

The extraordinary thing here is that Coppe is denouncing the very image with which he has been mistakenly identified. The anti-nomian dabbler in the liberty conferred by inner illumination is anathema to him, another devious formalism which chokes the practice of living by Christ. For a moment, he is depicted even as the carrier of sin's bacillus, the deceiver of the Last Days.

I see a brisk, spruce, neat, self-seeking, fine finicking fellow (who scornes to be either Papist, Protestant, Presbyterian, Independent or Anabaptist) I mean the Man of Sin, who worketh with all deceivableness of unrighteousness, 2. *Thes.* 2. Crying down carnall ordinances, and crying up the Spirit: cunningly seeking and setting up himself thereby.²⁴

Formal ordinances were indeed to come down: but not for avid inner religion, a new formalism, but for the righteous performance of a practical Christian charity.

Even a calculating charity was a type of formalism, a restraint on the true practice of charity. Coppe's well-known story of his encounter with a beggar illustrates that there can be no holding back, no limit, in the practical exercise of Christianity. Sunday, 30 September 1649, in Coppe's recounting of it,²⁵ saw him wrestling with his conscience before an abject beggar encountered in the open country. His first instinct was to give two pence. Then another dimension of his hypocrisy urged him to give six pence, 'enough for a Squire or Knight, to give to one poor body'; enough because 'hee's worse than an Infidell that provides not for his own Family, True love begins at home, &c . . .'. As an itinerant preacher, his maintenance was uncertain and it was necessary to 'Have a care of the main chance'. All this prudence urged in favour of sixpence but, on searching his pocket, Coppe found that all he had was a shilling piece. The beggar, naturally enough, had no change for this and Coppe was reduced to offering to leave him sixpence at the next town. As Coppe turned and rode away, prudence and conscience fought within him. On the one hand, his necessities, having ridden all day with little food or drink and still eight or nine miles to go, 'my horse being lame, the waies dirty, it raining all the way, and I not knowing what extra-ordinary occasion I might have for money'. On the other hand, the injunctions of the Epistle of St. James, chapter five, its warning to the rich and the Epistle's injunction to practical Christian charity thundered in his ears and finally Coppe, suffused with 'sparkles of a great glory', threw all that he had into the beggar's hands. True Christian charity knows no limits. The hypocrisy of conventional religion, the well-favoured Harlot, is its fertility and subtlety in finding restraints. Compared to the wickedness of this, cursing and swearing 'base impudent kisses' and lust are innocuous offences. As Christopher