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Reformation religious identities and the fluidities of confessional allegiance: the world according to Sir William Monson

Michael Questier

Department of Theology, Centre for Catholic Studies, Durham University, Durham, UK

ABSTRACT

At some point in the late 1620s or early 1630s, the long-serving naval officer, Sir William Monson, took the time to set down his thoughts about recent history, particularly of the Reformation in the English Church, the success (or lack of it) of the so-called Protestant cause, and of what appeared to him to be a slew of corruption which he associated with an unchecked tendency to puritanism. However, Monson was not just any run-of-the-mill Church-of-England conformist. As his, admittedly, often bizarre and even rambling text made clear, he had internalised some of the sharpest edges of what one might term the 'Catholic' account of the post-Reformation. But despite his family's reputation for having such tendencies, he, it seems, never went into separation. It is, therefore, worth revisiting his words to see how contemporaries in the early seventeenth century could think about their political and religious identity, and how they applied their thoughts in this respect to the political situations in which they found themselves.

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There are some issues on which historians will probably never agree. One of those issues is the pace of (Protestant) reform in the English Church at, and after, the Reformation, and whether there came a point at which the reform of religion was so embedded in that Church that there was no going back. Most of the current historiography operates on the basis of a belief that there was such a point of no return, even if scholars are still undecided on when that point was.

Linked with this is the much debated issue of religious identity – that is, what we call those who were members of the English Church. The terms of art used here are mainly contemporary ones, because contemporaries did style themselves, and others, using various labels – Calvinist, Anglican, puritan, Arminian, Catholic, and all the rest; but the modern debate about exactly who was who, and what, in the post-Reformation Church tends to go round and round in circles because those terms, even when applied by those who knew what they were talking about, were themselves capable of

CONTACT Michael Questier michaelquestier@aol.com Department of Theology, Centre for Catholic Studies, Durham University, Durham, UK

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a considerable latitude of interpretation.[1] Notoriously, there has been little consensus about how far the term 'Anglican' has a stable contemporary meaning.[2]

One of the ways, though, that contemporaries established what they took to be their own and others' religious identity was through attempting to make sense of the years of change up to their own time. As Felicity Heal argues, one striking feature of John Foxe's work was that 'a strong indigenous chronicling tradition was transformed [therein] into a remarkable narrative of [Protestant] ecclesiastical identity'. By the end of Elizabeth's reign, 'Englishmen had been fully trained in the process of thinking historically' under a Protestant rubric 'about their Church as well as their nation'.[3]

That was, however, a far from linear process. Many contemporary commentators whose world view was a resolutely Reformed Protestant one seemed to be convinced that the future might not be either unalterably stable or Protestant.[4] Notoriously, very late in Elizabeth's reign, Sir Francis Hastings, in a work entitled *Humble Motives for Association to Maintaine Religion Established* (1601), contended that the Church of England was, whatever people might think, full of those who, for want of a better word, could be described as papists. Allegedly, the pope could 'dispense' even with 'papists' who were 'ministers in our churches, provided they maintain some one point of popery or other'. The same sort of people could be 'magistrates in our commonwealth' as well, as long as they were willing to prevent their co-religionists coming under the hammer of the penal law.[5]

These claims were ten-a-penny, and, of course, not difficult to make, not least because 'popery' was as unspecific a contemporary label as any other. Those who identified as Protestants might categorise as 'papists' those who differed from them over the government of the Church, and other matters, whether such people were in any sense (Roman) Catholics, just as Protestants (of a certain sort), in turn, might be identified as puritans by those whom they attacked as papists. The identification of papists depended, inevitably, on what sort of 'Protestant' was doing the identifying. William Laud could condemn popery, but not in the same way (obviously) as, for example, William Prynne.

In the scholarly literature on the subject, there has been an uncertainty about how far such name-calling bore any resemblance to reality, assuming, of course, that there is a stable 'reality' out there, simply waiting to be discovered. What one does have, to be sure, are legal records concerning the prosecution of people, assumed or known to be 'Catholics', who had gone into separation. But, often enough, one can only speculate about what such people thought. It is yet more difficult to decide what, for want of a better word, crypto-Catholics thought. Even if one could locate all those, or even some

[1] I do not attempt to give a bibliography here of this issue, but see Lake and Questier, 'Introduction'.
[2] See here, especially, Anthony Milton's definitive introduction to the problems associated with use of the term 'Anglican': Milton, 'Introduction: Reformation, Identity, and "Anglicanism", c. 1520–1662'. For the difficulties associated with using the term 'Catholic ', see Shagan, 'Introduction',15.
[3] Heal, 'Appropriating History', 131.
[4] For the anxiety-ridden discourses of contemporary anti-popery, see Wiener, 'The Beleaguered Isle'; cf. Lake, 'Anti-Popery: the Structure of a Prejudice', for the rationalism of anti-popery.
[5] *Humble Motives for Association to Maintaine Religion Established. Published as an Antidote against the Pestilent Treatises of Secular Priests*, 30; Lake and Questier, 'Thomas Digges, Robert Parsons, Sir Francis Hastings, and the Politics of Regime Change in Elizabethan England'; cf. *A Briefe Censure upon the Puritane Pamphlet: Entituled, (Humble Motyves, for Association to Maintayne Religion Established.)*, 51–3. For a virtually identical claim to Hastings's, made by the former seminary priest John Copley in 1612, see Copley, *Doctrinall and Morall Observations*, sig. q4^{v}.

of those, whom contemporaries regarded as crypto-Catholics, how would one know what they believed, that is, if they ever went so far as to record their opinions?

These thoughts were in my mind when I came across a draft history of the Reformation period penned by a long-serving naval officer called Sir William Monson. The manuscript was written by him at some point, as it seems, in the very late 1620s or the very early 1630s. He gave it the somewhat unsnappy title of 'Certain Observations that are not worthy of the title history that hapned to England since the yeare 1558 and before'.[6] The text is 156 pages in length, and somewhere under 35,000 words. As we have it, it remains incomplete, and essentially unpublishable. There is a copy in the Harley papers, the provenance of which is unclear, but this does suggest that it did not remain entirely private.[7]

Monson's text set out a version of the historical past interspersed with a range of comment about other topics.[8] As we shall see, at various points it draws on the hardest of hard-line Catholic accounts of the change of religion in England. Monson, however, was a high-ranking crown servant and, as far as we know, a complete conformist.[9] Not only that, but he had been a great Elizabethan naval warrior, not least against the Armada in summer 1588. He then served as the earl of Cumberland's vice-admiral, in 1589, and, at one stage, he was a prisoner of war.[10] He subsequently attached himself to the earl of Essex, whom he served as flag captain in April 1596, and at Cadiz (he was knighted there on 27 June) he was conspicuously successful. In 1597 he was with Essex in the Azores expedition. Then, during 1599, when it was believed a Spanish invasion force might come again, he commanded a vessel under Lord Thomas

[6]The manuscript of Sir William Monson's 'Certain Observations that are not worthy of the title history that hapned to England since the yeare 1558 and before' [hereafter, Monson] was once in the library of Sir Robert Throckmorton, 4th baronet, and subsequently in the Southwark Roman Catholic Cathedral archives; it was deposited there with Canon Tierney's papers, given to Bishop Thomas Grant; see also Ushaw College Library, Special Collections, UC/P25/7/827: John Lingard to Mark Tierney, 28 October 1842, sending to Tierney 'two thin small folios, sent me by Dr Fletcher', one of which was the 'Certain Observations'. The manuscript was purchased by the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Osborn fb253; http://www.christies.com/lotfinder/books-manuscripts/sir-william-monson-manuscript-on-paper-5050836-details-aspx. As Michael Hodgetts has pointed out to me, Sir Francis Throckmorton, 2nd baronet (1641–1680) married Ann Monson (c. 1640–1728); this may explain how Monson's manuscript came to be in the Throckmorton family's possession. As for the date of composition of Monson's manuscript, at one point, the author refers to the Dutch 'taking some merchants' ships of the Honduras in the West Indies, 1628' (Monson, 107) and subsequently, he notes a military engagement in 1629 (the 'beleaguering the burse', when 'to divert you the enemy forced the passage of the River of Izzell'): Monson, 130. At another point, Monson writes of the Dutch that 'you are now entered into your climacterical year of 63 since your revolt began': ibid., 144. The start of the revolt can be fixed at various points from 1566 to 1568 – so Monson may have been writing at any point between 1629 and 1631, i.e. at exactly the point that the Anglo-Spanish peace looked set to wreck Anglo-Dutch relations.

