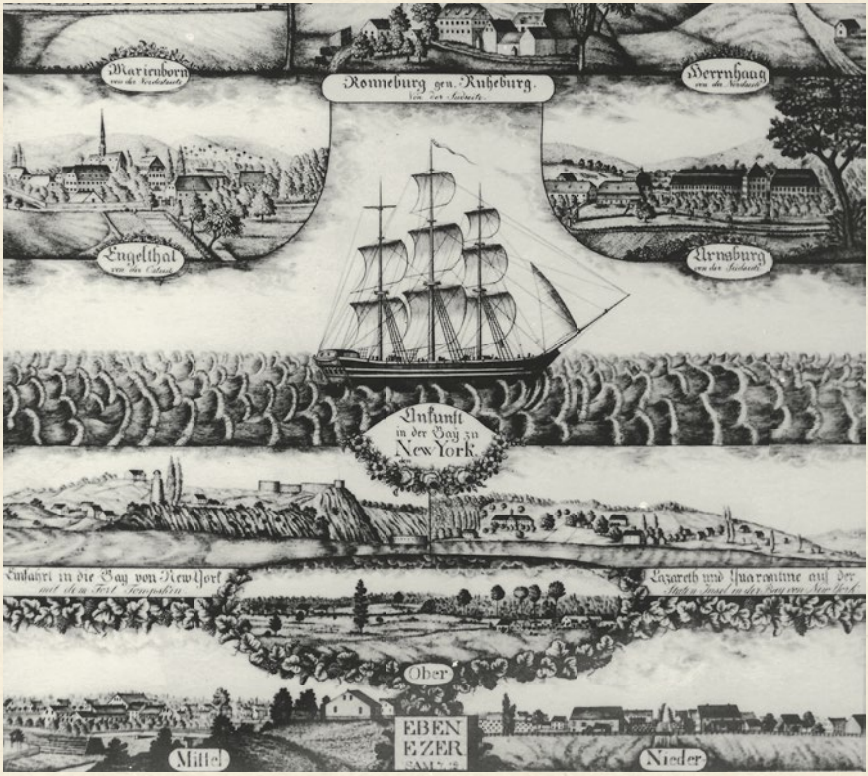
Christianities in the Trans-Atlantic World, 1500–1800

Protestant Communalism in the Trans-Atlantic World, 1650–1850



Edited by Philip Lockley

Christianities in the Trans-Atlantic World, 1500-1800

Series Editors

Crawford Gribben
Queen's University Belfast School of History and Anthropology
School of History and Anthropology
Belfast,
United Kingdom

Scott Spurlock
University of Glasgow Department of Theology and Religious Studies
Department of Theology and Religious Studies
Glasgow,
United Kingdom

Building upon the recent recovery of interest in religion in the early modern trans-Atlantic world, this series offers fresh, lively and inter-disciplinary perspectives on the broad view of its subject. Books in the series will work strategically and systematically to address major but under-studied or overly simplified themes in the religious and cultural history of the early modern trans-Atlantic.

More information about this series at
http://www.springer.com/series/14892

Philip Lockley
Editor

Protestant Communalism in the Trans-Atlantic World, 1650–1850

palgrave
macmillan

Editor
Philip Lockley
University of Oxford
Oxford, United Kingdom

Christianities in the Trans-Atlantic World, 1500-1800
ISBN 978-1-137-48486-4 ISBN 978-1-137-48487-1 (eBook)
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-48487-1

Library of Congress Control Number: 2016938645

Printed on acid-free paper

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by Springer Nature
The registered company is Macmillan Publishers Ltd. London

Contents

Notes on Contributors

Jeff Bach is Associate Professor in the Department of Religious Studies, Elizabethtown College, Pennsylvania, and Director of the Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies. He holds a PhD in Religion from Duke University (1997) and is the author of *Voices of the Turtledoves: The Sacred World of Ephrat*a (2003) and co-editor and translator with Michael Birkel of *Genius of the Transcendent: Mystical Writings of Jakob Boehme* (2010).

