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Truth Lifting Up Its Head Above Scandals:
The New Law of Righteousness
Proposed By Gerrard Winstanley and the Diggers

By John Cook
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In the beginning of 1649 a group of landless people began to build houses and plant crops on the common lands at George Hill in Surrey, England. However these were not ordinary squatters for the Diggers also had a program which declared "freedom to the creation, and that the earth must be set free of the entanglements of lords and landlords, and that it shall become a common treasury to all, as it was first made and given" to men by God. (p. 128) Sometime just before this the Diggers' leading spokesman, Gerrard Winstanley, had begun to claim "that many things were revealed to me which I never read in any books, nor heard from the mouth of any flesh." (p. 127) He became possessed by the spirit of his discoveries and disdained meals and company to sit and write "whole winter days from morning till night, [until] I was so stark with cold that I was forced to rise by degrees and hold by the table." (p. 155) Though he could not neglect any opportunity to express his ideas in words or writing, he soon found that some people could not bear to hear them, and that he had become "hated, reproached and oppressed on every side" (p. 140) for expressing the Word of God that he heard within himself. This harsh reaction only reinforced his sense of mission, for the Diggers counted it "a great happiness to be persecuted by the... successors of Judas." (p. 179) Undaunted, Winstanley felt his mind could not rest until he took action, for "words and writings were all nothing and must die." (p. 127) Though Winstanley was a biting social critic he probably would have been ignored in that turbulent
era, if the Diggers had not actively attempted to establish their community of equality.

The Diggers felt action was necessary because now that the Civil War was over the opportunity for a reform of English society was quickly passing. Indeed Winstanley warned the English people that they were in danger of being cheated of their freedom, "and if thou lose it now after all thy boasting, truly thy posterity will use thee for unfaithfulness."(p. 129) Winstanley himself had done more than just boast during the war, for he had been "beaten out of both estate and trade... by the burdens of and for the soldiery in the beginning of the war."(p. 127) He had then retired to the countryside where he lost what was left of his money by "the burden[s] of taxes and much free-quarter"(p. 127) that were demanded of him for the war effort. He had been sustained through the war by the promise that the people had stood for freedom, but now that the common enemy was gone, it seemed they were "all like men in a mist, seeking for freedom and know[ing] not where it is; and those of the richer sort... that see it are ashamed and afraid to own it."(p. 128) To remedy this, Winstanley addressed separate pamphlets to London, the Parliament, the Army, the courts, and the clergy so "that none of you that are the fleshly strength of this land may be left without excuse," (p. 129) before God's final judgement.

Winstanley's beliefs were drawn primarily from his experiences, and from his own interpretation of the Scriptures. He believed
that in the beginning "the great creator Reason made the earth to be a common treasury" (p. 77) for all to share, and commanded that everyone "shall enjoy the benefit of their creation, that is to have food and raiment from the earth." (p. 101) Man was given domination over the beasts, "but not one word was spoken... that one branch of mankind should rule over another." (p. 77) Man was also endowed with reason, which was the law of God within him, and was taught all things by God, so that he "needs not run abroad after any teacher without him." (p. 77) The spirit of God resided in each man, therefore the "saviour must be a power within you, to deliver you from that bondage within." (p. 271) The Diggers believed that the spirit of righteousness and the true laws of God dwelt within each individual, and not in the hands of the so-called "divines," who would claim exclusive knowledge of Him. "Christ is not confined to parties or private chambers," (p. 214) despite the rulers' "blazing profession... to own God, Christ, and the Scriptures." (p. 165)

In Winstanley's view man's fall began when he started to enjoy the objects of creation more than the spirit of righteousness and reason. The strong then began to think that they were entitled to a larger share of the earth than others were, and that they should be in some degree above the rest of society. The threat of force allowed the spirit of covetousness to prevail, and the earth was "enclosed" into private holdings by rulers and the teachers, nobles, and lawyers who were their cohorts. Though people soon began
to cheat each other in the "art of buying and selling" these enclosures of land, mankind did not actually reach "the extremity of division" until the power of the sword was unsheathed and property was taken "by cruel violence and force."(p. 265) England was conquered by these means many times before the Norman invasion, but "since William the Conquerer... all the kings that still succeeded did confirm the old laws, or else make new ones, to uphold that Norman conquest over us."(p. 114)

