

ALL THE POPE'S MEN: VATICAN DIPLOMACY AND
ESPIONAGE IN TUDOR ENGLAND, 1534-1570

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*To my grandparents,
whose stories of sacrifice
taught me to
appreciate the past.*

AMDG

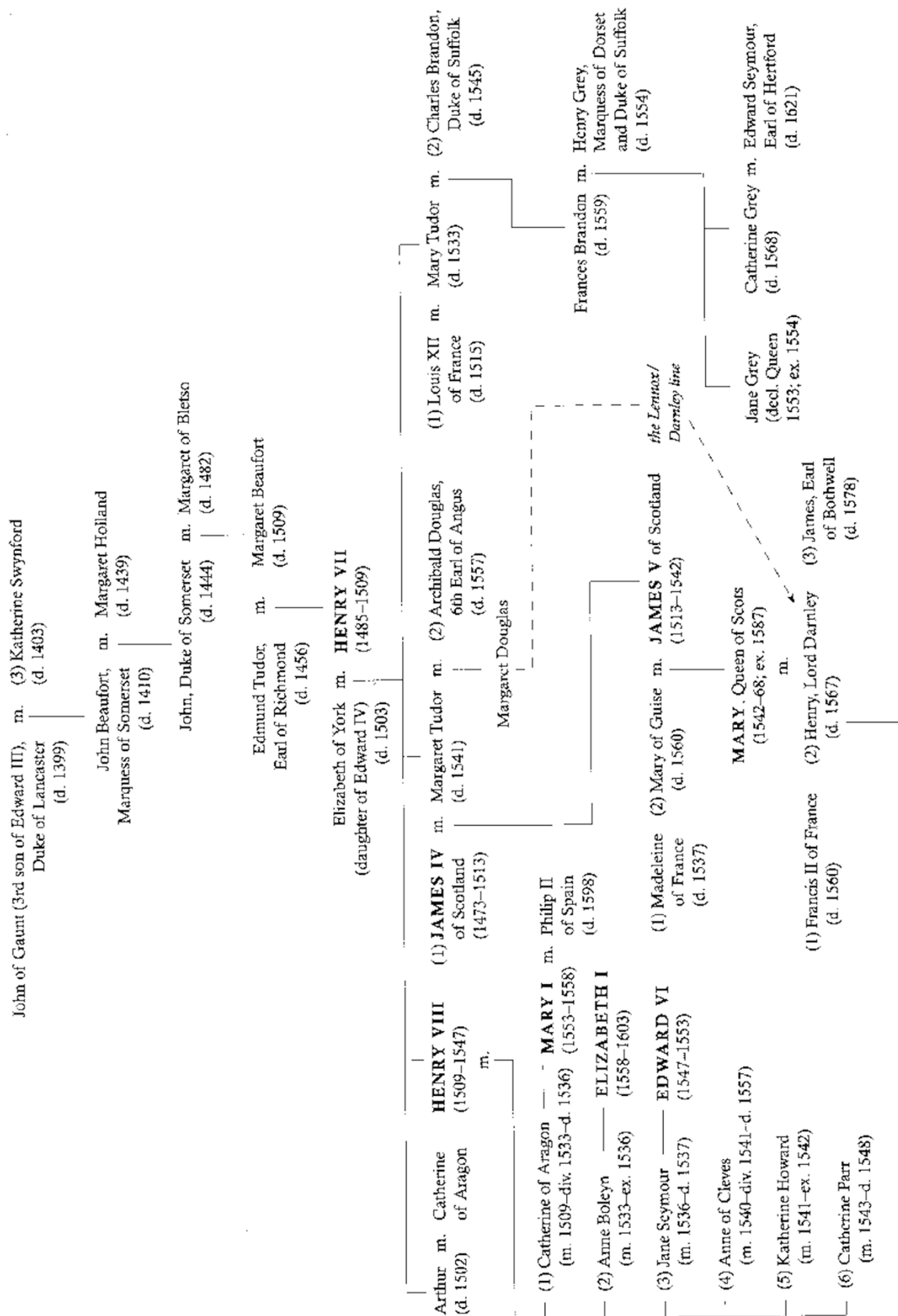
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I

INTRODUCTION

In 1570, Pope Pius V promulgated the bull *Regnans in Excelsis*, excommunicating Queen Elizabeth I of England (r. 1558-1603) and absolving her subjects of allegiance to her. This drastic course of action exacerbated preexisting tensions between recusant Catholics and the established regime and ushered in a new chapter in the diplomatic and, at times, military struggle between the Holy See and England. During this period, various schemes such as the 1571 Ridolfi Plot, the Throckmorton Plot of 1583, the 1586 Babington Plot, and the attempted invasion of the Spanish Armada in 1588 were concocted with the goal of overthrowing Elizabeth and restoring Catholicism in England. While this period can be characterized by the rapid escalation of hostilities between the Papal States and the Kingdom of England, *Regnans in Excelsis* was by no means the starting point of Catholic attempts to undermine the Tudor Dynasty.

As early as the reign of Henry VIII (r. 1509-1547) Catholics were attempting to subvert the Protestant reforms of the newly established English church. In 1536, northern English Catholics rose up against Henry's efforts to dissolve the Catholic religious houses. This revolt, the Pilgrimage of Grace, was eventually suppressed, but it foreshadowed the strife and dissension of the coming decades. During the reign of Henry's son, the boy-king Edward VI (r. 1547-1553), Catholics again revolted. In 1549, the English Church, by this point wholly divorced from Roman authority, adopted the new, thoroughly Protestant Book of Common Prayer. The Prayer Book Rebellion in the same year was the result. Twenty years later, in 1569, Catholic noblemen launched the

Rising of the North and attempted to depose Elizabeth I and replace her with her Catholic cousin Mary, Queen of Scots (r. 1542-1567, d. 1587). Although all these attempts to reverse the English Reformation were unsuccessful, they are evidence of the fact that the religious changes might not have been as welcome as has been written.

It was not until the reign of Edward VI that English Catholics were truly faced with the specter of Protestantism. Henry's break concerned matters of governance. He effectively retained the Catholic religion in England with the major difference of his assuming its headship in opposition to the Bishop of Rome via the 1534 Act of Supremacy.¹ This seeming usurpation, directly contradicting the authority of the Roman Church in spiritual matters, left English Catholics torn between their king and their pope. When Edward acceded to the throne in 1547, the regent, Edward Seymour, 1st Duke of Somerset, and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, began to implement a program of theological and liturgical reform. These reforms were expressed in, among other various ordinances, the Book of Common Prayer, which prompted the eponymous rebellion.² Although Catholics were granted a brief respite during the reign of the Catholic Mary I (r. 1553-1558), her sobriquet, Bloody Mary, not so subtly indicates that her time on the throne, and the Tudor Period generally, was hardly free of discord.

The Tudor Period, specifically the interval lasting from 1534, when the first Act of Supremacy was passed, to 1609, when the Scottish James VI Stuart (r. 1603-1625) acceded the throne, was assuredly a time of political instability and religious conflict. This was especially true in 1558, when Elizabeth succeeded her sister Mary, and the line of succession and status of the Roman Church in England were both uncertain. In due

¹ *Britannica Academic*, s.v. "Henry VIII," accessed September 15, 2021.

² *Britannica Academic*, s.v. "Edward VI," accessed September 15, 2021.

time, Elizabeth would go on to successfully secure England's Protestant royal succession and state church, a feat of great political skill given the numerous attempts to undermine her government.³ The tumultuous, and ultimately triumphal, nature of Elizabeth's reign has prompted much scholarship, especially with regard to the cloak-and-dagger efforts to secure her life and position.

Although it would be impractical to attempt to provide a detailed historiography of all Elizabethan histories to the present, there are a number of important works which typify the more recent literature on the period, and which will distinguish the novel approach of this project. There is, however, one extremely influential 16th century work worth discussing in relation to the topic of this project. Protestant English historian John Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*, commonly known as *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, was pivotal in establishing notions of Roman Catholicism as an oppressive, outdated, and foreign force in England, responsible for deaths of thousands of Britons. Although it was only published five years into Elizabeth's reign, in 1563, its influence on later Whig history, and its conceptions of post-Reformation English Catholicism as a negative current that corrupted English society, is unparalleled.

This strain of English history, which has survived to the present in a less virulent form, was significantly challenged by Eamon Duffy in his 1992 seminal work, *The Stripping of the Altars*. The late 20th century saw a rise in the number of Elizabethan histories published, but Duffy's work stands apart as a serious challenge to the academic status quo regarding the nature of popular Catholicism in 16th century England. For example, the idea advanced by John Foxe that the Catholic Church was suppressing

³ *Britannica Academic*, s.v. "Elizabeth I," accessed September 15, 2021.

popular religious texts in a pathetic attempt to maintain its ecclesiastical hegemony was rebuked by Duffy's arguing that "the enormous surge in numbers of publication after 1505 did not flood the reading public with reforming tracts or refutations of the real presence." Rather, there was an abundance of liturgical, devotional, and catechetical tracts published alongside almanacs and grammar books.⁴ There was a lively popular Catholicism in England before the Reformation, Duffy argues, and it was only after decades of anti-Catholic polemics and propaganda that the English were able to forget the devotion of not half a century prior.⁵

In addition to research on the nature of popular Catholicism in England and how it might have influenced Pope Pius's decision to take a more aggressive stance towards Queen Elizabeth, there are a multitude of works that study the espionage of the period from the English perspective. Alan Haynes' *Invisible Power: The Elizabethan Secret Services 1570-1603* stands out as a work of especial importance. Haynes' work explores the motivations and successes of Elizabeth's spymasters in light of domestic political factors. The turn to espionage as a semi-official endeavor by high-level courtiers, Haynes argues, was a result of the uniquely unstable nature of Elizabeth's position and her failure to prevent the Rising of the North in 1569.⁶ Haynes relies primarily on English state papers and the personal writings of Elizabeth's spymaster, Sir Francis Walsingham, to formulate his argument, resulting in a work that explores the perspectives of those attempting to root out Catholic agents. An important premise of Haynes' argument is the

⁴ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580*, (New Haven, 1992), p. 77.

⁵ Duffy, *The Stripping*, p. 593.

⁶ Alan Haynes, *Invisible Power: The Elizabethan Secret Services 1570-1603*, (New York, 1992), pp. viii-ix

idea that “revulsion in England against Rome and its agents was at its height” as Elizabeth’s Privy Council turned towards espionage, torture, and show trials.⁷

Another important work of recent scholarship is Patrick Martin’s *Elizabethan Espionage: Plotters and Spies in the Struggle Between Catholicism and the Crown*. As opposed to Haynes’ work, Martin covers a similar period of espionage but primarily from the perspective of the Catholic agents and not those hunting them down. Starting with the Persons-Campion Mission of 1580 and up to the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 (known alternatively as the Jesuit Treason), Martin offer a compelling defense of Catholic agents in light of existing scholarship, which has gone as far as to refer to these agents as terrorists.⁸ While many works have focused on describing the methods of the Elizabethan secret services, Martin’s work focuses on the Jesuit origins of the Catholic spy ring (which was organized primarily to minister to existing recusant communities), its transformation into a political and intelligence-gathering operation, and its central figures.⁹ Martin’s work hinges on the argument that the Catholic—usually Jesuit—agents within England were not working primarily to destabilize the English government, but to support the existing Catholic community and defend it against the Elizabethan threat. While *Elizabethan Espionage*’s perspective makes it an essential work for understanding the period, it focuses primarily on the domestic motivations of Catholic agents and not the diplomatic objectives and strategies of the Holy See in supporting them, and it does not discuss early Tudor history.

⁷ Haynes, *Invisible Power*, p. xiii.

⁸ Patrick H. Martin, *Elizabethan Espionage: Plotters and Spies in the Struggle Between Catholicism and the Crown*, (Jefferson, 2016), p. 1

⁹ Martin, *Elizabethan Espionage*, pp. 9-11, 107, 193.

Two additional works that are helpful for contextualizing the existing body of recent literature are K.J. Kesselring's *The Northern Rebellion of 1569: Faith, Politics, and Protest in Elizabethan England* and Patrick McGrath's *Papists and Puritans Under Elizabeth I*. These works, while not directly related to the topic of this project, shed light on some broader trends in recent Elizabethan historiography. McGrath's 1967 work, for example, discusses the identification of Catholicism with attempts to overthrow Elizabeth and the state of Catholicism in England between the excommunication in 1570 and the arrival of the Jesuits in 1580.¹⁰ *Papists and Puritans* offers an exposition of the oppositional role of Catholicism (and Puritanism) without the biases of some of its contemporary works. On the other hand, Kesselring's work, published in 2007, covers the Rising of the North, the only openly armed insurrection against Elizabeth's Protestant establishment and the event that motivated the establishment of the secret services. Kesselring looks at the role of Catholicism in motivating the insurrectionists, among other possible political or economic motivations. *The Northern Rebellion* stands opposed to prevailing scholarship, which views the latter motivations as more important than the former one. Kesselring's argument emphasizes that the support the revolt received among commoners and Elizabeth's vicious response are incongruous with economic explanations.¹¹ These works show how intricately Catholicism is bound up with the historiography of the period.

The ultimate goal of this project is to describe the history of the Tudor religious reforms from the perspective of the Vatican. Henry VIII's break with Rome and the

¹⁰ Patrick McGrath, *Papists and Puritans Under Elizabeth I*, (London, 1967), pp. 5, 100-103.

