http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/275486/

Lexical Choices in Early Modern English Devotional Prose

Jeremy J. Smith
University of Glasgow

Religious controversy in English has always been marked by ideologically charged lexicons. Developments in the analysis of machine-readable corpora have enabled more robust conclusions to be drawn about the nature of these vocabularies, relating particular usages to particular confessional orientations. In this paper, part of a long-term research project on the history of English religious vocabulary, an attempt is made to identify "keywords" characteristic of presbyterian, puritan and high Anglican communities of practice within the Church of England. In addition, the paper addresses some methodological and theoretical issues involved in such research, relating to the practice of historical pragmatics.

Keywords: communities of practice, lexicon, religion, seventeenth-century.

1.   Introduction: On uncomfortable words

Religious controversy and development in English has always been marked by distinctive, ideologically charged lexicons: sets of "keywords", in Raymond Williams's (1983) famous formulation. Until comparatively recently, research on such lexicons was undertaken impressionistically, with interesting but limited results (as in Williams's discussion; for an example of something rather more rigorous, see Hudson [1981]). It was obvious, for instance, that when many writers of the late-sixteenth century included the word *godly* in the titles of their numerous publications, they would be identified by contemporaries not only as Protestant but also as radically so (see, for example, Collinson [1983]).

However, the development over the last thirty years of machine-readable corpora and other resources, of increasingly sophisticated tools to analyse them, and interpretative frameworks – activities in which Andreas Jucker has been a leader – has enabled many more robust conclusions to be drawn from the data, even if very often the outcome has been to raise further research questions. Thus, for instance, in an earlier paper, I was able to identify distinct Roman Catholic and Protestant lexicons from the 1560s, reflecting not only different theological orientations – it was perhaps unsurprising that Roman Catholics liked to refer to *authority* and *sacrament*, whereas Protestants emphasised *repentance* and *salvation* – but also less obvious differences; Roman Catholic writers, for

example, referred to *glory, joy* and *love* much less frequently than Protestants (see Smith 2020: 104, 109). Such differences reflect subtle socio-cultural distinctions, drawing valuable cross-disciplinary support from other researchers; we might in this context recall Ryrie's (2013: 77–95; see also Footnote 9) comprehensive and fascinating discussion of the role of *joy* in Protestant thinking. And when a prominent traditionalist bishop was made, in John Foxe's (1563) Protestant martyrology, *The Acts and Monuments*, to refer to one of his evangelical enemies as *impudent*, he seems to be drawing on a distinctive Roman Catholic vocabulary of insult (Smith 2020: 109).

In England, religious controversy did not, of course, end with the split of the English Church from Rome in the middle of the sixteenth century. The newly reformed – even if "middle-way" – Church of England continued to be fraught by tensions between a variety of doctrinal schools. This state of affairs has of course continued, since there are even now many ways of being an Anglican (see, for example, MacCulloch [2009: 1008–1010]). By the first half of the seventeenth century, it was possible to identify several groups within the Church, ranging along a cline from high-church "conformists" at one extreme – whose practices, though distinct, were close to Roman Catholicism – through moderate puritans to presbyterians at the other (Lake 1988). Although the dividing lines between these groups were imprecise, and many individuals of eirenic temperament worked hard to downplay differences, these divisions were nevertheless real, and were a major factor in triggering the civil wars of 1639–1653. Such differences were, like those from the 1560s, manifested in a range of distinct (if complexly related) linguistic behaviours, both grammatically (as discussed in Yadomi [2019]), and – the subject of this paper – lexically. Here, an attempt will be made to reconstruct the primary English religious lexicons of the period, through a comparison of sets of English texts from the first half of the seventeenth century, with each set belonging to the same genre (namely, sermons), and to link them to the confessional status of their authors.[1]

In so doing, and in order to provide at least tentative explanations of the phenomena I examining, it will be necessary, in an interdisciplinary fashion, to engage extensively with historical contexts, drawing in particular, in the first instance, on the biographical information supplied by *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (ODNB), and on the possibilities for intertextual analysis provided by the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED). Such a goal aligns with many recent (and, indeed, older) trends in pragmatic research, where contexts have always been important, since explanation requires attention to language's social functions (see, for example, Leech [1983: 46]), and where "linguistic behaviour is seen as the realisation of, or the means of performing, the abstract meanings

---

[1] This paper is part of an ongoing research project on the history of the English religious lexicon, under the heading *Uncomfortable Words* (see also Smith [2020]).

that comprise a particular culture, with every semantic alternation corresponding to a culturally meaningful distinction" (Bartlett 2018: 26). Research by Andreas Jucker and Irma Taavitsainen, developed by scholars such as Claudia Claridge, Merja Kytö, Matti Peikola, Carla Suhr and Jukka Tyrkkö, is, in response to such considerations, capacious and qualitative in orientation. As Jucker and Taavitsainen (2013: 42–43) have noted:

> […] electronic corpora encourage a shift away from contextual assessments when a great deal of material is available in an easily accessible form. The corpus user may not be familiar with the background facts of texts, and without this knowledge qualitative analysis of examples cannot be performed without risking the integrity of the study. The problem of decontextualization has been noticed as a drawback and a shift seems to be taking place in linguistics towards pragmatic approaches […], with context playing a more prominent role than before.

The three corpora under analysis in this paper comprise a range of confessional orientations that were current in the first half of the seventeenth century: high-church conformists, represented by the well-known figures of Lancelot Andrewes and John Donne; "moderate" puritans, represented by John Preston and Richard Sibbes; and radical presbyterians, represented by Thomas Cartwright and John Dod. All six men were high-profile figures in their times, whose works were circulated widely or had a significant impact on others. Investigation of their lexical choices offers, therefore, at least in a preliminary manner, access to the kinds of religious discourse that were current in the first half of the seventeenth century.

