The religious and the civil fear differ in kind, "yet in resemblance and similitude they are not unlike" (Burton, 1636b: 6). Fear of the Lord is obedience to God. It is a "duty which God requireth of his children" (Burton, 1636b: 12). "We are bound to perform all obedience to God (...). Else it is rebellion (...), a mass of Idolatry and Superstitution, Will-Worship of man's invention" (Burton, 1636b: 14). Fear of the king is not a "fear with terror" but a "natural affection" (Burton, 1636b: 42), namely "the duties due from Subjects to their King" (Burton, 1636b: 36). It means honoring the king as with all superiors (parents, masters, princes), "yea greater love than natural Children beare unto their Parents, namely as [Subjects] are members of the great politicke body" (Burton, 1636b: 43).

Second, the proverb is an admonition. It admonishes one not to become involve with innovators in matters of religion or government, "that is, have no fellowship, side not, countenance not, approve not, applaud not such men in their evil wayes" (Burton, 1636b: 6). To Burton, men given to change "are always notorious detractors, and sycophants, derogating from those things, which they goe about to innovate or abrogate, that so they may establish their owne novelties, whither in Church, or State, or both" (Burton, 1636b: 8).

Burton suggests five reasons not to meddle with "innovators". The first is guilt by association: "if we bee silent and doe not detect them, nor labour to defeate them (...) we

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[6] The book of Proverbs is a collection of ancient proverbs (or 'sayings' or 'adages'), of which many existed in the Near East at the time. The collection is attributed to Solomon, Israel's greatest king.

shall be found guilty" and "so pertake of the like punishment" (Burton, 1636b: 93). The second reason is what Burton refers to as 'dangers': political innovation leads to Tyrany (Burton, 1636b: 93) and religious innovation to ruin, troubles and discontent in the State (Burton, 1636b: 95). Here Burton uses Aristotle's *Politics* (Book V, viii) (not *Republic* as he erroneously suggests) in which the Greek author "compares changes in a State, which at first seeme but small and insensible, to the expenses of a house, and the wasting of a man substance by little and little, which in a short time consumes all" (Burton, 1636b: 93-94). This has been a much repeated argument against innovation over the centuries, one to which we will return below. A third reason for not meddling with innovators is that they turn things upside down (Burton, 1636b: 96): undermining and overthrowing "the State of Church and Common weale, and mingle heaven and earth together" (Burton, 1636b: 99 164). Burton's fourth reason continues in the same vein: innovation "may set up Antichrists throne againe (...), Popery piety, and Superstition holiness" (Burton, 1636b: 99). Burton ends his list of reasons not to meddle with innovators by accusing the latter of being enemies to the king. As examples, Burton discusses the gunpowder plot (the attempted assassination of King James on November 5, 1605). "What tongue can tell or what heart conceive", Burton asks, "the miserable changes, that must have ensued, upon that desperate designe, if it had beene effected" (Burton, 1636b: 100). Burton also looks at the history of the church and argues that past changes and innovations – he cites Virgil's *De Inventoribus Rerum* with regard to popes' inventions – led to the 'infection' of superstition and idolatry: ceremonies, tables, altars, robes and bowing. According to Burton, these kinds of innovation had not stopped. On the contrary, the 'spirit of Rome' continues corrupting the worship of God, troubling the peace of the church, captivating "mans consciences with their humane invention", exercising tyranny and seeking the ruin of Christ's kingdom (Burton, 1636b: 109).

Finally, according to Burton's exegesis, the proverb offered a reason for admonition. Burton had already dealt with the matter above. Briefly stated, "calamity shall rise above [the innovators], and bring them to ruine" (Burton, 1636b: 8). To Burton, the "instruction arising from this text" is simple: "every one ought so to address himself to the hearing of the Word of God" (Burton, 1636b: 9).

Then, Burton devotes the rest of his text to discussing innovations under eight headings (Table 1) (Burton, 1636b: 111-58). It is worth looking at the innovations one by one, for it gives a sense of what innovation is according to Burton. As will become evident in the following pages, popery is Burton's main argument against innovation.

**Table 1.**

**Burton's Innovations**

Innovation in Doctrine

Innovation in Discipline

Innovation in the Worship of God

Innovation in the Civil Government

Innovation in Altering of Books

Innovation in the Means of Knowledge

Innovation in the Rules of Manners

Innovation in the Rule of Faith

Innovation in doctrine was a much debated topic in the 1630s. Burton discusses several books published by the prelates and which, according to his view, put several elements of the Protestant doctrine into question as regards, for example, transubstantiation and the Sabbath (more on the latter below). He condemns, and here his opponents would reply that it is only a matter of time and circumstances, the "inhibiting of young Ministers to preach of the Doctrines of Election and Predestation" (Burton, 1636b: 114). [7] He also argues against the prohibition that "Students should not read the modern learned writers such as Calvin, Beza, and others of the Reformed Churches" (Burton, 1636b: 111). According to Burton, this innovation (the prohibition) brings us back to Rome. Laudians

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[7] Predestination is the belief that god had chosen some men to be saved but most will be damned.

would deny such an innovation: it would constitute a misunderstanding on the part of Burton (see below).

Innovation in discipline holds a particular place in Burton's list because he felt personally concerned. In the introductory epistle, Burton claimed that *For God and the King* was produced to present the king "a true account" of his views. Burton maintained that the sundry "innovators" had "falsely and maliciously" presented his own views. "I humblie appeale to the King Majestie Sovereign and Patron, as my judge in this cause (…), for I hold it not fit that they who are my adversaries should be my judges". In a second document that he produced in defense of his censure, *An Apology of an Appeale* (1636), he explicitly accused the tribunal of unjustness and repeated the above accusation *verbatim*. The judges were "incompetent" because "they plainly appeare to be both parties in the cause" (Burton, 1636a: 6). To Burton, innovation in discipline means censuring people and ministers "because they will not conforme to their [bishops] impious orders" (Burton, 1636b: 127). Innovations allow the prelates to "catch more Ministers to outt them of their Ministry and living" (Burton, 1636b: 64). "For not yielding [to the innovations], Ministers are Excommunicated, suspended, yea threatened with Pistolling, and with blood-shedding and hanging as Rebels" (Burton, 1636b: 25).

The next innovation Burton discusses – innovation in the worship of God – may seem a 'minor' innovation to most of us today, and was indeed considered as such by his accusers, but constituted a 'major' innovation according to Burton. It concerned the introduction of new rites and ceremonies and "outward performances and duties" (Burton, 1636b: 17) or superstition and idolatry: "Will-worship of mans devising, consisting in some externall complements, and gesticulations, as cringing and crouchings, bowing, or standing upright at some Scriptures more than at others; also a punctuall observance in these formalities, as in bowing to the name of Jesus, to the Communion table, or rather Altar (...), praying with their faces towards the East, thus tying God to a fixed place, standing at reading of the Gospell, and the like" (Burton, 1636b: 128-29). To these, Burton adds the cathedral with "her pompous Service, her Altars, Palls, Copes, Crucifixes, Images, superstitious gestures and postures, all instruments of musicke". The

"Papall Pompe", Burton believes, constitutes "ornaments of the Romish whore" (Burton, 1636b: 162), coming from "desperate and all daring Popish innovators" (Burton, 1636b: 164).