[7]BL, Harleian MS 1579, fols. 3^{v}–38^{v} et seq. There are minor variations between this copy and the one in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

[8]For Monson's Catholic associations, see e.g. *Report on the Manuscripts of the Marquess of Downshire*, V, 144 (Sir Ralph Winwood to William Trumbull, 20 February [1615], asking 'in what manner Sir William Monson's son is bred up' at Liege, 'with whom he converses, and whether he be not wholly popish'); see also TNA, SP 77/12, fol. 31^{r} (Trumbull to Winwood, 4 March 1616, passing information against Monson concerning the Overbury case). For Monson's son John's aggressive claim in May 1623 that King James was a Catholic, 'whatsoever [he] . . . did shew himself', see Questier, *Stuart Dynastic Policy and Religious Politics, 1621–1625*, 48. For Sir William's own anti-puritanism, see his 'True and Exact Account of the Wars with Spain . . . ' (which appeared in print only in 1682): *A True and Exact Account of the Wars with Spain, in the Reign of Q. Elizabeth . . . written by Sir William Monson . . .* (London, 1682); BL, Sloane MS 43, fol. 2^{r} et seq.; see also *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [hereafter *ODNB*], *sub* 'Monson, Sir William' (article by A. Thrush) [hereafter Thrush, 'Monson'].

[9]Sir William and his brothers Sir Thomas and Sir Robert were all conformists (Thrush, 'Monson'), though in the 1630s Sir Thomas was referred to as a recusant. For Sir Robert Monson, who was described in 1618 as a 'known favourer of popish recusants', see *The House of Commons 1604–1629*, V, 354, citing TNA, STAC 8/151/8. Sir William's second son, William, was, however, a ship money defaulter and took parliament's side in the civil war, and attended the court which tried the king, though he did not sign the execution warrant. He was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1661: Thrush and Ferris, *The House of Commons 1604–1629*, V, 356–8.

[10]Hammer, *The Polarisation of Elizabethan Politics*, 258–9.

Howard.[11] Monson's last major military venture against the Spaniards started in March 1602 when he served as Sir Richard Leveson's vice-admiral in a venture, following the defeat of the Spaniards at Kinsale, to prevent any further Spanish incursion in the British Isles, and to intercept the silver fleet. Leveson failed in this task, but Monson, apparently single-handedly, scored a massive success in Lisbon harbour in taking the *St Valentine*.[12]

This was the CV of a military and political insider – and on 1 July 1604, Monson was appointed admiral of the narrow seas, probably at the direction of his patron Thomas Howard, now earl of Suffolk.[13] Monson's career to this point reminds one of Robert Cross's account of how easy it was for some of those Elizabethan military men who had been involved in the war against Spain to turn off their hostility to the Spaniards once the peace was concluded.[14]

But, in the mid-Jacobean period, Monson's record as a war hero was not sufficient to protect him from the reaction against alleged popery at the court – a reaction which followed the Palatine marriage alliance for James's daughter, Elizabeth. Like his brother Sir Thomas, who was a courtier attached to the earl of Northampton (d. 1614), Sir William Monson was disgraced during the Overbury scandal.[15] Sir William was arrested in December 1615 after James was informed that he was taking money from Spain; he was sent to the Tower in January 1616, and he lost his naval post. Up until April 1616 he was periodically interrogated about his contacts with the archducal regime in Flanders, though he retaliated, when questioned in mid-April 1616 by Francis Bacon and Lord Ellesmere, by denouncing what he took to be the perfidy of the Dutch.[16] He was released in the middle of July 1617, but not reinstated. His son William was used in an attempt to topple Sir George Villiers, which did not work; and his patrons, the earl and countess of Suffolk, were brought down in 1619.[17]

Still, the new political turn in the early 1620s, associated with the king's policy towards Spain, allowed him to recover something of his former influence. In March 1623, the regime asked for his opinion about how to seize control of the North Sea's fisheries from the Dutch, a topic on which he was only too ready to give his views.[18] This was a subject on which Monson had formerly tried to approach the earl of Northampton.[19] A number of

[11]As Andrew Thrush points out, Howard's wife was Lady Catherine Knyvett; and it must have been her influence which then secured Monson's election to parliament in 1601 for the borough of Malmesbury, which was under Knyvett control: Thrush, 'Monson'.

[12]Thrush, 'Monson'; see also *Megalopsychy*.

[13]Monson's function here was to maintain peace in the Channel, that is, between the Spaniards and the Dutch; see e.g. TNA, SP 94/11, fol. 152^{r-v}. The Spanish court must have known of his animus against the Dutch and he was soon in receipt of a sizeable Spanish pension: Thrush, 'Monson', citing Loomie, *Toleration and Diplomacy*, 54.

[14]See Cross, 'To Counterbalance the World'.

[15]In the trial proceedings, Sir Edward Coke charged Sir Thomas Monson with atheism and compared him with the Jesuit Henry Garnet. It seems that Coke anticipated that Sir Thomas could be pumped for evidence of a Hispano-Catholic conspiracy involving the disgraced earl of Somerset: *House of Commons 1604–1629*, V, 355; Bellany, *The Politics of Court Scandal in Early Modern England*, 72–3, 77, 78, 190, 248–9; *ODNB, sub* Monson, Sir Thomas (article by A. Bellany). Sir Thomas Monson was freed and was pardoned in January 1617.

[16]Thrush, 'Monson'; London, Archivum Britannicum Societatem Jesu 46/24/10 (Penelope Renold: transcripts and photocopies), II, no. 54, p. 200.

[17]Thrush, 'Monson', citing Oppenheim, *The Naval Tracts of Sir William Monson*; Bellany, *The Politics of Court Scandal*,193, 195, 196; *Spain and the Jacobean Catholics*, II, 105; *Report on the Manuscripts of the Marquess of Downshire*, V, 144; *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, I, 386, II, 127, 144.

[18]Thrush, 'Monson'; see also Hammer, 'Myth-Making: Politics, Propaganda and the Capture of Cadiz in 1596', 641.

[19]Thrush, 'Monson'. Monson had been a backer of the publication of Tobias Gentleman's *England's Way to Win Wealth*, which urged the support of the English fishing industry. For Sir Tobie Matthew's recruitment, later, to that general project (fronted by the lord treasurer, Richard Weston, and incorporating a range of Catholics) designed to claw back, from the Dutch, control over the fishing trade in the North Sea, see Feil, 'Sir Tobie Matthew and his Collection of Letters', 208–9, citing TNA, SP 16/231/15. i, SP 16/231/16.

commentators associated this with a royal turn towards modes of rule that were incompatible with the political sense and impulses of successive parliaments and, eventually, a style of royal government that was absolutist, looking to enforce prerogative taxation, and vulnerable, in turn, to denunciations of popery, associated with the rise of, as some saw it, Arminianism.[20] By 1628, in the third of his books on his naval career, Monson was advising something like the ship money projects of the 1630s.[21] There were rumours in the later 1620s that 'church Catholics', that is, crypto-Catholics, were offering advice to Charles I on how to raise prerogative excise-based taxation.[22] Monson served as a vice-admiral in the first ship money fleet under the earl of Lindsey. While one might assume that he would not have baulked at military service (again) against Spain in the 1620s, by the 1630s he was telling Charles to launch a pre-emptive strike against the Dutch. On 9 May 1637 he was appointed to the recently reconstituted council of war. In addition, in 1638 he wrote a piece entitled 'How to make war upon Scotland if they follow their rebellious courses', while, in 1639, he produced a treatise which made the case for collecting ship money.[23]

II

While Monson's public utterances were confined principally to military strategy and the advancement of trade, his 'Certain Observations' gives a vivid sense of the private ideological underpinnings for his political views. Here, his thoughts on the course of the Reformation, as well as incorporating many of his own personal concerns, focus on clusters of crucial contemporary political questions – monarchy and heredity, legitimacy, blood-right succession and consent, the extent of sovereign power and its limits, (non) resistance, the danger of evil counsel and the link between religion and the politics of virtue. He looks back as far as the 1530s, even though he is prudently less explicit about some of the pressing political questions of his own time. For instance, he has very little to say directly about parliament. His attempt to write a history of the Reformation functions as a reflection on the post-Reformation polity more generally.