2.   The three corpora

For the purposes of this paper, three sets of small representative sermon corpora are analysed, each consisting of two works:

Group A ("high Anglican")
The first five sermons from Lancelot Andrewes's *XCVI Sermons* (35,313 words). Sermons I–VIII from John Donne's 1640 collection, *LXXX Sermons* (72,043 words).

Group B ("puritan")
The first seven sermons from John Preston's *The Nevv Covenant* (71,084 words). The complete text of Richard Sibbes's *The Brvised Reede*, save for the prefatory material (34,760 words).

Group C ("presbyterian")

The complete set of Thomas Cartwright's sermons on Colossians (67,358 words). John Dod's six "godlie and fruitful" sermons (47,705 words).

(For ease of reference, and following Lake [1988] and Yadomi [2019], I have labelled the three groups "high Anglican", "puritan" and "presbyterian", respectively, while acknowledging that these labels are simplistic.) The puritan corpus is very slightly smaller (105,844 words) than the high Anglican one (107,356 words), and the presbyterian corpus is a little larger again (115,063 words); and, as noted, the contribution of the individual authors varies in size. In what follows, therefore, normalisation of figures will be deployed to allow for meaningful comparisons.

In 1629 appeared the first edition of a substantial volume: *The Nevv Covenant, or The Saints Portion*. This was a collection of eighteen sermons by John Preston (1587–1628), "Printed by I.D. for *Nicolas Bourne*". Bourne (*d.* 1660) was a London bookseller who was well-known for his provision of religious writings for the serious-minded – according to ODNB, rumour had it that he refused to print plays – while Preston, described on the title-page of *The Nevv Covenant* as "Dr. in Divinitie, Chaplaine in Ordinary to his Maiestie, master of Emmanuel College in Cambridge, and sometimes Preacher of Lincolnes Inne", had died a few years previously. However, the number of editions of the work since its first publication (six alone by 1631) attested to its continuing societal impact, as did the praise, in a preface, of two prominent contemporary ministers of religion, Richard Sibbes (?1577–1635) and John Davenport (baptised 1597, *d.* 1670), who referred to Preston as "honoured of God to be an instrument of much good, whereunto he had advantage by those eminent places he was called vnto" (sig. A3 v). It is possible that the "I.D." on the title page was Davenport himself.

Preston, Sibbes and Davenport were all members of a strongly Calvinist group in the Church of England, suspicious of perceived state tendencies towards Catholicism and even towards reconciliation with Rome. (It was no coincidence that *The Nevv Convenant* was dedicated to William Fiennes, Viscount of Saye and Sele (1582–1662), and to Saye and Seele's son-in-law William, fourth earl of Lincoln (*d.* 1667): both were prominent Calvinist sympathisers.) All three men had been involved in establishing a group known as "the feoffees for impropriations", who aimed to secure funds to support ministries for likeminded (and zealous) preachers. Both Sibbes and Davenport had joined with others in calling for support for Protestant refugees from the Thirty Years' War, leading to their being reprimanded by the "high Anglican" Archbishop William Laud (1573–1645), Charles I's close advisor and favourite cleric; and in 1633 Davenport was to leave for Amsterdam, later moving to minister to non-conformist communities in America. They therefore formed what might be

called a "community of practice",[2] linked together in a common Protestant endeavour.[3] All three were skilled controversialists, although Davenport – the youngest of the three – was not to publish his own collection of sermons (*The Saints Anchor-Hold, in All Storms and Tempests*) until 1661, by which time he had left the Church of England and was based in the godly community of New Haven in Connecticut, North America. However, Sibbes published, shortly after Preston's collection appeared, *The Brvised Reede, and Smoaking Flax*, a collection of sermons that were based on Matthew 12:20 and his "most celebrated" (ODNB) work. Taken together, Preston's and Sibbes's publications represent a substantial body of Protestant sermon-material by two men of approximately the same age and of the same confessional persuasion.

However, the kind of churchmanship displayed by Preston, Sibbes and their associates was not the only variety to be found in the Church of England in the first quarter of the seventeenth century, and other groups have had a more powerful cultural afterlife. John Donne (1572–1631) is now known primarily as a poet, but his most prominent public role during his lifetime was as Dean of St Paul's Cathedral in the City of London. He was a prolific preacher, and numerous sermons of his were published, the bulk posthumously, in three large folio volumes between 1640 and 1661. Donne's sermons and other devotional writings show him to be – by contrast with Preston, Sibbes and Davenport – interested in sustaining a middle path that appealed to royal patrons; Donne was generally in favour, for instance, with Archbishop Laud.

Later literary critics – most notably T.S. Eliot – found in Donne's prose much to admire, and placed it alongside the writings of other "high Anglican" contemporaries, most notably Lancelot Andrewes (1555–1626), who, as bishop of Winchester, played a key role in opposition to the Calvinist group represented by Preston and Sibbes; Andrewes was a prominent Laudian who, while Dean of the royal peculiar of Westminster Abbey, had encouraged traditional practices of worship that many contemporaries considered quasi-Roman Catholic. He was notoriously reluctant to publish in his lifetime, but in the same year (1629) of Preston's *The Nevv Covenant* appeared Andrewes's posthumous *XCVI Sermons*. According to Isaak Walton's preface to the 1640 edition of Donne's sermons, Andrewes, along with Donne and others, formed a group of divines that James VI and I especially favoured for their conversation:

---

[2] For the notion of "community of practice" as applied to English historical linguistics, see in particular the papers collected in Kopaczyk and Jucker ([eds] 2013).
[3] For biographical details throughout this paper, see in the first instance ODNB, available online at www.oxforddnb.com and last consulted on 4 November 2021. For wider contextualisation of the Protestant experience in a longer diachronic frame, see most comprehensively Ryrie (2017).

