

## Notes from an Archivist of Radicalism

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### Abstract

Archivists of radicalism working in any institutional framework may be touched by the material which they study. In such circumstances that may mean that change is less about insurrection and more about reformation, involving as it does the constant dialectic between being a manager and a radical, unsurprisingly so, for, as Blake put it, 'Without Contraries is no progression (*Marriage of Heaven and Hell* 3, E34). This essay explores the archives of radicalism which started with visits to Brazil which led to the study of the texts and images of William Blake (1757-1827) and the writings of Gerrard Winstanley (1609-1676).

### Key words

Radical; archivist; divinity manager; insurrection; William Blake; Gerrard Winstanley; John Robinson; Thomas Merton; Paul

### Introduction

I have spent much of my professional life in a role which made me into a 'divinity manager', as chair of a faculty board and supposed leader of a subject. It was a role to which I did not take easily, if at all. I aspire to be an archivist of radicalism and that sat uneasily with being a 'Divinity Manager' (Blanton 2016, 102), a gatekeeper in control of who should be let in and who should be kept out of the sacred portals. I have asked myself whether I am insurrectionist? I have decided that I am probably not – at least in terms of the job specification set out in *An Insurrectionist Manifesto* (2016). I *think* there is much in the *Insurrectionist Manifesto* with which I can agree but Deleuze and Heidegger *et al* are not my immediate dialogue partners. 'Radical theology' I can understand, even if my understanding of it may not be entirely that of the *Insurrectionist* authors, or Tom Altizer for that matter, but I share their commitment to the 'leftist political edge', and the importance of an experimental theology. What does ring a bell, however, and not only because it gave me something to hang on to, was the contrast between 'archivist radicalism' and 'divinity managers' in Ward Blanton's essay. My experience of Latin America, Brazil in particular, opened up for me the archive of Christian radicalism, to which I have returned again and again ever since. Here was my *kairos*, which triggered my intellectual understanding about the nature of the theological task, indeed of insurrection in my life, but also fructified me as a person, even if it convinced me that my vocation was not to be a divinity manager, though the conventional streak in me prevented a complete break with previous formation! So, I have struggled to find a way to open up a space for radicalism, its archives and its pedagogy in the groves of the academy. If I am honest, the results of the experiment have been mixed.

Being a 'divinity manager' of a nascent messianic movement did not prevent Paul from being one of history's most remarkable religious insurrectionists. He was an example of one 'seizing an opportunity' (*aphorme dia tes entoles*, Romans 7:8), to offer 'an attentiveness to this open space of transformation' (Blanton 2016, 93). He pioneered a social movement which exploited the cracks and crevices available in the social fabric of the Roman Empire for messianic adherents to inhabit and find ways of enabling a realised messianism to take root and blossom. Yes, Paul was an archivist of radicalism, delving into his scriptural and other ancestral treasures for things new as well as old and often imposing these on his fledgling communities' patterns of life, which must have seemed very alien. But his achievement was not just as an archivist and divinity manager, for he was an organic intellectual and contextually driven activist whose aim was the establishment of communities of mutual acceptance (Romans 13:8; Welborn 2015). Paul explored and negotiated a way forward in the 'space', which had 'opened', peculiar to each community. He was moving in unmapped terrain; his was 'experimental theology' for a messianic context. Discerning where to go required more than appealing to past maps, though he did resort to that – perhaps in times of crisis too much so. The mix of non-conformity and conformity to his Jewish past is at times bewildering but is indicative of the social experiment in which he was engaged, an insurrectionist project that was not just about new ideas but practice. Understanding how Paul behaved as an insurrectionist will mean exploring the psychological factors at work in Paul himself and his major aims *and actions* in respect of the life of the communities for which he showed his deep concern in writing the letters he did.