Winstanley enumerated the worst of these Norman laws and burdens specifically. William's greatest injustice was undertaken when he took away both the enclosures from the gentry and the commons from the common people, to distribute all the land to his Norman soldiers, and create the nobility and the "estates of the Norman gentry."(p. 123) He also had the laws written in Norman and French, "and then appointed his own Norman people to expound and interpret those laws, and appointed the English people to pay them a fee for their pains,"(p. 123) which created the trade of lawyers. To reinforce this structure William commanded that no man could plead his own cause in the courts, and he abrogated "that good and quiet course of ending controversies in a neighborhood," to bring the people "to Westminster... to have their causes tried."(p. 123) William was also responsible for establishing tithes to thank "the pope and clergy's good services in preaching... to persuade the people, to embrace him."(p. 123-4) As Winstanley saw it, William had "parcelled out the earth to some and denied it
to others;" therefore he stood as the conquerer "who was the cause of all our wars and divisions."(p.164)

Though the King had been _thrown out_, Winstanley realized that it was also necessary to cast out the laws created by his oppressive power. The people had not shed their blood and given their money so that the landlords of "Norman power" could continue to rule in tyranny, and they also had "not authorized any as yet to give away from them their purchased freedom."(p. 133) True freedom would not be established in England until there was respect for the poor as well as the rich, for if freedom was given to freeholders, priests, lawyers and lords of manors, but the poor were allowed no freedom, then English society was "a declared hypocrite, and all thy prayers, fasts and thanksgivings are and will be proved an abomination to the Lord."(p. 128-9) The time for reform had arrived, and "the spirit of Christ, which is the spirit of universal community and freedom, is risen, and is rising, and will rise higher and higher." (p. 88) Here Winstanley expressed the millenarianism of the Diggers, who sincerely believed that they were advancing God's work.

Their thought had the character of revelation, and the Diggers claimed that their program was showed them by a "voice" which told them: "Work together, eat bread together, declare this all abroad."(p. 88) Word of mouth, writings, and digging the commons were the only methods they took to advance their views, and their approach was explicitly pacifistic. The Diggers "abhor
fighting for freedom, [for] it is acting of the curse,... We will conquer by love and patience, or else we count it no freedom."(p. 190) The foundation beneath their program was that the Scriptures proved the earth was not made for some to be lords over it, but rather that "it was made to be a common livelihood to all, without respect of persons."(p. 99) They wanted to let the gentry have "their enclosures free from all Norman enslaving entanglements whatsoever, and let the common people have their commons and waste lands set free to them from all Norman enslaving lords of manors."(p. 115) Everyone was to have freedom, but particularly the common people, since "their estates were weakest and their misery in the wars the greatest."(p. 116) Nevertheless the Diggers assured the rich, "We shall meddle with none of your properties (but what is called commonage) till the spirit in you make you cast up your lands and goods."(p. 103) Their expectation was that the justice of their cause would prevail, and that once put into practice people would be convinced of its righteousness.