Another type of innovation which may seem minor to us, as to Burton's accusers to whom it made "little difference", was that of the altering of books. The Prayer Book was a real issue at the time and Burton was probably right in calling alterations of it an innovation. In 1637, a Royal prerogative imposed on Scotland a new Prayer Book, fashioned mainly on the basis of the English liturgy. The result of this laudian innovation was a riot and eventually the so-called Bishops' wars, which played a key role in the events leading to the English Civil War and Revolution. Burton looks at words left out, changed or added in recent editions of the prayer books which make "the religion of Papists the true religion" (Burton, 1636b: 131). [8] "I say still, and here write it in capitall Letters, that THE CHURCH OF ROME TEACHETH DISLOYALTY AND REBELLION AGAINST KINGS, AND LEADES HER PEOPLE INTO ALL CONSPIRACIES, AND TREASONS AGAINST STATES AND KINGDOMES" (Burton, 1636b: 133). Burton attributed the plague to the "altering [of] the Fast-Book and prohibiting preaching in all place infected". Since few people go to the church and preach, there had been a weekly increase in the number of sick people (Burton, 1636b: 144), while "preaching was never more necessary in this City than at this time" (Burton, 1636b: 148).

Similar accusations were made against what Burton calls innovations in the means of knowledge (suppressing and cutting short preaching and limiting all sermons to one hour) and the rule of manners. Prelates "allow one part of the Day for God, and the rest to mans carnall Lusts, Sin, the world, the Devil" (Burton, 1636b: 157). He was referring to Charles I's reissue of the Book of Sports in 1633 which allowed several leisure activities on Sunday, including Church ales (i.e. beer drinking after Sunday services). To Burton,

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[8] One example among many: "Instead of this passage, *Root out that Babilonish and Antichristian Sect, Which say of Jerusalem, &c*. They in the Last Edition, 1635. set it downe thus, *Root out that Babilonish and Antichristian Sect of THEM, which say of Jerusalem, &c*" (Burton, 1636b: 130). To Burton, the change was made to restrain or transfer the accusation to Puritans.

"sports and Pastimes deface and destroy the very face, beauty and power of all religion" (Burton, 1636b: 157). "I am ashamed of you" claimed Burton (Burton, 1636b: 49). "When the Lord calls to Fasting, you fall a Feasting" (Burton, 1636b: 50). Sports bring "the precipice and downfall of the people soules into perdition" (Burton, 1636b: 60). "Rebels and Sabbath breakers goe hand in hand together" (Burton, 1636b: 63). Like the prohibition of preaching, public assemblies brought us "a double increase of the Plague" (Burton, 1636b: 50) – a statement reproduced by Prynne, who added precise numbers to it: from 458 to 838 plague deaths (Prynne, 1636). "Preaching is made dangerous by you, for feare of the plague; which should [rather] be a meanes (as it hath beene formerly) to drive away the plague" (Burton, 1636b: 50).

All in all, the bishops' innovations are witness to what Burton discussed under one more heading: innovation in the rule of faith, namely the bishops' liberty in interpretation of the scriptures. "Our new Doctors cry up the dictates of the Church, to wit, of the Prelates, be our only guides" whereas "the true rule of faith is the Holy Scriptures" (Burton, 1636b: 151). Burton concluded his pamphlet as it started: *My Sonne, feare thou the Lord, and the King, and meddle not with them that are given to change. For their calamity shall rise suddenly; and who knoweth the ruine of them both*?

**The Politics of Innovation**

*For God and the King* openly challenges the government of the bishops. As innovators, the bishops would be revolutionaries: factious, seditious and rebels (Burton, 1636b: 9, 11). Innovators refuse to acknowledge their subjection to the King (Burton, 1636b: 41): "The maine Principle of Popery is to exalt and acknowledge the Pope as supreme over all Powers, as Emperors, Kings, Princes, States, etc (...). The Pope, and not the King, is the Papists King and Soveraigne" (Burton, 1636b: 40-41). In other words, popery constitutes rebellion against the king.

While discussing religious innovation, Burton thus meddles with politics. [9] This would be turned to an argument against him at court. Burton used a political and revolutionary vocabulary and talked of a time of disobedience to both God and the king from the very beginning of the pamphlet. He tells his readers that the king prohibits innovations, but that innovators ignore the king's laws. The king's enemies are those who "transgresse and oppose his Majesties royall Lawes, Proclamations and Declarations against all Innovations in matter of Religion, etc. And thereby disturbe the peace of his Majesties Kingdome and weaken the State" (Burton, 1636b: 10), while "His Majesty has committed to you the sword of Justice (...) to defend the lawes against such Innovators who (...) divide between the King and his people" (Burton, 1636b: 31). Burton accuses the innovators of a plot to overthrow the state of religion and of the commonwealth (Burton, 1636b: 5, 93, 99-100), changing a kingdom into a tyranny little by little, and changing laws, thus leading the country to troubles and discontent (Burton, 1636b: 93-95).

Burton's pamphlet discussed two central political issue of the Reformation, the jurisdiction between ecclesiastical and temporal power – the *jure divino* doctrine or the prelates' claim to rule the church by divine authority and right – and obedience and the right to (duty of) resistance. On one hand, while discussing fear of the King, Burton had already suggested that "to transgress [the King's] rule brings us under the guilt and penalty of rebellion" (Burton, 1636b: 38). "When the King taking an explicit solemn oath to maintaine the ancient Lawes and Liberties of the Kingdome, and so to rule and governe all his people according to those Lawes established: So consequently and implicitly, all the people of the Land doe sweare featly, allegiance, subjection and obedience to their King, and that according to his just Lawes" (Burton, 1636b: 39). On the other hand, in matters of religion kings have no unlimited power. "The King cannot give that power to others, which he hath not himself. For the Power that is in the King is given unto him by God (...). Neither God in his Law, nor the Lawes of the Land, doe allow the King to alter the State of Religion (...). Kings are the Ministers of God" (Burton, 1636b: 72-3). To Burton, "all our obedience to Kings and Princes, and other

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[9] As a matter of fact, at the time, the affairs of religion and the state were one and the same. On changes and the connections between the two fields, see Russell (1967) and Bernard (1990).

Superiors, must be regulated by our obedience to God (...). If Princes shall command any thing against God and his Law, then we (...) must obey man in nothing that stands not with our obedience first to God (...). To obey or fear man before God and so above or against God, is to make an Idol of man" (Burton, 1636b: 76).

A similar argument is offered against the bishops. The eighth innovation that Burton documents is innovation in the civil government. According to Burton, bishops "labor to reduce and transferre [the civil government] to Ecclesiasticall", making the people "used rather as vassals and slaves to the Prelates than as the free subjects of the King" (Burton, 1636b: 129). The prelates (and the High Commission) pretend to act in the king's name, but give themselves unlimited power, changing doctrine, rites and ceremonies as they wish. Burton calls for an insurrection against the bishops and for people to "stand out against the creeping gangrene" (Burton, 1636b: 34).