### **From the Archive of Radicalism**

My first journey to Brazil opened up for me the archive of Christian radicalism and was the start of a 'deforming moment', in the sense of problematising for me the sufficiency of a whole way of doing theology and exegesis, and effected a radical transformation, which has never been easy or straightforward. What Ward Blanton writes of, insurrectionist archivism being 'a kind of collective therapy of the soul', well describes the twists and turns of the journey through the open space that opened up following that first journey to Brazil and Mexico in 1983 and which led first of all to radical Christianity in 1988 (Bennett and Rowland 2016). What follows here are two examples which I have explored and so learnt from the archive of insurrectionist solidarities.

### **William Blake: Prophet of Insurrectionist Theology?**

The genealogy of one important strand of radical theology, pioneered by Thomas Altizer, is a complement to any archive of radicalism. For Altizer, Blake's writing is absolutely central to his 'death of God theology'. He found in Blake 'a totality of revolutionary vision' particularly with regard to the divinity. God is transformed; there is a self-annihilation of God of apocalyptic proportions with the crucifixion of Jesus at its centre (2009; Freeman 2011). Altizer used Blake's *Illustrations of the Book of Job* to make his point. I do not agree with his reading of Blake, as I do not think Blake is asserting anything about 'the death of God' in the Job illustrations. It is more that Job is seen as a type of person who went through a profound change in his theological understanding from a transcendent God to a

God who is with, and in, humanity, which is the point of the climactic plate 17 of Blake's Job series.

There can be few more insurrectionist manifestos than Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. Its chaos of genres and its very deliberate tilt at received wisdom, not least in its title, whether theological or literary, is unsurpassed. Throughout *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, the devils take the role of advocates of that which Blake deems to be true to what he considers the gospel – the Spirit, the freedom from subservience to rules, the elevation of desire over repressions and energy over restraint, all linked together with an emphasis on the *coincidentia oppositorum*, which challenges the conventional dualism of Christian theology. Milton's role is as an exponent of Christian orthodoxy, but 'he was a true Poet and of the Devils party without knowing it' (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, 5–6; in Erdman, D. 1988. *William Blake, The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*. Berkeley: University of California Press, newly revised edition, 1988, 35 (henceforth references to this edition are in the form E followed by page number).

One of Blake's major critiques of the Bible concerned the way in which he considered major themes had been co-opted by 'the primeval Priests assum'd power' in the service of a monarchical state. There is 'One King, one God, one Law' (*First Book of Urizen* 2:2; E70; 4:40; E72). Blake saw religion and politics intertwined. The enthroned monarchical divinity endorsed the polity of the British state and others like it. It is the divine 'brazen Book, That Kings & Priests had copied on Earth Expanded from North to South' (*Europe* 11:5; E64). The hegemony of this type of religion served the interests of a monarchical state and it was the elite that benefited from it.

The depiction of divine monarchy is particularly evident in Blake's wonderful *Illustrations of the Book of Job*, completed a few years before his death. There Blake's distinctive form of biblical commentary is found in twenty-one images, surrounded by marginal biblical references, which have a subordinate position to the central image. In several of the plates early in the series, God is depicted as a divine monarch, transcendent, surrounded by the heavenly host, and with a book open on his lap; below, Job and his wife discuss, as they too consult their books surrounded as they are by their family. The opening plate of the *Illustrations of the Book of Job* suggests that Blake interpreted the Book of Job as the story of a conventionally upright man, a creature of habit, , and a devoted adherent to a holy book. But as the series illustrating the book goes on, as a result of his bitter experience, he comes to a different understanding of God, a God who dwells not far off but with, and in, humanity. Across the top of the first image are the opening words of The Lord's Prayer, 'Our Father which art in heaven'. That is Job's view at the outset of the story from which the experience of suffering and vision helped deliver him.

Blake interpreted the meaning of God's appearance to Job in the whirlwind as Job coming face to face with God in the incarnate Christ, thus picking up on an ancient theme in Christian theology. Words from Job 42:5 dominate the textual commentary on this page, and indeed are a key to Blake's interpretation of the Book of Job as a whole. In this image Blake has as the main caption his version of the words from the KJV, 'I have heard of thee with the Hearing of the Ear but now my Eye seeth thee'.