The Diggers were "resolved to be cheated no longer, nor be held under the slavish fear" of authority.(p. 104) They would take the common lands and woods for their own use and look upon the lords "as equal with us, not above us."(p. 104) They also claimed the right to cut the common woods and trees when in need, and asked for a boycott of any purchases of wood from lords that impoverished the commons by cutting down these trees. Nonviolence, obedience to God's law, communal labor, the refusal to enclose land,
a denial of wage labor, and a belief in the fundamental equality of men were the keystones of their program. They even offered that "If any of you that are the great ones of the earth, that have been bred tenderly and cannot work, do bring in your stock into this common treasury as an offering to the work of righteousness, we will work for you, and you shall recieve as we recieve."(p. 94) They also sought the removal of "tithing priests" and the "intolerable oppression either of bad laws, or of bad judges corrupting good laws."(p. 166)

The Diggers could easily justify the equity of what they asked for. First they pointed out that digging the commons broke no particular laws established by Parliament, "but only an ancient custom, bred in the strength of kingly authority." (p. 133) These customs, they argued, should be thrown out with the King, and not upheld under the Commonwealth. The National Covenant also supported their claims, because in it the people of England pledged to be faithful and sincere before the "Lord God Almighty." The people had undertaken a commitment to support just and godly proposals and had "covenanted to preserve and seek the liberty each of the other, without respect of persons."(p. 106-7) The National Covenant promised a reformation according to the Word of God, which the Diggers took to mean a restoration of "that primitive freedom in the earth" when it was "a common treasury of livelihood to all, without working for hire or paying
rent to any,... in which there is no respect of persons" position or standing in society. (p. 116)

The Diggers sought to redeem Parliament's promise to them that, "if we would pay our taxes and give free-quarter and adventure our lives against Charles... they would make us a free people.... We claim this our bargain by the law of contract from them, to be a free people with them, and to have an equal privilege of common livelihood with them." (p. 107) The Diggers could also prove they had free right to the land of England, and equal rights to a comfortable livelihood, "without owning any... to be either lords or landlords over us. And this we shall prove by plain text of the Scripture, without exposition upon them, which the scholars and great ones generally say is their rule to walk by." (p. 107) Another proof that they were owed what they claimed was "the righteous law of our creation, that mankind in all his branches is the lord of the earth and ought not be in subjection to any of his own kind." (p. 107) Finally the Diggers also appealed to reason by stating that one-third of the land of England "lies waste and barren, and her children starve for want" because the lords of manors will not suffer the poor to cultivate it. (p. 115) God himself "is the life of our souls and the support of our spirits in the midst of this, our sharp persecution from the hands of unreasonable men," (p. 179-80) and He would assure their eventual triumph, whether the authorities recognized the righteousness of their claims or not.
The hopes the Diggers had for their program were utopian in nature, but not that excessive if they could have managed to establish their system. They "would have none live in beggary, poverty or sorrow," (p. 90) and they felt that if the earth became a common treasury enmity in all lands would cease, and none would dare kill another. (p. 80) Selfishness would also disappear, for no one would desire, or need, more than another. None would seek dominion over others and no one would rule over, imprison, or oppress his fellow man. The commandments would be strictly observed, and the evil of private property would cease to exist when everyone worked in common. Money would also no longer "be the great god that hedges in some, and hedges out others... [for] surely, the righteous creator... did never ordain that unless some of mankind do bring in that mineral (silver or gold)... they should neither be fed, nor clothed." (p. 100) Theft would be eliminated, as none would claim title to the objects of God's creation nor be in need of anything. The Diggers would be "filled with sweet content, though we have but a dish of roots and bread for our food." (p. 90)

The Diggers felt they had asked for very little, except a chance to support themselves and to live in peace. They did not want to "take away other men’s rights," nor demand what was not theirs, though they insisted on receiving a share of the liberty they had helped to win and desired to "have no more gods to rule over us, but the king of righteousness only." (p. 136-7) They had stated their
case and undertaken their actions in the spirit of peace, reason, and equity, and all they asked of the authorities was to be given the consideration that they felt was due them. They were also quite prepared to defend themselves and their views to whoever attacked them. "Let your ministers plead with us in the Scriptures, and let your lawyers plead with us in the equity and reason of your own law; and if you prove us transgressors, then we shall lay down our work and acknowledge we have trespassed." Unfortunately the Diggers were never given this chance, though they certainly were attacked.