¹¹ Krista Kesselring, *The Northern Rebellion of 1569: Faith, Politics, and Protest in Elizabethan England*, (New York, 2007), pp. 45-48, 118-119.

Tudor Dynasty's subsequent marginalization of English Catholics led to a sort of cold war between the England and the Holy See. Various popes and curial officials in Rome reacted to the English reforms in wildly different ways, producing a unique geopolitical situation that has yet to be studied from the perspective of the Holy See. Initial operations, during the years of Edward VI and Elizabeth I, were primarily focused on gathering intelligence and eventually ministering to the country's recusant Catholics. Later efforts were more hostile and sought to depose Elizabeth and replace her with Mary, Queen of Scots. These efforts were opposed by the Elizabethan intelligence services and organized by Catholics located throughout Europe. This project studies Vatican involvement in the former, and how the domestic, theological, and diplomatic pressures exerted on the papacy throughout this period influenced this involvement.

This project, in studying Catholic subterfuge in England through the neglected lens of Vatican diplomacy, seek to contributes to existing scholarship on the history of the English Reformation and the political history of the Papacy. Given the COVID-19 pandemic, however, access to relevant primary source material has been extremely limited. The use of a variety of collections and document compilations that would have been extremely helpful in crafting an argument capable of contributing to the scholarship covering this period was originally intended. These materials included the State Papers Foreign collection (particularly *State Papers Foreign, Elizabeth I, 1558-1577* and *Secretaries of State: State Papers Foreign, Italian States and Rome*) held in the British National Archives. More importantly, the key materials regarding the Vatican perspective were also inaccessible. The archives of the Venerable English College in Rome, along with Vatican Secret Library and archives of the Society of Jesus would have allowed for

much more comprehensive research. According to Dr Maurice Whitehead, the director of the archives at the English College, there are numerous collections in Rome which contain materials directly relevant to this project. Unfortunately, the vast majority of these materials are un-digitized and so it was impossible to investigate them.

Fortunately, there was a primary source collection of essential importance to this project that was digitized. The *Calendar of State Papers Relating to English Affairs in the Vatican Archives* includes two volumes, covering from 1558 to 1578. This collection was originally published in 1916, and its editor, J.M. Rigg, included only a limited amount of source material (the majority of which is located in the Vatican Secret Archives). Published by His Majesty's Stationery Office, the British body responsible for official government publications, these calendars include summaries and translated transcriptions of a number of important primary source documents which discuss Vatican relations with England during the Elizabethan era. These transcriptions and summaries were assembled by William Henry Bliss (1835-1911), an Oxford-educated scholar and adult convert to Catholicism. In 1877, the British Public Record Office (now the National Archives) tasked Bliss with researching the history of diplomatic interactions between Great Britain and the Vatican. He spent the latter half of his life working nine months out of the year in Rome at the Vatican Archives. The result was numerous volumes which included a significant number of documents treating the relations between England, Scotland, and Ireland, on the one hand, and the Holy See and her Catholic allies on the other. Included within these volumes are 1) drafts and copies of papal briefs preserved in the Vatican Archives, 2) correspondence between the Holy See and lay and ecclesiastical dignitaries, and 3) the correspondence of the Papal Secretaries of State with apostolic nuncios.

Through the use of the *Calendar of State Papers Relating to English Affairs in the Vatican Archives*, and other extensive secondary source materials, this project is able to adequately describe the Vatican diplomacy of the Tudor period. The material presented is divided into an introduction, three chapters, and a conclusion, along with supplementary material. The introduction presents the context and ideas that influenced the formulation of this project and discusses the existing historiography. The first chapter introduces Henry VIII, Edward VI, and Mary I, and covers the papal diplomacy that occurred from the 1520s until the accession of Elizabeth in 1558. The second chapter covers the first year of Elizabeth's reign and the dynamic between her and Pope Paul IV, which had tremendous consequences for the future of Catholicism in England. The third chapter covers the early portion of Elizabeth's reign, in the 1560s, her excommunication by Pius V in 1570, and its consequences. Finally, the concluding chapter offers a general evaluation of the project and the claims it makes. Throughout this thesis, ideas and events are discussed which could merit book-length publications in their own right. This made deciding what to include and what to exclude a great challenge. In addition, because of the lack of access to primary source material, some conclusions are not as assertive as they otherwise might have been. Nevertheless, this project is able to provide a well-supported argument as to the motivations behind the different courses of action taken by various popes and provide a diplomatic history of English Reformation from the Vatican's perspective.

II

A PROCESSION OF REFORMERS: THE ORIGINS OF ENGLAND'S RELIGIOUS STATUS QUO

Catholic espionage in Elizabethan England cannot be understood without regard to the major religious reforms initiated by King Henry VIII in the 1530s. In the centuries preceding the English Reformation, Catholics had in the papacy and the crown two complementary institutions with their own respective spheres of influence: the spiritual and the temporal. Devotion to the Catholic faith was evidently profound enough to merit England the title of 'Our Lady's Dowry,' in reference to the special place and veneration given by English Catholics to the Virgin Mary.¹² It is not surprising, then, that Henry VIII's break with Rome precipitated major changes in the political, religious, and social landscape of England. Henry's issue—Edward VI, Mary I, and Elizabeth I—would all go on to launch their own respective reform programs, leading to the political-religious status quo that defined the Elizabethan era. It is within the confines of this status quo that Catholic agents worked to preserve their faith and, in more extreme cases, restore its established status. The successive changes in the nature of the English state church, and the papacy's reactions to these changes, led to the development of a unique diplomatic relationship punctuated by overt religious gestures and covert espionage operations.

During the reign of Henry VII, Henry VIII's father, and in the years following his death and the accession of his son, Roman Catholicism was the established religion of England. This Church, while subject to the authority of the Bishop of Rome, the pope, also possessed a distinctly national character: it was the Catholic Church in England, as

¹² David Womersley, *Divinity and State* (Oxford, Oxfordshire: Oxford University Press, 2010), 16.

opposed to one in France or Spain.¹³ After Henry's break with the papacy in the 1530s, the Church in England retained the vast majority of disciplines, dogmas, and liturgies, with one stark exception: the pope and his Curia were removed as the ultimate authority in the hierarchy. Instead, Henry assumed personal control of the Church under the title of Supreme Head of the Church of England. Following his death and under the reign of his son, Edward VI, the Church, led by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, assumed a more Protestant character. Cranmer and his confederates replaced, removed, or amended many of its practices and doctrines. Edward's successor, Mary I, briefly reestablished the Roman Catholic Church before her successor, Elizabeth I, restored the Church of England with herself as its Supreme Governor. These dramatic and oftentimes violent changes, all within a period of less than thirty years, formed the fabric within which loyal Catholics lived.

From 1527, Henry sought to annul his marriage to the Spanish Catherine of Aragon. For the king an annulment was the only option—a divorce was impossible as a validly contracted Christian marriage is indivisible until death. This issue, known as the 'the King's great matter,' represented more than just a lascivious desire to be united formally with his mistress, Anne Boleyn. For a nation that not half a century earlier had been afflicted by decades of civil war over royal succession, having an undisputed heir was, especially for Henry, of the utmost importance—at the time of his accession, there were eighteen Plantagenet claimants to the throne.¹⁴ The daughter of Spain's Catholic Monarchs, Isabella I of Castile (r. 1474-1504) and Ferdinand II of Aragon (r. 1479-1516),

¹³ Patrick McGrath, *Papists and Puritans under Elizabeth I* (New York, NY: Walker and Company, 1967), 1.

¹⁴ Alison Weir, *Britain's Royal Families: The Complete Genealogy* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2008), 148.

Queen Catherine had not provided Henry with a male heir. She suffered through numerous miscarriages and stillbirths before finally giving birth to a daughter, Mary, in 1516.¹⁵

Catherine had previously been married to Henry's brother, Arthur, Prince of Wales, before his untimely death due to sweating sickness in 1502.¹⁶ Henry argued that due to his wife's previous marriage, he could not validly be married to her. Although the Church did prohibit marriage to the spouse of one's deceased siblings on the basis of Leviticus 20:21, Pope Julius II had granted Henry a dispensation from this canon because his brother died childless (as allowed by Deuteronomy 25:5-10) and Catherine testified that her first marriage had never been consummated.¹⁷ Nevertheless, Henry held that Pope Julius II exceeded his authority in issuing the dispensation and, consequently, that his marriage was blighted in the eyes of God. The King delegated this 'great matter' to his most trusted advisor, Thomas Cardinal Wolsey, the Archbishop of York and Lord High Chancellor of England. Wolsey's responsibility was to secure from Pope Clement VII an annulment of his marriage to Catherine.¹⁸ In the Catholic Church, an annulment, in contrast to a divorce, does not dissolve a validly contracted marriage. Rather, an annulment is retroactive in nature: it declares that a marriage thought to have existed does not in fact exist—nor has it ever existed—due to the continuing presence of a canonical impediment which would have prevented the marriage from being contracted in the first

¹⁵ The Wars of the Roses were fought from 1455 to 1487 by the rival Plantagenet cadet houses of York and Lancaster over the throne. The final result was the rise of House of Tudor, led by Henry VIII's father, Henry VII.

¹⁶ Sweating sickness was a mysterious disease that swept over England in the late 15th century. Its cause and pathology remain debated to this day.

¹⁷ *Britannica Academic*, s.v. "Catherine of Aragon," accessed September 15, 2021.

¹⁸ *Britannica Academic*, s.v. "Henry VIII," accessed September 15, 2021.

place. In Henry's view, this impediment was the biblical prohibition on marrying one's brother's widow, which not even the pope had the authority to suspend.

In Rome, the political landscape seemed to bode well for Henry's case. The Renaissance papacy was (and still is) infamous for its considerable corruption and immorality. Pope Alexander VI (r. 1492-1503) openly carried on with a mistress during his papacy and appointed his sons to prominent ecclesiastical benefices: Cesare a cardinal and Giovanni the commander in chief of the Papal States. Pope Julius II (r. 1503-1515) fathered three daughters and personally led armies in combat against Italian cities that defied his authority. Pope Leo X (r. 1513-21), son of Lorenzo de' Medici, was a cardinal at thirteen and was elected pope without first having been ordained a priest. The indulgences he granted to those who donated to the construction of the new St. Peter's Basilica were the ones that were challenged by Martin Luther in his *Ninety-Five Theses*.¹⁹ Given these circumstances, it is not surprising that popes usually obliged kings when it came to obtaining marriage dispensations and annulments, and that these papal favors were usually accompanied by donations from their recipients. The dispensation Julius II granted to Henry before his marriage to Catherine in December 1503 was one such exchange of this sort. The annulment he now desired of the same marriage was to be another.²⁰

Cardinal Wolsey's task was clear and he took the case to Rome in 1527 with three arguments meant to persuade Clement VII: 1) that the original dispensation was void because it was issued in contravention to biblical law, 2) that even if the dispensation was

¹⁹ Eamon Duffy, "Protest and Division, 1447-1774," in *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 133.

²⁰ *Britannica Academic*, s.v. "Henry VIII," accessed September 15, 2021.

valid on theological grounds, it was worded improperly and thus held no authority, and 3) that Henry's marriage being an English one, the matter ought to be decided by English ecclesiastical courts led by Wolsey himself as papal legate.²¹ The pope did not immediately reject Wolsey's overtures. Henry was the powerful ruler of a solidly Catholic kingdom and to dismiss his requests outright would only exacerbate an already delicate situation. Clement, however, was simultaneously facing a number of extraordinary dilemmas that weighed heavily on his conscience. These dilemmas, which complicated the political situation in Rome, cast doubt on what decision the pope would finally make.

To emphasize, it was not unprecedented for the pope to grant requests of Henry's sort and it is very possible Clement would have acquiesced had it not been for the political situation in Rome at the time. The papacy was struggling to reassert its legitimacy, authority, and prestige following the Avignon Papacy (when the pope ruled from Avignon instead of Rome), the Western Schism of 1378 (when there were three different claimants to the Chair of St Peter), and the Conciliar Era (when theologians asserted that pope's authority was limited by general councils).²² Henry was asking the pope to accept willingly that an expression of papal authority (the dispensation granted to him in 1503) was invalid, at a time when the pope was struggling to assert just the opposite. As if the Roman political situation did not bode poorly enough for Henry, he also had to contend with the influence of the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V (r. 1519-1556), Catherine's nephew and the most powerful secular ruler on the Continent. The emperor greatly valued "familial honor and public prestige" and also held Pope Clement

²¹ J.J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII* (Berkeley, CL: University of California Press, 1968), 7.

²² Duffy, "Protest and Division," 132-134.

VII as his prisoner following the Sack of Rome in 1527 by his disgruntled armies.²³ All these factors came together to make granting an annulment practically impossible.