His Majesty [was] much pleased that M. *Donne* attended him, especially at his meales, where there was usually many deep discourses of Learning, and often friendly disputes of Religion betwixt the King and those Divines whose places required their attendance on his Majestie: Particularly, the Right Reverend Bishop *Montague,* then Deane of the Chappel, (who was the publisher of the eloquent and learned Works of his Majestie) and the most learned Doctor *Andrewes,* then his Majesties Almoner, and at his death Bishop of Winchester.

(1640: preface)

It seems clear that Donne and Andrewes, along with Montague, formed a second community of practice, distinct from that formed by Preston and Sibbes.

The final sermons to be analysed here are by two writers who were even more radical than Preston and Sibbes, since (*inter alia*) they denied episcopacy, something that placed them well outside the mainstream of the Church of England: Thomas Cartwright (1535–1603) and John Dod (1549–1645). Again, these men – along with others, such as Walter Travers (1548–1635) – formed a distinct community of practice; Cartwright and Travers co-operated for a period in ministering to a "thoroughly reformed" (ODNB) English church in Antwerp, free from episcopal authority, and Dod served as one of Cartwright's literary executors after his death and preached his funeral sermon. Both Cartwright and Dod were vigorous in publication, and their sermons were much in demand; the two collections analysed here are Cartwright's sermons on Colossians 3:16, published posthumously (and presumably under Dod's supervision) in 1612, and six "godlie and fruitful" sermons that Dod published – with an additional contribution by another radical collaborator, Robert Cleaver – in 1614.

The methods adopted for this study are straightforward. The machine-readable texts were obtained from the freely available *Early English Books Online – Text Creation Partnership* (EEBO-TCP).[4] As in an earlier study (Smith 2020), the lexicons of each of the texts above were then analysed to identify commonalities and differences. Each text was processed,[5] and the resulting wordlists were scanned to exclude "grammar words" such as *the, of, and,* etc., since the focus will be on open-class categories (namely, nouns, adjectives and lexical verbs). In order to arrive at comparable figures, normalisation was carried

---

[4] Accessed 4 November 2021 at: https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebogroup/. On EEBO's background and context, see: https://textcreationpartnership.org/, last consulted 4 November 2021, and also Gadd (2009).

[5] All frequencies of forms were calculated using a simple freeware concordancer (*AntConc* 3.5.7 for Windows), available online at: www.laurenceanthony.net/software/antconc/. In order to allow for easy comparison, spellings of individual lexemes are normalised on the basis of present-day English usage; however, when individual texts are quoted, the original spelling is used.

out according to standard procedures.[6] The OED[7] was then checked to identify other texts where the open-class words thus distinguished were also deployed, allowing for further qualitative research on cultural contexts. The simple word-search function of *Semantic EEBO* was also used from time to time in order to offer a picture of more general changes in vocabulary.[8]

3.   Textual analysis

First results from the analysis indicate a degree of commonality between the corpora under investigation, even if the scores for a traditionally loaded descriptive term such as *godly* flag a difference between Andrewes and Donne (2 and 5.7, respectively) on the one hand, and on the other Preston, Sibbes, Cartwright and Dod (12.7, 17.3, 29.7 and – perhaps to be expected – 48.2, respectively).[9] Appendix A offers raw and normalised figures for all the lexemes where at least one corpus scores them as in the top ten of tokens deployed in the texts, with scores for the same lexemes in the other corpora as a comparison.[10]

As is demonstrated from these results, in all corpora, by far the most common noun is *God(s)*, ranging from 1,259 (normalised) occurrences in Donne's sermons to 461.6 in the Andrewes corpus; the average score for all corpora is 1,336.8. Other lexemes where all corpora, or all save one, exhibit very high scores (i.e., over 100), are *Christ* (Preston is the rather odd exception, with a still-impressive score of 40.8), *come, good, great* (Donne is here exceptional, albeit with a high score of 81.9), *lord, make* (save for Andrewes, with a score of 40.2), *man* and *time*. None of these forms is especially remarkable or surprising

---

[6] In order to attain the normalised frequency of lexemes (i.e., the occurrence of each item per 100,000 words), the raw frequency for each item within each writer's individual corpus is divided by the total word-count for their output, and then multiplied by 100,000. The resulting figure is then rounded to one decimal place. Appendix A gives both raw and normalised figures, allowing for calculations to be checked.

[7] Accessed 4 November 2021 at: https://www.oed.com.

[8] For *Semantic EEBO*, see: https://www.english-corpora.org/eebo/ (last accessed 4 November 2021). Raw figures provided by this concordance need to be used carefully, given changing patterns and growth in publishing in English during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. *Semantic EEBO*, as its name suggests, also offers access to semantic tagging in line with the categories developed for the *Historical Thesaurus of English* (HTE), for which see now the second edition, available online at: https://ht.ac.uk/, and last consulted on 4 November 2021. However, HTE's semantic tagging (e.g., *03.06 Faith*), relates to explicitly defined terms; one of the goals of this paper is the subtler discrimination of a confessional vocabulary that is not obviously religious, determined by contextual means.