Gerrard Winstanley gives an enlightening account of "the most remarkable sufferings that the diggers" encountered at the hands of local authorities, when they put their program into action. (p. 205-6) First some of the Diggers were taken to Walton Church as prisoners, and there "were struck in the church by the bitter professors and rude multitude," before being freed by a justice. (p.205) Later their spades were taken away "by above a hundred rude people," while some were taken to prison at Walton and then brought before a justice in Kingston. Three of them had, as it turned out, been arrested for trespassing, "meddling with other men's rights," and violating "an act of Parliament (as they tell us) to maintain old laws," passed on February 17, 1649.(p. 112) The Diggers' experiences with the court system began when the judges refused to tell them what the charges were unless they would hire an attorney to speak for them.(p. 130) The Diggers replied that
they would plead their own case, for they knew no attorney they could trust, and made an offer to pay for a copy of the declaration. This too was denied, and again refused two court days later "so greedy are these attorneys after money, more than to justify a righteous cause." (p. 130)

One of the Diggers then announced to the court that they couldn't fee an attorney without willfully breaking the National Covenant and becoming traitors to the nation by upholding the old tyrannical and destructive laws. (p. 130) This was as far as they could get, so they submitted a petition to the court "because we would acknowledge all righteous proceedings in law, though some slander us and say we deny all law, because we deny the corruption in law and endeavor a reformation in our place and calling." (p. 131) The court refused to read their writing and the next court day only the plaintiff was allowed to speak before judgement, sentence, and execution were passed, resulting in a fine to each Digger of ten pounds, and the division of the plaintiff's court charges of 29 shillings and one penny among them. (p. 138, 139) The Diggers thought it a supreme injustice that the court would not let them speak for themselves, would pass sentence without both sides being heard, and would have forced them to give money to their enemies to speak for them. (p. 138)

Winstanley never got to present the case he could build against these proceedings in a court, but when he put it into one of his pamphlets he revealed a surprising degree of education for
a poor subversive. First it is "mentioned in 36. Ed. 3. 15. that no process, warrant, or arrest should be served till after the cause was recorded or entered," though Winstanley was not told the cause, and was informed by the Court Recorder in their first encounter that the cause had not been entered. (p. 132) The court also refused them a declaration on their succeeding appearances, and unconstitutionally prohibited them from making their own defense, for "in 28. Ed. 1. 11. chap. there is freedom given a man to speak for himself... without the help of any other lawyer." (p. 132) Fourthly "no plaint ought to be recieved or judgement passed, till the cause be heard and witnesses present to testify the plaint to be true, as Sir Edw. Coke 2. Part of Institutes upon the 29. chap. of Magna Charta fol. 51. 52. 53.; The Mirror of Justice." (p. 132) A revolution had been fought against prerogative power, and a King had been executed in its name, but Winstanley knew from experience that these abuses persisted, despite professions of reform.

Attacks on the Diggers soon multiplied as one of their houses was torn down, and their hoes and spades were cut to pieces. They were also hauled before the Council of War, where they refused to take off their hats to General Fairfax because he was "but their fellow creature." (p. 27) Another Digger had his house pulled down and again their spades were destroyed. One had his head wounded and a boy beaten, and a cart and wheels were cut in pieces, and a mare cut over the back when they went to fetch a
load of wood. (p.205-6) Then some of the Diggers were beaten by William Star and John Taylor, "and some men in women's apparel," with some being so badly hurt that they had to be brought home in a cart. (p. 206) Another house was then pulled down and the wood stolen, and some of the Diggers were arrested and put in prison. Men then came to Winstanley's and, without him knowing it, drove away four cows that he was tending for someone else. (p. 206, 138) Apparently this was enough for some of the lord's tenants to ride into the next town shouting that "the diggers were conquered," but Winstanley remarked that, "Truly it is an easy thing to beat a man and cry conquest over him, after his hands are tied as they tied ours." (p. 139) Some of Winstanley's friends got the cows back, and found that the animals had been beaten with clubs so badly "that the cows' heads and sides did swell, which grieved tender hearts to see." (p. 141) Winstanley noted that "though they see I cannot fight with fleshly weapons yet they will strive with me by that power," (p. 140) while also not allowing him to fight them judicially.