For the first time in the Job series, Blake prints the biblical quotations in the open books in the marginal illustrations. Their position, subordinate to the image, is another way in which Blake emphasised the priority of what had been seen rather than merely relying on what had been received by word of mouth. The textual commentary has a selection of texts from the Gospel of John in which the incarnate Christ dwells with and in those who see God in Jesus ('I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you'; 'I and the Father are One'; 'He who has seen me has seen the Father'). God is not far off but with and *in* Job and his wife. It is also worth noting here that Blake, perhaps inspired by his relationship with Catherine, his wife, includes Job's wife in the process of theological education throughout the series. The inclusion of both Job *and* his wife is important. Henry Crabb Robinson's reminiscence of Blake saying 'Jesus is the only God' but then immediately adding 'And so am I and so are you' is an anecdote which reflects the theology evident in the selection of the biblical texts (Bentley 2004: 696).

In the very next image Blake chose other words, from Job 42: 10 ('And the Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends') to indicate that it is at the moment that Job prays for his friends that his redemption is sealed. The vision of God by itself is insufficient, for in addition forgiveness of sins is essential, and in the next illustration in the sequence, the words are from Matthew 5: 44: 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you' (Rowland 2010, 58–64).

The stanzas in Blake's 'Preface to *Milton*', commonly known as 'Jerusalem', need little introduction. These words echo various biblical themes, for example Elijah's chariot, John's vision of the New Jerusalem come down to earth from heaven and the spiritual and intellectual warfare mentioned at several points in the New Testament. The poem is a stirring summons to emulate the 'Prophetic Character', in the spirit and power of Elijah. Indeed, Blake's fervent hope was that *all* the Lord's people should be prophets, a quotation from Numbers 11:29 being appended to the stanzas (cf. 'Every honest man is a Prophet', *Annotations to Watson's Apology*, 14, E617, and 'the voice of honest indignation is the voice of God' (*Marriage of Heaven and Hell* 12, E38). For Blake, the 'Poetic or Prophetic Character' is a human characteristic, whose development in people Blake sought to kindle ('the Poetic Genius 'which is every where call'd the Spirit of Prophecy', *All Religions Are One* 5; E1). Its stimulation expands the horizons of human imagination, to avoid a 'repeat' of the same dull round over again' (*There is No Natural Religion* b Conc.; E3). For Blake, prophecy didn't mean predicting what would happen in the future but understanding more deeply what was going on and telling the truth as one saw it, whether concerning the hostile reaction of Britain to the American colonies, or the resistance to change of the *ancien regime* in Europe.

Blake believed that prophecy is the responsibility of all. 'Every honest man is a Prophet', *Annotations to Watson's Apology*, 14, E617) and 'the voice of honest indignation is the voice of God' (*Marriage of Heaven and Hell* 12, E38). It is not a charisma for a few. The Poetic or Prophetic Character is a human characteristic, whose development in people Blake sought to encourage.

Blake's life had none of the political activism of Winstanley during his Digger phase. Blake's insurrectionist tendencies manifested themselves in the form and content of his illuminated books amplified by his writings, which remain

a unique testimony to the nature of the process of intellectual subversion as text and image together witness to the subversive epistemological power of his art.

The slogan, 'Our Image of God must Go', at the start of the *Observer* article by John Robinson (17 March 1963), then Bishop of Woolwich, and published in the year of *Honest to God*, captures something which is central to Blake's *Illustrations of the Book of Job*. At the heart of Blake's interpretation is the idea that Job's image of God had to go, to be replaced by an understanding of God in Christ, with and in humanity.