Burton's crusade against innovation was most certainly not foreign to his own situation – and his accusers have not failed to reproach him for this bias. To Burton, rebels are those, like bishops and judges of the High Commission, who "falsly charged" himself – "a loving, dutifull, faithfull, obedient peacable subject" – and "suggest and whisper into Kings eares evill and false reports" (Burton, 1636b: 45-46). They "set the whole State in a combustion, by stirring up and fomenting the fire of dissension betweene our gratious Soveraigne, and his loving and loyall Subjects" (Burton, 1636b: 46). "This arte of Satan was much practiced in those times against those that were most religious and pious, and it prevailed much to the corrupting and overthrowing of Religion (...). This is also remarkable in this present Century (...). They creep into Courts, and by their hypocrisy, false tales, and detractions of sincere teachers and by a kind of collusion with Courtiers, they doe surprise the mindes of the great ones, and Magistrates" (Burton, 1636b: 47-48). Burton then drop a series of names onto them: blind watchmen, dumbe dogs, plagues of soules, false Prophets, ravening wolves, theeves and robbers of soules (Burton, 1636b: 48); Declamers, Factious, Seditious, Turbulent, Disafected to the present government, Enemies of the King (Burton, 1636b: 49); Pope Factors who "do labour to divide the

King from his good Subjects, by poysoning his gentle eares with their Serpentive breath" and "seducing the people to their Superstition and Idolatry" (Burton, 1636b: 51).

In sum, following some puritans and Catholics of the late 1500s and early 1600s, Burton appropriated a political category (innovation), a category defined by authorities as forbidden and, as a mere king's subject, has applied it as a catchword for all men given to change, including authorities (bishops). Armed with such an understanding of the category, Burton produced the first full-length discussion of innovation: What is innovation? Who is an innovator? What aims? What effects? Burton was responsible for launching the first controversy on innovation. Hundreds of pages were produced on both side of the controversy (see next section). From then on, innovation got increasingly into the everyday vocabulary.

To properly understand what innovation meant to Burton, the reader must keep in mind that in religious (and political) matters it was the political hierarchy (including ecclesiasts) who legitimately defined what innovation is. The explicit forbidding of innovation goes back to the 1540s with Edward VI's declaration (see introduction above) and continued in Burton's time: in 1626, only one year into his reign, Charles I, King of England, Scotland and Ireland (1625-49) issued a *Proclamation for the Establishing of the Peace and Quiet of the Church of England: Suppressing Dissent, Innovation, and Controversy*:

> In all ages great disturbances, both to Church and State, have ensued out of small beginnings (…). Because of "the professed enemies of our Religion, the Romish Catholics, the professours of our Religion may bee drawn first to Schism, and after to plaine Popery (…). His Majestie therefore (...) hath thought fit, by the advice of his reverend Bishops, to declare and publish, not onely to his owne people, but also to the whole world, his utter dislike to all those, who to shew the subtility of their wits, or to please their owne passions, doe, or shall adventure to stirre or move any new Opinions, not only contrary, but differing from the sound and Orthodoxall grounds of the true Religion, sincerely professed, and happily established in the Church of England; And also to declare his full and constant resolution, that neither in matter of Doctrine, or Discipline of the Church, nor in the government of the State, he will admit of the least innovation (...). Then Charles "admonish, and also straitly charge and command all his subjects of this Realme, and his Realme of Ireland (...) especially those who are Church-men (...), that neither by writing, preaching,

printing, Conferences, or otherwise, they raise any doubts, or publish, or maintaine any new inventions, or opinions, concerning Religion.

Two years later (1628), Charles dissolved Parliament – a well-known period in England history – and, in order to silence his opponents, issued a declaration explaining why he dissolved the institution (*His Majesty's Declaration to all his loving Subjects, of the Causes which moved him to dissolve the last Parliament*). Discussing the state of government, church and Commonwealth, and the schisms and divisions which have ensued in the Church, his Majesty claimed his intention to "tie and restrain all Opinions that nothing might be left for private Fancies and Innovations (...). Neither shall we ever give Way to the Authorising of any Thing, whereby any Innovation may steal or creep into the Church; but to preserve that Unity of Doctrine and Discipline established".

Only one year after the Burton-Laud controversy (1638), Charles I issued a declaration on religious innovation again. "Great Disorders have daily increased" following the introduction of new editions of the Service Book, Book of Canons and the actions of the High Commission. His Majesty defended himself against introducing innovation in religion and laws. "We neyther were, are, nor by the Grace of God ever shall bee stained with Popish Superstition: But by the contrarie, are resolved to maintaine the true Protestant Christian Religion". To Charles I, it was not innovation but "feare of innovation that hath caused the disorders which have happened of late within this Our ancient Kingdom". To His Majesty, "Our true meaning and intention is, not to admit of anie innovation eyther in Religion or Lawes, but carefully to mayntayne the puritie of Religion alreadie profest and established". The King reiterated his opposition to innovation in 1641 (*The King's Proclamation on Religion*).

In light of this context, one observes that Burton used a category (innovation) more extensively than the authorities did. While the latter used innovation against the king's subjects, it was here used by a subject who accused authorities of innovating and was used in a polemical way. Burton's rhetorical move was appropriating a political term, including all "deviants" in the category of innovators and developing a full-length

discourse on such innovation. Extending the meaning of a term is a frequent rhetorical strategy. It is what happened to heresy, a term of Greek origins (*hairesis*: 1. to take; 2. choice), a term which turned pejorative in Jews' and Christians' hands. As E. Peters has documented, from the late tenth century the term heresy "came to be used of all forms of dissent, from the personal to the political", from the intellectual to the popular (Peters, 1980: 91). To Burton, "men given to change" are innovators "either of Religion or of the Republick" (Burton, 1636: 7): heretics, as well as those acting against the king, be they lay people or officials, and the King himself when he allows the bishops to innovate. Throughout the pamphlet, Burton's rhetoric stressed the political effects of such innovators on the country: they bring in ruin and tyranny. The political rhetoric helped make Burton's case against religious innovations.

**The Innovators' Answer**

Burton's opponents were not fooled by his rhetoric. The innovators denied all Burton's charges. Burton was the innovator, not they: "You have acted the false Accuser" claimed Peter Heylin; "your selfe must be reputed for the Innovator" (Heylin, 1637: 170). "No men", claimed Laud, "in any age of it, have been more guilty of innovation than [Burton and his complices]" (Laud, 1637: 42).

The most complete answers to Burton's pamphlet came from Peter Heylin and Christopher Dow. In 1637, they both produced replies of two hundred pages each discussing Burton's allegations point by point. Archbishop Laud also produced a speech for Burton's trial. Since Laud relied mostly on Heylin's answer published several months earlier, I use the latter as well as Dow in what follows. These are also more interesting, since the tone of the answers clearly demonstrates the polemical purpose of the authors.

Heylin (1599-1662), first biographer of Archbishop Laud (Heylin, 1668), was 'employer' in the High Commission when he wrote his answer to Burton. "Being now employed in the Examiners Office", stated Heylin, "I must deale with you" (Heylin, 1637: 1-2). "I was commanded by authority to returne an Answer to all the challenges and charges, in the

said two Sermons and Apology of Master Burton" (Heylin, 1637: preface, no page number). Dow's Laudian pamphlet *Innovations Unjustly Charged* offered, as the author put it, "an answer to clamorous and scanderous railers" who "levell their poisoned arrows of detraction against the Soveraigne Power, and against the Fathers of the Church" (Dow, 1637: 2). Dow's goal was "to examine this Grand crimination, and to speake of the severall supposed innovations" (Dow, 1637: 31) in order "to prevent the growth of so great a mischiefe". "We must no longer be silent", he said. "It is high time then to speake" (Dow, 1637: 3-4).