The locals continued to give the Diggers troubles by ruining all their corn in the fields, breaking their carts to pieces, and stealing their tools. More of the Diggers "were beaten by the gentlemen, with the sheriff looking on" and five were taken to White Lion Prison for five weeks. (p. 206) Men then came to Winstanley's at night and drove off eight cattle, even though the fine he had to pay was only eleven and a half pounds. The lords,
he noted, wanted to take the Digger's cows "to pay for the service of destroying them,"(p. 143) and had executed a sentence twice "at their prerogative pleasure."(p. 145-6) The authorities then combined their powers, and "the sheriff, with the lords of manors and soldiers standing by," caused some poor tenants to pull down another Digger house, allowing them to steal some more of the Diggers' goods.(p. 206) The next day the local preacher, Parson Platt, also became directly involved, when he sent men to pull down another house, turning "a poor old man and his wife out of doors to lie in the field on a cold night."(p. 206) The priests also asked people not to trade with the Diggers, and Winstanley noted that the authorities were "so furious," because in addition to digging on the commons, "we endeavor to dig up their tithes, their lawyer's fees, their prisons and all that art and trade of darkness, whereby they get money under color of law."(p. 147) Despite all the abuse he had received, Winstanley only desired of his enemies "that your actions toward your fellow-creatures may not be like one beast to another, but [that you] carry yourselves like man to man."(p. 151) The Digger's pacifist program had unrealistically expected that others would see the wisdom in their proposals and allow them their freedom, but the violent reaction they received only reinforced their already highly developed sense of injustice.

The Digger's defended themselves in their pamphlets, which were the only forum they were allowed, and continued to try to
point out to the authorities the consequences of ignoring their demands, without much success. They warned their oppressors that their violent actions broke the Covenant, and risked "pull[ing] the blood and cries of the poor oppressed upon your heads." (p. 116) The government had also ignored its own promises to grant freedom in return for support during the war. This "gave just occasion to the common people of England never to trust the fair words of a Parliament any more, as you were always slow in trusting the King." (p. 117) The Diggers claimed that the people were justified in losing their fervor for Parliament because of its breach of promises when it had the power to keep them, and its neglecting to give the poor their freedom by removing the burdens of kingly tyranny. (p. 117) Winstanley pointed out that keeping the old tyrannical laws joined Parliament with those who had been either ambiguous or enemies to their cause during the war, while casting "such as have been your true friends at the feet of the nation's enemies."

(p. 118)

Most tellingly Winstanley pointed out that "It will appear to the view of all men that you have cut off the King's head that you might establish yourselves in his chair of government, and that your aim was to throw down not tyranny, but the tyrant." (p.119) If Parliament had killed the King for his power and government, it was little better than a thief that killed "a true man for his money." (p.119) Winstanley stated that Parliament
should make its laws "in the light of equity and reason, respecting the freedom of all sorts of people" (p. 119) rather than further promoting the interests of those who already held too much power and wealth. Parliament had already favored the gentry, the clergy, the lawyers, and itself; now it was time for it to make good its promises of liberty and do something to help the poor oppressed, who had been ferociously attacked for trying to help themselves.