[9] On *godly*, see Smith (2020, passim).

[10] The figures for *godly* are also included in Appendix A, for ease of reference, but distinguished by being placed in italics.

in the context of these sermons. *World*, too, is fairly evenly spread in distribution across the corpora, ranging between Donne's 199.9 through Preston's 74.6; the average score for the three corpora is 123.9. Something similar may be said of *spirit*, where Sibbes's score of 443 indicates a remarkable focus, spread across his entire corpus, but where only Cartwright's corpus drops below a score of 50 (i.e., 49); Dod, who as we have seen aligns with Cartwright in confessional terms, has a score of 283 for this lexeme, albeit with many tokens concentrated in particular sermons. Of course – a point that will be returned to later – it is possible that the difference between Cartwright and Dod is to do with date, given that Dod is a younger man. Certainly, according to *Semantic EEBO*, *spirit* undergoes a considerable increase in tokens during the seventeenth century, peaking in the 1650s at 73,939 (compare interestingly 30,611 citations in the 1640s and 44,808 in the 1660s – a pattern that will recur below).

Some other forms seem to relate to particular themes or orientations of the sermons, reminding us of the important point that quantitative analysis of corpora needs always to be balanced with qualitative contextualisation. Thus the high scores for the lexeme *apostle* in both Andrewes (116.1) and Cartwright (414.2) relate to their sermons both being focussed on the Pauline letters (Hebrews and Colossians, respectively). Donne's high score for *church* (238.7) relates to one of his major concerns: the need for the Church of England to establish a distinct identity; seven collocations of *church* with *primitive* are in this respect suggestive, as are twenty with the terms *ordinance(s)*. Cartwright's similarly high score (203.4) for *church* shows a distinct pattern, with numerous collocations of *church* with *head*, including the phrase *head of the church*, to be identified with *Christ*. This emphasis is theologically important to Cartwright in discussions of church governance. Another outlier is Andrewes's use of the lexeme *joy*, for which his corpus scores 257.7, where the average score for the other corpora is 24.5; this usage clearly relates to the sermons being delivered at Christmas, and there are several instances in these texts where Luke 2:10 is cited, or a near-paraphrase is offered.[11] Other outliers, such as Preston's use of *beloved* (146.3), never used by Andrewes and rare in the other corpora, presumably derive from Biblical use,[12] while Preston's similarly exceptional use of *creature*

---

[11] "And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you tidings of great **joy**, which shall be to all people". (All citations from the Bible in this chapter are taken from the King James Version of 1611.) As Ryrie (2013: 94) points out, *joy* was an important word for Protestants of any category: "not straightforwardly happy" but rather conceived of as denoting the experience of direct encounter with God.

[12] We might compare, for instance, the beginning of I John 3:2: "Beloved, now are we with the sons of God […]". The edition of Preston's sermons frequently places *beloved* within parentheses, as an aside to an individual reader. *Semantic EEBO* records, as with *spirit*, a comparatively sudden efflorescence of *beloved* in the 1650s, with 6,099 hits compared with 2,982 in the 1640s and 3,440 in the 1660s; it might be argued that this pattern reflects the

(422) derives in particular from a close focus on the word in his fifth sermon, which is an exploration of the relationship between God and his creation. Cartwright's high score for *gospel* (233.1) results from a similar concentration, notably in this fierce passage on the dispute with Roman Catholics (we might note the reference to *the time of Popery*) about the relative importance of works and the word. (The boldface on forms in this and subsequent passages is mine.)

> [Obiection.] And they will obiect hereby that we haue not the **Gospell**, for where (say they) is your fruits? In the time of the Popish religion there was more almes and not so much wickednesse, as among the Protestantes.
> [Solution.] Answer. Would to God they could not too rightly obiect that to vs But yet they cannot hereby proue our **Gospell** to be none, or not the true **Gospell**. For in the time of Popery, they liued in ignorance in palpable & Egiptiacall darkenesse, wherein small sinnes could not be seene to be sinnes. Great sinnes as blasphemie, infidelity &c. were no sinnes. For there was no liberty in reading of the word. Now the light of the **Gospell** discouereth sinnes that are committed vnder it, which in time of ignorance were not thought nor knowne to be sinnes. Againe wee wish it might bee found more truely; That if the sinne in time of the Gospell bee puninished vnder the **Gospell**, then the **Gospell** is quit and free from that accusation. Now by the **Gospell**, the **Gospell** appointeth the sinnes committed vnder it to be punished, and so much the more sharply, as because in the light they haue beene committed.

More cheerfully deployed, and characteristically more eirenic, is Andrewes's favourite (235) use of *fullness*, another outlier rarely used by other writers, and never by Dod. Again the word clusters in particular sections, as here:

> 1. From the **fullnesse** of His Compassion, He sent to release us: 2. From the **fullnesse** of His Love, He sent His Sonne: 3. In the **fullnesse** of Humility, He sent Him made: 4. Made of a Woman, to make a full vnion with our nature: 5. Made vnder the Law, to make the vnion yet more perfectly full with our sinfull condition: 6. That we might obtaine a full deliverance, from all Evill, by being redeemed: 7. And a full estate of all the Ioy and Glory of his heavenly inheritance, by being Adopted. So, there is **fullnesse**, of all hands. And so much, for the **fullnesse** of the Benefit, we receive. … That so from us, and on our parts, it may be plenitudo temporis, or tempus plenitudinis, the **fullnesse** of time, or time of **fullnesse**, choose you whither.