Hermann Ehmer holds a doctorate in Theology from the University of Tübingen (1972). Trained as an archivist he worked for the archives service of the state of Baden-Württemberg, 1972–1988, then as Head of Archives for the Protestant Church of Württemberg (Landeskirchliches Archiv) in Stuttgart, 1988–2008. From 1996 to 2012 he lectured on Württemberg church history at the Faculty of Protestant Theology at the University of Tübingen, and was made honorary professor in 2007. He has published extensively on the regional history of southwest Germany and German church history.

Christian Goodwillie is Director of Special Collections, Hamilton College, New York—a major repository of Shaker and other communal society source material. He has published numerous articles on Shaker history, is co-author of a history of Hancock Shaker Village and is editor of a three-volume edition of *Writings of Shaker Apostates and Anti-Shakers, 1782–1850* (2013).

Matthew J. Grow is Director of Publications at the Church History Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He holds a PhD in American History from the University of Notre Dame (2006) and was previously an assistant professor of history and director of the Center for Communal Studies at the University of Southern Indiana. He is author of the award-winning *"Liberty to the Downtrodden": Thomas L. Kane, Romantic Reformer* (2009) and (with Terryl Givens) *Parley P. Pratt: The Apostle Paul of Mormonism* (2011).

Peter Hoehnle is President of the Communal Studies Association and editor of the journal *Communal Societies*. He hold a PhD from Iowa State University (2003) and has published extensively on Inspirationist history and other communal topics, including the monograph *The Amana People: The History of a Religious Community* (2003). He further serves as administrator of the Amana Church Society.

Bradley Kime is a Jefferson Fellow and doctoral student in religious studies at the University of Virginia. His work has been published in the *Journal of Mormon History*, *Religion in the Age of Enlightenment* and *Wesley and Methodist Studies*.

Philip Lockley is British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow in the Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Oxford. He holds a doctorate in history from the University of Oxford (2010). He is the author of *Visionary Religion and Radicalism in Early Industrial England: From Southcott to Socialism* (2013), a study of the relationship between millennial religion and the earliest English socialisms.

List of Figures

Maps

Map 1 Locations in North America

Map 2 Locations in England

Map 3 Locations in southwest Germany

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Philip Lockley

This book recovers the trans-Atlantic histories, networks, ideas and influences of Protestant Christian traditions of communal property across two centuries of early modernity. Between 1650 and 1850 a distinctive if disparate North Atlantic Protestant culture emerged, grew and continued among a variety of religious communities set apart from mainstream Protestant Christianities in both Europe and North America by their attitude to property and collective social practice. Across this period, small Protestant groups, often with a trans-Atlantic reach, came to embrace communalism, or the holding of property in common in single or interlinked settlements, as a mark of their ideal Christian practice.

Several groups displayed no communal propensity in Europe, yet came to adopt shared property soon after arriving in North America, such as the Shakers and the German-speaking Ephrata community in Pennsylvania in the eighteenth century. Others evolved elements of a communal outlook in Europe, adapting and expanding this further after migration to the new environment of the United States. These included the Community of True Inspiration and the Harmony Society—both traditions of radical German Pietism. Still other traditions developed in nineteenth-century American soil, or only practised communalism in America, yet maintained a trans-Atlantic component to their history, mission or recruitment, among them

P. Lockley
University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

P. Lockley (ed.), *Protestant Communalism in the Trans-Atlantic World, 1650–1850*, DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-48487-1_1

the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—the Mormons. While some communal traditions were short-lived, others endured for generations. All such communities co-existed with the tensions and opportunities presented by host cultures of individualism and private property—cultures themselves rooted in a predominant Protestant social ethic, in central Europe, in Britain or in North America.

A primary aim of this volume is to correct a still prevailing interpretation of many of these Protestant communal groups which sees such societies belonging to an explicitly *American* communal tradition, or a recognized tradition of 'American utopia'. Countless essay collections, dictionaries and annotated guides have drawn more or less direct lines of comparison and precedent from these migrating and mission communities in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to the communes and radical alternatives of the 1960s counterculture.[1] Taken as a whole, this utopian tradition may be seen to appeal to some as a comforting testimony to 'another America'. The perennial presence of such groups arguably reveals shared work and common ownership to be as 'American' a pursuit as the proverbial happiness conferred by individual interest, private property and other assumed legacies of American Protestantism.