The Diggers were only able to go it alone for about a year before they were finally dispersed, and a twenty-four hour watch hired to prevent their returning. (p. 31) Although their revolution had failed, the Diggers left behind a body of ideas that were far in advance of their time. They had seen the connections between the institutions of private property, law, and sovereignty, and the role they played in the maintenance of the social structure. Covetousness "after pleasure, honor, and riches" (p. 190-1) was the root of all the evils in the world. It degraded man and created fear of being crossed by others and of being in want. This fear "begets hypocracy, subtlety, envy, and hardness of heart" which makes a man willing "to break all promises, ... to seek to save himself in others' ruin, and to suppress and oppress every one that does not say as he says, and do as he does." (p. 191) Hardness of heart created pride, which produced envy, "luxury, and lust of the flesh, [which] runs into all excess with greediness." (p. 191) The result is that "every one preacheth for
money, counsels for money and fights for money, to maintain particular interests" rather than the common good. (p. 91) Winstanley scorned those "that have the treasury of the earth locked up in... bags, chests, and barns and will offer up nothing to this public treasury; but will rather see your fellow-creatures starve for want of bread," than allow them the equal right to livelihood that they were given by the law of creation. (p. 101) Those who want merely to get the riches of the earth "into their hands, to lock it up from them to who it belongs... [will] be left without excuse in the day of judgement." (p. 102-3)

In discussing a world which was ruled by people of this sort, Winstanley could produce new examples of their hypocrisy on virtually every page of his writings. He makes a well-founded accusation that the powers of England had, through covetousness, placed the people into greater bondage and oppression than before, by reducing "the commoners to a morsel of bread." (p. 82) The Covenant and oaths had been broken, and self-willed, prerogative laws still stood, despite the extravagant claims of freedom the authorities banded about. He also cited his court case as a prime example of tyrannous hypocrisy and noted that there was no freedom or justice in allowing one side to speak and not another. The army too was guilty of hypocrisy, for "some of your great officers... [said] we diggers take away other mens' property by digging upon the common; yet they have taken... taxes and free-quarter to advance themselves, and allow us not that [which] they promised us." (p. 191)
Parson Platt was cited as an example of the false clergy, who preached the Scriptures, yet denied God, Christ, and the Scriptures, to such a degree that it seemed he knew nothing of them. (p. 176)

Winstanley informed the powers of England that their "verbal profession, without the pure righteous action, shews you generally to be outlandish men." (p. 213) "The common people are filled with good words from pulpits and council tables, but no good deeds;" and while they waited and waited for deliverance, greater bondage came instead. (p. 91-2)

Winstanley's fiercest attack was on the clergy, for he believed they were the "most vehement to break covenant and hinder them that would keep it." (p. 136) The priests, he claimed, sell themselves to the highest bidder and "will serve on any side, like our ancient laws that will serve any masters." (p. 167) They made profuse promises of an inward satisfaction of mind, so that the poor would be comforted "and made to wait with patience" for a deliverance that would never come. (p. 202) The clergy were "men that will enjoy the earth in reality, and tell others they must enjoy it in conceit." (p. 202) Winstanley had realized some 200 years before Marx, that religion was the opium of the people, and a principal means of their oppression. "False Christs and false prophets... destroy the creation under the cover of saving it; and the people sees them not." (p. 193)

Injustice and hypocrisy did not stop with the religious structure however. Winstanley quite correctly stated that the
laws "exist only to uphold civil property of honour, dominion, and riches one over another,"(p. 79-80) for "truly most laws are but to enslave the poor to the rich."(p. 201) "Prisons, whips, and gallows" were "but the laws and power of the sword, forcing and compelling obedience"(p. 180) to the will of authorities which, if they were just, would not need such measures. The very men that punish others for theft were thieves and robbers who had gained their power by enforcing their will on the weak, and had stolen the money of the poor by making promises they did not intend to keep. The poor were forced to work for the rich by laws which made beggars liable to whipping and prison. "The power of covetousness... does countenance murder and theft in them that maintains his kingdom by the sword... so that which is called a sin in the common people, if they act such things, is counted no sin in the action of Kings."(p. 135) Winstanley's court case had been ended speedily, but he noted that "when the attorney and lawyer get money they keep a cause depending seven years, to the utter undoing of the parties, so unrighteous is the law and lawyers." (p. 139) The best laws that England had, such as the Magna Charta, had he claimed, been "got by our forefathers' importunate petitioning unto the kings;... and yet these best laws are yokes and manacles tying one sort of people to be slaves to another." (p. 113) Winstanley had perceived that the laws were written by and for those in power; and he clearly saw the entire social structure of lords of manors, lawyers, priests,
teachers, landlords, and freeholders combined in opposition to him, and the claims he advanced for the poor.