Fullness is in this passage characteristically followed by the preposition *of*: a clear echo not only of Ephesians I:10 ("the fullness of time[s]" = *plenitudo temporis*) but also of (for instance) Psalm 16:11, "[…] in thy presence is fullness

---

dominance of puritan theology during the decade of the Commonwealth. We might note also the discussion of *sufficient*, etc., below.

of joy". Given Andrewes's liking for *joy*, the latter correlation seems unlikely to be fortuitous. Similar clusters of tokens can be found in Donne's and Sibbes's use of *mercy* and *soul*.

At first sight, *sufficient* is a similar case, since it is especially common in Preston's corpus (478.3), where it appears always in the cluster *all-sufficient*, relating to the sub-title of his collection ("A Treatise vnfolding the All-sufficiencie of God, Mans vprightnesse, and the Covenant of grace"). The link with *grace* is theologically significant, referring to Corinthians 12:9 ("My grace is sufficient for thee"); *sufficient grace* is defined by the OED as "the grace which […] renders the soul capable of performing a supernatural act". Since the emphasis on grace was central to Protestantism (both Lutheran and Calvinist; see MacCulloch [2009: 634]), Preston's emphasis on the *sufficiency* of grace is not surprising; we might as a gloss cite the following passage, which includes a reference (*secret Popery*) to the presumed origins of an alternative view:

> If God be **All-sufficient**, then, when you performe any thing, doe not thinke that you giue any thing to the Lord, and so looke for recompence; (there is that secret Popery in every mans heart, that he thinkes when he hath done any speciall service to be rewarded for it).

It is noticeable that *sufficient* is comparatively rarely deployed by Sibbes (8.6) and even more rarely by Andrewes (5.7) and Donne (2.8), although Sibbes compensates by being by far the most frequent deployer of *grace* (405.6). The only other writers to use the lexeme *sufficient* and its derivatives – although in their cases never with the *all-* premodifier – are the two "extreme" Protestants: Cartwright and Dod. It may be significant that, according to *Semantic EEBO*, the term *sufficient* undergoes a steady increase in usage throughout the first half of the sixteenth century, reaching a high point of 13,462 occurrences in the 1650s, during the Commonwealth period when puritanism was dominant. Dod sums up the firmly Calvinist theological position well as follows: "the word of God heard and practised, is **sufficient** to bring the soule to euerlasting life". There may also – as suggested by the OED – be an allusion to, or an echo of, Matthew 6:34: "**Sufficient** unto the day *is* the evil thereof".

This last citation is from Jesus's Sermon on the Mount, and Preston's thinking on that passage in the New Testament clearly influenced his use of *perfect*, notably Matthew 5:48, which he quotes at least five times: "Be ye therefore **perfect**, even as your Father which is in heaven is **perfect**." And the very first sermon in the collection is on this prefiguring text from Genesis 17:1: "And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I *am* the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou

perfect."[13] Preston's score of 251.8 for *perfect* contrasts markedly with Donne's 1.4; Sibbes's score is also high (80.6), as is Cartwright's (53.5). Again, the usages tracked in *Semantic EEBO* are suggestive, with a high-point of 15,638 hits for *perfect* recorded from the 1650s. However, the deployment of *perfect* – unlike *sufficient* – does not seem to align entirely with the communities of practice identified earlier in this paper, since Andrewes's score is 39.6 – still respectably high – whereas Dod's is the much less impressive 10.5, the second-lowest in the corpus.

Indeed, in the list of commonly deployed lexemes given in Appendix A it is noticeable that – by contrast with the Roman Catholic/Protestant distinctions that were such a feature of linguistic behaviour in the 1560s – things were clearly more complex in the first half of the seventeenth century: arguably an index of the astonishing increase in contemporary theological literacy, driven by extensive encounters with the Bible and other textual resources, that is a notable feature of English culture during the period (see Hunt [2010]; see also Ryrie [2013: 259ff]). Of Appendix A's lexemes, the only items that seem to correlate fairly unambiguously with distinct communities of practice are the following:

comfort
The scores for this lexeme are as follows: Andrewes (19.8), Donne (16.7), Preston (171.6), Sibbes (264.7), Cartwright (69.8) and Dod (102.7). In the earlier study (Smith 2020: 110), I concluded that *comfort* and its derivatives, notably *comfortable*, developed in the sixteenth century as a distinctly Protestant lexeme, deriving its usage in particular from its appearance in the 1549 reformed Prayer Book: "The moste **comfortable** Sacrament of the bodye and bloude of Christe" (Cummings [ed.] 2011: 24).[14] It would seem, from the evidence of the corpora being investigated here, that this lexeme, at least in tendency, retained something of its association with evangelical religious expression. The difference between

---

[13] *Perfect*, at least in the citation from Genesis, would seem to align with the theologically specialised first meaning in OED – namely, "Of, marked, or characterized by supreme moral or spiritual excellence or virtue; righteous, holy; immaculate; spiritually pure or blameless", rather than the more general second meaning (which would be appropriate for God), that is, "In a state of complete excellence; free from any imperfection or defect of quality; that cannot be improved upon; flawless, faultless". According to the specialised meaning, it is possible to be *perfect*, but nevertheless liable to fall into sin: a defining condition, after all, of fallen humanity. Relevant citations in OED include the following:

1530　　*Myroure Oure Ladye* (Fawkes) (1873) II. 76　None maye wythstonde eny temptacyon be he neuer so **parfyt**.
1599　　J. DAVIES *Nosce Teipsum* 37　The **perfect** Angels were not stable, But had a fall, more desperate then wee.