Burton's opponents made use of many arguments, from the *ad hominen* and *ad populum* arguments to historical 'evidence'. To every argument, they offered a counter-argument, to every accusation they developed a counter-accusation.

To both Heylin and Dow, Burton was simply a frustrated individual whose aim was revenge. In the past, Burton had accepted the established practices, but he was dismissed from the court and started writing against the bishops. Having failed at court, suggested Heylin, Burton "thought it then high time to Court the people; that he might get in the hundreds what he lost in the countie". "Such is the humour of most men, whom the Court casts out; that they do labour what they can, to out-cast the Court" (Heylin, 1637: preface, no page number; see also Dow, 1637: 9-13). To Heylin, "Burton the Dictator" was "a man in whom the Element of fire has the most predominance".

"The pulpit", Heylin continued, "first erected onely for preaching of the word of God, was by him made a Sanctuary, or privilieged place, from whence to raile against the time, to cry downe all the orders of holy Church, and to distract the people with needless controversies". Burton "declame [s] the Clergy, and Inflame [s] the people". To Dow, "it seemes" that Burton's "ayme in his Sermons was the same which the Poet had in making his comedyes, To please the people" (Dow, 1637: 19). In an "approbious language", Burton "mocke [s] at the devout gestures, and pious expressions of holy reverence in Gods Service", he "deride [s] the whole service of God allowed and approved in our Church" (Dow, 1637: 23-24).

*Ad hominen* arguments and charges of seeking for popularity mixed with accusations of invention (in a pejorative sense). When discussing the suppression of preaching, Heylin accused Burton of having "brought in new forms of [his] owne devising" (lecturing for sedition rather than preaching) (Heylin, 1637: 38, 166). 'Fancy' is another term used. Dow talks of the "fancied platform" of Calvinists (Dow, 1637: 193) and Heylin of the "fancies" of individuals: "The opinion of some private man prove not in my poore Logick an Innovation (…). To make an innovation (…), there must be an unanimous and general concurrence of minds and men, to let on foote the new and desert the old; not the particular fancie of one private man (Heylin, 1637: 124).

Heylin and Dow next turn to more 'empirical' arguments. According to Dow, Burton had misunderstood His Majesty. On the reviving of the Act on Sports on Sundays, His Majesty intended "onely to take away that scandall which some rigid sabbatarians had brought upon our Religion" (Dow, 1637: 78). He "onely permit [s], and not impose[s] the use of recreations", for "all men not being morally able to apply themselves for space of the whole day to spirituall and religious exercises and to divine Meditations onely" (Dow, 1637: 80); second he authorizes "provided that the proper worke of the day, the publick service of God be first ended" (Dow, 1637: 81); and third "he only condemns drunkeness and disorders (Dow, 1637: 83) and "dancing of men and women together" (Dow, 1637: 84). "Alwaies the end and other circumstances ought to be considered, as well as the bare letter of the Law" (Dow, 1637: 89). Similarly, on innovation in civil government, Dow could find no proof in Burton, only a misunderstanding: "All that was intended by His Majestie [is] not to suppresse Gods truth, but curiosity (...). Men cannot bee curious or over-daring without impiety" (Dow, 1637: 126). Briefly stated, the argument sums up to: you "misinterpret his Majesties most pious Act, in an undutiful and scandalous manner (…) to serve your owne turne" (Heylin, 1637: 47). The king "labours to suppress those innovations which you and those of your dissent have introduced" (Heylin, 1637: 82).

Burton would have misinterpreted the Reformation too. On innovation in doctrine, particularly on not studying the modern authors, Dow replies that it is "a thing acted

twenty yeares agoe [King James]"; "if [Burton] had gone backe but twice as many more, hee might have found the reading of Calvin and Beza accounted as great an Innovation" (Dow, 1637: 32). King James "enjoyne young students rather to looke into the Fathers, and acquaint themselves with the judgment of the Ancient Church, than to take up opinions upon trust of those moderne Authors" (Dow, 1636: 34). "The truth is that King James (...), having taken some just distaste at some novell points delivered by some young Divines [who] were ill affected to Monarchical Government and injurious to the just right of Kings", decided that studies should not be grounded upon "unsound and dangerous opinions to the State" (Dow, 1637: 35-36). To Heylin, there has never been a prohibition against reading Calvin, Beza and others of the Reformed Church, it is only that the students should not begin with these but with the Scriptures "and by degrees to those Divines" (Heylin, 1637: 119).

On change in the doctrine of obedience to superiors (too much obedience and unlimited power to Kings), Dow accuses Burton of conjectures: "Proofes I can finde none" but "conjectures and surmises" (Dow, 1637: 60). The Bishops "teach no other doctrine of obedience to Superiours than hath beene ever taught in the Church of God (...). They give to God and Caesar both their dues" (Dow, 1637: 64).

Time and circumstances, or history, also has to be taken into account, according to Dow. Why not alter the books "when the occasion ceased, as well as make it to serve the present occasion of those times" (like the danger of contagion) (Dow, 1637: 133). Burton's fancies "shall receive from me the answer it deserves: silence" (Dow, 1637: 143). Similarly, on Charles' Declaration on the Articles of Religion supposed to have suppressed election and predestination, Dow replied, "is it not better that some truth for a while be suppressed, than the peace of the Church disturbed?" (Dow, 1637: 39). "When this Declaration was published by His Majesty, men were uncapable of these doctrines" (Dow, 1637: 40). The doctrine was not suppressed, added Dow, but "profit being unknown" (Dow, 1637: 40-41). Time and circumstances matter to Heylin too. On innovations in the altering of the book of prayers, Heylin replies that many of Burton's innovations make "so little difference" (Heylin, 1637: 152). "As if a forme of prayer for a

particular time and purpose must be still observed, when there is no such cause to use it, as at first to make it" (Heylin, 1637: 160).

Finally, on the innovations in the worship of God, qualified as superstition and idolatry by Burton, Dow suggests that the novelties are rather symbolic and are "nothing of the substance of God worship" (Dow, 1637: 113). They constitute reverence and external ceremony (Dow, 1637: 114). Some are also simply accidents, like placing the altar to the east (Dow, 1637: 117): "We turne to the East, not as if God who is every where, were there" (Dow, 1637: 119). "God is not tyed to any fixed place". He may be found anywhere and, if anywhere, then also in the east. "Why we may not doe it toward the East, according to the custome" (Dow, 1637: 119). [10]

However, the main argument of both Heylin and Dow concerns 'renewal'. There is no innovation but a restoration (Heylin), no innovation but a restitution (return) to or continuance of ancient customs (Dow). Burton's innovations "are injuriosly so termed" stated Dow (Dow, 1637: 30). Burton had already identified this bishops' tactical move: prelates "doe plead that they bring in no changes, but revive those things which ancient Canons have allowed and prescribed (...)". (Burton, 1636b: 158). "Innovations, Say they? Wee bring no innovations, no new rites, but what hath beene in use ever since the Reformation (...). All that we goe about is to reduce inferior churches to an unity, and conformity to their Mother Churches" (Burton, 1636b: 159).