Without reproducing the full structure of his draft history – something that is made quite difficult by his tendency to repeat himself – the outlines of his take on the Reformation are, in places, startlingly clear, and demonstrate how a conformist identity in the seventeenth century did not necessarily exclude an openly Catholic account of past politics. Thus, for Monson, the monarchy of Mary Tudor was a welcome reaction against the disorder and misrule which Monson associated with the Henrician Reformation. Her monarchy was founded on a legitimist triumph (she was 'lineally descended out of the great monarchies of England, Castile and Aragon'), as well as her own personal virtue and her religious orthodoxy. She was 'famous for her virtues and natural parts, as wisdom, clemency, mildness, bounty and courage' and 'famous in her sex, being the

[20]Lake, *On Laudianism*, 33, 63, 439.
[21]Thrush, 'Monson'. Monson also penned 'A Proposition to the Parliament', a paper which argued that parliament should order the collection of £20,000 each year in order to fund the king's navy: ibid.
[22]Nichols, 'The Discovery of the Jesuits' College at Clerkenwell', 38; McCoog, 'A Letter from a Jesuit of Liège (1687)?', 91–2.
[23]Thrush, 'Monson'. For Monson's association with the cause of naval reform, see Young, *Servility and Service*, 25–6, 27. Only a couple of years before his death in 1643 he was still writing about how to make war either on Spain, or on France or on the Dutch: Thrush, 'Monson'. For the sense that that, following the treaty of Vervins, and certainly after the 1604 Anglo-Spanish peace, support for the Dutch was not necessarily compatible with the national interest, see esp. Russell, *King James VI and I and his English Parliaments*, 180.

first absolute sovereign queen unto whom God gave entire rule over this realm'. She had overcome the usurpers who had intended 'to deprive her of her crown and dignity'; and she was 'famous to those of her religion by her constancy, not fearing any practice or peril to manifest her zeal therein'.[24]

All of this could be set off against the public corruption of the Henrician court, and the vileness of Henry VIII, that 'cankered viper', himself – a topic on which Monson dwells at some length. Henry had, 'after twenty and odd years of an allowed marriage', decided to divorce Katherine of Aragon, and then 'devised an act to absolve … subjects of their future obedience to' Mary herself and to 'deprive her of her right of inheritance'. Then, when she finally did inherit, the kingdom remained 'distracted in opinions of religion, and out of it sprang factions and practices to deprive the heirs of her father, and the true heirs of her grandfather, and to settle it upon a younger line without right or reason'. Though Mary had defeated the coup by Lady Jane Grey's supporters, when Mary attempted to 'reduce religion into the ancient state' in which it had 'continued … a thousand years', she 'incurred … the title of a persecutor' from 'her new opinionated subjects'. Her prudent determination to marry Philip II of Spain had been undermined by the delay in taking him as her consort; and that could be attributed to Henry VIII's misdeeds, and his susceptibility to evil counsel, when 'old virtues were shaken off, and new vices with the new religion crept in, and infected the whole commonwealth'. The 'misdoing of a prince is the scourge to his commonwealth, for his palace is like a fountain and spring that waters the whole kingdom', and there was no sin more dangerous than 'concupiscence'. There had never been a shortage of busybodies to 'nourish' princes' 'fleshly desires'. This had caused 'vice [to] abound' in the king 'and virtue was abolished'. Henry was urged on by the 'divines' who 'studied themselves to prove … the unlawfulness of the king's marriage with his brother's wife'. The 'professors of the ancient religion' were 'arraigned and condemned by these … novices'. A 'doctrine was invented of more liberty and freedom … than had been before taught or believed' which served as 'a good motive to increase the new congregation'. 'Now' also 'was found in the Scripture the king's supremacy with a penalty of death to him that believed it not, which' had been inexplicably a secret 'from the time of Moses to that very day'. After this, 'zeal and devotion' were held to be 'superstition'.[25]

The fracture of the direct line of succession was thus connected with the assault on traditional modes of religion. 'Houses' that were 'anciently dedicated to God and his service' were made 'dwellings and dens for thieves' and the 'places of altars' were made into 'ale houses' and 'stables'; every man struggled 'for them'.[26] In the first twenty years of Henry's reign, the king 'and his realm flourished', and that period was absolutely free from vice – apparently, 'all people lived in a sweet harmony'.[27] The good years ended when 'base flattery abused the king's integrity, for which way soever he lent his ears or looked with his eyes he had a false glass presented unto him to entice and allure him to lust'. Vices followed one upon the other, and the king was mired in 'his own lust and concupiscence' now that he had 'absolute power both temporal and spiritual'. So, 'whereas in the twenty and odd years of his reign he might have been styled a good

[24]Monson, 1.
[25]Ibid., 2–4.
[26]Ibid., 5.
[27]Ibid.

and a godly king', while he had Katherine, a 'queen of rare virtue and holiness' as his consort (and he 'himself confessed [it] at the assembly of the Blackfriars when his divorce was handled'), subsequently he had 'five wives in eight years' – a shocking prostitution of dynastic duty to 'fiery lust'. 'Mark what followed . . . two of them tasted the sharpness of a tyrannical sword and the sixth . . . had done the like if the king's sudden death had not given her life'.[28] Annoyingly, Monson rarely mentions the sources that inform his account. If, for example, he had read Nicholas Sander's excoriating text, *De Origine ac Progressu Schismatis Anglicani*, which relies so heavily on stories of court corruption in the 1530s, he does not explicitly mention it; and he certainly draws back from citing some of Sander's more shocking stories about King Henry.[29]

Monson's critique of Henry's reign extends to the Reformation after 1558. He acknowledges the 'peace' that Elizabeth enjoyed at home and her 'victories over her enemies abroad' and admits that she had the 'love of her subjects'.[30] But he discerned a poison in the further damage to true religion, caused by the decision of so many of her subjects to change their religion, and in her own assent to 'cruel and severe laws made against' Catholics, and the barbarity of the treatment of Mary Stuart.[31]

In places, Monson's account of Elizabeth's susceptibility to bad advice is reminiscent of the evil-counsellor rhetoric of the *Treatise of Treasons*, published in the early 1570s, even if Monson does not explicitly refer to it. That work was obviously Catholic-inflected, but its principal aim was, it claimed, the safeguarding of the line of succession from Henry VIII – and that was something that underwrote a broad arc of contemporary royalist/anti-republican sentiment in England. Elizabeth was, says Monson, 'unfortunate in the election of some of her counsellors who sought their own advancements . . . by innovations and altering [of] the State from the former government'.[32] She had tried to 'make the state of her realm better than when she found it'. But she had not taken the good advice of some, 'of noblest and ancient houses and blood', who 'advised the continuance' of the Mass and the Catholic religion, 'showing the danger of innovation by her father, brother and sister, alleging that, by that religion, she should have the love and league of foreign princes her neighbours and make the pope her friend, whose authority she had much cause to fear if her title' should 'come to a civil trial'. These 'lords', whoever they were, 'hoped by this means to settle the kingdom in peace, and themselves in that prosperity that their ancestors had enjoyed'. They feared, with reason, the rise of new men, on the make and apt 'to bring in innovation'.[33] The new men 'thought to rise by fishing in foul and troubled waters' and had no respect for ancient titles. 'Merit' was the new buzzword. They were 'skilful in the laws of the land [as]

[28]Ibid., 5–6.