While this book does not set out to dismantle this interpretation, it nevertheless confronts this reading by recovering and emphasizing the formative and persistent trans-Atlantic dynamic to the wider communal tradition as a whole, and to specific groups and traditions in their individual and collective histories and influences. This dynamic is illustrated in new understandings of the European roots, relationships and reputations of some communities, and the consciously 'Atlantic' rather than 'American' worldviews and influences assumed by others.

The comparative study of such communal religious traditions has a distinguished history. Yet this is in turn dominated by their American context—from Charles Nordhoff's *Communistic Societies of the United States* (1875) to Arthur Bestor's *Backwoods Utopias* (1950), and on to Donald

[1] Among the best existing volumes belonging to this tendency are Donald E. Pitzer (ed.), *America's Communal Utopias* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); and Robert P. Sutton, *Communal Utopias and the American Experience: Religious Communities, 1732–2000* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003). Two reference works include Robert S. Fogarty, *Dictionary of American Communal and Utopian History* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980) and Foster Stockwell, *Encyclopaedia of American Communes, 1663–1963* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1998).

Pitzer's edited collection on *America's Communal Utopias* (1997).[2] These works have been almost exclusively concerned with the 'Americanness' of such communal phenomena. Robert Sutton's two-volume collection *Communal Utopias and the American Experience* (2003–2004), which discusses Ephrata, Shakers, Harmonists, Inspirationists and others, acknowledges a persistent concern in its title: the extent to which such communalisms reflected an 'American experience' above all.[3]

Today, historians of the early modern and modern period are deeply engaged by the dynamics of Atlantic exchange and the nature and extent of intercontinental relationships across this ocean.[4] Broader movements within Pietism and its recognized English-language relatives—revivalism and evangelicalism—are historical subjects which have benefitted greatly from the transnational perspective.[5] Yet, the full spectrum of communal traditions related in diverse ways to this Protestant renewal remains understudied from a trans-Atlantic perspective.

[2] Charles Nordhoff, *The Communistic Societies of the United States: from personal visit and observation: including detailed accounts of the Economists, Zoarites, Shakers, the Amana, Oneida, Bethel, Aurora, Icarian and other existing societies; their religious creeds, social practices, numbers, industries, and present condition* (London: J. Murray, 1875); Arthur Bestor, *Backwoods Utopias: The Sectarian and Owenite Phases of Communitarian Socialism in America, 1663–1829* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1950); Pitzer (ed.), *America's Communal Utopias.*

[3] Sutton, *Communal Utopias*; see also Robert P. Sutton, *Communal Utopias and the American Experience: Secular Communities, 1824–2000* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004).

[4] David Armitage, 'Three Concepts of Atlantic History', in David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick (eds), *The British Atlantic World, 1500–1800* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 11–27; Nicholas Canny and Philip Morgan (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of the Atlantic World, 1450–1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *The Atlantic in World History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Lars Maischak, *German Merchants in the Nineteenth-Century Atlantic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[5] This trans-Atlantic literature is vast, and may be dated either from Richard Carwadine, *Trans-Atlantic Revivalism: Popular Evangelicalism in Britain and America* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1978) or Susan O'Brien 'A Trans-Atlantic Community of Saints', *American Historical Review*, 91 (1986), 811–32. More recent notable contributions include: W.R. Ward, *Early Evangelicalism: A Global Intellectual History, 1670–1789* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Jonathan Strom, Hartmut Lehmann and James Van Horn Melton (eds), *Pietism in Germany and North America 1680–1820* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009); Jonathan Strom, *Pietism and Community in Europe and North America: 1650–1850* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Crawford Gribben, *Evangelical Millennialism in the Trans-Atlantic World, 1500–2000* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