As a matter of fact, while discussing innovations in the worship of God, Dow argues: "I cannot but wonder with what face he can accuse any of these things of novelty, when there is not one of the things he names which hath not been used in the primitive and purest ages of the Church" (Dow, 1637: 114). They were introduced in the beginning of Christianity, continued at the Reformation and confirmed by the Parliament (Dow, 1637: 120). Similarly, Heylin could find not a single innovation in Burton: "The Papists and these men, how different soever they may seeme to bee in other matters, have (...) agreed

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[10] However, God is not in every individual. While discussing transsubstantiation, Dow says: "Gods presence is not everywhere alike (...). He is not so in the brute creatures as in the rationall; nor so in the wicked as in his Saints" (Dow, 1637: 119).

to charge this Church with novelties and innovations (...). But in the reformation of this Church, we introduced no novelties (...) but onely laboured to reduce her to that estate and quality, whereby she was in her originall beauty and the Primitive times (...). All those Innovations which they have charged upon the Church in their scandalous Pamphlets, are but a restitution of those ancient orders, which were established heere at that Reformation" (Heylin,1637: preface, no page number). "It is no innovation to admit traditions" stated Dow. "Onely we doe not admit any traditions contrary to the Scriptures" (Dow, 1637: 167-68). To Laud, ancient practices have been altered little by little in the past "and now, if any authority offer [s] to reduce it, this ancient course of the Church is by and by called an innovation" (Laud, 1637: 55).

The argument of renewal is used for every innovation identified by Burton. On the limited power of the king to alter the state of religion (instituting new rites and ceremonies), Heylin says the king only "restore[s] this Church to its ancient luster" (Heylin, 1637: 82). On the *jure divino* power of the bishops, Heylin replies that "this is no new saying devised but yesterday" (Heylin, 1637: 64). Similarly, discipline (censures of the Church) "proceed[s] no otherwise now then of the old did" (Heylin, 1637: 131); the worship of God is "long since ordained by Canon (…), a reforme certainely as old as the Reformation" (Heylin, 1637: 135), an "ancient custom" (Heylin, 1637: 136), and a "reviver and continuance of the antient usages which have been practiced in this Church since the Reformation, and were commended to it from the purest ages" (Heylin, 1637: 140); alterations of books yes, but "a restitution onely of the proper reading" (Heylin, 1637: 150). Mr. Burton, "YOU are the innovator" (Heylin, 1637: 38).

All said, Burton is a revolutionary. He puts into question both the king's and the bishops' authority and calls for popular insurrection. As Laud put it, all these libels "are against the King and the Law, and can have no other purpose than to stir up sedition among the people" (Laud, 1637: 43-44). Heylin put it similarly: "There is none of any age, nor all together in all ages, which hath shewne greater malice unto the Church, and to the governors and Teachers of it, then you, Master Burton (…). You have the King's royal power in question". But "it is a kind of disobedience and disloyalty to question what a

King can do" (Heylin, 1637: 178-79) and a sedition to call up people to insurrection (Heylin, 1637: 185). You "stirre up the people to effect the ruine [of Bishops] (...), to bring them into discredit and contempt (...) and incense his Majestie against them" (Heylin, 1637: 183).

The accusation of rebellion and sedition is similar to that Burton made against his opponents. As a matter of fact, to every accusation, there is an answer or reply. To every innovation there is a denial: others innovate, not oneself. There is something ironic here about the protestant churchmen hostile to innovation in the wake of the biggest innovation of them all, the Reformation. How could innovation be such a fuzzy concept and be amenable to so many contradictory interpretations?

**What is Innovation?**

In 1637, Burton had his ears cut and was sentenced to life imprisonment. However, after three years he was released by Parliament. He went back to his position at Saint Matthew and became a popular hero (Hughes, 1974; Auchter, 2001). As a matter of fact, the tide was turning against Archbishop Laud. Parliament accused Laud of treason and imprisoned him in the Tower of London. Laud was beheaded in January 1645. This put an end to the innovation controversy.

Parliament had always been against innovation – but was silenced for years by King Charles. As early as 1628-29, the third Parliament had set up a committee to inquire into innovation in religion and politics and adopted a Resolution against "divers courses and practices tending to the change and innovation of religion" (*Resolutions on Religion Drawn by a Sub-Committee of the House of Commons*). As commented by parliamentarian John Eliot, the Parliament voted "whosoever shall bring in innovation in religion, or (…) seek to extend or introduce Popery or Arminianism, or any other opinion disagreeing from the true and orthodox Church, shall be reputed a capital enemy to this kingdom and commonwealth" (Forster, 1864: 419-20. However, to Parliament, Laud was not the only enemy. Charles was another. The king had levied a tax without Parliament's

approval. He was "reputed an innovator in the Government" (*Protestation of the House of Commons*, 1628-29). As Eliot put it, the tax was "against the ancient and settled course of government, and tending to an innovation therein" (Forster, 1864: 455). In his declaration dissolving Parliament, Charles declared that "these [political] Innovations [Parliament's committees] we will never permit again".

When Parliament reconvened in 1640 after an eleven-year absence, it resolved that many censures and sentences of the High Commission were illegal and void. The House of Commons also voted that: 1. The communion table should stand east and west; 2) Games and pastime on the Lord's day should be prohibited; 3) pictures and images in churches should be taken away (*The Orders from the House of Commons for the Abolishing of Superstition, and Innovation in the Regulation of Church Affairs*, 1641). Parliament was backed by hundreds of petitions (Morrill, 1985), national 'convenants' from Londoners and Scots "forbearing the practice of all novations", and some bishops who had constructed a listing of (forbidden) innovations in doctrine, discipline and the Common Prayer Book (*A Copy of the proceedings of some worthy and learned Divines Touching Innovations in the Doctrine and Discipline of the Church of England*, 1641).

In order to appreciate the historical relevance of the controversy to the history of innovation, at least four elements have to be taken into account: the context out of which innovation as a category emerged, the meaning of the category, the values held by the people at the time and the uses to which the category was put.

The innovation controversy was embedded in a context or period of history governed by the paradigm of orthodoxy, authority and order. Innovation was forbidden. Church and State were interwoven and innovation in one threatens authority in the other. Innovation fears 'crown sourcing' that would led any kind of change tests the waters. Burton put it in terms of fear or obedience to both God and kings. For nearly a hundred years there was a new orthodoxy in England (Protestantism) to which subjects (including the bishops) had to submit. But some, according to Burton, were corrupting the established doctrine with

idolatry and superstition. When Burton accused the bishops of innovating, he was calling for a restoration of purity in the English reformed tradition.

Seventeenth-century England (and Europe) was also a context of change (political, economic, social and cultural). New and radical ideas and projects abounded, turning the world 'upside down' (Hill, 1972). Order and orthodoxy had to be enforced and it became a matter of discipline to obey the authorities. Printing seditious pamphlets to incense the people against the king (Heylin, 1637: 43) or using the pulpit to "ransack the affaires of state" (Dow, 1637: 156) was unacceptable. "If every man had leave to cast his cruple, the balance of authority would soone weighed downe" and bring "Anarchie", stated Heylin (Heylin, 1637: 38, 40).