The pope followed the only course of action that seemed available to him: he stalled in order to avoid displeasing either Henry or Charles. In 1528, Clement seemingly granted Wolsey's request. He permitted him to hold an ecclesiastical trial in England but stipulated that it was also to be led by Lorenzo Cardinal Campeggio. Although the situation was apparently turning in Henry's favor, it took Cardinal Campeggio six months to arrive in England. Campeggio prorogued the court numerous times and was also unwilling to accept that Pope Julius II's dispensation was invalid. Campeggio and Wolsey accomplished nothing before Clement recalled the case to Rome in July 1529. For his failure to secure the annulment, Wolsey was stripped of all his titles and privileges, except the Archbishopric of York. He was later recalled to London to answer to charges of treason and died on the way in 1530.²⁴ Henry effectively, but not formally, broke with papal authority in January 1533 when he disobeyed Pope Clement's explicit orders not to act until the court reached a final decision and finally married Anne Boleyn. In May of the same year, Thomas Cranmer, the Boleyn family chaplain and papally-appointed Archbishop of Canterbury, annulled Henry's marriage to Catherine.²⁵

The formal break with Rome did not happen all at once, rather it was the result of a number of policies and enactments. For instance, the 1532 Submission of the Clergy²⁶ culminated in the 1534 Act of Supremacy, which declared Henry the Supreme Head of

²³ *Britannica Academic*, s.v. "Henry VIII," accessed September 15, 2021.

²⁴ *Britannica Academic*, s.v. "Thomas, Cardinal Wolsey," accessed September 15, 2021.

²⁵ *Britannica Academic*, s.v. "Henry VIII," accessed September 15, 2021.

²⁶ See also the Act in Restraint of Appeals 1532, the Act Concerning Ecclesiastical Appointments and Absolute Restraint of Annates 1533, and the Peter's Pence Act 1533, which outlawed canonical appeals to Rome, suspended the pope's English income, and abrogated his right to appoint English bishops, respectively.

the Church. Even before the Act of Supremacy, however, Henry had already embarked upon the path to schism. In July 1533 Clement finally denied Henry an annulment and pronounced a formal sentence of excommunication against him and Cranmer.

Unsurprisingly, the decree was largely ignored in England and Clement died in 1534, shortly before the Act of Supremacy came into force. He was succeeded by Paul III (r. 1534-1549), known as the ‘petticoat cardinal’ because it was rumored that he was only elevated to the rank on the request of his sister, the mistress of Pope Alexander VI. It was clear from early in his pontificate, however, that Paul was to be no Clement VII. Now known as a reformist pope of strong moral character, Paul III did what he could to put out the flames of reform in England.²⁷ He was opposed by Wolsey’s effective successor, Thomas Cromwell, a career courtier with heavy Protestant leanings, who was responsible for introducing the anti-Catholic legislation of the 1530s, most consequential of which was the Act of Supremacy, which transformed the Church in England into a spiritual department of state under the crown.²⁸

Henry had entered his reign as one of Catholicism’s most avid champions. In 1521 he published a theological treatise, *Assertio Septem Sacramentorum*, defending the papacy and the sacraments against Martin Luther, which earned him the title *Fidei Defensor*—Defender of the Faith—from Pope Leo X.²⁹ By 1534 he had removed ecclesiastical authority from Rome and invested it in the person of the monarch, finalizing his break with the papacy. Those who dared oppose Henry, such as Lord Chancellor Sir Thomas More, and John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, were executed soon

²⁷ John Julius Norwich, *The Popes: A History* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2011), 294, 297-299.

²⁸ *Britannica Academic*, s.v. "Henry VIII," accessed September 15, 2021.

²⁹ Norwich, *The Popes*, 284.

thereafter. Fisher, who was promoted to the cardinalate by Paul in an attempt to prevent his execution, had openly and vehemently defended Henry's marriage to Catherine and refused, like More, to take a legally required oath (Succession to the Crown Act 1533) affirming Henry and Anne's issue as legitimate. In perhaps one of the earliest instances of Catholic espionage in England, Fisher had also corresponded with Charles V in an attempt to persuade him to invade England and depose Henry in concert with a popular uprising.³⁰ Henry continued his attack on the Catholic Church when, in 1536, he began to disband the religious houses, expropriate their land, and seize their accumulated wealth.

This dissolution of over nine hundred monasteries, abbeys, priories, and convents, which lasted from 1536 to 1541, was undertaken for a number of reasons. Monastic orders—those that resided in the religious houses disbanded by Henry—were not uniquely English, and thus their loyalty to the English state could not be assured. These orders maintained a presence in other countries and were ultimately answerable to an overseas superior. Furthermore, monastic orders epitomized the elements of Catholic religion reformers like Cranmer and Cromwell wanted to purge from the English Church, such as the doctrines of purgatory and the veneration of saints and their relics. More importantly, the religious orders owned somewhere from one-fifth and one-third of all the land in England. Many religious houses amassed great wealth from their rental incomes and from donations made by those making pilgrimages to venerate their relics.³¹ Henry sought to seize these lands and either add them to his own Crown Estate or sell them to members of the nobility to fill his own coffers and ensure their loyalty. The Suppression

³⁰ Brendan Bradshaw and Eamon Duffy, eds., *Humanism, Reform and the Reformation: The Career of Bishop John Fisher* (Cambridge, Cambridgeshire: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 156-157.

³¹ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c.1400-c.1580* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 379-423.

of Religious Houses Act 1535 began the process and, in response, Catholics in the north of England rose in revolt.

This so-called Pilgrimage of Grace, led by Robert Aske, arose in response to Cromwell's attempts to dissolve the northern monasteries. By October 24, 1536, Aske and over 30,000 armed Catholics had taken York and gathered the support of local clergy and nobility. The king ordered Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, to suppress the insurrection, which had spread to Lincolnshire, Lancashire, Northumberland, and Cumberland. At a peace conference at Pontefract in December, the rebels demanded amnesty, return to communion with Rome, a new Parliament to effect this return, and the punishment of heretic bishops. Norfolk vaguely agreed to the terms and Aske disbanded his forces. The retribution from King Henry was ruthless and swift; over two hundred men were executed, including Aske.³² The dissolution continued under Cromwell, by then appointed Vice Gerent in Spirituals (the king's deputy on all ecclesiastical matters). Pope Paul responded to the rebellion and continued his attack on the monasteries by issuing a second excommunication of Henry and Cranmer in 1538, this time in more certain and harsh terms. Like Clement VII's earlier excommunication, it went unheeded.

Pope Paul, confronted with the reality of the English situation, instead focused his efforts on fighting the Reformation on the Continent. In 1540 he granted a papal bull establishing the Society of Jesus under its first Superior General, Ignatius of Loyola. One of the first orders of clerks regular (as opposed to monastic orders, like the Benedictines, and meditant orders, like the Franciscans), the Jesuits did not live in monasteries, nor did they have a special habit. Rather, they committed themselves to strict obedience to the

³² *Britannica Academic*, s.v. "Pilgrimage of Grace," accessed September 15, 2021.

pope and to propagating the faith. The Jesuits would go on to lead the Church's Counter-Reformation. In 1542 he reorganized and re-empowered the Roman Inquisition to seek out and prosecute heretics throughout Europe. Finally, he convened the Council of Trent in 1545 in order to clarify and reassert Catholic teaching in the face of Protestantism. Although it would be too late to reverse the Reformation completely, Paul began to fight actively against it with every tool at his disposal. Paul III did not live to see the fruits of his labor, as he died at the end of 1549, but the seeds of the Counter-Reformation had been sown and the Renaissance church was beginning to change.³³

In England, the Pilgrimage of Grace was followed by smaller rebellions in Cornwall and Walsingham, and by Bigod's Rebellion in Cumberland and Westmorland. These revolts sealed the fate of the religious houses and by 1541 the last of them were dissolved and their assets seized. In a surprising turn, however, Henry's religious reform program shifted back towards Catholic theology and away from Protestantism in the early 1540s. In 1539, much to the dismay of Cromwell and Cranmer, Parliament passed the Six Articles, which affirmed transubstantiation³⁴, communion under the species of bread only, and clerical celibacy, among other things.³⁵ In 1540, for much debated reasons, Cromwell was executed under charges of treason and heresy. The Reformers were able to achieve some victories: For instance, in 1541 Henry ordered Cromwell's vernacular translation of the Bible, the *Great Bible*, to be placed in all parish churches. Otherwise, conservative policies mostly prevailed: In 1543 Henry published the King's Book, a

³³ Norwich, *The Popes*, 301-303.

³⁴ The Dogma rejected by many Protestant reformers that the bread and wine offered at Mass is transformed, by the priest's words of institution, into the real body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus Christ.

³⁵ Duffy, *The Stripping*, 424-430.

theological compendium and successor to the Bishops' Book of 1537, which reversed Protestant reforms and left the rejection of papal authority and the dissolution of the monasteries as the only significant differences between the English and Catholic Churches.

Much had changed for Henry from 1527 to 1543, when the King's Book was published. In 1536 Catherine of Aragon died. Later, in the same year, Henry had his marriage to Anne Boleyn (who only bore him a daughter, Elizabeth) annulled and had her executed under charges of treason for purported adultery. Henry's third wife, Jane Seymour, bore him his much-desired male heir, Edward, in October 1537, but died twelve days later. In 1540, he married but quickly had annulled his marriage to Anne of Cleves, precipitating the downfall of Thomas Cromwell. Also in 1540, he married the seventeen-year-old Catherine Howard, who was executed not a year later for her adultery. Last, in 1543, he married Catherine Parr. A queen with Protestant leanings, she was attacked by conservative elements within Henry's government, such as the Duke of Norfolk, who quickly fell from favor. The Reformist council members who replaced them went on to form the regency council under Edward. On January 28, 1547, at the age fifty-five, Henry, obese and ill, died in London. His nine-year-old son succeeded him as Edward VI.³⁶

On February 20, in Westminster Abbey, Edward was crowned King of England and Ireland. During the service, Archbishop Cranmer hailed King Edward as England's Josiah—the biblical King of Judah who initiated a zealous religious reform program and fight against idolatry. Of course, the nine-year-old king was not a scholar of theology and

³⁶ *Britannica Academic*, s.v. "Henry VIII," accessed September 15, 2021.

ecclesiology. He was, however, under the supervision of his uncle, Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset, as regent and Lord Protector.³⁷ Edward was raised as a Protestant and was young, impressionable, and taught to defer to the counsel of his advisors. Seymour, a Protestant, and Cranmer sought to continue the reforms Henry had prevented with his Six Articles and *King's Book*. With nearly unlimited power, and the support of the King, achieving this goal became possible. Not even a year into Edward's reign, in July 1547, Cranmer published the *Homily of Good Works*, which all clergy were to preach. The homily condemned, among other things, a number of "papastical superstitions" such as rosaries, purgatory, relics, bells, holy water, and holy palms. Shortly thereafter, a visitation of the country's churches by a group of thirty Protestant commissioners according to a set of Reformist injunctions was announced. This visitation represented a significant shift towards total Protestantism.³⁸ A series of reforms followed: the repeal of the Six Articles, the Sacrament Act 1547 (which allowed the laity to receive communion under both kinds), the Chantries Act 1547 (which closed the last religious houses), and, finally, the Book of Common Prayer of 1549.

While Henry's formal break with the Catholic hierarchy had signaled the formation of an independent English Church, it was not until 1548 that the split became truly theological, rather than merely political. In the same year the Privy Council banned most of liturgical 'smells and bells' associated with English Catholicism, including candles on Candlemas, ashes on Ash Wednesday, and palms on Palm Sunday. The 1549 Prayer Book continued these reforms in a much more pervasive manner; it prohibited or altered the components of the Mass that were central to pious practices and ideas

³⁷ *Britannica Academic*, s.v. "Edward VI," accessed September 15, 2021.

³⁸ Duffy, *The Stripping*, 448-450.

surrounding it. For example, it eliminated the parish processions, the elevation of the consecrated host, the vast majority of feast and fast days, votive Masses, the use of the Latin language, and traditional chants. In areas of especially Catholic devotion, such as Cornwall and Devon, the prayer book was not well received. In addition to religious turmoil, these areas had historically been persecuted by English authorities for their independent cultural identity and had recently been struck by economic downturn. The 1549 Prayer Book was the last straw. An armed resistance formed under prominent Catholic landowner Sir Humphrey Arundel, which demanded a restoration of the Henrician Reform. An English force, under John Russel, 1st Earl of Bedford, was dispatched to quell the insurrection. After several months of fighting, the rebel forces were decimated in the Battle of Sampford Courtenay in August 1549 and Arundel was executed. The Prayer Book Rebellion represents mounting opposition from Catholics to the Protestantization of the English Church, and this opposition was complemented theologically by the Council of Trent.³⁹

The Council of Trent, convened by Pope Paul III in 1545, was the Catholic Church's high command when it came to the offensive against Protestantism. The council, which continued through the next two pontificates, met in a city nominally under the control of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V but still close to Rome. In simple terms, Trent reorganized the Church along both theological and structural lines. First, the council reasserted traditional Catholic doctrine with regard to purgatory, the seven sacraments, and transubstantiation in clear and cogent terms, albeit a generation too late. Nevertheless, it provided the foundation for addressing the issues which provoked

³⁹ Duffy, *The Stripping*, 459-460, 464-470.