In recent years, innovative research has begun to pay closer attention to the European origins and American connections of some individual communal traditions, but certainly not all. For instance, Clarke Garrett's *Origins of the Shakers* sought to locate the 'Shaking Quakers' who migrated from the northwest of England to New York State in 1774 within a diffuse culture of 'spirit possession and popular religion' identified on either side of the Atlantic.[6] One of several radical Pietist groups to leave southwest Germany during and after the Napoleonic Wars, the Separatists of Zoar, Ohio, have had their roots in early nineteenth-century Württemberg uncovered by Eberhard Fritz, in two articles originally published in German and translated for English readers in 2002 in the journal *Communal Societies*.[7] The earlier cloistered community of Ephrata, Pennsylvania, founded by German Baptist immigrants, has likewise had elements of its 'sacred world' dissected for European precedents in *Voices of the Turtledoves* by Jeff Bach—who brings more recent research to bear in his contribution to this volume.[8]

Moravians—the revived *Unitas Fratrum* movement—are perhaps the most prominent Protestant tradition to have an identifiable history of communal property ownership, though this was limited to a specific period in the eighteenth century. Moravian history has fared especially well in the scholarly turn towards the transnational of the last decade or more. A growing body of scholarship now strongly emphasizes the trans-Atlantic dimension to Moravian group identity and collective practice.[9]

[6] Clarke Garrett, *Origins of the Shakers: From the Old World to the New World* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998). This study was first published as *Spirit Possession and Popular Religion* in 1987.

[7] Eberhard Fritz, 'Roots of Zoar, Ohio, in Early 19th Century Württemberg', *Communal Societies*, 22 (2002), 27–44, and *Communal Societies*, 23 (2003), 29–44. This article was first published as Eberhard Fritz, 'Separatisten in Rottenacker. Eine ortliche Gruppe als Zentrum eines "Netwerks" im fruhen 19. Jahrhundert', *Blatter für Wurttembergische Kirchengeschichte*, 98 (1998), 66–158.

[8] Jeff Bach, *Voices of the Turtledove: The Sacred World of Ephrata* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003).

[9] Craig Atwood, *Community of the Cross* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004); Michele Gillespie and Robert Beachy (eds), *Pious Pursuits: German Moravians in the Atlantic World* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2007); Aaron Spencer Fogleman, *Jesus Is Female: Moravians and Radical Religion in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); Gisela Mettele, *Weltbürgertum oder Gottesreich: Die Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine als Globale Gemeinschaft, 1727–1857* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009); Katherine Carté Engel, *Religion and Profit: Moravians in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009); Leland Ferguson, *God's Fields: Landscape, Religion,*

Yet, while the Moravian concept of community has gained much attention within such studies, their time-limited practice of shared property has rarely been related to a context of wider Pietist, and indeed Protestant, tendencies towards communalism in either the period or similar geographical settings.

The essays in this book do not set out to be exhaustive in their dissection of all instances of Protestant communalism across their period. Instead, they seek to offer a range of broad or focused accounts and perspectives which will go some distance towards defining the culture of communalism it recognizes, and locating this Protestant culture across an Atlantic geography encompassing northwest Europe, the British Isles, the eastern seaboard of North America and the continent beyond.

In the second chapter, I attempt to 'map' Protestant communalism across 200 years and two sides of an ocean. This provides an overview of each of the groups and traditions discussed in greater detail elsewhere in the volume, and locates other communal movements, including Moravians and Anglican monasticism, emerging earlier and later from similar or drastically different beliefs. Across this survey chapter, the adoption of communal practices is shown to have been grounded repeatedly in theological ideas before or soon after its practical implementation. Eschatology in its broadest forms was the branch of theology most frequently involved in providing this theological conduit to communalism, though communal property was not dependent on an eschatological outlook: some attempts to revive monastic communities in Protestantism are found to have owed more to an intended return to Catholic traditions of asceticism and order.

