

THE DECLARATION OF CHARLES I FROM CARISBROOK CASTLE

IN ATTEMPTING TO PLACE English Civil War pamphlets into their historical and bibliographical context one often finds that problems arise from the issue of some of the more important pamphlets in several different states, or even editions, without any express sign of differentiation. The purpose of this note is to describe a case in which at least three different editions exist, but have not been distinguished, for instance in Donald Wing's *Short-Title Catalogue*.¹

The pamphlet in question is a Declaration² purporting to have been written by Charles I and dated 18 January 1647 (i.e. 1647/8) from Carisbrook Castle at a critical juncture in his affairs. The background to the pamphlet was the increasingly complex relationship between the King, Parliament and the Army in late 1647. On 4 June 1647 the King had been seized by Cornet Joyce as a prisoner for the Army. He had been held at Hampton Court, but had escaped on 11 November leaving behind him a manuscript Declaration addressed to the Lords and Commons and all his other Subjects. This Declaration set out the uselessness of his submitting to prolonged captivity and his desires for a properly grounded peace. It was published as a separate pamphlet³ and also included in the issue of *Mercurius Pragmaticus* for 9–16 November. *Mercurius* added, with perhaps pardonable exaggeration:

And now let the world judge whether this *Declaration* (so *concisely* and *pathetically* penned, so full of *honesty*, *elegancy*, *Ingenuity* and *tendernesse* toward his afflicted *Kingdom*) must not of necessitie convince the Consciences of his *Adversaries*, that he is as patient, and as wise a *Prince*, as ever was instructed by *Adversity*.

However, on 14 November the King was recaptured and imprisoned in Carisbrook Castle on the Isle of Wight.

The King thereupon sent a message seeking to negotiate peace by way of a personal treaty between himself and the two Houses of Parliament, covering such matters as religion, the militia and the arrears of pay claimed by the Army.⁴ His Message was read in the House of Commons on 19 November, “but”, said *Mercurius Pragmaticus*, “nothing was done upon it; for *Peace* is the least thing they aime at: Their chiefe care is to keep faire with the *Army*, whilst they pick up the *Profit* of the whole Kingdome.”⁵

Thereupon each side made strenuous efforts to convince the world that it was in the right. The King published several further messages seeking a personal treaty.⁶ Parliament responded by preparing four Bills for the King to pass into law dealing with the militia and validation of past matters transacted by Parliament, as well as making void any peerages created since mid-1642 and giving power to Parliament to sit perpetually with such adjournments as it thought fit. There seems never to have been any prospect that the King would assent to these Bills, but they were, of course, used as propaganda. They were drafted in late

November and given wide publicity long before submission to the King. There was much discussion as to the composition of the deputation that was to take them to the King at Carisbrook Castle. As *Mercurius Pragmaticus* put it:

But I admire at nothing so much, as there should be found such a jolly *pack* of strange *Creatures* as there are, to undertake the weighty businesse of carrying the foure *Bills* to his *Majesty*, when he told them long since, it was unreasonable they should expect him to passe any *Particulars* before the *Treaty* was agreed upon And yet there are I know not how many *Lords*, drawne into the busines, to make a fine gaudy shew among the *Islanders*, and dazle the eies of the *Kingdom*, now the *States* are to goe a *peace-catching*. And though I told you my Lord of *Pembroke* was become wise; yet see how a man may be deceived; for, here wee have him again with his glorious head-piece of *Diamonds*. . . . And because he would not be laugh't at alone, he hath got my L. of *Northumberland*s good company After him comes my Lord of *Salisbury*, a man in a *Trance*, that was wrapt into a religious *Cause*, no body knowes how Then there is my zealous Lord of *Warwick*, who . . . having beene *ship-wrack't* by Land, was resolved to trie his *Fortune* by Sea In the Taile of these comes my Lord of *Kent*, wadling along as *bigg* as ever he can *tumble*; and for feare he should *miscarry* by the way, he was to take my Lord of *Rutland* along for a *man-midwife*, that so (if possible) he maybe safely *brought to bed* of the *personall Treaty* in the Isle of *Wight*

These were the men that were appointed at first Commissioners in the busines; but being sick of the *Enterprize*, and vnwilling to become *Stalking-horses* to so simple a peece of *Mockery*, have made a shift (I heare) to come off with Credit, and sent my Lord of *Denbigh*, and my Lord *Montague* for their *Deputies* And because no *Mock-shew* of this *Reformation* is complete without a *mad-Priest* or two in it, two of the prime *Trades-men* of the *Assembly* (*Stephen Marshall* and *Philip Nye*) are gone along with them; these are the very *Capital* Letters of *Presbyterie* and *Independencie*: Such strange *Creatures* as *Pliny* never wrote of, and the like not to be seene in *Noah's Ark*; both of a distinct *Species*, And so the Affaire is like to thrive well, and you may gesse what the *Harvest* will be, when the *Houses* proceed crosse against *Scripture*, which commands them not to *plow* with an *Oxe* and an *Asse* together.⁷