Luther's protest by strictly prohibiting simony and emphasizing salvation by faith, in addition to works. Second, the council introduced a new weapon in the fight against Protestantism: the seminaries. These educational institutions were designed to replace older methods for the training of clergy and, consequently, improve the moral and intellectual quality of the presbyterate. The oftentimes corrupt, complacent, and decadent Church of the Renaissance, which had rather impotently allowed the Reformation to take root, had no choice but to reshape itself to meet the challenges at hand and Trent provided the means of achieving this goal. The Church after Trent was efficiently organized, professionally managed, and an increasingly formidable opponent to Protestantism. As a result, in the years following Trent the spread of Protestantism was stopped and even somewhat reversed in some places.⁴⁰

While Pope Paul did what he could to challenge directly the Protestant threat, these efforts were threatened following his death in 1549. During his pontificate, Paul elevated a number of humanist bishops to the cardinalate. Among those raised was Henry VIII's exiled cousin Reginald Pole, who shared many of Luther's convictions regarding justification and the need for institutional reform. Paul also, however, raised many conservative bishops, like Gian Petro Carraffa (who rejected all of Luther's claims as heresy) to the cardinalate, and when the Conclave gathered to elect his successor in the winter of 1549, the future of the Church seemed very much uncertain.⁴¹ Pole was a dominant candidate at first, but the Italian and French parties ultimately could not bring themselves to stomach the thought of an English pope. They ultimately settled on the relatively unknown Giovanni Maria Ciocchi del Monte, who was ultimately elected in

⁴⁰ Duffy, "Protest and Division," 167-168.

⁴¹ Duffy, "Protest and Division," 163-164.

February 1556. Now Julius III (r. 1550-1555), del Monte was a competent canon lawyer, but also had a scandalous relationship with a seventeen-year-old boy whom he created cardinal shortly after his accession to the papacy. In spite of his moral failings, Julius continued to support the Council of Trent and openly promoted the Jesuits as the defenders of the Church in the face of Protestantism. In so doing, Julius at least sustained the Counter-Reformation efforts of previous popes during the final years of Edward's reign.⁴²

Under Edward VI, Archbishop Cranmer and his confederates, Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset, and John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, were able to form a distinctively English national Protestant church. In 1552, Parliament passed acts that regulated holy days, legitimized the children of married clergy, and required every person living in England, Wales, and Calais to attend church on Sundays. Furthermore, in the same year it replaced Edward's first Prayer Book with the Second. Unlike the First, the Second Book of Common Prayer was wider reaching and more radical. It replaced or altogether excised Catholic phrases like matins, evensong, Mass, offertory, and altar from the liturgical lexicon and, most significantly, overthrew traditional Catholic understanding regarding the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Unlike the liturgy introduced by the 1549 Prayer Book, the liturgy of 1552 bore little resemblance to its Catholic predecessor. In the year following these reforms, Edward's health declined precipitously, and his ministers grew concerned over the likely succession of his Catholic half-sister, Princess Mary, to the throne. Edward entertained changing the succession for the sake of the reforms and in June 1553, Northumberland summoned Parliament to give

⁴² Norwich, *The Popes*, 304.

force to a Device of Succession that would replace Mary and Elizabeth in the line of succession with his daughter-in-law, the fervently Protestant Lady Jane Grey (also Henry VIII's grandniece). Northumberland's plan, however, was interrupted in July 1553, when Edward died, sooner than expected, of tuberculosis.⁴³

Upon Edward's death, Lady Jane Grey was quickly proclaimed as queen by the Privy Council, to the discontent of Mary and her supporters. Mary gathered support among her tenants in East Anglia and sent an ultimatum to the council demanding she be recognized as queen, which they declined to do. As public support for Lady Jane and the council quickly dwindled, Mary managed to build an army of over 20,000. Realizing their mistake, the council reversed itself and declared Mary queen on July 19, 1553, a decision that was met with rejoicing on the streets of London. On August 3, Mary rode triumphantly into the capital accompanied by her half-sister, Elizabeth, and the Duke of Northumberland was quickly executed for high treason.⁴⁴ In Rome, Pope Julius III rejoiced at the inevitable re-Catholicization of the English Church. He quickly dispatched Cardinal Pole to England with full legatine powers to do what was necessary for the success of the Catholic restoration. In February 1555, Parliament dispatched an envoy to Rome to inform the pope of England's formal submission. Julius did not receive the message, however, because he had become afflicted with an illness that prevented the proper functioning of his digestive system. On March 23, 1555, he died of starvation. The conclave gathered in Rome and elected as his successor another compromise candidate,

⁴³ John Guy, *Tudor England* (Oxford, Oxfordshire: Oxford University Press, 1988), 224-226.

⁴⁴ *Britannica Academic*, s.v. "Mary I," accessed September 15, 2021.

Marcello Cervini degli Spannochi, who took the name Marcellus II and died twenty-two days later.⁴⁵

Not one month after Marcellus' death, the conclave elected the indomitable Gian Petro Carafa, who took the name Paul IV (r. 1555-1559). Carafa was one of the conservative bishops who had been elevated to the cardinalate by Pope Paul III, and he was now in a position to reform the Church as he saw fit. At the same time, in England, Queen Mary and Cardinal Pole, the papal legate and new Archbishop of Canterbury, set about the process of undoing the Edwardian reforms. Upon her accession in 1553, there was little doubt that Catholicism would be restored and within weeks, in August, she had released a proclamation calling for the same, but still allowing for religious tolerance. Nevertheless, any pretense with regard to the latter did not last long. By September leading Protestants like Archbishop Cranmer were imprisoned and in October Parliament passed First Statute of Repeal 1553 which nullified all religious legislation passed under Edward VI and restored the English Church to the form it had taken under the Six Articles of 1539. Mary's next order of business was finding a husband, and her cousin, Emperor Charles V, suggested his son Philip, who was the heir to the Spanish throne.⁴⁶

The idea of a foreign, still worse a Habsburg king sent shockwaves throughout England. Government ministers, such as the new Catholic Lord Chancellor, Stephen Gardiner, were opposed to the marriage and Parliament even formally petitioned Mary to consider marrying an Englishman instead. Mary did not relent, and Protestants from Kent, fearing Catholic tyranny, revolted under the leadership of Sir Thomas Wyatt, who set out to London with a force of five hundred. By the time Sir Thomas reached London,

⁴⁵ Norwich, *The Popes*, 304-305.

⁴⁶ Duffy, *The Stripping*, 527-528.

he had 4,000 men. Wyatt's forces were initially viewed as an imposing threat, but Mary was ultimately able to quash the revolt and put all those implicated in its planning (including Lady Jane Grey's father, the Duke of Suffolk) to death. Although she had resecured her position and was ultimately able to marry Philip in 1554, it represented the beginning of the decline of popular support for Mary.⁴⁷ Although the Edwardian Protestant reforms had been repealed, it was not until 1555, when at Philip's insistence the Second Statute of Repeal was passed, that the English Church was formally reunited with Roman authority. The statute nullified all religious legislation passed after 1529, though it did allow seized monastic lands to remain under their current owners, much to the chagrin of Pope Julius III. Regardless, after 1555, England was, at least legally, Catholic again.

Mary's rise had been meteoric, and her downfall occurred in a similar dramatic fashion. Despite early assurances made to the contrary, in 1554 the Heresy Acts were reintroduced, and in 1555 the first executions occurred. Among those executed was Archbishop Cranmer, who repented of Protestantism but then recanted shortly before he was burned at the stake. Ultimately, about 300 Protestants were executed for heresy or treason. Reginald Cardinal Pole, who had been sent to England as a papal legate soon after Mary's accession, was appointed the new Archbishop of Canterbury after Cranmer's execution in 1556. Together, Pole and Mary led the restored Catholic Church in England until Pope Paul IV, the conservative Carafa, revoked Pole's legatine powers and recalled him to Rome under charges of heresy for sharing ideas regarding justification with Luther. Mary refused to send him but accepted his removal from his post as legate.

⁴⁷ *Britannica Academic*, s.v. "Mary I," accessed September 15, 2021.

Although Paul was an ideologically staunch pope, he blundered in depriving the Catholic Church in England of one of its most influential and well-respected figures, and as result needlessly undermined the Marian restoration.⁴⁸ Mary's popularity fell even further in 1558 when, as Spain's ally, she entered a war against France and lost Calais, the last English foothold on the Continent. Popularity aside, the greatest threat to the Marian restoration was lack of continuity, and after numerous false pregnancies, it seemed almost certain that Mary's nominally Catholic half-sister, Princess Elizabeth, would follow her. Racked by her political and religious failures and abandoned by her husband, Mary fell into a deep depression and died from an unclear illness on November 17, 1558.⁴⁹

Mary's reign has often been characterized as a reversion, full of inquisitions and burnings at the stake. While such a characterization is assuredly an exaggeration, Mary did fail to bring together her efforts to restore English Catholicism with the positive aspects of the Counter-Reformation. The Marian restoration lacked the missionary zeal that characterized re-Catholicization efforts on the Continent and Mary neglected to consider that she was fighting a battle for England's soul.⁵⁰ Instead of rebuilding a Church capable of independently meeting the Protestant challenge, she instead relied on her own personal authority to defend and support it—there was no understanding, only obedience. A century prior such a policy might have continued unchallenged, but after decades of religious reform and turmoil, nothing was certain. Unlike its Henrician predecessor, the Marian Catholic Church was sterile, stuck in the past, and unable to

⁴⁸ Norwich, *The Popes*, 305-306.

⁴⁹ *Britannica Academic*, s.v. "Mary I," accessed September 15, 2021.

⁵⁰ Guy, *Tudor England*, 226-227.

adapt the tests of the future.⁵¹ It is no surprise, then, that after Mary died, what lay in store for the English Church under Elizabeth I was uncertain, especially for Pope Paul IV.

⁵¹ Duffy, *The Stripping*, 524-525.

III

LIKE FATHER, LIKE DAUGHTER: PAPAL REACTIONS TO THE ELIZABETHAN RELIGIOUS SETTLEMENT

During the years of Henry VIII and his two successors, Edward and Mary, the English Church was rocked by a series of major reforms. In less than three decades, it had been reorganized under the crown, reformed according to Protestant doctrine, and restored to Catholic liturgy and authority. Thus, when Elizabeth, Henry's daughter by his second wife, Anne Boleyn, acceded the throne in 1558, the future of the English Church was very much uncertain. Catholic officials in Rome, previously contented with Queen Mary's religious policy, were now forced to come to terms with the possibility of a second, permanent schism. Elizabeth was opposed on multiple fronts, both by vehemently Protestant elements who wished to continue the reforms of the Edwardian period, and by Catholic functionaries who had served Mary I, such as the Catholic bishops in the House of Lords. Nevertheless, Elizabeth charted out a path between the various religious groups in England, which all advocated for a particular model of the English Church. This new religious status quo, known as the Elizabethan Religious Settlement, cemented many of her father and half-brother's reforms while maintaining select Catholic elements restored by Mary. Pope Paul IV's response to this new settlement was perplexing, and scholars today still debate its purpose. Nevertheless, his actions, or rather, inaction, becomes more understandable when evaluated together with the political context and intelligence he received.

Queen Elizabeth's early life was relatively lackluster; she was born in Greenwich Palace in 1533 to little fanfare. King Henry, her father, had divorced his first wife in order to marry Elizabeth's mother, who was to produce for him his much-desired male

heir. When the result was yet another daughter, Henry was less than pleased. Boleyn was executed before Elizabeth turned three, and the annulment of Henry and Boleyn's marriage issued by Parliament meant that Elizabeth was illegitimate and could not inherit. She was raised by courtiers at Hatfield House and remained relatively uninvolved with political affairs. Since she had been reinstated to the line of succession in the final years of Henry's reign, all Elizabeth had to do to become queen was wait. While she outwardly conformed to Catholic practices during the reign of her half-sister Mary, she also remained the focus of plots to overthrow the new government and restore the Edwardian reforms. She was viewed with heavy suspicion after Wyatt's Rebellion in 1554 and was only narrowly able to escape execution. After 1554, Elizabeth publicly and openly confirmed her allegiance to her sister while adroitly avoiding the question of her religion. She obviously never dared oppose Mary, but also maintained a neutral public image. As a result, Protestants and Catholics alike speculated as to her true alignment, which became a serious matter when Mary died childless on November 17, 1558.⁵²

Elizabeth's accession following Mary's untimely demise was met with widespread jubilation and accompanied by public parades, processions, and bonfires. A far cry from the instability following the death of King Edward, Elizabeth's entrance into London captivated the people and captured their hearts and minds. In her first public appearance as queen, Elizabeth offered spectators a glimpse into the future by first publicly kissing an English translation of the Bible (banned under Queen Mary) and subsequently dismissing the candle-wielding, conservative monks of Westminster Abbey who had come outside to meet her.⁵³ Like her half-brother, Elizabeth was hailed as a type

⁵² *Britannica Academic*, s.v. "Elizabeth I," accessed September 15, 2021.

⁵³ *Britannica Academic*, s.v. "Elizabeth I," accessed September 15, 2021.

of legendary biblical figure, Deborah in this case.⁵⁴ Numerous pageants celebrating her coronation framed Elizabeth as a harbinger of political stability and religious harmony. While it did seem as if a return to reformation was likely given her involvement with Wyatt's Rebellion, in actuality things were not so clear. The question of Elizabeth's true religious convictions continues to be debated and is beyond the scope of this project. It is clear, however, that Elizabeth was forced to reckon with a number of hostile forces, both internal and external, in order to secure her position. As a result, she asserted more authority in matters of state than any of her Tudor predecessors.⁵⁵

Given the pivotal role Elizabeth was bound to play in settling the question of English religion, at least for the near future if not permanently, it is not surprising that both Catholic and Protestant forces sought to observe and influence the Queen. Entries in the papal diary dated December 1558 record the official papal reactions to Mary's death and Elizabeth's accession:

To-day came tidings of the death of the Queen of England, wife of the Catholic King. She had ever lived as became a Catholic, and had been the means of bringing England back to obedience of the Holy Roman Church.