In Chap. 3, Jeff Bach presents the first of five extensive case studies of distinct Protestant communal traditions forged in trans-Atlantic histories. Bach narrates the rise, flourishing and decline of the eighteenth-century Ephrata community in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania—a settlement with celibate orders and married families originating in the 1730s. Bach

and Race in Moravian Wachovia (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011); Katherine Carté Engel, 'Moravians in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World', *Journal of Moravian History*, 12:1 (2012), 1–19; Amy C. Schutt, *A Harmony of Spirits: Translation and the Language of Community in Early Pennsylvania* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Markéta Křížová, 'The Moravian Church and the Society of Jesus: American Mission and American Utopia in the Age of Confessionalisation', *Journal of Moravian History*, 13:2 (2013), 197–226; Aaron Spencer Fogleman, *Two Troubled Souls: An Eighteenth-Century Couple's Spiritual Journey in the Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

argues that an accurate interpretation of Ephrata must take account of how diverse religious and cultural influences from Europe combined in the American context. Ephrata maintained lasting communications with contacts in Switzerland and Germany, while further drawing on pockets of radical Christian views among the Pennsylvania population. Much of the past interpretation of Ephrata has focused on the unique location of America as a place for religious freedom. Through tracing outward communications and networks of relationships that spanned the Atlantic, the chapter shows both the patterns of Ephrata's recruitment and its theological foundations to have remained intimately linked to Europe.

In Chapter 4, Christian Goodwillie offers a fresh and strikingly detailed group biography of the original trans-Atlantic English Shakers who founded one of the most recognizable traditions of Protestant communalism. The life of the Shaker leader, Mother Ann Lee has been narrated many times, not least in later Shaker writings reflecting a generation or more of oral tradition and collective memory. Of the eight other English Shakers who accompanied Ann Lee on her 1774 crossing to America, and the further handful of believers who joined them in America the following year, less has been written. This is despite Shaker sources taking care to record memories of some of their other founders, including Ann Lee's brother, William Lee, and the first Shaker leader after Mother Ann's death in 1784, James Whittaker. Goodwillie painstakingly compiles the evidence of the lives of these and each of the other English Shakers, from both Shaker and non-Shaker sources. He reveals how several played significant roles in shaping the emerging body of Shaker principles and communal settlements in New York and New England in the 1780s and 1790s.

In a third case-study chapter, Hermann Ehmer narrates a new European and American history of the Harmony Society, the radical German Pietist association led by George Rapp, which relocated from Württemberg in southwest Germany to western Pennsylvania in 1804. The Harmonists' three successive settlements in nineteenth-century America—Harmony, Pennsylvania, New Harmony, Indiana, and Economy, Pennsylvania—are among the best-known historic sites of communal experiment in the United States today. In his revisionist study, Ehmer notably brings to bear a wealth of German-language scholarship on the history of Pietism and Württemberg's social and political history, setting the emerging theology and practice of Rapp's society within this specific German context. Ehmer argues that the emigration of the Harmony Society to the United States may only be understood in light of the group's millennial beliefs. Their

communalism in the United States was a further expression both of Pietist theology and inherited forms of communal behaviour transported from the German village to the American frontier.

In Chapter 6, Peter Hoehnle writes on the Community of True Inspiration—yet another radical German Protestant group with its origins in the eighteenth century. Hoehnle uncovers a notable 'axis of communalism' along which this persisting Pietist tradition moved between the early and mid-nineteenth century, and from central Germany to central Iowa, via upstate New York. This movement towards communal property, Hoehnle shows, was not simply a response to the demands of the American landscape, or even a following of precedent set by other Pietist traditions in the United States. Rather, many surviving and newly converted Inspirationists had already gathered together on a series of estates leased from tolerant landowners in the Hessen region. Several of these estates had once been Roman Catholic monasteries or convents; one was 'Herrnhaag', a Moravian communal settlement since left in a state of disrepair. On these German estates in the 1820s and 1830s, the Inspirationists took significant steps towards communalism, sharing many assets, living in communal buildings and working in common industries. The Inspirationist experience of Protestant communalism is thus shown to have been forged in circumstances and practices on both sides of the Atlantic, expressing an evolving bond of community embodied in their trans-Atlantic crossing.