Shortly before his death, Thomas Merton (1915–1968), who was himself profoundly influenced by Blake, wrote a perceptive review, of modern 'radical theology' (Hart, 1981, 3–11). In Merton's view, Blake was certainly a radical Christian theologian, but he was not a pioneer of 'death of God' theology:

... we can certainly agree that Blake was a radical Christian in his belief that Churches had perverted Christian truth and that the God of the Christian Churches was really [Blake's] Urizen, Nobodaddy, and even Satan – not the lover of man who empties himself to become identified with Man, but a spectre whom man sets up against himself, investing him with the trappings of power which are not the 'the things of God' but really 'the things that are Caesar's'. Blake's vision is .... a total integration of mysticism and prophecy, a return to apocalyptic faith which arises from an intuitive protest against Christianity's estrangement from its own eschatological ground. Blake saw official Christendom as a *narrowing* of vision, a foreclosure of experience and of future expansion, a locking up and securing of the doors of perception. He substituted for it a Christianity of openness, not seeking to establish order in life by shutting off a little corner of chaos and subjecting it to laws and to police, but moving freely between dialectical poles in a wild chaos, integrating sacred vision, in and through the experience of fallenness, as the only locus of creativity and redemption. Blake, in other words, calls for 'a whole new form of theological understanding' (Hart 1981: 5–6; 1968: 675–6).

### **Gerrard Winstanley: 'Christ Rising in Sons and Daughters'**

Winstanley's writings offer one of the best examples of theology in context. Most of Winstanley's extant writings come from just before, and shortly after, Charles I's execution, much of it connected with the setting up of the Digger colony first on St George's Hill in April 1649, weeks after the execution of Charles I. If ever there was a *kairos*, a 'propitious moment', to use Karl Mannheim's phrase (Mannheim 1960, 192–202), in English history when King Jesus would set up his 'Fifth Monarchy' on earth, this was it. The radical nature of Winstanley's proposals and his action and that of his colleagues were intimately linked to that opportune time. For Winstanley, and many of his contemporaries, 'now indeed seemed to be the Day of Salvation (2 Cor 6:2 cf. Isa 49: 8). After 1652, however, Winstanley's political and theological writing seems to have ceased, and he seems to have slipped back once more into the bourgeois life of rural Surrey. In most of his extant writings the mix of the emphasis on social and political change, the emphasis of the experience of the divine within, and the suspicion of book learning, anticipating Blake's contrast between 'Inspiration' and 'Memory', buttressed by a robust socio-political biblical interpretation, testify to his conviction about the possibility for political change as Christ rose in men and women.

Winstanley interpreted the story of 'The Fall' in Genesis 2–3 as an exposition of the ways in which individual desire gets institutionalised socially and politically. Those who coveted and possessed found a variety of ways, social, ideological and legal to hang onto what they gained. In contrast to this 'dis-ease', Winstanley regarded the moment in which he lived as an opportunity to enable a revolution in the society to be organised, thereby anticipating the Second Coming of Christ which he interpreted as 'the rising up of Christ in sons and daughters, when 'the earth may be made a 'common treasury' for all, with no lording of one over another, but all being equals serving the needs of each other. So, for Winstanley, 'the New Jerusalem is not some vague hope, 'to be seen only hereafter' but to be established *within* creation. (*The New Law of Righteousness*, in Corns, T. Hughes, A., and Loewenstein, D. 2009. *The Complete Works of Gerrard Winstanley*. 2 vols, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, i.506 (henceforth references to this CHL followed by volume and page number).

In two works written within a short time of each other in 1648–9, *The Saints Paradise* and *The New Law of Righteousness* we find enunciated some of Winstanley's most distinctive theological themes.

*The Saints Paradise* begins with a quotation from Jeremiah 31:34 ('And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord'). The treatise is in large part a challenge to those 'professors' who may know the Bible well and its history, but 'who worshipped a God, but neither knew who he was, nor where he was'. Winstanley criticised those who buried their heads in study about what happened 'in *Moses* time, in the Prophets time, in the Apostles, and in the Son of Mans time' without 'waiting to find light and power of righteousnesse to arise up within his heart (*New Law*, CHL i.547).