Putting into question the discipline of the bishops was not allowed. Burton had compared the High Commission to "the arte of Satan". However, replied Heylin, "as farre as you have said the truth, they [the judges] will all joyne with you. But when you leave to speak the trueth, which is the Office of a preacher, and fall upon Seditious, false and factious discourse, to inflame the people, and bring them into ill opinion, both of their King, and those to whom the government of the Church is by him intrusted; you are no more a preacher, but a Prevaricator, a dangerous Boutefeu, and Incendiarie" (Heylin, 1637: 6). [11] Too many "speake evill of the things they understand not, and shall utterly perish in their own corruption" (Heylin, 1637: preface, no page number). "What authority", asked Dow, "hath [Burton] to demand a fight of [Church] Authority? Who made him Inquisitor generall over the Bishops, to examine their actions" (Dow, 1637: 106). To Dow, "in any Church since the beginning of Christianity was it ever knowne that any Church, or any evill government did, or could subsist, without inflicting censures upon the willfull violators of their orders and constitutions?" (Dow, 1637: 109). The punitions are neither an innovation nor a persecution but an "act of justice" (Dow, 1637: 112).

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[11] Similar accusations abound in Dow: "a projector" (projecting plots) (Dow, 1637: 27-28), "a captain of factions" (Dow, 1637: 179) and "a broacher of novell opinions" (Dow, 1637: 213).

What was innovation to people of the time? Like heresy (and heterodoxy), innovation "does not exist in and of itself", but only in relation to orthodoxy and order. Orthodoxy claims that there exist right and wrong beliefs concerning Christ and his teachings (Peters, 1980: 14). In light of this context, innovation had a specific meaning. It had nothing to do with originality or creativity – not yet. Innovation has nothing to do with progress either: it is rather subversive. Innovation is essentially defined as 'change' in accepted practices, more specifically 'introducing change' (or 'alterations') in 'public' or state affairs: in religious matters – "new I call it because it is flat contrary both to the expresse Scriptures and to the judgment of all Divines in all ages of the Church" (Burton, 1636b: 77) – and in politics – "King and novelties here doe stand in opposition one against the other" (Burton, 1636b: 100). Given this meaning (introducing change), it is not surprising that innovation has been discussed in terms of 'cultural change' (anthropologists), 'social change' (sociologists) and 'technological change' (economists) when, in the twentieth century, it came back into the vocabulary after centuries of 'terrorism'. [12]

Innovation was not a neutral term but a morally charged one. It was a pejorative designation: a derogatory label applied to opponents and enemies and, like heresy, what we know about innovators "we know largely from the records left by their enemies, who sought to emphasize the fact and consequences of their deviance, not accurately report them" (Peters, 1980: 61). [13] It reflected the values and attitudes of its users and the reaction to nonconformists and deviants, namely all those who redefine the boundaries of 'normal' behavior (as many other terms did at the time: curiosity, virtuoso, originality, eccentricity and enthusiasm) and act contrary to the established custom. To His Majesty innovation was no less than a deliberate transgression of norms. It was both heretical and revolutionary. The kings' declarations and proclamations discussed above are witness to this interpretation.

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[12] On innovation and other concepts like change, novelty and creativity, see Godin, 2011.
[13] In his book *Concerning Heretics*, the humanist Sebastian Castellio (1515-63) had defined heretics simply as those "with whom we disagree". Cited in Skinner (1978: 247).

To others, innovation was mere fancy. When Burton labeled all those who do separate the fear of the Lord and of the king [14] as "Novell Doctors" (Burton, 1636b: 81, 126, 151, 153), "Novellers" (Burton, 1636b: 96, 99, 100, 156), "New Babel-builders" (burton, 1636b: 32), "New Reformers" (Burton, 1636b: 66), "Reformers of Religion" (Burton, 1636b: 106, 107) and "New Masters" (Burton, 1636b: 107, 108, 163), he was referring to practices (idolatry or new forms of worship) which were "of their own invention" (Burton, 1636b: 15, 109). It was seen as "man's device" and a matter of "private opinion". In sum, innovation was mere novelty and fondness for novelty. Similar pejorative uses of the term novelty were made in Heylin and Dow (see p. 22 above). As a matter of fact, the distinction between novelty (as curiosity, contemplation, subtlety and fashion) and invention (as useful) was still in the making (Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum*, 1620) – and had not yet gained pre-eminence. [15]

Because of its pejorative connotation, the use and diffusion of the category innovation developed slowly over many centuries. In the church of the 1500s, there were occasional charges of 'novelty' and 'innovation'. Certainly, the removing of novelties was a major goal of the reformers. However, novelty was discussed in terms of 'heresy', and 'enemy' was used as a term for innovator. 'Private opinion' (and 'variety of opinions') was also a popular term. Innovation really started being used more widely in the 1600s, above all during the Burton-Laud controversy and after. There 'innovators, novelers, novelists, etc.', emerged as labels for those who worked for a 'return' to Rome as well as for a number of ideas and behaviours previously called heresy and heretical. Innovation came to share the vocabulary with heresy. [16] Burton's popularity – together with William Prynne – may have furthered the diffusion of the term.

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[14] Anabaptists and Papists who refuse to honor the King, and Jesuits who attribute unlimited power to Kings.

[15] The history of the concept of invention remains to be written (Godin, 2008).

[16] At this time, the vocabulary of heresy also came to share its place with other terms like 'error'. Anthony Wotton in *Runne from Rome* (1624) talked of erroneous rather than heretical beliefs in order to avoid needless wrangling over the word, "for it seemes to many somewhat doubtfull what is properly to be called heresy" (Milton, 1995: 210). Novelty was sometimes discussed in terms of the paradigm of truth too: from "antiquity of truth to novelty of errors" (Burton, 1636b: 100).

Nevertheless, the pejorative connotation of the term gave rise to a whole vocabulary on 'renovation', 'restoration' and 'reformation' (*Erneuerung* in German) in *lieu et place* of innovation. [17] As a matter of fact, English Protestants denied that they had created a new religion, and talked instead of a reformed one. [18] In the ensuing centuries, innovation continued to be seen as negative. 'Violent', 'dangerous', 'pernicious', 'zealous', 'unscriptural' and 'schismatic' are only some of the terms used to talk of innovation among eighteenth and nineteenth century divines. Pejorative associations also abounded in clerical titles of the same period: 'ignorance and innovation', 'superstition and innovation', 'usurpation and innovation', 'revolution and innovation'. At the same time, there were very few uses of innovation elsewhere in a positive sense, whether in science, literary criticism or mechanical arts, each developing its own 'disciplinary' vocabulary, respectively the terms 'discovery', 'imagination' and 'invention'. [19] As a consequence those who, in the ensuing centuries, wanted to rehabilitate innovation had to develop 'strategic' thoughts on how to deal with resistances to innovation.

The use of innovation has another characteristic: its subjectivity. To a certain extent, innovation is 'objective': it is change in the established order. However, we have seen that what order, change and innovation are seen to be varies according to individuals' interpretations. Innovation is 'subjective': others (enemies) innovate, not oneself. As the *ars rhetorica* of the culture of humanism suggests "it is always possible to construct a

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[17] It is often suggested (or assumed) in the literature that the language of innovation, because it is pejorative, was not used, but rather renovation and the like instead (Panofsky, 1960: 37-38; Burke, 1974: 221-27; Whitney, 1986; Palonen, 2003: 76-77). However, that another vocabulary came into use has not eliminated that on innovation. As this paper has documented, the language of innovation was used by authorities and other people, although with a negative connotation.