And:

The French in view of the Queen of England's death grew luke-warm about the peace and hopeful of detaching that kingdom from King Philip or uniting it with that of Scotland, and (among other means to that end) were instant with the Pope that he should declare Queen Elizabeth illegitimate, and, as it were, of incestuous birth, and consequently incapable of succeeding to the throne, whereby they pretended that the crown would belong to the Queen of Scotland.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Deborah was a prophetess and judge (more akin to a military leader) during part of Israel's pre-monarchic period. She led an army against the Canaanites and after achieving victory, led the Israelites for forty years.

⁵⁵ John Guy, *Tudor England* (Oxford, Oxfordshire: Oxford University Press, 1988), 250-251.

⁵⁶ "Rome: 1558, December," in *Calendar of State Papers Relating To English Affairs in the Vatican Archives, Volume 1, 1558-1571*, ed. J.M. Rigg (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1916), nos. 1-2.

In emphasizing Mary's role in bringing about the return of England to Catholicism, it is apparent that Pope Paul IV was concerned about whether these efforts would continue. In addition, Pope Paul was also forced to consider French geopolitical strategy, which sought to see England ruled by the Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots, husband of Francis, Dauphin of France.⁵⁷ A letter from Sir Edward Carne, the English minister in Rome, where he writes that the French ambassador is pressuring Paul to excommunicate Elizabeth and establish Mary Stuart as the legitimate queen, also supports this idea.⁵⁸ Although it has often been written that Paul caved into French demands to declare Elizabeth illegitimate, there is no evidence that he ever did.⁵⁹

Pope Paul was by no means a tolerant figure; he was renowned for his anti-Protestant zeal and prodigious support of the Inquisition. In 1557 he introduced the Index of Prohibited Books (by which Catholics were forbidden, under pain of sin, to read any of the listed titles) and he also centralized his authority by suspending the Council of Trent and replacing it with a commission of bishops, prelates, and theologians.⁶⁰ While Paul might have considered similar abrasive strategies in England following Elizabeth's accession, it initially did not seem necessary. Catholicism in England was in fact very lively in the late 1550s and informed the life of both prince and pauper.⁶¹ The above

⁵⁷ Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots is not to be confused with her cousin Mary Tudor, Queen of England and Elizabeth's predecessor. Both were Catholic and married to foreign figures, Francis and Philip, respectively. In this paper, Mary Tudor is referred to as just "Mary", while Mary, Queen of Scots, will be referred to as Mary Stuart.

⁵⁸ Ted W. Booth, "Elizabeth I and Pope Paul IV: Reticence and Reformation," *Church History and Religious Culture* 94, no. 3 (2014): 324, accessed September 15, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23923181>.

⁵⁹ The first to erroneously claim that Paul IV declared Elizabeth illegitimate was 17th century historian Paolo Sarpi. For more discussion on this claim see F.W. Maitland, "Elizabethan Gleanings."

⁶⁰ Duffy, "Protest and Division," 168-169.

⁶¹ For a more thorough discussion of this recently established claim, see Christopher Haigh's *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society under the Tudors*, J.J. Scarisbrick's *Reformation and the English People*, and Eamon Duffy's *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580*.

excerpts from the papal diary establish that the Vatican was at least receptive to the news of Elizabeth's accession, even if they were naturally uncertain about the extent to which the Catholic Church in England would be affected. Nevertheless, it was not likely that this diplomatic courtesy would persist if Elizabeth declared herself a Protestant and separated the Church in England yet again from Roman authority. In addition, the excerpts show that French diplomats, no doubt influenced by their own foreign policy objectives, were lobbying Paul for Elizabeth's excommunication very soon into her reign. And yet, given this pressure, and Pope Paul's own over-enthusiastic tendency to go on the offensive, he still did not act decisively at the outset, perhaps the only point at which Papal condemnation could have effected a real change in English governance. Considering all these factors, it appears, then, that Pope Paul did not act because he did not think he needed to act—Elizabeth was likely going to remain Catholic, but if he acted against her, then she surely would not.

Upon initial observation, it would seem that maintaining Catholicism was the path of least of resistance for Elizabeth. Since the Church had already been reestablished by Mary, Elizabeth would not have to pass any new legislation or make any drastic structural changes. She had also already publicly conformed to Catholic teaching and even continued attending Mass during the first few months of her reign. Furthermore, an open affirmation of her allegiance to the pope would have offered her protection from French claims to her throne grounded in accusations of heresy and illegitimacy. On the other hand, continuing Mary's policies would likely have forced England into an alliance with Spain and possibly resulted in a marriage between Elizabeth and Mary's widow, Philip. Elizabeth was intimately familiar with the opposition Mary experienced over her

own pro-Spanish policy and was likely unwilling to take any course of action that could jeopardize her position. Elizabeth also faced potential opposition from the ever-important landed gentry and nobility, who had never altogether fallen in line behind Mary and whom Elizabeth needed now more than ever. For these and a number of other reasons, including parliamentary opposition and the likely alienation of skilled Protestant advisors, Elizabeth began to move England away from Catholicism.⁶²

On December 1, 1558, Elizabeth's advisors, led by her moderate Protestant principal secretary, Sir William Cecil, produced a document entitled "A Device for the Alteration of Religion," which provided a framework for introducing new acts of supremacy and uniformity, and the likely diplomatic consequences of such a course of action (which included the excommunication of Elizabeth and the invasion of England by France).⁶³ The "Device" is evidence of the fact that the Privy Council reasonably expected that a change in religion would bring a swift excommunication and, in keeping the plans secret until the last moment, the council's belief that such an excommunication could have a deleterious effect on the planned reform. These ideas were not mistaken: an excommunication would make gathering support in the House of Commons significantly more difficult and entry in the papal diary from December 1558 details a French plan to unite England and Scotland under Mary Stuart, by war if necessary, if Elizabeth is excommunicated.⁶⁴ King Henry II of France (r. 1547-1559) made no effort to disguise his true intentions, going as far as to display the French arms together with those of England

⁶² McGrath, *Papists and Puritans*, 4-8.

⁶³ Booth, "Elizabeth I and Pope Paul IV," 322-323.

⁶⁴ "Rome: 1558, December" in *Calendar of State Papers*, no. 2.

and Scotland in his palace. Elizabeth's position was still uncertain and an early excommunication along with a war with France would have spelled disaster.

It did not take long for Pope Paul, and King Philip of Spain, to learn of Elizabeth's plans. On December 27, 1558, Elizabeth issued a decree prohibiting public preaching on any topic save for scripture and allowed for components of the liturgy to be said in English instead of Latin until Parliament could meet and implement new religious measures. Although it was not an explicit declaration of her Protestant intentions, it was enough to cause Pope Paul and Philip significant alarm. An entry in the papal diary dated January 1559 reads:

At last, this month, the Queen of England has declared herself a Lutheran, and made a decree that there is to be no preaching save of the Gospel and the Epistles of St. Paul...She suffered all to live after their own fashion until she declared by decree of Parliament that they ought to live according to the true and pure faith, by which she meant the faith as the Lutherans understand it. King Philip has given the said Queen to understand that, since she will not live after the Catholic fashion, she shall have no more of his alliance, and that English affairs concern him no further.⁶⁵

Elizabeth, in issuing the decree, exerted authority in the ecclesial realm for only the second time in her reign (the first, after her accession, was ironically to forbid any religious changes). In compelling obedience on a minor but important matter like the topic of sermons, she was able to confirm clerical submission and prepare the English Church for the coming of wider-reaching changes, such as another re-organization. The decree also had the added effect of preventing preaching on the changes Elizabeth was planning to implement. At this point Elizabeth was supported by neither the French nor the Spanish and had taken the first steps towards reestablishing an independent English Church. Still, Pope Paul vacillated and failed to take decisive action against the queen by

⁶⁵ "Rome: 1559" in *Calendar of State Papers*, no. 3.

either declaring her illegitimate or excommunicating her. It is likely that he was holding out in the hopes that Elizabeth would maintain Catholicism in England and not stray too far from Roman authority. Evidence of these hopes exists in a letter from John Francis Canobio, ostensibly a papal courier, where he writes that “the Queen is badly infected with heresy...and it will be no easy matter to cure her, but God is powerful.”⁶⁶

As the situation in London worsened, Pope Paul continued receiving intelligence reports. One of these reports, dated to March 1559, describes the dire parliamentary situation just one month before the new Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity were introduced. First, instead of adjourning for Holy Week, the Houses met through Thursday. The Catholic bishops in the House of Lords passed articles asserting the supremacy of the Catholic Church, which were poorly received by the lower House of Commons. Also, Queen Elizabeth attended Easter Mass celebrated in the way it would have been during the reign of her half-brother, King Edward, and received Communion under both species.⁶⁷ Worst of all, the report asserts that “preachers from Germany” have been breaking into churches, stripping them of their ornaments, and desecrating the Sacred Host. The only possible silver lining, the report claims, is that Elizabeth will notice the strife and controversy caused by her plans and “resolve to have no more of it.”⁶⁸ Unfortunately for Paul, Elizabeth resolved to do quite the opposite.

In April, Sir William Cecil introduced to the lower house an Act of Supremacy to re-establish crown control of the English Church and an Act of Uniformity to return English worship to the Book of Common Prayer. The latter act chose the considerably

⁶⁶ Booth, "Elizabeth I and Pope Paul IV," 330-331.

⁶⁷ Traditional Catholic practice was to receive Communion under one species, that of the bread, alone. Communion under both species, that of bread and wine, was reintroduced by Protestant reformers.

⁶⁸ "Rome: 1559" in *Calendar of State Papers*, no. 16.

Protestant 1552 Prayer Book and not the more moderate 1549 Prayer Book, which might have been acceptable to greater part of the public.⁶⁹ Although Cecil had introduced a reform bill as early as February 1559, it had been heavily amended and rendered inert by the Catholics in the House of Lords. Now, Cecil's plan for preventing a similar outcome was to frame parliamentary debate in Protestant terms, thus discouraging the Catholic Bishops from participating. These bishops were by no means a majority in the upper house, but they wielded significant influence and led a faction of Catholic lay lords, who together formed a majority that could derail any potential reform. So, when debate began on Cecil's new Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity, and leading Bishops White and Watson walked out in protest, the government had sufficient justification to charge them with contempt and imprison them in the Tower of London. Without White and Watson, the Catholics in the Lords were very close to losing their majority.⁷⁰

In April 1559 the House of Commons passed the Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity without issue. For Cecil, such an outcome was expected, but there was still no guarantee that the Lords would not yet again block the bills. Ultimately, there was opposition in the upper house but not enough to block the passage of the acts because, in addition to Watson and White, two other Catholic prelates were absent. The Supremacy Act passed with a minor amendment and without the support of a single bishop. The Uniformity Act passed with a narrower margin, eighteen against and twenty-one in favor, and was also opposed by every bishop present. For the first time in English history, substantial religious change was implemented in the legislature without the support of a

⁶⁹ McGrath, *Papists and Puritans*, 10-11.

⁷⁰ Guy, *Tudor England*, 260-263.

single cleric.⁷¹ The new Supremacy Act bestowed upon Elizabeth the less controversial title of Supreme Governor, rather than Head, and restored the Henrician protocol for appointing bishops. The Uniformity Act reimposed, with few changes, the 1552 Prayer Book, while still allowing for some Catholic vesture and ceremonial, and also required attendance at Church by all the people.

There was little widespread resistance to the Elizabethan Settlement. Under Mary, many thousands—the vast majority—of priests accepted the return to the Mass and to the Catholic hierarchy. Now, these same priests, with only a few hundred exceptions, willingly accepted the return to the 1552 Prayer Book and to national English authority.⁷² In April and May, Elizabeth re-dissolved the monasteries and religious houses that had been restored by Queen Mary. The new Supremacy Act was widely supported by owners of land that had been originally seized from religious orders during Henry's dissolution of the monasteries. Although Pope Julius III had allowed Cardinal Pole to leave the land with its new owners, there was no guarantee that Pope Paul IV would continue this policy. Now that he lacked the ability to affect land ownership at all, the landowners' title was secure.⁷³ In addition to undoing the Marian restoration, the acts required explicit loyalty in the form of an oath from public officials and at least outward conformity from everyone else. The penalties imposed on those who refused were severe and ranged from a hefty fine to life imprisonment. Catholic priest and historian Philip Hughes best described the situation for Catholics in England when he wrote "The queen's subjects may continue to be Catholics, so long as they pretend to be Protestants."⁷⁴

⁷¹ Guy, *Tudor England*, 263.

⁷² McGrath, *Papists and Puritans*, 19.

⁷³ Guy, *Tudor England*, 264.

⁷⁴ McGrath, *Papists and Puritans*, 52-54.