It is not knowledge of the words of the Bible that count but experiential understanding of God.

'It is very possible, that a man may attain to the literal knowledge of the Scriptures .... and may speak largely of the History thereof, and draw conclusions, and raise many uses for the present support of a troubled soul ... and yet ... may be not only unacquainted with but enemies to that Spirit of truth, by which the Prophets and Apostles writ.

For it is not the Apostles' writings, but the spirit that dwelt in them that did inspire their hearts, which gives life, and peace to us all ...

He argued that the scriptures had been written 'by the experimentall hand of Shepherds, Husbandmen, Fishermen and such inferiour men of the world' (*Fire in the Bush*, CHL ii.200). Indeed, in language reminiscent of 20<sup>th</sup> century liberation theologians, Winstanley, echoing Matthew 11:25–6, stressed the interpretative ability of those who match experience and the Bible (Hill 1993, 223–4). Thus, the 'plough man' is in as good a position as the university scholar to understand God:

Nay let me tel you, That the poorest man, that sees his maker, and lives in the light, though he could never read a letter in the book, dares throw the glove too al the humane learning in the world, and declare the deceit of it, how it doth bewitch & delude man-kinde in spiritual things, yet it is that great Dragon, that hath deceived the world, for it draws men from knowing the Spirit, to own bare letters, words and histories for spirit: The

light and life of Christ within the heart, discovers all darknesse and delivers mankind from bondage, And besides him there is no Saviour (*New Law*, CHL i.537).

Indeed, also anticipating the hermeneutical privilege of the poor found in liberation theology, Winstanley suggested that it was the poor and outcast who would be the instruments of change:

The Father now is raising up a people to himself out of the dust, that is, out of the lowest and despised sort of people, that are counted the dust of the earth, man-kind, that are trod under foot. In these, and from these shall the Law of Righteousnesse break forth first, for the poor they begin to receive the Gospel, and plentiful discoveries of the Fathers love flows from them, and the waters of the learned and great men of the world, begins to dry up like the brooks in Summer. Math. 11.25. 1 Cor. 1.27 [text citations in the original] (*New Law*, CHL i.508).

Like William Blake after him, Winstanley emphasised ‘the sight of the King of glory within’, which does not depend on ‘strength of memory, calling to mind what a man has read and heard, being able by a humane capacity to joyn things together into a method; & through the power of free utterance, to hold it forth before others, as the fashion of Students is in their Sermon work’. It is the ‘inward power of feeling experience’ which counts which even ‘a plough man that was never bread in their Universities may’ have (*New Law*, CHL i.557).

In his theological exposition, Winstanley mounted an explicit critique of a transcendent theology. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is about resurrection within oneself. Similarly the Ascension is Christ arising in the midst of men and women to assist them deal with all their shortcomings. It is the indwelling Christ, and the pattern of his life as set out in the gospels, which Winstanley stressed. There is no need to ‘look for God now, as formerly you did, to be a place of glory beyond the Sun, Moon and Stars, nor imagine a Divine being you know not where, but you see him ruling within you, and not only in you, but you see and know him to be the spirit and power that dwells in every man and woman, yea, in every creature, according to his orbe, within the globe of Creation’ (*The Saints Paradise*, CHL i.356–9).

In the slightly later *The New Law of Righteousnes*, he took up a similar theme. He argued that:

the fleshly man seeks content and peace from Sermons, Prayers, Studies, Books, Church-fellowship, and from outward Forms and Customs, in Divine Worship. But that peace that is built upon the foundation of gold, silver and precious stones, will fall and come to nothing.

He criticised those who seek for,

new *Jerusalem*, the City of *Sion*, or Heaven, to be above the skies, in a locall place, wherein is all glory, and the beholding of all excellent beauty, like the seeing of a show or a mask before a man. And this not to be seen neither by the eies of the body still the body be dead.