With this inauspicious background, the four Bills were presented to the King on 24 December and rejected by him on the 28th. His formal Answer, which again presses for a personal treaty, was, of course, published.⁸ Propaganda continued. Parliament gave publicity to the four Bills,⁹ and the King's supporters to the proposal for a personal treaty,¹⁰ in each case continuing to do so long after

either the passing of the four Bills or entering into a personal treaty was within the realm of practical politics.

Meanwhile on 15 January 1648, matters came to a head. Parliament, noting the King's failure to assent to the four Bills, resolved that neither they nor anyone else (without their permission) should make any further address or application to the King, nor would Parliament receive any message from the King or allow anyone else to do so. Breach of this Order carried the penalties of High Treason. On 17 January, Parliament ordered that these resolutions should be forthwith printed and published and they were so printed the following day.¹¹

It was in response to this drastic step that there appeared the pamphlet which is the subject of this note. It is entitled *The Kings Declaration to all his Subjects, of whatsoever Nation, Quality, or Condition* and dated 18 January 1647 (i.e. 1647/8). The Catalogue of the Thomason Collection gives Thomason's date of acquisition as 18 January. The title page of the pamphlet gives no place of publication or name of printer or publisher. The text opens with a passage which is strikingly histrionic, even by the standards of Civil War literature:

AM I thus laid aside, and must I not speak for my self? No! I will speak, & that to all my People, (which I would have rather done, by the way of my two Houses of Parliament, but that there is a publick Order, neither to make addresses to, or receive Message from me) and who but you can be judge of the differences betwixt Me, and my two Houses? I know none else; for I am sure, you it is, who will enjoy the happinesse, or feel the misery, of good, or ill Government. . . .

It goes on to restate in summary form the King's reasons for refusing to assent to the four Bills and to press once again for a personal treaty.

I have examined three distinct editions of this pamphlet. In each case, the pamphlet is printed on a single quarto sheet, collating A⁴, [2] + 6 pages. A² and A³ are signed and the text begins on A²^r. Other details of the three editions are as follows:

1. EDITION A: Title page reads: THE KINGS | DECLARATION | TO ALL HIS | *SUBJECTS*, | Of whatsoever Nation, Quality, | or Condition. | [rule] | *Published by His Majesties | speciall Command.* | [rule] | [block ornament] | [rule] | Printed in the Yeare, 1648.

2. EDITION B: Title page reads: THE KINGS | DECLARATION | TO ALL HIS | *SUBJECTS*, | Of vvhatsoever Nation, | Quality, or Condition. | [rule] | *Published by His Majesties | special Command.* | [rule] | [six ornaments] | [rule] | Printed in the Yeare, | 1648.

It corresponds line for line with edition A save for variations in spelling and punctuation, for the moving of one word from line 27 to line 26 in A⁴^r and for a misprint discussed below.

3. EDITION C: Title page reads: THE KINGS | DECLARATION | TO ALL HIS | *SUBJECTS*, | Of whatsoever Nation, Qualitie, | or Condition. | [rule] | *Published by His Maiesties | Speciall Command.* | [rule] | [seven ornaments] | [rule] | Printed in the Yeare, | 1648.

The letter C in *SUBJECTS* comes from the wrong fount. The copy examined has poor impressions of the title page ornaments, but three of them appear to correspond to ornaments used on the title page of edition B. Similarly, although the impressions are poor, the ornaments used at the head of A2^r appear to correspond to those in edition B. This edition, however, differs from the other two in having 33 lines of type per page (excluding the catchwords) as against 32. It does not correspond line for line with the other editions, but it does correspond page for page save that two and a bit words have been displaced between A3^v and A4^r. Save for spelling and punctuation and for a misprint discussed below, the text is the same as that in the other two editions.