It would not be an overestimation to claim that the majority of the country was Catholic at the time of the settlement, and that only a small minority were really committed Protestants intent on altering the religious framework of a nation. Nevertheless, it is impossible to know just how many Catholics were willing to risk imprisonment for the sake of papal authority. The Catholic bishops that did take a stand were quickly replaced and Catholic aristocrats generally stayed out of the spotlight. The vast majority of priests conformed and thus left those Catholics who were willing to keep the faith without guidance or ministry until 1574, when the first seminary priests arrived in secret. Even then, the damage had been done. Rome failed tremendously in, first, not reacting to the situation rapidly and sending new priests to minister to recusant Catholics and, second, in not taking a firm stance against Catholics attending Protestant services for the sake of conformity (when the Council of Trent finally did in 1562, it was too late to effectively spread the information). Although there were still pockets of resistance, especially in Lancashire and Chichester, where Catholic priests continued to openly offer the Sacraments, average Catholics had been placed in an impossible position. They were faced with significant penalties for breaking the new laws, and when their parish priest and local lord all followed the new Elizabethan program, who were they not to follow their example?⁷⁵

With the passage of the Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity, Pope Paul's hopes that England would remain a Catholic nation should have been completely lost. The acts definitively rejected Catholic liturgy and authority. Yet in a letter to the pope, John Francis Canobio is not discouraged. He claims that Elizabeth is in fact indecisive and is

⁷⁵ McGrath, *Papists and Puritans*, 52-58.

only being “pressed by her heresiarchs to accept the Augsburg confession and enjoin its observance.”⁷⁶ Such a communication suggests that the matter is not final, and Canobio continues to say that the Count of Feria, an advisor of King Philip, is actively working to restrain Elizabeth and has succeeded insofar as the queen is delaying making her will regarding the Augsburg Confession clear. Nevertheless, such a radical shift would have been the furthest towards Protestantism the English Reformation had ever gone and yet Pope Paul refused to act! It is possible he truly believed that Elizabeth was merely under the influence of an unscrupulous clique of Protestant ministers, as the letters he received seemed to suggest, and did not want to take action that could push her in the opposing direction. Instead, he merely considered a plan for establishing an official intelligence network to provide the pope with more consistent reports of English affairs. The network relied on organizing a communication network amongst exiled English courtiers, such as Sir Francis Englefield. Although the plan gives little indication as to whether or not it was adopted, it very likely was, given that numerous English Catholic exiles did go on to participate in the espionage efforts of the succeeding decades.⁷⁷ If Pope Paul ever had a long-term plan to bring England back into the fold following the Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity, it was never implemented; he died shortly thereafter in August 1559.

On balance, Pope Paul IV managed English affairs poorly. He often quarreled with Queen Mary and Cardinal Pole and when the time came for yet another Act of Supremacy, Paul made it all too easy for Elizabeth and her advisors to yet again separate the English Church from papal authority. When he died in August 1559, Rome erupted

⁷⁶ "Rome: 1559" in *Calendar of State Papers*, no. 18.

⁷⁷ "Rome: 1559" in *Calendar of State Papers*, no. 27.

into joy. A mob went as far as to attack the Inquisition's headquarters, seize the Pope's statue, and lob its head into the Tiber.⁷⁸

His domestic legacy aside, Pope Paul set the stage for the hostile papal diplomacy of the late 16th century by failing to take decisive action against Elizabeth. His inaction was not the result of ignorance (as the state papers show) or cowardice (he excommunicated many other secular rulers). Rather, Pope Paul seemed to genuinely believe that Elizabeth could be persuaded to maintain the Marian status quo. This theory is supported by numerous communications between the pope and his advisors. Even as late as March 1559, a month before the Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity were passed, papal communications are hopeful that Elizabeth will not go through with plans to reintroduce Protestantism.⁷⁹ In addition, the plan for establishing an intelligence network claims that:

considering also that the Queen, notwithstanding her perversity in religion, has not as yet shown any disposition to deal rigorously with the persons of those lay lords and churchmen who have refused to take the oath of obedience or deny the Catholic religion, but has merely deprived them of their offices and benefices, still suffering them to abide in the realm, and in some cases to live abroad in the enjoyment of their revenues: there is therefore reason to hope that in the course of time, and the chapter of accidents, the Queen will be compelled, or perchance inspired by God, to restore the obedience of the realm to the Apostolic See, and to return to the Catholic religion.⁸⁰

There was hope in the Vatican that, even following the new Religious Settlement, Elizabeth would return the English Church to Catholic administration. This, coupled with a report that King Philip of Spain was still considering a marriage to Elizabeth, gave Pope Paul all the reason he needed to hesitate. The same plan goes on to directly recommend

⁷⁸ Norwich, *The Popes*, 306.

⁷⁹ "Rome: 1559" in *Calendar of State Papers*, no. 16.

⁸⁰ "Rome: 1559" in *Calendar of State Papers*, no. 27.

against following French requests to excommunicate and declare Elizabeth illegitimate: “All this his Holiness is accordingly prayed to consider, piously and prudently cherishing, as far as may be, this hope, and not suffering Princes to induce him to make war upon the Queen, as he may well be solicited and besought to do.”⁸¹

Pope Paul naturally trusted the information he received from his advisors, and also followed recommendations that he not act rashly against Elizabeth. The course of action Paul followed, namely, that of inaction, was undertaken with the hope that Elizabeth would not follow the advice of counselors like Sir William Cecil. Somewhat ironically, it was this inaction which allowed the Elizabethan Settlement to take root in the English religious landscape. Elizabeth played a game of brinksmanship with the pope: swift action could spell victory or defeat for either of them. In keeping her intentions discreet, she was able to both mollify Pope Paul and keep him at a distance. The lull in hostilities enabled her to secure her own position. In April the Religious Settlement came into force and in May she made peace with France and Scotland, both of which would have been remarkably more difficult to achieve under the pall of papal excommunication.⁸² Such a penalty would have further emboldened France and Scotland against her, provided Spain and the Holy Roman Empire with an incentive to declare war, and set the stage for domestic instability and difficulties with dealing with Parliament. Thus, the interaction between Elizabeth and Pope Paul IV was of monumental consequence: it resulted in the secure establishment of her regime and set the stage for future Vatican espionage in England. Paul would surely have lamented such an outcome.

⁸¹ Booth, "Elizabeth I and Pope Paul IV," 334-335.

⁸² Guy, *Tudor England*, 264.

Nevertheless, it was his adamant belief that Catholicism in England could be saved that allowed Protestantism to take hold again.⁸³

⁸³ Booth, "Elizabeth I and Pope Paul IV," 330-331.

IV

POTENS EST DEUS: A NEW CHAPTER IN VATICAN DIPLOMACY

In the first years of Elizabeth's reign, the Vatican was still trying to decipher what Elizabeth's intentions were, and whether she could be brought to restore Catholicism in England. Throughout this period, lasting roughly from 1559 to 1570, Vatican diplomacy was unconfident and submissive. The pope succeeding Paul IV, Pius IV also failed to excommunicate Elizabeth, and was influenced in not doing so by both his conciliatory foreign policy and his desire not to alienate Catholic Spain and the Holy Roman Empire, neither of which wanted to see Elizabeth excommunicated. On the other hand, Pius IV's successor, Pius V, prioritized settling the matter of Elizabeth's alignment once and for all, even if it meant acting against the wishes of King Philip of Spain and Ferdinand of the Holy Roman Empire. Furthermore, the Vatican's foreign policy was inconsistent, not only because it had to cope with a change in pope every decade or so, but also because there were two opposing strains of thought that different popes embodied. It is no surprise then, that it took the Vatican eleven years from the time the Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity were passed in 1559 to finally declare Elizabeth excommunicate in 1570. Without the formal excommunication, papal relations with England were inconsistent and based more on the surrounding political context, rather than being influenced by a coherent program of objectives meant to restore Catholicism.

Following the death of Pope Paul IV, the cardinals gathered in Rome to elect his successor. They had to be cautious about whom they elected; another pope as enthusiastic as Paul could spell disaster for the Catholic Church. Paul had not exactly engendered friendly relations with the monarchs of Europe. He despised the Spanish and King Philip

II for their domination of his homeland, Naples, and had broken relations with Holy Roman Emperor Charles V over his concession of the principle *cuius regio, eius religio* at the Peace of Augsburg in 1555. He went as far as to ally himself with King Henry II of France and go to war with Spain, a war which he ultimately lost when the Duke of Alba invaded the Papal States from Naples and successfully conquered the port city of Ostia in 1557. Although the Spanish spared Rome, Paul made King Philip's wife's efforts to restore Catholicism in England difficult by attempting to prosecute the estimable Cardinal Pole. His last, and most consequential, failure was his inaction in the face of an English Protestant resurgence. Pope Paul might have done more damage had he not died in August 1559, a few months after Elizabeth's mutiny.⁸⁴

The story of Paul IV is a genuinely tragic one; he was a man of great courage and integrity, but he was narrow-minded at a time of great change and instability. He attempted to control matters far outside of his realm and likely made matters less favorable than if he had not intervened at all. The contrast between Paul IV and his predecessor, Paul III, could not be more drastic. The latter was a *bon vivant* who did the bare minimum to keep the Counter- Reformation machinery running while the former was a moralist who attempted to impose his harsh vision on all who surrounded him. Paul III's papacy embodied the plurality of voices that had characterized the Renaissance: it had accommodated both the theological musings of the Catholic humanists, like Cardinal Pole, and the unyielding dogmatism of those like Carafa. It encouraged religious exploration and novel ideas on spirituality, within bounds, like those of Ignatius of Loyola and the Jesuits. On the other hand, Paul IV embodied a reactionary Church and

⁸⁴ Guy, *Tudor England*, 306.

diverted efforts from “the exploration of truth to the suppression of error,” as scholar Eamon Duffy put it.⁸⁵ For the rest of the Counter-Reformation, the Church moved between these two poles, and the main concern of succeeding popes was to reconcile them.

In 1559, after four months of deadlock, the Conclave in Rome elected Giovanni Angelo Medici, a moderate figure who embodied the Renaissance tradition most recently promoted by Pope Paul III. Medici (whose relation to the great Florentine family is still debated) took the name Pius IV (r. 1559-1565). Unlike his predecessor, Pius was a lively pope who made no effort to conceal his three natural children. Moral failings aside, he undid many of Pope Paul IV’s unwise policies. First, he dissolved the council Paul had established to perform the functions of the Council of Trent and reestablished the council itself. Second, he mended relations with King Philip of Spain and his brother, the new Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand I. Last, he restricted the jurisdiction of the Inquisition, reduced the size of the Index of Prohibited Books, and had Paul IV’s corrupt nephews, who had fallen from grace in the final months of his papacy, executed.⁸⁶ Pius also raised one of his own nephews, Carlo Borromeo, to the cardinalate and appointed him Archbishop of Milan. Unlike previous Cardinal nephews, however, Borromeo was reverent, dedicated to serving the poor, and an exceptional theologian and administrator—he was eventually canonized and remains widely venerated.⁸⁷

With regard to England, Pius did not deviate from the course charted out by Paul IV. By the time of his election, England was rapidly moving again towards Protestantism,

⁸⁵ Duffy, "Protest and Division," 170.

⁸⁶ Norwich, *The Popes*, 306-307.

⁸⁷ Duffy, "Protest and Division," 170.

but Pius did not attempt to excommunicate Elizabeth.⁸⁸ A Vatican report from April 1560 suggests that like his predecessor, Pius believed that the Elizabethan Settlement was not final:

The Pope, having watched for some time the course of events in England with a view to finding means to bring that realm back to the Catholic religion, is now apprised that the English Catholics will persist in their opinion not without hope that the Queen may yet be willing to listen to proposals for the reconciliation of herself and her kingdom to the Holy See. The Pope, therefore, yesterday determined to send an envoy to the Queen to sound her disposition in regard to the said matter, and has chosen the Abbot of San Saluto for the purpose, though it is not yet known when he will depart.⁸⁹

In March, both Borromeo, who was the pope's principal advisor, and Pius himself sent letters to King Philip and Emperor Ferdinand, requesting that they aid the efforts of the Abbot of San Saluto, Vincenzo Parpaglia.⁹⁰ Although the mission was a failure (Parpaglia never made it past Brussels) the reasons behind its failing shed light on the role that Spanish and French foreign policy objectives played in the Vatican's diplomacy.

The situation in the Catholic Kingdom of Scotland changed tremendously in the early years of Elizabeth's reign. The Queen of Scotland, Mary Stuart, was living in France with her husband, Francis, son and heir of King Henry II of France, and so her mother, Mary of Guise, was administering Scotland as regent. Mary of Guise's regime, however, was largely unpopular, and with the Scottish Reformation beginning in earnest in 1559, she needed French soldiers to secure her position. Although the presence of a foreign army in Scotland did not bolster Mary of Guises' popularity, it was able to effectively nullify the threat of a Protestant revolution. These Protestants, led by preacher John Knox, sought English assistance. As early as August 1559, requests for aid were

⁸⁸ Norwich, *The Popes*, 308.

⁸⁹ "Rome: 1560" in *Calendar of State Papers*, no. 39.

⁹⁰ "Rome: 1560" in *Calendar of State Papers*, nos. 44, 45.

met with deliveries of money and arms, but this was not enough to defeat the French. Elizabeth finally acquiesced in early 1560, when she added her own forces to the Siege of Leith. The French effort was not lost, however, until spring 1560, when they lost their fleet in a storm. This disaster was followed shortly by a domestic Huguenot conspiracy to take control of the government in March and the death of Mary of Guise in June. With victory seeming less and less likely, the French sued for peace.⁹¹

The Treaty of Edinburgh, negotiated in July 1560 by representatives of Queen Elizabeth, the Scottish Protestant Lords of the Congregation, and King Francis II of France (Mary Stuart's husband, who succeeded his father, Henry II, in July 1559). The treaty guaranteed the removal of French forces from Scotland, installed the Lords of the Congregation as the new provisional government of Scotland, continued the Anglo-French peace originally established by the Treaty of Cateau-Cambr sis in 1559, and established a new Anglo-Scottish alliance. While France turned its attention inward to focus on the growing Huguenot threat, Mary Stuart was left in the gutter. First, Scotland was no longer a Catholic country. Second, the Franco-Scottish "Auld Alliance" was no more. Last, her husband, King Francis, died in 1560, and his mother, the new regent Catherine de' Medici, excluded her completely from French governance. Eventually, in August 1561, Mary Stuart returned to Scotland and recognized the Reformation.⁹² Although French endeavors in Scotland came to an end in July 1560, Parpaglia was dispatched in April, and King Philip of Spain had reason to suspect he was part of a French conspiracy to excommunicate Elizabeth and provide them with a justification for invasion, which could place England in the French sphere of influence. Parpaglia's

⁹¹ Guy, *Tudor England*, 265-266.