Winstanley added the comment, ‘A strange conceit’. When Christ, the second *Adam* rises up in the heart, he makes a person see heaven within. ‘This is Heaven that will not fail us’ .... ‘This Christ is within you, your everlasting rest and glory’ (*New Law*, CHL i.550).

The priority Winstanley gave to the ethical in answering the question, ‘What is it to walk righteously, or in the sight of reason?’ (Reason is Blake’s way of describing God immanent in humankind). It echoes some of the themes from the Gospel of Matthew, especially Matt 25:31–45:

First, When a man lives in all acts of love to his fellow-creatures; feeding the hungry; clothing the naked; relieving the oppressed; seeking the preservation of others as well as himself; looking upon himself as a fellow-creature (though he be Lord of all creatures) to all other creatures of all kinds; and so doing to them, as he would have them do to him; to this end, that the Creation may be upheld and kept together by the spirit of love, tenderness and oneness, and that no creature may complain of any act of unrighteousness and oppression from him.

Secondly, when a man loves in the knowledge and love of the Father, seeing the Father in every creature, and so loves, delights, obeys, & honours the Spirit which he sees in the creature, and so acts rightly towards that creature in whom he sees the spirit of the Father for to rest, according to its measure. (‘Truth Lifting up his Head’, CHL i.418–9)

Throughout his writing, Winstanley used apocalyptic imagery to interpret the political realities of his day. For example, the four beasts arising out of the sea in Daniel 7 Winstanley sees as different facets of the oppressive power of an unjust and unequal society. Thus, the first beast is royal power, which by force makes a way for the economically powerful to rule over others, ‘making the conquered a slave; giving the earth to some, denying the Earth to others’. The second beast is the power of laws, which maintain power and privilege in the hands of the few by the threat of imprisonment and punishment. The third beast is what Winstanley calls the thieving art of buying and selling the earth with the fruits one to another. The fourth beast is the power of the clergy – power, which is used to give a religious or ideological gloss to the privileges of the few. According to Winstanley, the creation will never be at peace, until these four beasts are overthrown. This will be the moment when humankind will be enlightened. When they are, it will be when ‘Christ the Anoynting spirit rises up, and inlightens mankind’ and the beasts ‘make way for Christ the universall Love, to take the Kingdome, and the dominion of the whole Earth’ (*The Fire in the Bush* CHL, ii.192–3). But as is the case throughout his writing, overthrowing the four beasts of Daniel 7 does not come by force of arms but political change, which is inspired by example and transformation of attitudes (‘A Declaration to the Powers of England’, CHL ii.10, Hill 1993, 447–51; Rowland 2010, 169; 2014: 84). Indeed, his summons is:

Come, make peace with the Cavaliers your enemies, and let the oppressed go free, and let them have a livelihood, and love your enemies, and doe to them, as you would have had them done to you if they had conquered you ... let love wear the Crown... This great Leveller, Christ our King of righteousness in us, shall cause men to beat their swords into plowshares, and spears into pruning hooks, and nations shall learn war no more, and every one shall delight to let each other enjoy the pleasures of the earth, and shall hold each other no more in bondage. (*A New-Years Gift for the Parliament and Armie*, CHL ii.143–5).

From the perspective of an ‘radical ... ecological vision of life’ Winstanley’s emphasis on the earth as ‘common treasury’ seems to maintain a humano-centric

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view of the reality of the world. His play on the word Adam, however, indicates a grasp of the closeness of the bonds between humanity and the earth. After all, delving into the archives of radicalism, whether it is the writings of Winstanley or the writings in the Bible, is to find analogues not prescriptions. Politically he is as aware as any one of his generation of the 'devastation' caused by monarchy and the maintenance of the interests of the elite, ideologically and institutionally.