This social structure produced some justifications for the power it had arrogated to itself, but Winstanley showed these claims were only hypocracies. The "imaginary teaching power" of university divinity was "Judas' ministry," for it made an outward show of devotion while actually delivering God "into the hands of the selfish power." (p. 233) This religion denied Christ as the universal saviour by electing some to salvation and a place in heaven, while at the same time thrusting "others into hell never to come out." (p. 193) "Imaginary kingly power" relied on the power of the sword to elevate some above their fellow men, while placing others in bondage. "Imaginary juridicature" was indeed "but the declarative will of the conquerers." (p. 234) The lawyer too promised to save others, but "at last saves himself and destroys others and laughs at others' loss." (p. 194) Buying and selling of the earth, i.e. the institution of private property, was also a type of "covetous self-love" by which a rich man cheated honest men to get "the fulness of the earth into his hands, and lock it up... from others,... [saying] this is righteous and God gave it him." (p. 194) These were "the four beasts which Daniel saw rise up out of the sea: [in] Daniel 7.3" (p. 234) to enslave mankind. Winstanley demanded a complete reformation, for "if one truly fall, they all must fall." (p. 194)
At the heart of the system of oppression was private property. This was what covetousness drove men to seek, and this was what unjust laws were established to maintain. "Pleading for property and single interest divides the people of the land and the whole world into parties, and is the cause of all wars and bloodshed and contention everywhere."(p. 90) Though capitalism was only just beginning, materialism had already overthrown the spirit of cooperation and equity. Competition and the "cheating art of buying and selling" were rending society into the two great classes of haves and have-nots, and despite the professions of liberty that had prompted Winstanley's plea, this division was continuing and worsening. "Surely if these lords and freeholders have their enclosures established to them in peace, is not that freedom enough? Must needs they have the common land likewise?"(p. 118) Unfortunately reason was never strong enough to stand in the way of avarice, then or now.

Winstanley had also realized the nature of the alienation inherent in any economic system based on private property. Man had first been alienated from the state of nature that had existed when God had "made the earth to be a common treasury of livelihood to whole mankind, without respect of persons."(p. 187) Man was also alienated from himself, when "the laws appointed the conquered poor to work for them that possess the land... (for such small prizes)" that the worker can not feed his family.(p. 201) The Diggers' theories fully realized that mans' labor, and hence his
life, were no longer his when he worked for a wage. Man was also alienated from his species when his "spirit was killed and man brought into bondage,... [as] a greater slave to such of his own kind, than the beasts of the field were to him."(p. 78) Winstanley was one of the first to realize the fundamental perversion of human relations that private property brought about. "All this falling out or quarreling among mankind is about the earth, [and] who shall and shall not enjoy it."(p. 191) Capitalism or "buying and selling is the great cheat that robs and steals the earth one from another. It is that which makes some lords, others beggars, some rulers, others to be ruled, and makes great murderers and thieves to be imprisoners and hangers of little ones, or of sincere-hearted men."(p. 101) Class position was hereby defined by Winstanley as a creation of private property, and he found that the amount of material goods one possessed had become the measure of a man, instead of his character or righteousness.

For this reason Winstanley utterly rejected the concept of sovereignty, as that which tried to legitimize placing one man above another. Sovereignty was "the power of unrighteousness... or the power of self-love ruling in one or many over others," enslaving those who in the creation are their equals, and denying an equal freedom in the earth to every one.(p. 163) Such a power was by its nature abusive, and it sharply contrasted with the "power of righteousness... of Almighty God, ruling the whole creation in peace and keeping it together."(p. 163) Earthly
governments could have no authority, for everyone was "subject to give account of his thoughts, words and actions to none, but to the one only righteous judge and Prince of Peace." (p. 101) The Diggers believed government would become unnecessary if everyone joined their program and lived by the law of God, rather than in the spirit of covetousness.