[14] See also the following formulation from the 1559 Prayer Book: "[…] the holy sacramentes of his blessed body and bloud, the which being so **comfortable** a thing to them which receive it worthily ..' (Cummings [ed.] 2011: 131).

Dod's and Cartwright's deployment of the word may be, as previously flagged, to do with date; according to *Semantic EEBO*, the usage reached its peak in attestations across the EEBO-TCP corpus in the 1630s. One of the citations in OED is interesting in this regard:

> 1641   EARL OF STRAFFORD *Speech on Scaffold* 5   It is a very great **comfort** to me, to have your Lordship by me this day.

Thomas Wentworth (1593–1641), first earl of Strafford and Charles I's counsellor, was executed as part of the ongoing conflict between king and parliament that was shortly to erupt in civil war. Strafford was a complex character, but it is interesting that his last words included this lexeme. As the ODNB flags from a contemporary biographical account, "at moments of crisis Wentworth was no stranger to the religious self-examination which is often seen as typical for a particularly puritan variety of religious fervour, although he clearly did not share the wider political outlook associated with puritanism". This last point is an interesting one; Strafford, in extremity, deploys (or, since the speech is recorded posthumously, made to deploy) a lexeme that clearly had a particular set of associations for him and his contemporaries.

heart
The scores for this lexeme are as follows: Andrewes (17), Donne (47.2), Preston (399.5), Sibbes (376.9), Cartwright (68.3) and Dod (352.2). Intriguingly, *Semantic EEBO* indicates a significant increase in hits for *heart* during the course of the seventeenth century, rising from 17,348 in the first decade to 61,201 in the 1650s; afterwards, hits for the lexeme decline, with 36,384 hits recorded from the 1660s. The OED's citations for the lexeme in its various meanings are extensive, but especially relevant are those linking *heart* to sermons, as follows:

> 1641   W. HOOKE *New Englands Teares* Pref. sig. Aij^v   As for this Sermon, expect not eare-pleasing, but **heart**-affecting phrases in it.
>
> 1665   R. BOYLE *Occas. Refl.* III. vi. sig. R8^v   In such kind of Sermons, there is little spoken, either from the **Heart**, or to the **Heart**.

Robert Boyle (1627–1691), now better-known as a scientist, saw his life's-work as essentially religious; despite his eirenic views on toleration between Christian confessions, he remained a firm Protestant throughout his life (ODNB). The discussion in this section of his *Occasional Reflections* was focussed on the difference between those who used sermons as an opportunity for stylistic display rather than sincere exhortation – a Protestant concern; and this concern is well-expressed in the above citation from William Hooke (*d*. 1678), a prominent Protestant ('Independent') clergyman who was to become Oliver

Cromwell's domestic chaplain, although spending much time in New England; he was later to contribute a preface to Davenport's sermon-collection *The Saints' Anchor-hold* of 1661.[15] As a Protestant manual from 1620 put it, "labour not so much to heare the words of the Preacher sounding in thine eare, as to feele the operation of the spirit, working in thy **heart**" (cited by Ryrie [2013: 360]). Both Preston and Sibbes exhort listeners/readers of their sermons to "incline your hearts" – a phraseology derived ultimately from Joshua 24:23, but also found in the Book of Common Prayer.[16]

word

The scores for this lexeme are as follows: Andrewes (206.7), Donne (190.2), Preston (74.6), Sibbes (80.6), Cartwright (252.4) and Dod (251.5). *Semantic EEBO* records a noticeable increase of this lexeme's deployment in the 1650s, with no fewer than 76,757 hits in the 1650s compared with 39,811 in the 1640s and 40,005 in the 1660s. At first sight, such a pattern might suggest that the usage was to be associated with increasing dominance of puritan expression during the Commonwealth period, aligning with the patterns of usage for *comfort* and *heart* (and perhaps also for *beloved* and *sufficient*). Relevant citations from OED include the following seventeenth-century examples:

> 1601 BP. W. BARLOW *Def. Protestants Relig.* 181 The ministerie of the **word** is a coadiutor with the Spirite.
>
> 1648 T. SHEPARD *Clear Sun-shine of Gospel* 12 This old man hath much affection stirred up by the **Word**.
>
> 1653 J. ROGERS *Ohel or Beth-Shemesh* II. ix. 511 Those that do receive others..into the Church, *viz.* being full of the **Word** and Spirit, like fire in the bones.

Whereas, according to their ODNB entries, William Barlow (*d*. 1613) was equivocal in his "party" alignment, both Thomas Shepard (1605–1649) and John Rogers (*b*. 1627) were prominent puritans; the former had, it seems, been much inspired by John Preston, while the latter was a well-known millenarian or "Fifth Monarchy" man. However, the issue is not clear-cut, on the basis of the corpora examined here, in that although Cartwright and Dod are enthusiastic users of the

---

[15] For Hooke's career and associations, see further Sachse (1948); see also Hooke's entry in ODNB, where Davenport is mistakenly named "Joseph", and where Hooke is attributed, also erroneously, co-authorship of the collection.

[16] "Now therefore put away, *said he*, strange gods which *are* among you, and **incline your heart** to the Lord God of Israel". We might also note responses to the decalogue in the 1559 Prayer Book communion service: "Lorde have mercye upon us, and **encline our hartes** to keep this lawe" (Cummings [ed.] 2011: 125).

lexeme, Preston and Sibbes use *word* rather less frequently than the "high Anglicans", Andrewes and Donne.