Blake's and Winstanley's suspicion of abstract theology and their emphasis on the mutual forgiveness of sins and the community of goods respectively, and Blake's and Altizer's emphasis on the incarnation, indicate the various ways in which they perceive that the secular is the necessary context of what constitutes the Christian response. This should not surprise us. After all, it is a repeated theme in the Bible. The Torah is about the demonstration of obedience in lives lived, and a persistent theme in the prophetic corpus is the priority given to just acts rather than the perfection of worship. It is a theme taken up in the New Testament. Confessing the name and being part of an ecclesial community is not what counts (Matt. 7:21–3; Matt 25:31–45). How best to 'love a brother or sister whom [we] have seen' and thereby 'love God whom we have not seen' (1 John 4:20) is key. Practical discipleship is the context within which theological understanding takes place, and understanding something of the identity of God comes through service to those who are the least of Christ's brothers and sisters. The Beatitudes reveal the divine identification with the poor and marginalised. Indeed, Matt 25:31–45 suggests that the wretched 'are the latent presence of the coming Saviour and Judge in the world, the touchstone which determines salvation and damnation' (Moltmann, 1977, 127). Notwithstanding 'Death of God' kinds of statements such as 'Thou art a Man God is no more Thine own humanity Learn to adore', which Blake puts on the lips of Jesus in *The Everlasting Gospel* (E520), and the consistent critique of the patriarchal law-giving God, Blake's personal piety was a curious mixture of the conventional and the radical, as his letters indicate. The same was probably true of Winstanley, if the hints we have about his later years are anything to go by (Gurney 2013).

The emphasis on this world, its contradictions and political shortcomings, is evident in the writings of both Blake and Winstanley. But whereas Winstanley encourages a focus on this world, rather than what is beyond the skies, Blake probes the political character of hegemonic theology, and his stories of the deities in his own mythology explore psychological conflict and imbalance, as well as the ways in which an alliance of religion and politics works against human integration. Blake and Winstanley are very different sorts of insurrectionists. As has been pointed out, most of Winstanley's writing, and certainly that which evinces his most radical political theology, was written shortly before and during his activist phase which came to an end in 1652. Little is heard of him thereafter, and the stream of remarkable writings suddenly dried up. For that brief period he exemplified the Christian insurrectionist, more so than Blake, for whom actions and words never mingled in quite that way, the latter complementing and ancillary to the former. He may be compared with his earlier insurrectionist predecessor, Thomas Muentzer, who died shortly after the unsuccessful Peasants' Revolt at Frankenhausen in 1525. There is much in common, the appeal to visions rather than precedents, for example, but in the attitude to violence they could not be more different. There is a sense that Winstanley's life had come to exemplify his

words: 'Action is the life of all and if thou dost not act thou dost nothing'. Just writing seemed to have little importance and came to an abrupt end with his desperate *cri de coeur* at the end of *The Law of Freedom*. These words are a painful witness to the realization that he had seized the moment, but it had been wrenched from his grasp as the waters of conformity and property drowned him and his colleagues.

### **Archivist of Radicalism and 'Insurrectionist solidarities'**

'Choose today whom you will serve, becoming through your choice – the options are stark, demanding – either a divinity manager or an archivist of insurrectionist solidarities' (Blanton 2016, 107). The last words of Ward Blanton's article gave me hope that there may be more to being an archivist of radicalism than just a collector but one in search of a 'recognizable space for the essential political affirmation of contingent, tinkered, and emerging solidarities, that traverse and elude strict limits of the regularities of the current identarian regimes' (Blanton 2016, 106. What a brilliant way to encapsulate the politics of the apostle Paul, by the way!). So, included in the task of being an 'archivist of radicalism' is the exploration and the inhabiting as well as the exposition of 'insurrectionist solidarities'. That was true of Winstanley in the short period covered by his extant writings, and perhaps, given the circumstances, in different ways for the rest of his life, and Blake also.

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