[29]There are similarities also between what Monson says and sections of Thomas Stapleton's account of Sir Thomas More; see Stapleton, *The Life and Illustrious Martyrdom of Sir Thomas More*, 72 (Stapleton's claim that the Henrician court became corrupt after twenty years). Monson's account of Jane Seymour's death is in Sander, but there is no indication that this was actually Monson's source: Sander, *Rise and Growth of the Anglican Schism*, 138, text and n. 6; *A Treatise on the Pretended Divorce between Henry VIII. and Catharine of Aragon*, 280; *ODNB*, *sub* Seymour, Jane (article by B. L. Beer); see also Heylyn, *Ecclesia Restaurata*, 8.

[30]Monson, 13.

[31]Ibid., 14–15.

[32]Ibid., 15. On the subject of evil counsel, see Lake, *Bad Queen Bess?*, 5–7, and *passim*; *A Treatise of Treasons against Q. Elizabeth, and the Croune of England*.

[33]Monson, 15–16. Monson does not name these conservative advice givers, but this was the exactly the case that had been made by Viscount Montague in parliament in 1559: Questier, *Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England*, 119–23.

a means to advantage a prince and disadvantage the subject'. Also they 'had a woman to work upon, in the innocence of State' and they persuaded her towards 'a most absolute government over the Church and commonwealth'. Among the 'motives they insisted upon, as a policy to advance their credit and esteem with her Majesty, pretending nothing but the care and safety of her person, state and dignity' were, first, the 'the doubtfulness of her legitimacy' and the fact that 'the next heir and inheritor' was 'as absolute a queen as herself, over the Scottish nation', married to Francis II, 'both of them earnest in Catholic religion'. They advised her to 'run a violent course in her government, and rather to procure envy than pity from them that might prove her enemies'; and, to that end, 'the foundation of the building must be grounded upon religion and such a one', that is, Protestantism, 'as must be contrary to [that of] the competitor'. And so Elizabeth 'made profession of the Protestant faith with rigour to such that were not conformable to it'. At 'that time, Scotland was much perverse to their queen and her religion, whereby it was the easier to raise a faction against her'. The jealousy between them, however, was in large part the result of Francis II's decision to 'quarter the arms of England' and to style himself 'king of England'. All the while, the good king Philip II of Spain showed his 'fervent affection' to Elizabeth and served as her political best friend. He even returned to Elizabeth 'her sister's jewels'.[34]

This was the rhetoric of those conservatives whose opposition to the courses taken by Elizabeth did not necessarily result in separation from the national Church. For Monson, the subsequent military struggle against Spain was not fundamentally an ideological, and certainly not a Protestant, one. Although he had a record of valiant military service against Spain, now he said that, 'though the late wars betwixt that nation [Spain] and us have alienated our hearts from one another, yet laying aside spleen, and the natural enmity that is incident to mankind', the fact was that Spain was the natural ally of the English. Monson himself 'had heard' that Elizabeth, 'to her dying day, did acknowledge' Philip's 'noble favours and often' bewailed 'the former discourtesies that happened betwixt them'.[35] Indeed, had Elizabeth married Philip II 'she would have added happiness to his power' and between them they would have been able to 'right all [the] wrongs offered them'. This 'conjunction' would have 'abated the insolence of all seditious subjects'. There would have been neither 'disobedience' in Flanders to him nor in Ireland towards her. It would also have prevented the danger from Mary Stuart, in that there was any at all. In failing to secure a dynastic alliance of that kind, both of them, Elizabeth and Philip, had been unfortunate.[36]

That kind of sedition had been witnessed all across England, Scotland, France and Flanders. There were 'practices in Scotland' against Mary and, equally, the 'Huguenot faction in France was thought fit to trouble that king', Francis II, who was 'husband to the competitor'. The 'rebellious Netherlands' had been 'supported and maintained both in their religion and disloyalty against their prince'. After the death of Francis II, 'factions' were 'raised, and wars ensued' between Henry III and the house of Guise, Mary's relatives; and all this was underwritten with English money. The corruption of religion and of the State went hand in hand. It was this that led to the 'Catholic religion' being

[34]Monson, 16–18.
[35]Ibid., 19.
[36]Ibid.

'altered', and 'all that professed it [were] accounted of the queen of Scotland's faction which caused most bloody and unheard of laws against them'. 'All subjects' were 'animated against their sovereigns in other countries, as though they had designed the destruction of monarchy'. The queen of Scotland became Elizabeth's prisoner and suffered the 'most rigorous entertainment that was ever … practised upon [a] prince'. The 'denial' of the 'queen's supremacy' was 'made treason'. The 'rigour of the laws against Catholics kept them in awe' and 'the queen was made secure by constraint rather than [by] love'.[37]

Much of Monson's text argues that change of religion served primarily as a vehicle for attacking monarchical authority, that is, as much as it worked to introduce errors in religious belief, though it undoubtedly did that as well. This was not, however, merely a kind of religious traditionalism – in the sense of, as one might say, Catholicism without the pope. Looking back on the political events of the 1560s, Monson denounced the ill-wisdom of opposing 'the universal Catholic Church, a religion professed by the greatest part of Christians' and also of defying the pope. 'Giving the title of [the] supremacy' to the queen was simply absurd, thought Monson. This was not just because, 'by that authority, she might have preached and have exercised all other spiritual functions and ceremonies due to priesthood', but also because this served to 'exasperate all the Catholics in England, the queen of Scots being made the head of them, and prisoner amongst them'. Elizabeth became 'thereby sovereign but of half her subjects, if so many were Catholics'. Was it 'safety for her to run such perils of her life if the treasons against her had been true, as they [her counsellors] desired to have it published and believed'?[38] To Monson it was clear that evil counsellors had duped Elizabeth into a profession of Protestantism simply because it was 'opposite' to that of 'her competitor', for if the 'queen of Scots had lived Protestant, Queen Elizabeth should have declared herself Catholic'.[39] Elizabeth would have been well served to hear 'all men speak, that thought themselves wise by holding their peace'. The 'property of evil and splenetive counsellors is to wrest laws to their condition, and not their condition to the laws', and thus 'they alter and trouble the public peace for their own particulars'.[40]

In this respect, the Protestant Cause, as it was called, was inimical to monarchical authority and, as it happened, the national interest – as had been demonstrated in spades by the decision 'to join with the Huguenots of France against the young king [Charles IX] and to accept of Newhaven from … them, considering what ensued'. The Huguenots soon discovered that 'what we did was for our own ends and not theirs, and that the colour of [Protestant] religion was but a fair show to deceive' and the result was that the Huguenots 'drew their swords against us', and the English soldiers returned home carrying the plague infection.[41] Nor should Elizabeth have given 'aid to the rebels of Holland without affront offered from Spain or before the queen could draw her neighbour princes into association to ease her expense of the war for thereby grew the consumption of the wealth of this kingdom'. 'We have', said Monson, 'raised

[37]Ibid., 21–3.
[38]Ibid., 24. For a recent and comprehensive account of contemporary resistance theory, see Cuttica, 'Tyrannicide and Political Authority in the Long Sixteenth Century'.
[39]Monson, 28.
[40]Ibid., 27, 29.
[41]Ibid., 25; Questier, *Catholicism and Community*, 140.

a dangerous and base nation', the Dutch, 'who contest with us for prerogatives and other rights in all the quarters of the world'.[42]

Elizabeth had been unwise enough to force the Dutch towards Protestantism. 'At the beginning of the revolt', the Dutch were 'doubtful what sect to maintain, until the queen denied them assistance, unless they would show themselves of John Calvin's beliefs, whose doctrine gave more liberty, and showed itself more furious and turbulent where it was embraced, than all others', even though there were others in the United Provinces that 'thought their interpretation of the Gospel [to be] more sincere'.[43]