Chapter 7 concludes the series of case studies with a perhaps unexpected tradition: Matthew J. Grow and Bradley Kime re-examine the origins, points of influence and repercussions of communal experiments among the Mormons in the nineteenth century. As Grow and Kime show, communalism in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was inextricably bound up with millennialism—a theological concern animating several of the groups already encountered in the volume. From Joseph Smith's early prophecies directing his followers to realize God's intended unified and equal society, to the developing vision of 'Zion'—a righteous place which the Latter-day Saints sought to build in Ohio, Missouri, Illinois and then Utah—early Mormonism challenged mainstream ideas of individualism and private property in America. Mormon prophetic and millennial beliefs in particular were utilized in missionary contact with prominent traditions of Protestant communalism, and converts won from both these traditions went on to influence organizational aspects of nascent Mormon communalism. In addition, some of the earliest and most successful trans-Atlantic Mormon missions were to the northwest of England—a region

closely associated with cooperative trading. Grow and Kime trace how cooperative principles were not only brought over to Utah by such converts, but the Mormon press took a consistent interest in the development of cooperation in the trans-Atlantic world. This interest and influence directly contributed to the brief 'United Order' initiative across Utah in the 1870s—a distinctive communal experiment in Mormon economic and social history. In a comparative and reflective conclusion, the chapter points forward to how mid-century Mormon communal experience was in turn a critical influence on the later trans-Atlantic communalism of John Alexander Dowie and a continuing inspiration for Latter-day Saints' own understanding of their social aims and divine direction in the twentieth century.

The final chapter in the collection represents a shift in perspective as I explore the renown and reputation of Protestant communalism among outsiders in the early nineteenth-century Atlantic world, in particular among the earliest secular socialists in Britain and North America. One of the first socialist theorists, Robert Owen, has long been linked to the Harmony Society, as he crossed the Atlantic to purchase their Indiana community in the mid-1820s. However, the interactions between early socialism and Protestant communalism stretched further, and over a longer period than this single property deal. Accounts of Shaker, Harmonist and other communal settlements were promoted enthusiastically by socialist journals and readers in Europe over several decades. Sympathizers regularly set out to visit communities for themselves, and in some cases chose not to leave but to join. Tracing the rise and fall of this socialist interest in Protestant communal groups helps to highlight the trans-Atlantic scope of not just their internal history but their external influence before 1850, so presenting a fuller picture of the notice, consequence and effects of Protestant communalism in the trans-Atlantic world.

CHAPTER 2

Mapping Protestant Communalism, 1650–1850

Philip Lockley

The European Reformation left a complex legacy for Protestant approaches to Christian community. Close to a thousand years of monastic tradition upholding the principle of common property came to an end wherever Catholic convents and monasteries were dissolved across northern Europe. Many of the ascetic disciplines, most notably celibacy, as well as the mystical theologies developed by men and women living the cloistered life, were also rejected by Lutheran and Reformed churches. Magisterial Protestant reformers invariably endorsed the family unit and promoted the order and obligations of private-property ownership as the location for godly living. Among radical Anabaptist groups in Switzerland and regions of the modern-day Czech Republic an alternative impulse towards shared communal property was manifested between the 1520s and 1550s, and in the case of the 'Hutterite' Brethren preserved for extended periods later.[1]

[1] G.H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1962), pp. 124–46, 429–34, 680; James Stayer, *The German Peasants' War and Anabaptist Community of Goods* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991). The Hutterite Brethren was the one branch of Anabaptism to have reinstituted the practice of community of goods in the later sixteenth century, and preserved it since. Most Hutterites migrated east to the Ukraine in the 1770s, and west across the Atlantic to the Dakotas in the 1870s.

