

## Guide to readings (David Como):

The paper I will be delivering uses the deposition of Giles Creech, a young London cutler, who approached the authorities in 1638, claiming to have “been of fowerteene severall Religions ... being yet but a young man” – on the face of it, a case of “conversion” run amok. In particular, Creech alleged that he had been associated with several different cells of “Familists” and “Antinomians,” identifying some of his erstwhile co-religionists. The paper uses Creech’s allegations as a platform for thinking about the broad religious transformations that led to the emergence of the sectarian explosion of the English Revolution. In some ways, the paper represents a sequel to my first book, which examined antinomianism prior to the English civil wars (which also, as you will see, made use of Creech’s deposition). The article here is an offshoot of a much broader book project on radical parliamentarianism during the English civil war and revolution.

The documents included are probably best read in the following order:

### Secondary sources:

1) *Blown by the Spirit: Puritanism and the Emergence of an Antinomian Underground in pre-Civil-War England* (Stanford, 2004). 1-9, 33-46. This excerpt from my book seeks to provide an account of what seventeenth century English people meant by “antinomianism.” It also provides a very brief overview of the history and structure of the antinomian community prior to 1640, offering a prelude to the detailed analysis and reconstruction offered in following chapters.

2) Geoffrey Nuttall, “James Nayler: a Fresh Approach,” *Journal of the Friends’ Historical Society*, supplement 26 (1954). A brief overview, by one of the great twentieth century historians of puritanism and Quakerism, of what Nuttall deems the “Familist milieu” of the late 1640s and 1650s. Nuttall introduces a number of the figures and groups that will be discussed in my paper.

### Primary sources:

3) *Blown by the Spirit*, 469-73 (included at the end of the PDF containing the other selections). A concise example of what I term “perfectionist” antinomianism. It is clearly inspired by the writings of the messianic founder of the Family of Love, H.N. It was copied into the diary of Edward Howes, probably in the 1640s, along with a translation of a song from the *Cantica* of H.N. Although brief, the manuscript contains interesting hints as to how self-identifying Familists imagined their spiritual progress, including what might be termed “conversion.”

4) The information of Giles Creech (1638). This is the document that serves as the starting point for my paper. I wanted to give you a chance to see it, to assess for yourselves both the challenges and possibilities embedded in this sort of hostile and partisan account of alleged sectarian heterodoxy.

5) *The Power of Love* (1643), excerpts. One of the most famous pamphlets of the English civil war, this tract is traditionally ascribed to William Walwyn, the Leveller propagandist. It offers an unvarnished version of the type of divinity routinely denounced as “antinomian” during the period, but also contains remarkable social and political observations that hint at the mounting radicalism within some sections of the militant parliamentary front during the civil wars.