This had been all of a piece with the treatment, and eventual killing, of Mary Stuart, 'being in her Majesty's custody', especially 'considering she had a son of so great hope', secure in Scotland who had absolutely the best right to succeed Elizabeth in England, 'notwithstanding the sinister practices devised by parliaments to keep undeclared the lawful successor'. Here Monson echoed the Catholic political literature of the period which invested so heavily in the rights of the house of Stuart, despite the republican phase of some Catholic activists, in the later 1580s and early 1590s, when, on the grounds of religion, they opposed the claim of James VI as Elizabeth's successor.[44]

Monson saw James as the epitome of a dutiful prince who had negotiated his future relationship with the English nation with diplomacy and tact. In dynastic terms, James had made an excellent match with Anne of Denmark – not least because he had avoided antagonizing the English as he could have done, since the 'infanta of Spain' had been 'propounded [to] him'. Anne was 'daughter to Christian, king of Denmark', a 'professed friend' to Elizabeth 'that did not altogether dissent' from 'her in religion'.[45] This was a distinct contrast to the failures of English policy in this respect – in which the queen was manipulated by those around her. 'What dishonourable mock marriages did they put upon' Elizabeth 'to serve their turns of State to the disreputation of an English prince'! If the duke of Anjou had lived he would almost certainly have taken revenge for the way that the English had strung him along when he had sued, in the late 1570s, to be Elizabeth's consort.[46]

In all of this, there was an obvious link between contemporary anti-popery and what Monson, like many of his contemporaries, identified as puritanism. Elizabeth's bad counsellors had terrified her with the thought of the pope's authority, and had used that fear in order to force her into unwise courses. Their arguments were risible, 'as though the roving of a Romish bull could astonish, amaze and stagger all England'. How could the pope in fact 'prejudice the queen or her title here . . . [in] England who was in possession of the crown [and] applauded by all sorts of subjects at her entrance'? As 'her years increased, their loves' were 'augmented to her', principally because 'they esteemed her a gracious lady born, bred and lineally descended of the English line'. Pius V's excommunication of her had had no discernible effect at all: 'did any subject take hold of that sentence or esteem her the less queen or acknowledge the less sovereignty to her?' Just as Henry VIII's temporary disinheriting of Elizabeth had no effect, said Monson, the 'people's hearts' were not turned from her.[47] Monson evidently chose not to remember

[42]Monson, 25–6.
[43]Ibid., 28.
[44]Ibid., 26.
[45]Ibid., 27.
[46]Ibid.
[47]Ibid., 29–30.

that, during the later 1580s, a number of Catholics' hearts were very definitely turned from Elizabeth. William Allen notoriously referred to her as 'an incestuous bastard, begotten and born in sin of an infamous courtesan'.[48]

But Monson's main point remained – if 'innovation had not crept in and altered the whole face of an ancient and settled commonwealth', the pope would have confirmed Elizabeth's title and 'all princes under the pope's obedience' would have had to acknowledge it. There would have been fewer impediments to a good dynastic match for her.[49] The framing 'of a religion that must be opposite to the universal received Catholic Church' was positively damaging to royal authority. When the bible was translated into English, 'with advantage to their sect', 'admonitions to entice the ignorant people to the reading of it' stirred them up to 'insolence and . . . zeal', and 'everyone' made 'their fancy the true religion'. This liberty had 'infected' the foolish like a 'malignant plague' that 'to this day cannot be cured'.[50] Monson insists that Scripture has to be interpreted by reference to 'the authority of the Church', and he laments the rejection of traditional versions of central doctrines and practices – the Eucharist (the doctrine 'that Christ's body was really in the sacrament of the altar'), and a version of papal authority (since 'all [Church] councils' acknowledged the 'pope's supremacy'), purgatory, prayer for the dead, auricular confession, 'fasting and the chastisement of the body', 'public service in Latin', and so on; and, he added, 'we put ourselves upon predestination', and other controversies, so much so, that 'a learned man counting many of these contradictions aforesaid concluded that if an ass could speak but one word . . . , "nego", he would make as good a Protestant as the best of us'.[51]

III

It would have been almost impossible for a contemporary not to have identified this with a Romanised version of Catholic Christianity. But Monson's targeting of what he took to be the social and political consequences of a certain kind of Protestant doctrine as tending towards puritanism would have been compatible with the other kinds of contemporary anti-puritanism that were not dependent on any sort of confessional allegiance to Rome. He noted that a wrong opinion about free will and predestination not only led to violent disagreement in places such as 'Holland' among those who posed as 'reformers of religion', but, in addition, 'those reformers do so much detest the state of our English Church and bishops that are the governors of it as they term them the limbs of Antichrist'. Moreover, they 'call us, that defend the king's supremacy, idolaters'.[52]

Monson's anti-puritanism would, therefore, have dovetailed in some respects with the views of, as they are sometimes called by scholars, avant-garde conformists – those whom some contemporaries, by the 1620s, were calling Arminians. Just as churchmen such as Lancelot Andrewes did, so Monson makes a great deal of the issue of sacrilege. The 'first sin that was committed upon change of religion was sacrilege in defacing churches, monuments, monasteries and inward ornaments' while the second major sin was the

[48]Allen, *An Admonition to the Nobility and People of England and Ireland*, 11, 54.
[49]Monson, 30–1.
[50]Ibid., 32–3.
[51]Ibid., 33–5.
[52]Ibid., 35.

seizing of 'the lands . . . dedicated to the service of God' which were 'divided and parted amongst ravenous thieves'. Inevitably the result was a 'contempt of our clergy, which themselves must confess', and 'no man the better for that spoil' than those 'that were the authors of it'.[53]

This diatribe against sacrilege can be found expressed across a range of avant-garde conformist thought in the period but is certainly near the epicentre of Laudianism, which Peter Lake describes as 'an attempt to redraw' and 'to redefine the line between the sacred and the profane', and which, he says, cannot 'be reduced either to a series of numbered points about predestination nor an assemblage of conventional conformist commonplaces about the need for order, obedience and uniformity'. In the context of their 'vision of the church as the house of God', Laudians focused on 'the ceremonial and liturgical aspects of the beauty of holiness'. This vision was realized in large part through the restoration of altars in the churches and the emphasis on prayer and the sacrament of the eucharist at the expense of preaching. Furthermore, 'all the central features of Laudianism . . . were constructed against a countervailing image of puritan heterodoxy and subversion'.[54]

In language that, undoubtedly, a number of Arminians and, latterly, Laudians would have understood, Monson described 'slackness and slowness in religion and devotion' following on from sins such as sacrilege, and which he connects with the worst excesses of a socially divisive, parasitic and hypocritical puritanism. It was 'always observed that example and ceremony are two great motives of good life, but what can be expected when preaching is preferred before prayer and the services of God, by means whereof we set our minds more upon knowledge and instruction than upon zeal and devotion'? 'What were the teachers of this new [anti-ceremonial] doctrine but wolves put into sheep's clothing, most of them debauched, unlearned, irreligious and mechanical persons that had nothing to insist upon but the truth of the Word of God, the light of the gospel, the idolatry of times past, the Antichristian Whore of Babylon and the slavishness of people under her'. This was 'their outward doctrine, roared out of their foul mouths and acted with the violence of their hands upon the pulpit', when 'their chiefest study of which they had most feeling was how to seek preferment by simony and to avoid the statute upon that point' and then to get into tithe disputes with parishioners. Monson believed also that 'the lands extorted from the churches and divided into so many families should be the cause of raising base and mechanical people into the degrees of nobility, knights and gentry, to the contempt of antiquity, honour and authority'. In turn these transfers of estates caused 'as great a war in the hearts of the people by suits in law as the civil contentions in former times have done'. And 'so many mean and mercenary lawyers' were 'raised from nothing by these evil gotten lands which have bred endless suits since' they were 'snatched out of the true owners' hands'. A further consequence was that 'the subject' was 'enthrall[ed]' with 'the bondage of wardships'. In the past, a 'beggar was . . . as rare as charity nowadays amongst us'. 'Many rich, costly and sumptuous [religious] houses' had been so 'absolutely ruined or defaced that there remains no memory of them'; and the ones that were still standing were 'converted into profane and sacrilegious