P. Lockley
University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

P. Lockley (ed.), *Protestant Communalism in the Trans-Atlantic World, 1650–1850*, DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-48487-1_2

Such communal practices alarmed political and ecclesiastical authorities almost as much as the Anabaptist denial of infant baptism (a rejection of an essential measure of Christian citizenship), intensifying their intolerance. In due course, the traumatic memory of Münster—the besieged city in northern Germany where a community of goods was instituted in 1534—confirmed official attitudes still further. And yet for Protestants drawn to read their Bibles, and more particularly to look to the first church in Jerusalem depicted in Acts 2 and 4, the precedent of the earliest Christian community where 'all that believed were together, and had all things in common' remained potent.[2]

Before the middle of the seventeenth century, experiments in shared property, beyond a few persisting Hutterite bodies in Eastern Europe, were rare, brief and often obscured by subsequent reputation within the Protestant world. The enigmatic late sixteenth-century network of the Family of Love, who tended to gather in discreet communities in England and parts of Northwest Europe, were commonly thought to deny ownership—or that 'no man … clameth any thing to be his Owne'.[3] More openly, if conveniently forgotten in later repute, the Calvinist 'Pilgrim' émigrés who disembarked the *Mayflower* in Massachusetts in 1620 adopted community of property for their first 3 years, before ceasing the practice.[4]

From around 1650 until well into the nineteenth century, a diverse range of Protestant traditions of communal property subsequently emerged in the trans-Atlantic world. This chapter maps the history of this Protestant communalism, identifying the geographical contexts, migration patterns and theologies behind such groups and practices in early modernity. Traditions explored in later chapters are introduced in overview, and set within a longer narrative of the development, decline and revival of communal interest and experiment on both sides of the Atlantic. The mapping exercise reveals the sharing of property in common to have been inspired by old and new forms of Christian belief. The chapter concludes with an attempt to categorize this variety of communal theologies across the period, so charting frameworks of ideas as well as the communities that believed them.

[2] Acts 2:44.

[3] Hendrick Niclaes, quoted in Alastair Hamilton, *The Family of Love* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1981), p. 10. See also C.W. Marsh, *The Family of Love in English Society, 1550–1630* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[4] John Demos, *A Little Commonwealth Family: Family Life in Plymouth Colony* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).

Early Experiments, *c.*1650–1700

The civil wars that disrupted the British Isles in the 1640s and after produced unfettered religious experimentation as well as political turmoil. In this period, new denominations like Baptists and Quakers made their first appearance, as also did small collective bodies like Gerrard Winstanley's group of 'Diggers'—labourers and landless farmers who gathered on a Surrey hillside in 1649 and pronounced the earth to be 'a common treasury'.[5] By 1650, Winstanley's community had been forced off their original plot of land on St George's Hill, but moved to nearby Cobham Heath, building several houses and replanting the land. Related colonies sprang up in Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire, Kent and elsewhere in southern England, apparently influenced by Digger literature insisting that land was created by God for all to share, and never to be held in private hands.[6] Winstanley notably believed a new age was just beginning, in which the Spirit of Christ would be newly present within people, leading them to act with greater justice and overcome all poverty and inequality. Digger communities were a sign of this new age which would overcome the Fall—a millennium, or thousand years of harmony prophesied in Revelation 20. Yet, no Digger community survived very long, being dispersed within a year in the face of local landowner opposition.

An appetite for experiment nevertheless remained during the Cromwellian protectorate. In 1658, a Dutch Socinian, Pieter Cornelius Plockhoy, is known to have crossed from Amsterdam to England and attracted supporters in Bristol, London and parts of Ireland for his plan 'bringing together a fit, suitable, and well qualified people unto one … little-common-wealth'.[7] The Restoration of the English monarchy in 1660 put paid to Plockhoy's plans being realized in England, but he returned to the Netherlands, and interested the authorities there in funding a group of Mennonite settlers—descendants of former communal Anabaptists—to establish a 'little-common-wealth' in the mid-Atlantic Dutch colonies.

[5] Timothy Kenyon, *Utopian Communism and Political Thought in Early Modern England* (London: Pinter, 1989).

[6] Andrew Bradstock, *Radical Religion in Cromwell's England* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), pp. 56–7.

[7] Pieter Plockhoy, *The Way to Peace and Settlement of These Nations: Fully Discovered* (London: 1659); and, idem, *A Way Propounded to Make the Poor in These and Other Nations Happy, by bringing together a fit, suitable, and well qualified people unto one household-government, or little-common-wealth* (London: 1659).