⁹² Guy, *Tudor England*, 266.

mission was anything but, and it had actually been conceived of independently by the pope. Philip nevertheless prevented the emissary from leaving the Low Countries and the mission was a failure.⁹³

As the situation unfolded in Scotland, the pope continued to receive regular intelligence reports. These reports, which include a description of the Siege of Leith, warn Pope Pius that an English fleet would soon set sail to block the arrival of French reinforcement (which did indeed happen). Another report describes in detail the terms of the Treaty of Edinburgh.⁹⁴ Now that the treaty had assuaged Philip's anxieties regarding French hegemony, Pius resolved to send another emissary to Elizabeth, this time choosing Abbot Girolamo Martinengo. Martinengo's mission was to re-establish relations with Queen Elizabeth and invite her to attend the re-opening of the Council of Trent.⁹⁵ Unfortunately, the English Privy Council, led by Sir William Cecil, voted to refuse Martinengo entry into the country. A letter from John Francis Commendone, the Apostolic Nuncio to Lower Germany, to Hercules Gonzaga, Cardinal Archbishop of Mantua, describes the Privy Council's reasoning:

The Queen, I understand, alleges three principal grounds for Martinengo's exclusion: 1, that unlike other princes, she was not consulted as to the summoning of the Council; 2, that the Council is not free, pious and Christian, and that, had it been so, she would have sent to it men learned and pious in the name of the Anglican Church; 3, that the Pope likewise seeks to stir up the Catholics in her kingdom and raise sedition, and in that regard she complains that an Irishman was sent from Rome to Ireland for such a purpose.⁹⁶

⁹³ John Hungerford Pollen, S.J., *The English Catholics in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1920), 67-68.

⁹⁴ "Rome: 1560" in *Calendar of State Papers*, nos. 53, 57.

⁹⁵ "Rome: 1561, January-June" in *Calendar of State Papers*, nos. 67, 74.

⁹⁶ "Rome: 1561, January-June" in *Calendar of State Papers*, no. 81.

When King Philip heard of the Martinengo's rejection, he acted swiftly to prevent the likely outcome: excommunication. If Pope Pius was delaying in announcing such a penalty because of a hope that Elizabeth could still be convinced to return to Catholicism, such hopes would surely have been dashed following the spurning of his personal representative. King Philip nonetheless sought to prevent a bull of excommunication because such a bull might have prompted a French invasion of England. Philip wrote to his ambassador in Rome to prevent any steps being taken towards excommunicating Elizabeth, to guarantee that, should the opportunity present itself, he would restore Catholicism in England by force, and to suggest that the pope offer the English crown to Philip if their efforts should be successful. Although there is no evidence to suggest that Pope Pius had not agreed to the last point, it is unlikely given that by 1561 the Vatican was beginning to regard Mary Stuart as the rightful Queen of England. What Philip's communication to Rome does prove is that no longer was the papacy influenced in its inaction against England by a misperception that a peaceful return to the faith was possible. Rather, now the pope was under pressure to not excommunicate Elizabeth, when he otherwise likely would have done, because of Spanish concerns of French domination in England.⁹⁷

Throughout the 1560s, English domestic politics were focused primarily on the questions of succession and marriage. Elizabeth fell deeply ill in 1562 and in 1564, which made the question of an heir ever more pressing. The strongest claimant to the throne was Mary Stuart (who was the granddaughter of Henry VIII's sister, Margaret, and King James IV of Scotland), followed by her aunt, the Countess of Lenox (Margaret's daughter

⁹⁷ Pollen, *The English Catholics*, 71-72.

by her second husband). Legally, however, Elizabeth's heir presumptive was Lady Katherine Grey (Jane Grey's younger sister), who was given precedence by Henry VIII's 1544 Act of Succession. Elizabeth did not explicitly recognize anyone's claim as legitimate, and actually had Lady Katherine imprisoned for contracting a marriage without her permission (she died under house arrest in 1568). Mary was open to the possibility of succession but did not wish to be seen as Elizabeth's pawn, so in 1565 she married the Countess of Lenox's son, Lord Darnley, thus uniting the two strongest claims to the throne in the person of her son, James, who was born in 1566. Elizabeth was understandably incensed by Mary's unilateral marriage, but her upper hand did not last long. Lord Darnley was murdered in 1567, and Mary was forced to flee to England after her marriage to Darnley's alleged murderer, the Earl of Bothwell, provoked the nobility to force her to abdicate in favor of her son.⁹⁸

The Council of Trent, which had recently reconvened, soon became involved in the question of how to respond to Elizabeth. There was only one English bishop at the council, Thomas Goldwell, as the rest had been imprisoned by Elizabeth. In 1563, as the council began to draft its decrees, Pope Pius sent a communication to his legates:

His Holiness says that as the Decrees of the Council involve the condemnation of the Queen of England, the Protestants and the Huguenots, you will do well to begin considering what will be the proper procedure on your own and his Holiness' part, and to send his Holiness your opinion in writing, especially in regard to the Queen of England, as soon as possible.⁹⁹

At this point, the intention of the Pope to excommunicate Elizabeth is clear, and English Catholic exiles, like Nicholas Sanders, proposed a radical course of action. They advocated for not only excommunicating Elizabeth, but also for absolving her subjects of

⁹⁸ Guy, *Tudor England*, 268-270.

⁹⁹ "Rome: 1563, April-June" in *Calendar of State Papers*, no. 240.

allegiance to her, confirming Mary Stuart as the rightful queen, and sending a delegation of English Catholics to offer her the crown. The papal legates directing the council entertained the proposals and summoned French, Spanish, and German representatives to consider them. The reactions were not positive. The Germans and Spanish condemned the proposals for different reasons: the Germans were concerned about the possibility to domestic Protestant uprisings and the Spanish were still cautious of French foreign policy objectives in England.¹⁰⁰

When Pope Pius IV was informed of the adverse reactions, he quickly backtracked, and revoked the letter he sent requesting a condemnation of Elizabeth in some form:

I wrote to you on the 7th to the effect that his Holiness, giving more weight to the judgment of the Emperor than to that of any other person, was content that you should walk warily and take no proceedings as yet against the Queen of England. This I am now for the same reason bidden by his Holiness to repeat, with the addition that in regard to this and all other matters of policy that might affect the peace of Germany and other countries in which there is a danger of violent action being taken on account of religion, his Holiness will be well pleased that you should be guided by the advice and opinion of the Emperor, in whose judgment and goodness his Holiness has reason to confide, knowing him to be most prudent and abounding in Christian zeal.¹⁰¹

The Council instead pronounced a general excommunication on all who rejected its decrees but did not single out Elizabeth or any other Protestants. Although a particular excommunication of Elizabeth might seem inevitable, the constant debate surrounding the question shows that it was anything but. On the one hand, Church officials and the English Catholic exiles supported a hardline policy, while the Catholic statesmen viewed such a policy as a hindrance. The pope was forced to grapple with these two currents, but

¹⁰⁰ Pollen, *The English Catholics*, 76-78.

¹⁰¹ "Rome: 1563, July-September" in *Calendar of State Papers*, no. 255

ultimately gave in to the politicians over his own advisors. If he could not excommunicate Elizabeth, he could at least begin to exert some sort of pressure upon her regime.¹⁰² So, Pope Paul requested that the Holy Roman Empire and Spain press Elizabeth to release the many Catholic bishops she had imprisoned (who, unlike the bishops during Henry VIII's reign, staunchly refused to submit to the crown's arrogation of ecclesiastical authority). Emperor Ferdinand wrote and petitioned for a release of bishops, along with a degree of toleration towards Catholics, as was then the case for the Huguenots in France. In her response, Elizabeth of course refused his request, and assumed the mantle of Catholic Church for her own English Church.¹⁰³

In December 1563, the Council of Trent met for the final time. The council, which had been first opened by Pope Paul III in 1545, had done a great deal to equip the Church with the tools necessary to combat Protestantism. In 1564, Pope Pius issued the papal bull *Benedictus Deus*, which ratified all the decrees of the council and declared them as binding upon all Catholics under pain of excommunication. These decrees covered the most controversial theological topics of the period, such as the nature of justification, the seven Sacraments, saints and relics, and, of course, indulgences. Pius continued the council's mission by producing a catechism to teach the decrees of the council and by beginning the process of codifying the Catholic liturgical books.¹⁰⁴ After Trent, the pope took no action against Elizabeth. In a consistory in June 1565, he addressed Elizabeth with affection and declared that a policy of reconciliation ought to be way forward for the Church. Unlike his predecessor, Pius was unwilling to act

¹⁰² Pollen, *The English Catholics*, 78-79.

¹⁰³ "Rome: 1563, October-December" in *Calendar of State Papers*, no. 287.

¹⁰⁴ Norwich, *The Popes*, 307.

unilaterally or decisively, but they both refrained from directly attacking Elizabeth or the re-established English Church. He died in December 1565.¹⁰⁵

Along with his numerous political accomplishments, Pope Pius was a great patron of the Renaissance tradition. In Rome and Papal States, he supported artists and philosophers, founded schools and universities, and sponsored the construction of public works (improving Rome's water supply) and new churches. Even as the English situation continued to deteriorate, Pope Pius had, on balance, left the Church in a better position than that in which he had found it upon his accession to the papacy.¹⁰⁶ In 1566, the Conclave gathered in Rome to elect Pius's successor. His nephew, the admirable Carlo Borromeo was the preferred candidate, but he made clear that he would not accept the office if elected, and instead recommended the austere Michele Ghislieri. Ghislieri, who had served as Inquisitor General under Paul IV, was elected in 1566 and took the name Pius V (r. 1566-1572). Just as the pendulum had swung one in one direction during the papacy of Pius IV, it swung back in the other during the reign of Pius V. He, among other things, reinvigorated the Inquisition and also adopted Pope Paul IV's mistrust of the Spanish.¹⁰⁷

Pius V had humble origins; he was a shepherd in his youth who had responded to a vocation with the Dominicans. Underneath his papal robes he wore the abrasive habit of his order and he consumed mostly vegetable broth and shellfish. He expected similar ascetism and devotion from those around him and worked to root out prostitution and blasphemy from everyday Roman society. Throughout his papacy, Pius had one goal: to

¹⁰⁵ Pollen, *The English Catholics*, 79-83.

¹⁰⁶ Norwich, *The Popes*, 308.

¹⁰⁷ Duffy, "Protest and Division," 170.

keep Protestantism out of where it was not already and to actively fight against it where it was. While his methods and reliance on the Inquisition could be characterized as harsh at times, they were no doubt effective in Italy, which he managed to preserve as the rest of Europe was plunged into religious wars.¹⁰⁸ One of Pope Pius's first orders of business was to reiterate the Council of Trent's condemnation of the Catholic practice of attending Protestant services for the sake of conformity. Laurence Vaux, an English Catholic clergyman, attempted to spread this message personally now that the pope's usual channels of communication were no longer an option, but he was mostly unsuccessful.¹⁰⁹

Pius was brazen and much more willing to create enemies than his predecessor. He sent Bishop Vincent Lauri to help Mary in Scotland maintain her throne, but when she married the Earl of Bothwell in a Protestant ceremony, he condemned her with extremely forceful language.¹¹⁰ In another break from his predecessor, Pius sought to act decisively in the matter of Elizabeth's excommunication. He had not, however, begun his papacy with a hostile attitude. In a 1566 letter to Bernard Ferrario, a former confidante of Elizabeth who offered to try to persuade Elizabeth to return to Catholicism, one of the pope's advisors writes:

We have shown the Pope the information containing your offer of your services for bringing Queen Elizabeth back to the obedience of Holy Church at the risk, if need be, of your own life; and, marking the just solicitude which is and has ever been yours for the exaltation of the holy faith, his Holiness is much gratified, and says that he desires you to send him a succinct account of the means which you would use to bring her Majesty back to the true faith; and if they should seem to him meet and expedient for the salvation of those people and the exaltation of Holy Church, he entirely approves their adoption, even though it were necessary to stake his own life upon the venture. Wherefore, desirous as We well know that you are to accomplish so good and holy a work, you will not fail to send a brief information of the method you purpose to employ for bringing that kingdom back

¹⁰⁸ Norwich, *The Popes*, 308-309.

¹⁰⁹ Pollen, *The English Catholics*, 104-105.