4.   Conclusion

As will be evident from the above discussion, the lexicon of religion was in considerable ferment during the seventeenth century, and – in contrast with the 1560s – clear-cut patterns are comparatively hard to identify. Perhaps this is unsurprising, given the complex allegiances and interactions of writers during the period, who of course all drew extensively for their phraseology – as will have been obvious from the discussion – on the Authorised Version of the English Bible of 1611, and, relevant for older authors such as Cartwright, its predecessors, such as the translation in 1535 by William Tyndale and Miles Coverdale.

Sibbes's career is a case in point. Although later generations perceived him to be a precursor of radical Protestantism, and although troubled it seems by the actions of Archbishop Laud, he was nevertheless able to retain his Cambridge fellowship and his role as Master of St Catharine's College, both positions that required him to conform to established religion. Similarly, the title-page to *The Nevv Convenant, or The Saints Portion*, as we have seen, proclaims Preston's role as "Chaplaine in ordinary to his *Maiestie*"; in 1620, Preston may have clashed with Lancelot Andrewes over his failure to use the Book of Common Prayer, but he then apologised and kept his positions. We might also note Preston's close association with Prince Charles's favourite, the Duke of Buckingham, even though they were to become distanced before the latter's assassination in 1628; Buckingham's influence seems to have secured Preston the chaplaincy, and indeed his succeeding John Donne as preacher at Lincoln's Inn. Even John Dod, the most radical of the figures under review in this paper, was – although at times on the run from the authorities – always respected as an important evangelical figure, and to a degree protected, by an earlier Archbishop of Canterbury, George Abbot (1562–1633).

This complexity does not, however, indicate that the effort to "break the linguistic codes" of religious expression in the early modern period is impossible; and indeed the insights offered above into "keywords" such as *comfortable, heart* and *sufficient*, and even *word* are at least suggestive of many future directions for further research, perhaps linked further to such important initiatives as the *Linguistic DNA Project*.[17] Rather, the discussion above draws attention to how quantitative analysis needs balancing with careful investigation

---

[17] See Fitzmaurice et al. (2017) and references there cited.

of context. The contrast in the preceding discussion between the findings flagged by *Semantic EEBO* and those provided from the corpora of individual writers may be noted, and, although directions for investigation might be suggested by the former, further work on individual usages in relation to biographies and theological developments (i.e., contexts and socio-cultural functions) is needed if robust, or at least better, explanations of linguistic phenomena are to be achieved.

Acknowledgments

References

Online resources

AntConc. See: www.laurenceanthony.net/software/antconc/.
Early English Books Online – Text Creation Partnership (EEBO-TCP). See: quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebogroup/.
English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC). See: estc.bl.uk.
Historical Thesaurus of English (HTE). See: ht.ac.uk.
Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (ODNB). See: www.oxforddnb.com. Entries for: George Abbot (Kenneth Fincham); Lancelot Andrewes (P. E. McCullough); William Barlow (C. S. Knighton); Nicholas Bourne (S. A. Baron); Robert Boyle (Michael Hunter); Thomas Cartwright (Patrick Collinson); John Dod (J. Fielding); John Davenport (Francis J. Bremer); John Donne (David Colclough); William Fiennes, Viscount of Saye and Sele (David L. Smith); William Hooke (Susan Hardman Moore); William Laud (Anthony Milton); John Preston (Jonathan D. Moore); John Rogers (Richard L. Greaves); Thomas Shepard (Michael Jinkins); Richard Sibbes (Mark E. Dever); Walter Travers (Alan Ford); Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford (Ronald G. Asch).
Oxford English Dictionary (OED). See: www.oed.com.
Semantic EEBO. See: www.english-corpora.org/eebo/.

Primary sources

Andrewes, Lancelot. 1629. *XCVI. Sermons*. London: George Miller, for Richard Badger. ESTC S106830.

Cartwright, Thomas. 1612. *A Commentary vpon the Epistle of Saint Paule written to the Colossians.* London: Nicholas Okes. ESTC S117383.

Dod, John. 1614. *Seven Godly and Frvitfull Sermons*. London: Felix Kyngston, for William Welby. ESTC S109731.

Donne, John. 1640. *LXXX Sermons*. London: Miles Flesher, for Richard Royston and Richard Marriot. ESTC S121697.

Preston, John. 1629. *The Nevv Covenant, or The Saints Portion*. London: John Dawson, for Nicolas Bourne. ESTC S101919.

Sibbes, Richard. 1630. *The Brvised Reede, and Smoaking Flax*. London: Miles Flesher, for R. Dawlman. ESTC S102404.

Works cited

Bartlett, Thomas. 2018. "Rethinking (Context of) Culture in Systemic Functional Linguistics". In Akila Sellami-Baklouti and Lise Fontaine (eds), *Perspectives from Systemic Functional Linguistics*, 26–46. London: Routledge.

Collinson, Patrick. 1983. *Godly People*. London: Hambledon.

Cummings, Brian (ed.). 2011. *The Book of Common Prayer: The Texts of 1549, 1559, and 1662*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fitzmaurice, Susan, Justyna Robinson, Marc Alexander, Iona Hine, Seth Mehl and Fraser Dallachy. 2017. "Linguistic DNA: Investigating Conceptual Change in Early Modern English Discourse". *Studia Neophilologica* 89: 21–38.

Gadd, Ian. 2009. "The Use and Misuse of *Early English Books Online*". *Literature Compass* 6: 680–692.

Hudson, Anne. 1981. "A Lollard Cect Vocabulary?" In Michael Benskin and Michael L. Samuels (eds), *So Meny People Longages and Tonges: Philological Essays in Scots and Mediaeval English Presented to Angus McIntosh*, 15–30. Edinburgh: Middle English Dialect Project.