[53]Ibid., 44–5.
[54]Lake, 'The Laudian Style', 164, 165, 178–9; see also Lake, *On Laudianism*, esp. at 2, 77, on sacrilege, and 133–50, on the beauty of holiness.

uses'. The funds originally dedicated to good causes were 'consumed and spent upon' the 'wasteful children' of the guilty ones.[55]

One imagines that churchmen who consciously invested in the Laudian experiments of the 1630s, and who tended to promote prayer and devotion as an ideal mode of worship (and sharply distinguished that mode from, as Lake phrases it, a 'positively idolatrous cult of the sermon'), would hardly have dissented from all this.[56] In the case of those, said Monson, who were 'friends to new opinions and enemies to old books', their 'learning' consisted 'in preaching which is no more than the repetition of other men's sayings and sentences'. 'One sermon serves them to feed seven churches' and 'as many penny worth of sermons bought upon a stall in' St Paul's churchyard 'preached by them again' is sufficient to get 'a fame unto them', which in turn 'makes the father, the uncle and all the kindred put their monies together to make this man capable of a benefice by simony'. Here, the relentless emphasis of anti-popish tropes, pumped out through the pulpit, was the puritan *argot* which greased the wheels of patronage and promotion. In turn, this ambitious clergyman 'pours forth his forced voice against the rebellion of the North, Babington's treason, the [Gunpowder] conspiracy of Percy, Spain and the plots of the Jesuits and priests', that is, 'until … seven or eight years be expired', and the preacher's 'friends once more draw their purse strings to send him to the university to compass a doctorship which will much avail him in a marriage and portion. And as the years prove plentiful to increase their tithes, he is to make another purchase of a new parsonage to grace his doctorship' though his learning is largely a sham. The same man keeps banging on in the pulpit against 'the pope's temporal power as Antichristian' but will pay to get himself into the commission of the peace; and then he becomes a typical interfering bloody-minded puritan busybody, condemning malefactors 'with more rigour than the other justices'; and, instead of 'beating down Satan and sin', he will wear 'costly' apparel, made out of 'the richest satin that can be gotten', so that he could be mistaken for 'the usher of a dancing school' or a 'pedantic traveller that studies how to speak English in an affecting manner, differing from the vulgar sort'. 'These men … are those that make themselves bold with our bishops and our Antichristian … government of the Church as they term it'. But the 'records of the courts of justice in Westminster Hall' revealed what evil lives these people themselves led. Monson observed that the children of these clergy went first to the bad and then to the gallows. In fact, there was never so much vice as in recent years: 'the sin of sodomy, unheard of in our climate, is now … frequent'. Furthermore, 'what is more common than drunkenness and swearing'? The 'religion is safest and soundest that teaches [the] best life'.[57]

This discourse attacking the evil social effects of a certain sort of puritan-tending ambition then loops back into a long account of 'the affairs of Holland, from the beginning of the revolts, the continuance of them and the present state they are now in'. Monson insisted again that what happened in Holland influenced, for 'good' or 'evil', the fortunes of the English.[58] Elizabeth had 'engaged herself in a war for their sakes with a king that before gave no occasion of hostility' to her. The French refused 'all

[55]Monson, 46–7, 48–9, 51.
[56]See esp. Lake, *On Laudianism*, 23, 26, 101–2, 202, 254, 274–5, 279, 388, 390, 571.
[57]Monson, 54–8, 59. For Caroline anti-puritanism, see also Lake, '"A Charitable Christian Hatred"'; Lake and Stephens, *Scandal and Religious Identity in Early Stuart England*.
[58]Monson, 60.

propositions', and so Elizabeth prevailed on the duke of Anjou, and he 'undertook the . . . quarrel', but his failure there had been catastrophic. Philip was driven to 'embargo and arrest all English ships and goods found in his dominions', which 'proved a great loss to the English subjects' and to Elizabeth's 'customs', let alone the expense of prosecuting a war. The only people who commercially did well out of all this were the Dutch, who did precious little to help Elizabeth in return. Elizabeth 'never lessened her affection' to the Dutch, and sent over the earl of Leicester, and it was well known 'how evil[ly] they requited her gracious meaning'. Monson then provides chapter and verse on how, to his way of thinking, the Dutch had exploited and parasitized Elizabeth's beneficence, not least because she rejected successive 'overtures of peace' made to her by Spain, 'unless it might stand with the safety of the Hollanders'. Henry IV of France had shown more sense. The Dutch exploited their trade advantages to the hilt, and disputes were resolved in their favour in the English court of Admiralty.[59]

The insidious effects of all this had continued into the new/Stuart era. James I had been a believer in peace, and brought peace to Britain, 'a blessing from heaven'; the Dutch might have 'accepted of it' but, 'refusing it, within [a] few years after, they entertained a . . . truce with his Majesty' which redounded entirely to their own benefit. James was 'so far' from 'forbidding their fishing upon the English shore' that he extended their privileges in this respect, at the expense of his English subjects, not least in the 'transportation of our commodities in their own vessels in a larger proportion than they enjoyed in the queen's reign, as the books of the custom[s] will witness'. James had also tried to resolve the differences in religion amongst them, notably at the synod of Dort. But they 'after fell unto new questions . . . contrary to his Majesty's intent and meaning' and the 'Arminians' in the Netherlands were persecuted, without just cause. James could easily have taken revenge for their 'barbarous proceedings amongst his subjects in the East Indies, Greenland and the coast of Scotland' but his 'moderation and temper' prevented the justified 'bitterness' of his subjects from 'bursting forth into a greater violence'. He even conferred the Garter on the prince of Orange.[60]

Charles similarly extended his favours to the Dutch, who were lucky to escape the consequences of the Spanish match which had been proposed for him when he was the prince of Wales. They were incorporated in the treaty-making which followed Charles's accession, as the British State went to war against Spain.[61] The perfidious Dutch were now making themselves dependent on France, 'their reconciled false friend'. For good measure, Monson added a long section entitled 'The State of Holland from the beginning, the continuance and what is like to prove in the end'. Here he recapitulates his account of the perversion of religion for bad political aims. He attacks the prince of Orange, William the Silent, for having used 'innovation in religion' to achieve his ambitions. It was the Catholics there who 'out of zeal and conscience would not be drawn from the service of their master', Philip II. 'Suppose that the duke of Alba' had brought 'down an army for his master's service, what had Orange to fear if his carriage had been loyal?', which it

[59]Ibid., 60–5.
[60]Monson, 66–70; see also ibid., 106, concerning the profits that the Dutch made via the fisheries off the English coast; for the fisheries issue in the 1630s, see Haskell, 'Sir Francis Windebank and the Personal Rule of Charles I', 266. Monson seems to have had little time for the Dutch Arminian strain of Calvinism as such, and says merely that Oldenbarnevelt promoted it as a means of confronting Prince Maurice: Monson, 133, 142 (pagination irregular).
[61]Ibid., 70–5.

evidently was not; he suborned others, notably the count of Egmont, to take part in his own Machiavellian treasons. Monson wove into his narrative of the Dutch revolt a discussion of whether a subject could resist his sovereign, and under what circumstances, if any, the sovereign had to explain and justify his actions to his subjects. At one point, Monson wrote that Orange fled to Germany 'where he found only help' from 'the [elector] palatine' of the Rhine. Monson remarked on, as he took it, the subsequent and just 'judgment of God upon the house of the Palatine that has been since executed upon that State by the forces of the king of Spain', that is upon King Charles's brother-in-law, Frederick V, thrown out of his patrimony by imperial forces. The proof of the pudding was that 'time and better reason wrought better effect[s] with' some of the seventeen provinces of the Netherlands, and they repented their rebellion.[62]