[18] Arguments for a Reformation may be summed up as 1) 1500s: not a new church (*vis-à-vis* Rome) but a reformed one; removing of corruption, removing of novelties; 2) 1600s: return to primitive church and true church – scriptures, invisible church (God church, true believers), medieval church (sects like those of Hus and Wycliff as proto-protestants) (Milton, 1995: chapter 6).

[19] Certainly, 'new' and associated concepts abound in the writings of the time, and need to be studied seriously in any historiography of innovation. However, the 'new' was not talked about in terms of 'innovation'. The use of 'new' is also not without contradiction. For example, on one hand, the tradition of *ars rhetorica* denied innovation: the central argument of rhetoricians, according to which persuasion consisted in convincing an audience to accept something they did not already hold to be true, was to be achieved by means of accommodating the unfamiliar or unpopular proposition to the values of the audience. On the other hand, rhetorical manuals advised the orator that he should guarantee the attentiveness of his audience. This could be done if the orator demonstrated that the matters which he was about to discuss were important (*magna*), novel (*nova*) or incredible. I owe this point on rhetoric to Markku Peltonen.

plausible argument *in utramque partem*, on either side of the case" (Skinner, 1996: 9, 97-99). Burton attributed innovation to Laud and the bishops; Laud, Heylin and Dow denied being innovators and accused Burton of innovating. The use of the category moved from being a well-defined transgression (King's proclamations) to being polemical: anyone who, according to an accuser, brought in novelties as regard scriptures was an innovator.

In fact, the participants in the controversy identified a varying number of innovations. Burton discussed the bishops' innovations under eight headings. However, to Laud there were fourteen innovations in Burton, not eight, and "some few more there are" (Laud, 1637: 68) To Dow, the number varied considerably: "I have gone over these eight heads of Innovations [but] I might easily have reduced them to halfe that number" (Dow, 1637: 192). At the very end of his pamphlet, Dow claimed that he could have charged Burton and his party "with five times that number" (Dow, 1637: 213).

The subjectivity of innovation got into twentieth century representations. In 1962, in a book that has remained a classic for some decades (five editions), US sociologist E. M. Rogers defined an innovation as an idea *perceived* as new by its adopter (Rogers, 1962). This subjectivity explains the reluctance of economists to study innovation late in the twentieth century, namely following anthropologists and sociologists. Nonetheless, subjectivity got into the methodological manual used by officials for measuring technological innovation, the OECD Oslo manual: innovation differs according to whether it is conducted at the firm, market or world level (OECD, 2005).

In his study of the period 1600-1640, Milton suggested that (what I have called) the controversy on innovations "derived less from any easily identifiable novelty than from the fact that a practice so notable for its associated Roman errors was expounded and encouraged without a single caveat or even allusion to any papal corruption" (Milton, 1995: 69-70). "The engine behind religious conflict", argued Milton, "was not their introduction of any specific doctrinal innovations – indeed many of the ideas which provoked most complaint may be found expressed, in different polemical contexts, among their opponents. Rather, what triggered conflict was the manner in which these

ideas were presented, the specific polemical context in which an idea was expressed and the presence or absence of caveats which were standard in a particular polemical genre" (Milton, 1995: 543). Innovations did violence to wider aspects of Protestantism. They were breaks with aspects of religion (the Reformation) which served national identity: they were symbols of deviation in Anglican doctrine and superstition and idolatry (Milton, 1995: 98-100).

That there was no innovation or no "identifiable or specific" novelty deserves qualification. The innovations were 'minor' perhaps, as some would say today, but nevertheless 'symbolic' and, for this reason they were real innovation to many at the time. Milton defined innovation from today's point of view: an innovation must be something new. [20] This is a recurrent misunderstanding in the literature on this period. Historians often confuse our meaning of innovation with the aim of innovators. Because 'innovation' at the time aimed at a restoration, reformation and renewal, it would not really be innovation; it was not something novel (or 'first' introduction) but a return to earlier and purer orthodoxy. However, once innovation is understood as 'introducing change' (not creativity or originality) and 'perceived' change, one cannot deny that there were many 'innovations' at the time and that Burton had a good case for his claim that his adversaries were introducing innovations. That the 'innovations' were really understood as innovation is attested by the severity of the punishments. As Bray put it while discussing the series of acts from the mid-1500s onward designed to enforce uniformity in religion, "The severity of the punishments, which included death for relatively minor offences, reflected the concern felt by many that the 'old religion' was being overthrown [and] demonstrates the essential hollowness of the opposition to reform" (Bray, 1994: 221).

Another element of interpretation would take into account a shared perception of the time: innovation was regularly defined as a slow and gradual process, but one which,

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[20] How much novelty is a matter of debate. Controversial classifications have been developed and contrast major to minor or incremental innovation. Similarly, distinctions are often made between innovation (as *first* adoption of a new idea, thing or behavior) and imitation (diffusion of the innovation or adoption among followers, even if it is new to them).

over time, gets out of proportion. Little things do matter. Put differently, over the long term 'minor' innovations have cumulative and undesirable effects. To Burton, alterations and innovations "doe fill the peoples minds with jealousies and feares of an *universall* [my italics] alteration of Religion" (Burton, 1636b: 147); to Prynne, they "breed a *generall* [my italics] feare of a sudden alteration of our Religion" (Prynne, 1636). "Little by little" they change a kingdom into a tyrany (Burton, 1636b: 93). The argument has a long history, going back to Aristotle (see above, p. 11). It was used by N. Machiavelli in his discussion of innovation in *The Prince* (1513). Charles I also made use of it in his 1626 declaration (see p. 20 above). The argument would remain popular among many others in discussing innovation. Sixty years after the controversy (1696), an anonymous British Baptist wrote a pamphlet on the "innovation of singing" in the Church. Singing in itself is not "a matter of the greatest moment", said the author, but if similar innovations multiply, in forms of praying for example, "it might tend to the utter ruine of Primitive Christianity" (Anonymous, 1696). The argument was not much different from Cranmer's in the preface to the 1549 prayer book (see p. 6 above). One hundred years later (1785), the English divine George Berkeley would pronounce a sermon in which he suggested: "At first [innovation] runs in a gentle rill, but, by degrees, the rill swells into a mighty torrent that sweeps away every thing before it" (Berkeley, 1785: 34-35).

**Conclusion**

Innovation would continue to have bad press in the following centuries. Together with negative religious connotation, political considerations contributed to a pejorative representation of innovation. Berkeley is witness to such a representation. He used the same Solomon's proverb as Burton to discuss innovation. Berkeley was concerned with those who attempt "by violent methods, to reform the Constitution" (Berkeley, 1785: 6), "the danger and the sin of making violent innovations in any constitution of government whatever, that has been long established, and to which the people have been accustomed quietly to submit" (Berkeley, 1785: 7).