The text has been reset completely between editions. However, the close similarities between the three editions make it clear that (unless there is another edition which I have not seen) each of the two later editions was set from an earlier edition. It is of some interest to attempt to determine the order of printing of the three editions. The major evidence on this point comes from misprints on the first page of text in editions B and C. The relevant passage in edition A reads:

And we all pretend who should run fastest to | serve you;
without having a regard (at least in the first | place) to particular
Interests:

In edition B, it reads:

And we all pretend who should run fastest to | serve you;
without having a regard (at least fn the | place) to particular In-
terests:

In edition C, it reads:

And wee all pretend who should | run fastest to serve you,
without having a regard (at | least in the place) to particular In-
terests:

The reading in edition B has an obvious misprint, while that in edition C is nonsense. The obvious explanation is that the reading in edition B arose from faulty copying of edition A, while the reading in edition C arose from a compositor's unsuccessful attempt to correct the misprint in edition B. It follows that the order of editions was A, B, C and that B was set from A and C was set from B. No other order is susceptible to convincing explanation.

Such other internal evidence as is available supports this conclusion. The close similarity between editions A and B makes it clear that one was set from the other, but apart from the abovequoted passage does not give any convincing evidence of order of priority. Equally, there are the following similarities between editions B and C:

(a) A3^r line 22 begins “their dissent;” in edition A and “their dissent:” in edition B. The corresponding passage in edition C has the same punctuation as in edition B.

(b) A3^v line 20 ends “*My Conscience and Honour;*” in edition A and “*My Conscience, and Honour;*” in edition B. The corresponding passage in edition C has the same punctuation as in edition B.

(c) A3^v lines 27 and 28 refer to “S. | *Albans*” in edition A and “Saint | *Albans*” in edition B. Once again, edition C corresponds to edition B.

There is one small pointer in the opposite direction in the body of the text. A3^v line 14 ends “patience,” in edition A and “patience” in edition B. The punctuation in edition C corresponds to that in edition A. On balance, however, such evidence as there is in the body of the text links edition C with edition B rather than with edition A. Thus the other evidence (such as it is) confirms the conclusion that the order of editions is A,B,C.

The presence of no fewer than three editions suggests that the pamphlet had substantial sales. But it was already too late for propaganda of this sort to have much effect. Parliament sought to justify its resolutions of no further address by publishing a long Declaration¹² setting out grievances over the King’s entire reign, ranging from an old allegation that he had been implicated in the alleged poisoning of King James by the Duke of Buckingham to his failure to pass the four Bills. Thereafter an increasing bitterness is expressed towards the King personally and, although further attempts were made at accommodation later in the year, any prospect that the views set out in the present pamphlet might be accepted vanished for ever.

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NOTES

¹ *Short-Title Catalogue of books printed in England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and British America and of English books printed in other countries 1641-1700* (Second edition, New York, 1972).

² *The Kings Declaration to all his Subjects, of whatsoever Nation, Quality, or Condition.* Printed in the yeare, 1648. (Wing C2264)

³ For instance, *His Maiesities most gracious Declaration left by him on his table at Hampton-Court, Novemb. 11. 1647*: London, Printed for Richard Royston. 1647. (There are several editions of this pamphlet, not all of them identified by Wing. Wing C2507 is another edition.)

⁴ *His Majesties Message to both Houses of Parliament, from the Isle of Wight, Novemb. 17. 1647.* London: Printed by Robert Austin. 1647. (Wing C2465)

⁵ *Mercurius Pragmaticus* 16 to 23 November 1647.

⁶ For instance, *His Majesties most gracious Message to his two Houses of Parliament, in prosecution of peace by a personal treaty. From Carebrook Castle. Decemb. 6. 1647.* London, Printed by John Bill. 1647. (Wing C2517)

⁷ *Mercurius Pragmaticus* 14 to 21 December 1647.

⁸ For instance, *His Majesties most gracious Answer to the bills & propositions presented to him at Carisbrook Castle in the Isle of Wight, Decemb. 24. 1647.* London, Printed for Richard Royston, 1648. (Wing C2500). See also the edition printed for John Wright and dated Jan. 3. 1647. (i.e. 1647/8. This is Wing C2110.)

⁹ *The four Bills sent to the King to the Isle of Wight to be passed.* London: Printed for Edward Husband, March 20. 1647. (i.e. 1647/8. This is Wing E1541.)

¹⁰ *The Kings most gracious messages for peace, and a personal treaty.* Printed in the year, 1648. (Wing C2520)

¹¹ *A Declaration of the Lords & Commons assembled in Parliament; with the Resolutions of both Houses concerning the King.* London, Printed for Edward Husband, Jan. 18. 1647. (i.e. 1647/8. This is Wing E1487.)

¹² *A declaration of the Commons of England in Parliament assembled; expressing their reasons and grounds of passing the late Resolutions touching no farther Address or Application to be made to the King.* London, Printed for Edward Husband, Feb. 15. 1647. (i.e. 1647/8. This is Wing E2559. See also Wing E2456, which covers substantially the same ground.)

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