Thus Monson painted a picture of a faux-tolerant hell-on-earth, falsely represented to the world as cohesive and free, but which in reality was anything but that. The title 'United Provinces' was a joke – 'when never people in any State disagreed more as well in government as religion'. All their talk of liberty was nonsense: 'what taxes, tolls or other unusual contributions have their former princes imposed upon them that, since, they have not been compelled to pay twenty fold'. Their 'blindness' and 'ignorance' prevented them from seeing this. Orange had told numerous lies to persuade the Dutch to revolt against their lawful sovereign. Orange had used religion to stir up the king of Spain's subjects against him; and it was 'the general text of all their preachers to insist upon in their sermons to take away all means of reconciliation'.[63]

In this absolute antithesis of good government, the higher born had the misfortune to live 'under the usurped and mechanic commonwealth . . . who have as many eyes as Argus upon them and their courses', while the hapless Oldenbarnevelt had 'feared . . . Count Maurice more than the declared enemy'. Monson confidently expected that the United Provinces would eventually go to destruction because of the 'division and faction of the State'. It was better to live under a true prince 'than to live as' the Dutch did – under 'tyrants that never taste of true friendship or perfect felicity'. In addition, 'monarchs have more means of reconciliation than you', that is, the Dutch; 'princes may inherit one another's State, princes have children to tender in marriages for their advantage, princes have succession', and so on.[64] Then Monson proceeded to pour yet more scorn on Dutch naval and military prowess.[65]

IV

Monson's account of the travails of the English and, then, British monarchy, as we can see, had morphed into a commentary on contemporary European politics, though one in which, presumably for prudential reasons, there was no mention of the recent disastrous parliaments of the later 1620s, in which, one assumes, Monson would have identified most of the bad

[62]Ibid., 76f (quotations at 76–9, 87, 93, 94). Monson says that he will, to maintain impartiality, for the most part 'follow a relation written by Sir Roger Williams of the state of things in that time' (Sir Roger Williams, *The Actions of the Lowe Countries* . . . (1618)): Monson, 77. For Williams, see *ODNB, sub* Williams, Sir Roger (article by D. Trim), pointing out that *The Actions of the Lowe Countries* was 'published . . . in effect by the old Essex affinity'.

[63]Monson, 95, 97.

[64]Ibid., 100–1. Here, of course, though he does not explicitly cite him, Monson is, in part, replying to Thomas Scott's claim that 'popular commonwealths' were 'better neighbours, surer friends and less dangerous enemies than monarchies': Thomas Scott, *Vox Populi, or, Newes from Spayne* . . . (no place of publication [London ?], 1620), sig. B4^{v}, cited in Courtney, 'Court Politics and the Kingship of James VI & I, c. 1615–c. 1622', ch. 5.

[65]Monson, 104–8.

humours that he located in the United Provinces.[66] Monson's stance was unashamedly an absolutist one – monarchy was a defence against the chaos of popular politics.[67] Despite his condemnation of the failings of Henrician and Elizabethan government, he is adamant that all rebellion is sinful, even against a tyrant.[68] Monson asks 'what act can be decreed to abolish kings' rights, seeing a king can make no such condition to prejudice his son or lawful successor'? The Dutch imposition of conditions on King Philip was 'more cruel and tyrannical against kings than ever subject was tied unto by [a] prince'.[69]) Monson quotes and paraphrases in places, at some length, from King James's *True Law of Free Monarchies*,[70] remarking that 'rebels' always 'pretended ease and relief of the commonwealth', and that they were 'taking away … abuses when' in fact they 'themselves were the abusers of it, and heaped double distresses and desolations upon it, for rebellion works contrary effects to what they propounded'. For 'a king cannot be thought so tyrannical but the commonwealth will be kept in better awe by him than by taking him away, for all sudden mutations are perilous in States, if liberty were given men to do what they list'. Moreover, 'kings in all civil monarchies' were 'established before the laws, for countries must be reduced to civility before the laws or parliaments could be settled, which shows that kings are the makers of laws and not laws the [makers of] kings'. The 'laws are disgested by subjects, but confirmed and ratified by the king, for without his sceptre, it is no law'. Nowhere in Scripture, as Monson read it, was resistance to princes allowed. Monson rehearses some of James's words about the sacredness of monarchy – 'kings are so sacred as they are termed Gods, because they sit upon God's throne on earth and administer justice'. The duty and allegiance that' the people 'swear to their prince is not only to [princes] themselves but to their lawful heirs and successors to the crown, for such a prince is not the more king by his coronation but by his birth and right of inheritance'.[71]

V

At various points, Monson gets close enough to the thought of Sir Robert Filmer even if his (Monson's) words do not constitute anything like a systematic or original political commentary. What, then, does Monson's draft history actually tells us about the politics of post-Reformation religious identity? Clearly there is little point in trying to calculate how many Monsons there were in early Stuart England, although his interest in history and his scorn for the Dutch could be found being expressed by Catholic intellectuals such as Edmund Bolton.[72]

[66]See also Francis Kynaston, 'True Presentation of Forepast Parliaments' (various copies, e.g. BL, Lansdowne MS 213 and PRO, SP 16/233/51–2, incorporating Sir Francis Windebank's notes on it); *ODNB, sub* Kynaston, Sir Francis (article by M. Smuts); Cogswell, 'A Low Road to Extinction?', 302–3; for a different reading of Kynaston's views about parliament and monarchy, see Burgess, *Absolute Monarchy and the Stuart Constitution*, 38–40.

[67]For the absolutist reaction to the parliamentary politics of the 1620s (putting forward an 'explanation of current events in terms of a popular and puritan conspiracy against monarchical power in both Church and State'), see Lake, '"Free Speech" in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England', 84–90.

[68]See also Cuttica, 'Tyrannicide and Political Authority in the Long Sixteenth Century', 283f.

[69]Monson, 112–13.

[70]James I, *The True Lawe of Free Monarchies*, 10, 13, 14 and *passim*.

[71]Monson, 117–18, 119, 118[*bis*]–19[*bis*], 120, 121, 122, 123. Monson rehearses again how the Dutch had, so far, escaped the consequences of their rebellion: ibid., 126f. The last section of the work, almost an afterthought, is an account of the tribulations of Elizabeth's last years, principally Tyrone's rebellion and the revolt of the earl of Essex, but celebrating the accession of King James: ibid., 147f.

[72]See *ODNB, sub* Bolton [Boulton], Edmund (article by D. R. Woolf). I am grateful for discussions of this subject with Matthew Growhoski. Bolton thought, in early 1615, that 'the Hollanders' greatness is hated by our people, and feared of our sea-traders, for like the warm snake they sting the bosom which harboured them': Archives of the Archdiocese of Westminster, A XIV, no. 41, p. 117 (Edmund Bolton to Thomas More, 22 February 1615). For Bolton's interest in Catholic historical writing, see Archives of the Archdiocese of Westminster, A XIII, no. 257, pp. 669, 670.

There were other courtiers and crown servants during the Personal Rule who had similar views, and were also regarded as Catholics of some kind. They, like Monson, and indeed Filmer, probably could not say out loud precisely what they thought on such topics – certainly not in the later 1620s and early 1630s – though one imagines that, had Monson written his draft history in the later 1630s, he would have remarked on the rise of the new ecclesiological culture in the English Church, particularly once his nephew publicly sided with William Laud against Bishop John Williams.[73]

To what extent, then, might we regard Monson as an active participant in the ideological politics of the early Stuart period? Can we, for example, compare him to others who sharply critiqued royal government without committing themselves so far in public that they were completely excluded, as it were. Recently Peter Lake has revisited the newsletters written by Joseph Mede, and has shown how Mede's very moderate mode of puritanism (if he was, in fact, a puritan at all) did not prevent him from espousing an aggressive version of the contemporary Protestant cause and, in private, collecting and recycling a range of news items, often generated out of word-of-mouth modes of communication, in a way that was highly critical of royal policy.[74] Monson was, of course, not writing newsletters, but his draft history incorporated a good deal of what was, in effect, political banter which was likely to have been shared with others who were of a similar mind, just as his account of the Reformation was constructed by reference to political ideas that were certainly not the preserve of a separatist/recusant Catholicism, or even of people who necessarily identified primarily as (Roman) Catholic.