At the end of 1651 Winstanley addressed his final work to none other than Oliver Cromwell. The New Law of Freedom in a Platform stated "that the main work of reformation lies in this, to reform the clergy, lawyers and law; for all the complaints of the land are wrapped up in them three." (p. 280) He noted that nothing had been changed by the removal of the King, and that a true reform was overdue. The major change in this work was that experience had taught Winstanley that "because offences may arise from the spirit of unreasonable ignorance" (p. 292) laws had to be added to his program. If a man abused his neighbor or his neighbor's family by word or action he was to be punished. Provisions were also made to protect a person's house and furniture, as one might expect in the aftermath of the devastations the Diggers had suffered. None were to live idly off others' labors, and a system of annually elected officers was constructed to serve the community. Their duties were clearly enumerated and criteria were established to judge the fitness and principles of the candidates for office. In addition to local officers, courts, a
Commonwealth's Parliament, and a ministry were also proposed and their functions explained in detail.

Ministers were also to be chosen yearly, and they would have only three duties: To read the affairs of the Commonwealth, as brought by the postmaster; To explain the laws of the commonwealth; And to make discourses, not on religion but on history, the arts and sciences, and sometimes on the nature of mankind. This was to be a church of reason, which would provide "the way to attain to the true knowledge of God (who is the spirit of the whole creation)" by examining how He had "spread himself forth in every form." (p. 347) Since salvation was extended to everyone by God there was no reason to argue over dogma, and "no man shall be troubled for his judgement or practice in the things of his God, [if] he live quietly on the land." (p. 379) Everyone would have the power to make speeches during the services, and the minister would not "assume all the power to himself, as the proud and ignorant clergy have done" previously. (p. 347) "Then will knowledge cover the earth, as the waters cover the seas; and not till then." (p. 347)

Postmasters would be set up to disseminate news and information throughout the commonwealth, and all children would be educated in whatsoever trade they desired, even being allowed to change it if they wanted to. "There shall be no buying and selling in a free commonwealth, neither shall anyone hire his brother to work for him," though Winstanley was flexible on buying and
"For as, like a tradesman, I ask the highest price: Yet I may fall (if you will rise) upon a good advice." (p. 367) The fruits of the earth were to be gathered into warehouses, with the assistance of every family, and when any wanted they could take what they needed without the use of money. Common stables and livestock would also be maintained for the use of all. New "short and pithy laws" (p. 377) would be written, and Winstanley concluded his work with an example of 62 regulations that would completely establish his program. Winstanley's naive exhortations had been replaced with a more comprehensive and systematic exposition of a system of government that would uplift mankind, increase commerce, and provide a community of equality. His views had matured, but he had not left behind his idealistic goal of complete equality and freedom.

Winstanley left a remarkable statement to posterity, but he attracted little attention in his own day, except from those who would persecute him. The reforms he desired never came about, and England soon found it had gotten a new "king" in the person of its supposed liberator, Oliver Cromwell. Winstanley had accurately observed that, "Every one talks of freedom, but there are but few that act for freedom, and the actors for freedom are oppressed by the professors of freedom." (p. 129) He knew why the authorities would not let him speak: For "it is clearly seen that if we be suffered to speak we shall batter to pieces all the old laws, and prove the maintainers of them hypocrites and traitors." (p. 142)
So it remained that "if thou wouldst know what true freedom is, read over this and my other writings," (p. 129) for it certainly could not be found anywhere else, then or now.

A

Excellent & clear presentation.

Diggel view.

My own extreme historic view.

Police, & rel. ideas.

Norman. Greek, then for invasion.

How in Egypt, & from one.

Religious, nature, verse, Deism.

May have consulted H.C. Mather, Jolners, H. W. Mather, & others.
BIBLIOGRAPHY