Hunt, Arnold. 2010. *The Art of Hearing: English Preachers and their Audiences, 1590-1640.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jucker, Andreas and Irma Taavitsainen. 2013. *English Historical Pragmatics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Kopaczyk, Joanna and Andreas Jucker (eds). 2013. *Communities of Practice in the History of English*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Lake, Peter. 1988. *Anglicans and Puritans?: Presbyterianism and English conformist thought from Whitgift to Hooker.* London: Unwin Hyman.

Leech, Geoffrey. 1983. *Principles of Pragmatics*. London: Longman.

MacCulloch, Diarmaid. 2009. *A History of Christianity*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Ryrie, Alec. 2013. *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ryrie, Alec. 2017. *Protestants: The Radicals who Made the Modern World*. London: William Collins.

Sachse, William. 1948. "The Migration of New Englanders to England, 1640–1660." *The American Historical Review* 53: 251–278.

Smith, Jeremy J. 2020. "Godly Vocabulary in Early Modern English Religious Debate". In Ewa Jonsson and Tove Larsson (eds), *Voices Past and Present – Studies of Involved, Speech-Related and Spoken Texts, in Honor of Merja Kytö*, 96–112. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Williams, Raymond. 1983. *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. (Second edition.) Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Yadomi, Hiroshi. 2019. *Language, Identity and Community: A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Language Practice of Early Modern English Preachers.* (PhD thesis.) Glasgow: University of Glasgow.

Appendix A

LEXEME (& derivs)	Andrewes raw	n'lised	Donne raw	n'lised	Preston raw	n'lised	Sibbes raw	n'lised	Cartwright raw	n'lised	Dod raw	n'lised	Average n'lised
apostle	41	116.1	45	62.5	13	18.3	9	25.9	279	414.2	30	62.9	116.7
beloved	0	0	7	9.7	104	146.3	4	11.5	14	20.9	2	4.2	32.1
Christ	90	254.8	356	494.1	29	40.8	450	1294.6	372	552.3	103	215.9	475.4
church	4	11.3	172	238.7	24	33.8	53	152.5	137	203.4	26	54.5	115.7
come	88	249.2	112	155.5	142	199.8	61	175.5	158	234.6	50	104.8	186.6
comfort	7	19.8	12	16.7	122	171.6	92	264.7	47	69.8	49	102.7	107.6
creature	7	19.8	26	36.1	300	422	20	57.5	19	28.2	6	12.6	96
day	97	274.7	131	181.8	50	70.3	24	69	31	46	26	54.5	116.1
flesh	89	252	17	23.6	11	15.5	32	92	34	50.5	55	115.3	91.5
fullness	83	235	1	1.4	11	15.5	2	5.6	14	20.9	0	0	46.4
God	163	461.6	907	1259	657	924.3	261	750.9	793	1177.3	383	802.9	896
godly	*2*	*5.7*	*2*	*2.8*	*9*	*12.7*	*6*	*17.3*	*20*	*29.7*	*23*	*48.2*	*19.4*
good	73	206.7	154	213.8	180	253.2	109	313.6	187	277.6	151	316.5	263.6
gospel	11	31.2	23	31.9	7	9.8	14	40.3	157	233.1	13	27.3	62.3
grace	12	33.9	57	79.1	64	90	141	405.6	75	111.3	51	106.6	137.8
great	136	385.1	59	81.9	149	209.6	69	198.5	106	157.4	99	207.5	206.7
heart	6	17	34	47.2	284	399.5	131	376.9	46	68.3	168	352.2	210.2
holy	16	45.3	78	108.3	28	39.4	47	135.2	46	68.3	81	169.8	94.4
joy	91	257.7	17	23.6	21	29.5	11	31.6	10	14.9	11	23.1	63.4
light	11	31.2	146	202.7	32	45	78	224.4	31	46	15	31.4	96.8
lord	63	178.4	150	208.2	370	520.5	54	155.4	131	194.5	229	480	289.5
make	142	40.2	140	194.3	185	260.3	97	279.1	165	245	173	362.6	230.3
man	123	348.3	518	719	704	990.4	172	494.8	451	669.6	227	475.8	616.3
mercy	4	11.3	108	149.9	42	59	73	210	23	34.2	9	18.9	80.55
perfect	14	39.6	1	1.4	179	251.8	28	80.6	36	53.5	5	10.5	72.9
soul	14	39.6	88	122.1	57	80.2	115	330.8	15	22.3	77	161.4	126.1
spirit	30	85	58	80.5	47	66.1	154	443	33	49	135	283	167.8
sufficient	2	5.7	2	2.8	340	478.3	3	8.6	19	28.2	18	37.7	93.6
time	116	328.5	94	130.5	85	119.6	49	141	85	126.2	59	123.7	161.6
truth	7	19.8	6	8.3	15	21.1	69	198.5	78	115.8	38	79.7	73.9
word	73	206.7	137	190.2	53	74.6	28	80.6	170	252.4	120	251.5	176
world	36	101.9	144	199.9	53	74.6	33	94.9	90	133.6	66	138.4	123.9
W-TYPES	3709	10503.2	6656	9238.9	4252	5981.7	4264	12267	4756	7060.8	4573	9166.8	

Address for correspondence

Jeremy Smith
School of Critical Studies
University of Glasgow
5 University Gardens
Glasgow
G12 8QQ
United Kingdom

Jeremy.Smith@glasgow.ac.uk

Publication history