In this context it might be misleading to characterise Monson as, for example, merely a 'church papist', in the sense of that category as it has been used in much of the modern-day scholarly literature, that is, as a kind of colourless middle-way conformist, culturally opposed to clearly established ideological positions of various kinds.[75] Monson's public career and his own account of his ideological self-positioning makes him part of what Professor Lake terms the 'dialogic, even dialectical' struggles 'between the regime and its … critics and enemies' in front of a public audience in this period.[76] In the mid-Elizabethan period, this had involved Protestant and puritan interest groups that

[73]One thinks here of the privy councillors Sir Francis Cottington, Sir Francis Windebank, and Richard Weston, earl of Portland. Windebank, who in 1632 was made a member of the Admiralty commission, was one of those who favoured a ship money tax as the basis for a reinforced maritime sovereignty (it was alleged shortly after the beginning of the Long Parliament that he had said ship money refusers were traitors); he was certainly no friend of the Dutch, although, as Dr Haskell shows, his approach to foreign, trade and naval policy was not driven simply by 'sympathy with Spain': Haskell, 'Sir Francis Windebank', 130–1, 248, 250, 282–3, 500. For Windebank's personal religion (his devotions were 'based on John Cosin's *Collections of Private Devotions*' of 1627), see esp. Haskell, 'Sir Francis Windebank', 364–5. For the cautiousness of highly placed royal servants such as these in expressing their ideas, see ibid., 531, 532. In the 1630s, Sir Thomas Monson's son (Sir William's nephew) John had an ongoing quarrel with Bishop Williams, against whom they both lobbied Archbishop Laud when they faced Williams in Star Chamber. The nephew had attacked Williams's registrar John Pregion; and, when he was attacked in return, he secured 1000 marks out of the vast fine levied on Williams: *The House of Commons 1604–1629*, V, 353; *ODNB*, *sub* Monson, Sir John (article by B. Porter, rev. S. Kelsey); Lambeth Palace Library, MS 1030, fols. 68^{r}–70^{v}, 79^{r}–80^{v}.

[74]Lake, 'Thomas Scott and Joseph Mede Respond to the Crisis of the Early 1620s'; *idem*, 'Constitutional Consensus and Puritan Opposition in the 1620s'; *idem*, *On Laudianism*, 123, 127, 128, 152, 160, 183, 186, 191, 204, 205, 213, 259, 437–8, 510.

[75]For Christopher Haigh, church popery was an expression of the opinion of something like the silent majority who in turn might be taken to be the bedrock of Anglicanism proper, though, perhaps paradoxically, also part of the 'continuity of Catholicism'. For Patrick Collinson and Alexandra Walsham, church papists are fellow travellers with Arminians and Laudians, the spearhead of the force which disrupted the godly and allegedly mainstream consensus, in which Protestantism is in effect coterminous with puritanism, created by the Elizabethan reformation of the Church and remained intact until undermined by this essentially alien intruding force. For the existing literature, see also Muldoon, 'Recusants, Church-Papists, and "Comfortable" Missionaries', 242–57.

[76]Lake, '"Free Speech"', 68–9, and *passim*.

reckoned that they constituted, or ought to constitute, the core of the State, facing (down) the overtly Roman Catholic critics and enemies of the regime of the day. In the early Stuart period, by contrast, some of those earlier certainties were starting to be radically disrupted, and a range of voices, including ones that could be regarded as Catholic, were starting to associate Protestant-cause politics with subversion and sedition.[77]

This, in turn, helps to rationalise the articulation of fears of popery and Arminianism, and the identification of the threat from Arminianism with actual (Roman) Catholics. The tendency among scholars has been to assume that this was merely hyperbole, or at least a gross exaggeration of political reality – in other words, the crude deployment of contemporary stereotypes, weaponised in particular by the factional strife in and around the court. But, as Kathryn Marshalek has argued, the anti-Arminian polemics of the period should be seen as, in part, coming out of the confrontations in the early 1620s between forward, if not froward, Protestants and, on the other side, Catholic (especially Jesuit) clergy who had made their case in public during the period of temporary toleration associated with royal foreign policy and negotiation with France and Spain, and whose activities had in effect been licensed by the court.[78]

It would be quite easy to write off Monson as an eccentric oddball, whose Catholic views were extreme, and constituted no more than a kind of enemy's-enemy-is-my friend version of contemporary anti-puritanism. But if he was accurately articulating thoughts about the past, all the way back to the 1530s, which were not the exclusive preserve of a tiny-minority Roman Catholic confessional and separatist fraction of the national Church, this suggests that we might want to think again about the distribution across the ideological spectrum of opinions to which some contemporaries tended to allude by using the catch-all term 'popery'. Of course, what we do not have, for most contemporaries who identified as Catholics, is quite the wide array of pamphlets and sermons which were turned out by those people during the 1620s and 1630s who, as Professor Lake shows, were constructing a coherent 'Laudian' platform in the national Church, and, in response, the ones generated by those who opposed this. In that respect, the archives available to us are somewhat asymmetrical.

What we have here, though, is an instance of the case made by Anthony Milton about the ubiquity of different forms of Catholicism in post-Reformation England. As Professor Milton puts it, 'for all the occasional use of a language of binary opposition between the forces of Protestantism and Catholicism, and alarmist talk of religious contagion, life in Protestant England was in fact littered with Roman Catholic ideas, books, images and people.'[79] That itself was, ironically, one of the factors that persuaded a certain sort of Protestant to resort to the binary account of the world to be found in classically puritan anti-popery, in which there was no middle ground between the true Church and the false Church.[80]

Here, for what it is worth, Catholicism would, in its various contemporary senses, be potentially right at the centre of what scholars now call 'post-revisionism' – the term of art used in recent times to describe the reaction to the 'revisionist' project of the later

[77]Lake, *Bad Queen Bess?*, 5–7.
[78]I am very grateful to Dr Marshalek for discussions of this topic. See Marshalek, 'Putting the Catholics Back in: The "Rise of Arminianism" Reconsidered'; see also Lake, '"Free Speech"', 81–2.
[79]Milton, 'A Qualified Intolerance: The Limits and Ambiguities of Early Stuart Anti-Catholicism', 86, 106.
[80]Milton, *England's Second Reformation*, 316f.

twentieth century which, among other things, raised doubts about whether there was any such thing as absolutism and divine-right monarchy in early modern England, and claimed that there were no major ideological disagreements among contemporaries about the law and authority generally; and argued that puritanism, by the seventeenth century, was not the issue that it had been in the later sixteenth century, and that, to all intents and purposes, 'Catholicism' was not a topic of any real moment, and that anti-popery was part of the red mist of religious intolerance, weaponised by the failures of Stuart monarchical rule, exacerbated by the structural problems of the post-Reformation State.[81]

If this is the case, then Sir William Monson's Catholic-inflected account of monarchical authority and the subversive tendencies of a range of bad (republican and puritan) actors in the British Isles and across Europe, penned in the aftermath of the failed parliaments of the later 1620s, could, therefore, be read in the context of, and be taken to inform, the outlines of the post-revisionist rendering of the discontents of the early Stuart polity. If nothing else, that might serve to integrate rather than to exclude a good deal of the available source material concerning those who identified in some way as 'Catholic' during this period, and the Long (or post-)Reformation more generally, including those who were partially or completely conformist; and, of course, that would certainly make more comprehensible the reaction of those who claimed, often vociferously, that monarchical government was being subverted by 'popery'.

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Abbreviations

BL	British Library
ODNB	*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*
TNA	The National Archives

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[81]Lake, 'From Revisionist to Royalist History', esp. at 657–62.

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