Berkeley offered three reasons for avoiding violent innovation. One was the nature of man: man is made for society and "society necessarily implies laws and subordination" (Berkeley, 1785: 15). Second, to Berkeley there existed diverse dangers of innovation in forms of government. Certainly, to Berkeley, "nothing human is absolutely fixed (…). General alterations in the modes of government are, perhaps, unavoidable". But "great and violent innovations no individual is entitled to make" (Berkeley, 1785: 33). Alterations perhaps, innovations no. "Much more ill than good is ever to be expected from them" (Berkeley, 1785: 34). As an example, Berkeley discussed the history of Charles I. In fact, Berkeley's sermon was preached on January 31, as was Burton's, the day appointed to be observed as the anniversary of the martyrdom of the king. He looked at the attempts of the Commons to abolish the royalty, which led to a civil war. This served as his third reason for avoiding innovation. "The usual pretence of those 'who are given to change' is to redress grievances, and to reform the constitution" (Berkeley, 1785: 35). But "it has been commonly found that, after civil broils, a return of peace has not brought back with it freedom and happiness. Not to insist upon the executions, proscriptions, and confiscations which must inevitably take place" (Berkeley, 1785: 36). To Berkeley, "it is hardly to be expected that (…) the grievances complained of should be redressed; an unsuccessful rebellion having been ever found to strengthen the government it intended to destroy" (Berkeley, 1785: 36-37).

Berkeley concluded as follows. It is worth reproducing a passage at length from this conclusion:

> That our constitution is absolutely perfect, it would be ridiculous to assert. Perfection belongs not to lapsed humanity. That a better constitution may be conceived, we do not positively deny (…). It may, however, be consistently asserted that so few and so unimportant are the defects, so many and so valuable the perfections, of the nicely balanced British Constitution, as to render it highly probable that any innovations in its system will be more likely to injure than to improve it (p. 87-88). No plan of representation could possibly be devised in which the WHOLE NATION would agree. Why then should we hazard the consequences of an innovation, which it is barely possible might do some good; but which is much more likely to create discord (p. 91). My Son, fear thou the Lord and the King, and meddle not with them that are given to change.

A few years later, two more English ministers would make use of Solomon's proverb to discuss innovation in sermons preached before local military associations. They both argued for respect and submission to superiors. Thomas Ackland in *Religion and Loyalty Recommended, and a Caution Against Innovation* (1798), suggested "not to meddle with them that are given to change; that is, do not listen to, do not consort with, much less yield to those persons, who whilst they talk of reformation, and pretend only to improve or to renovate the government of the English nation, seek to make fundamental alterations, to the subversion of the monarchy, and to the utter abolition of all establishments" (Ackland, 1798: 15). Henry Fly in *Loyalty Recommended by its Connection with Religion, and the Effects of a Fondness for Innovation* (1798), using the "popular fury of 1780" in England and the French revolution as examples, discussed how the "love of novelty" "plunge[s] a whole nation into the most dreadful calamities".

The twentieth century representation of innovation had a more positive value, and it owes to 'usefulness' (Godin, 2011). As a contributor to the French *Gazette infernale* put it as early as 1789: "On ne doit jamais craindre d'innover, quand le bien public est le résultat de l'innovation" (Anonymous, 1789). Innovation has shifted from being a 'private' (individual) and subversive affair to a social and progressive one. To this end, innovation had to move to another social 'arena' and get disentangled from both religion and state affairs: innovation serves goals intended to advance society rather than serves as a permission and protection from a government. The value of innovation is no more based on an assessment of inclusion based on purity but on throughput quality. When contested, innovation is the object of satires instead of fears.

The new value of innovation owes largely to technological invention and technology's theorists. By the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century technology is increasingly reputed to be a factor of social and economic 'progress' and many started using technological innovation (or simply innovation without determinative) to talk about 'social change' and 'economic development'. [21] By the end

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[21] The story is not linear but discontinuous. As a matter of fact, innovation has remained a contested category over time, and its value has varied according to people, field and context. For example, in the

of the twentieth century, several traditions of research had developed on studying technological innovation, government policies on technological innovation have emerged and firms were regularly invited to measure how and why they innovate. To many, innovation came to mean (marketed) technological innovation, and this understanding became the 'dominant' one. Innovation has shifted from being evil to being *panacea*.

This paper suggests that religion hold a special place in explaining the long pejorative meaning of innovation – another factor is politics (Godin, 2011). While the impacts of religion on science – directly by way of inquisition (Bruno; Galileo) and indirectly through affinities between ideas – have been well documented, no one has yet studied what innovation owes to religion (as well as to politics). For a long period in Western history, innovation threatened authority. The innovator was a heretic and a revolutionary.

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seventeenth and eighteenth centuries innovators (called 'projectors') already held a language on 'progress', but they were not trusted and thus have acquired a pejorative connotation (Yamamoto, 2009). To a certain extent, the innovative ideologists of the twentieth century have 'decontested' innovation and have given it a positive value (Godin, 2010; on deconstested concept, see Norval, 2000).

## Burton's Vocabulary
### (*For God and the King*, 1636)

| | |
|---|---|
| New | Everywhere |
| Innovators | Everywhere |
| Innovation | Everywhere |
| Alteration | Everywhere |
| Change | Everywhere |

**The Innovator**

| | |
|---|---|
| Changers | 24 |
| Re-founders | 105 |
| Re-builders | 32, 159 |
| New Babel-builders | 32 |
| Builders | 32 (2) |
| Planters | 128 |
| New masters | 107, 108, 163 |
| New reformers | 66 |
| Reformers (of religion) | 106, 107 |
| Novell Doctors | 81, 126, 151, 153 |
| Novellers | 96, 99, 100, 156 |
| | |
| Perturbers | Dedicatory epistle, 164 |
| Disturbers | Dedicatory epistle |
| Distractors | 8, 51 |
| Transgressors | 38, 95 |
| Dividers | 51, 67, 73, 75, 85 |
| Usurper | 72, 164 |
| Oppressor | 72, 100 |
| Persecutor | 72 |
| Troubler | 72 |
| Rebel | 25, 37, 41, 56 (3), 63, 77, 81, 83, 96, 133 |
| Enemies | 18, 140 |
| Traitors | 133 |
| Workers of iniquity | 140 |
| Satan | 34, 35, 63, 82 |
| Antichrist | 35, 83, 139 |
| Devil | 15, 139 |
| Sabbath breakers | 63 |
| False prophets | 11 |
| Heretics | 7, 112, 114, 118, 127, 135, 136 (4) |

**The innovation**

| | |
|---|---|
| Libertism | 60 |
| | |
| Original | 108, 124, 130 |
| Different | 137 |
| Contrary | 77 (2), 109, 146 |
| Error | 135 |
| | |
| Opposition | 82, 98, 109 |
| Separation | 73 |
| Defection | 73 |
| Poison | 51, 75, 106, 113 |
| Infection | 106, 113 |

**Innovating**

| | |
|---|---|
| Introduce | 158 |
| Institute | 137 |
| Bring in | 57 (2), 60, 72, 162, 163 (2) |
| Undertake | 118 |
| Turn | 131 (2) |
| Metamorphose | 126, 161,164 |
| Reform | 50, 143 (2) |
| | |
| Restore | 20, 114 |
| Remove | 126 |
| Reduce | 164 |
| Overthrow | 62, 108 |
| Usurping | 83, 87, 111 |
| Break | 7, 63, 95 |
| Violate | 8 |
| Abrogate | 8 |
| Pollute | 63 |
| Prostitute | 83 |
| Intoxicate | 88 |
| Incensing | 91 |

**Effects**

| | |
|---|---|
| Trouble | 109 |
| Disorder | 127 |
| Destruction | 97 (2), 140 |
| Disunion | 51 |
| Division | 51, 64 |
| Schism | 51, 122 (2) |

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