¹¹⁰ "Rome: 1567, July-September" in *Calendar of State Papers*, no. 467.

to Holy Church, to which undertaking We doubt not that God will shew Himself favourable and propitious.¹¹¹

Although these efforts were obviously not successful, Pius still did not seek to act alone. He communicated with the Spanish Duke of Alba for months, but ultimately made no progress as the Spanish were concerned primarily with French domination, and the excommunication of Elizabeth could very much engender such an outcome. The failure of the pope's allies to seriously consider excommunication showed Pius that he needed to act alone, if at all.¹¹²

Concurrently with the deliberations regarding the excommunication, Catholic landowners in the north of England were considering yet another uprising. The Elizabethan Religious Settlement was not as widely accepted in the north where, in the Dioceses of Carlisle, Durham, and York, the Catholic Mass was said openly. Elizabeth dealt with the situation by removing the northern aristocrats from their posts and replacing them with loyal southerners. For leading northern peers, the Earl of Northumberland and the Earl of Westmorland, the queen had gone too far. Their response to Elizabeth's action was to plan a coup that would see Elizabeth replaced by Mary Stuart, and see Mary married to the Duke of Norfolk, premier peer of the realm. Both Northumberland and Westmorland had more personal reasons for plotting to revolt as well: the latter was the Duke of Norfolk's brother-in-law, and the former was an especially devout convert to Catholicism.¹¹³

Elizabeth eventually caught on to the scheme and imprisoned Norfolk. Northumberland and Westmorland were subsequently abandoned by other nobles who

¹¹¹ "Rome: 1566, January-June" in *Calendar of State Papers*, no. 373.

¹¹² Pollen, *The English Catholics*, 142-146.

¹¹³ Guy, *Tudor England*, 272-274.

had initially allied themselves with them for purely pragmatic reasons (curtailing the overreaches of Cecil and the Privy Council), such as the Earls of Arundel and Pembroke. Northumberland and Westmorland looked outwards and requested aid from both the Spanish and from Pope Pius V. They did not wait for a response before they raised a force of several thousand in November 1569 and took over Durham, Ripon, and Hartlepool. When the revolt failed to secure the person of Mary Stuart, support began to crumble. Elizabeth's forces routed the so-called Rising in the North and captured and executed Westmorland. Northumberland was barely able to escape and lived out the rest of his days in the Netherlands. The papal support they required came a month too late.¹¹⁴

In February of 1570, just one month after the suppression of the Rising in the North, Pope Pius began the formal process for pronouncing a sentence of excommunication upon Elizabeth. The commission for pronouncing an indictment was led by Alexander Riario, the Auditor General of Causes in the Pontifical Court. On February 5, Riario produced an indictment that accused Queen Elizabeth of heresy, mistreatment of Catholics, and the promotion of unacceptable liturgical forms. Over the next several days, twelve English witnesses testified as to the truth of the charges. As the trial was proceeding, Pope Pius received a letter from the leaders of the by-now suppressed Rising in the North and responded positively:

We have lost no time in replying to your letters of Nov. 8 received by Us on Feb. 16; whereby, apprehending more clearly and intimately the woes and calamities not wholly unknown to Us before, We are afflicted with that distress of mind which the unmerited character of these evils, which We in your persons suffer, and our fatherly love towards you and the rest of the Catholics in that kingdom ought to excite in Us; for, besides that by virtue of our common office of pastoral charity We are bound to rejoice or grieve in the weal or woe of all the faithful in Christ, and of every province in which the Christian name is held sacred.... For think not, dear sons in Christ, that they whom you name, Catholic bishops or

¹¹⁴ Guy, *Tudor England*, 274-277.

nobles of that realm, who rather than swerve from the confession of the Catholic faith were either cast into prison or otherwise subjected to unmerited suffering, have fared ill; for their constancy even now, as We deem, confirmed by the recent example of Blessed Thomas, Archbishop of Canterbury, none can praise as it deserves.¹¹⁵

Shortly after responding to the letter, the trial concluded, and Elizabeth was unsurprisingly found guilty. On February 25th, Pius pronounced a formal bull of excommunication against Elizabeth I:

We declare the said Elizabeth heretic and fautress of heretics, and her adherents, to have fallen under sentence of anathema, and to be cut off from the unity of the Body of Christ, and her, Elizabeth, to be deprived of her pretended right to the said realm and of all and every dominion, dignity and privilege; and also the nobles, subjects and peoples of the said realm, and all else who in any manner have made oath to her, to be for ever absolved from such oath, and all duty of liege-fealty and obedience, as by the authority of these presents We absolve them, and deprive the said Elizabeth of her pretended right to the realm and of all else aforesaid, and lay upon all and singular the nobles, subjects and peoples, and others aforesaid, our injunction and interdict, that they presume not to yield obedience to her, or her admonitions, mandates and laws; otherwise We involve them in the like sentence of anathema.”¹¹⁶

The papal bull, *Regnans in Excelsis*, was forceful and direct; Pius did not mince words. In addition to excommunicating her, Pius also deprived Elizabeth of her sovereign rights and absolved her subjects of allegiance to her (this single principle would go on to the form the bedrock of later attempts to depose or assassinate Elizabeth and replace her with Mary Stuart). After such a long period of inaction, the bull must have come as a shock to Elizabeth and although it arrived too late to help the Rising in the North succeed, it would nonetheless set the tone of Anglo-Vatican relations for centuries to come.

Elizabeth's rise to power ushered in a new, more uncertain period in the continuing diplomatic, political, and theological struggle between the Catholic Church

¹¹⁵ "Rome: 1570, January-March" in *Calendar of State Papers*, no. 647.

¹¹⁶ "Rome: 1570, January-March" in *Calendar of State Papers*, no. 649.

and the Kingdom of England. *Regnans in Excelsis*, however, occupies a special place in organizing and characterizing the history of the Church's diplomacy. It serves as a clear dividing line between the efforts of 1534 to 1570 and those of 1570 onwards. Before the excommunication, Vatican diplomacy with England changed wildly from pope to pope and was also influenced by the constantly shifting religious status quo. On the other hand, after 1570 the Elizabethan Religious Settlement was firmly established and so was the Vatican's method of combatting it. Whereas popes like Paul IV and Pius IV, who both embodied different strains of the post-Reformation Church, were magnanimous in their conduct with England, after *Regnans in Excelsis* and Pope Pius V, Vatican diplomacy was hostile, aggressive, and uncompromising. Numerous conspiracies arose with the goal of overthrowing Elizabeth and restoring Catholicism. The first of these, the Ridolfi Plot, came in 1571 and was followed by the Throckmorton Plot in 1583 and the Babington Plot in 1586. The culmination of these efforts was the Spanish armada's attempted invasion of England in 1588. These plots, of course, all failed. As a result, Catholics in England returned their focus to covert sacramental ministry, which coexisted with the Elizabethan status quo for decades.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ Duffy, "Protest and Division," 170.

V

**BONES IN THE ATTIC: CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVES
IN A TIME OF TURMOIL**

Welsh Jesuit Philip Evans was playing tennis on the grounds of Cardiff Gaol prison on July 21, 1679, when he received word that he was to be executed the following day. Evans, born in nearby Monmouthshire, had not lived in Wales his whole life; in 1665, at age twenty, he entered the English Jesuit College at St Omer in Flanders, where he was educated and ordained a Catholic priest. In 1675 he was dispatched to his native land, where he served as a missionary along with other Jesuits, like John Lloyd, his eventual cellmate. Evans and Lloyd were not the first Catholic priests to be executed in England. In 1679 Charles II was king, but his government was merely carrying on the religious status quo that been established over a century prior, by Tudor monarchs Henry VIII, Edward VI, and Elizabeth I. On the eve of Evans' death, he wrote a letter to his sister, a nun in Paris. He writes, "Dear Sister, I know that you are so well versed in the principles of Christian courage as not to be at all startled when you understand that your loving brother writes this as his last letter unto you, being in a few hours hence to suffer as a priest and consequently for God's sake. What greater happiness can befall a Christian man?"

The following day Evans was hanged, drawn, and quartered. As the first priest of the day, his execution was particularly brutal in a failed attempt to motivate those after him to recant—both Evans and Lloyd held the faith to their last. Almost two hundred years later, in 1878, a wooden box was discovered in the attic of a home in Holywell, Wales. The box held the remains of two men wrapped in a linen shirt. One of the skulls in the box had a vertical hole through it and many of the individual bones seemed to have

been cut with a knife, suggesting that the body had been dismembered and head impaled on a pike. The bones remained unidentified until just a few months ago, when Maurice Whitehead and Hannah Thomas, scholars of the Welsh martyrdoms, suggested that the bones might belong to Evans and Lloyd. When the identification was confirmed, the bones were included in an exhibition memorializing the Catholic martyrs of England and Wales, including Thomas More, John Fisher, Edmund Campion, Robert Southwell, and Edward Oldcorne, among many others.¹¹⁸

The story of Evans and Lloyd, both captured and imprisoned by professional ‘priest hunters,’ shows that the history of centuries ago is still very much with us at present. The bones of these priests, and the struggle to identify them, are a testament to the complicated and even perhaps contemporary nature of the religious conflict that took place in England during the 16th, 17th, 18th, and, finally, 19th centuries, when full Catholic emancipation was achieved. Much like the bones, however, Catholic perspectives have too often been relegated to attic of historical analysis, with significant attention paid instead to the perspectives of those defending the religious status quo, like Elizabeth’s spymaster Sir Francis Walsingham. In prioritizing such perspectives, Historians have painted a picture that depicts Catholics in England and the pope in Rome as a foreign, fundamentally non-English, force.

As has been mentioned, much of the existing historiography has focused on important personalities like Walsingham and a few others, like Sir William Cecil, and imbued their efforts with an almost mythic quality. This literature describes how Sir

¹¹⁸ CNA Staff, "Catholic martyrs' bones identified almost 150 years after discovery in an attic," *Catholic News Agency*, April 8, 2021, accessed December 1, 2021, <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/247199/catholic-martyrs-bones-identified-almost-150-years-after-discovery-in-an-attic>.

Francis and his men ‘saved England’ from Catholic corruption. It has even become prevalent trend in recent years to characterize Catholic Counter-Reformation efforts as terrorism. For example, Derek Wilson's *Sir Francis Walsingham: A Courtier in an Age of Terror* describes the Pope as a “religious leader in Rome urging state-sponsored terrorism and dispatching his mullahs into England to deflect Elizabeth's subjects from their loyalty.” This project’s primary aim is to show that such conclusions are utterly baseless. In reality, Catholics in England were a much less menacing threat than meets the eye. During Henry, Edward, and Elizabeth’s reign, they were on the defensive and during Mary’s reign they, perhaps in an excessive manner, were only reacting to what they saw as decades of damage dealt to the Church.

This paper’s method for countering this current is twofold: first to shed light upon the neglected perspective of the Vatican with regard to the English Reformation and second to argue that the Vatican was not acting in a fanatical or deluded manner. Throughout the Tudor Period, the Vatican’s efforts to support Catholicism in England were sober and restrained. It was only after decades of giving English monarchs the benefit of the doubt that the Church finally went on the offensive and began to sponsor efforts to effect religious change by force. These efforts were not purely foreign. From the earliest days of Henry’s reign until the last days of Elizabeth’s, English Catholics were rising to oppose the religious changes that were being implemented. The 1536 Pilgrimage of Grace, 1549 Prayer Book Rebellion, and 1569 Rising in the North stand out as the most significant uprisings, and their formation was neither supported nor even encouraged by the Vatican. This alone ought to be enough to dismiss claims that the

Vatican was acting against the interests of the English people to preserve its own prestige.

The Vatican's objectives in England were not self-interested, rather they were intended to be a way of supporting the English population, which not fifty years earlier had been nearly entirely Roman Catholic. Granted there were surely political factors behind the actions taken by various popes, especially Pius IV, but were these factors as conspicuous or influential as those behind Henry or Elizabeth's actions? They were not. One need only look at any biography of Henry VIII to learn that he was not committed Protestant. Rather, he foisted a new hierarchy upon the English people, without their consent, for the purpose of securing his own dynastic legacy. Elizabeth's religious flip-flopping, before finally settling on Protestantism in 1559, does her no favors either. Although just how much these two monarchs relied on religion as a tool for political security is debatable, what is not debatable is that the religious turmoil of middle to late 16th century England was deeply scarring for the average subject.

The English Reformation, and particularly the Elizabethan Religious Settlement, was no patriotic revival received by the masses with open arms. On the contrary, as Eamon Duffy, and numerous scholars after him, have shown, popular Catholicism in England was alive and well, even in the early years of Elizabeth's reign. It was assuredly not, as has been claimed elsewhere, a decrepit and byzantine force from which the English population desired release. During Henry and Edward's reign Catholicism persisted and when Elizabeth implemented her changes, few bishops were willing to go along with it. Although they were eventually replaced, Elizabeth still managed to keep the Vatican on its toes when it came to divining her true affiliation. If the Vatican was as

extreme as the literature would have us believe, then it would surely not have taken two successive popes a total of ten years to finally excommunicate Elizabeth. Even the uncompromising Pius V, who wasted no time prosecuting heresy within his borders and reportedly ordered papal armies in France to execute Huguenot prisoners, did not speak an ill word against Elizabeth until the excommunication of 1570 (the same cannot even be said for Mary Stuart, whom Pius denounced for being married in a Protestant ceremony to a divorced earl). The record of Papal diplomacy with England does not evoke images of a vindictive and delusional pope, constantly condemning a government and people that dared to defy his edicts. Indeed, even the most extreme, most dogmatic popes were, at the very least, courteous in their dealings with a monarch who had explicitly rejected their authority and imprisoned those who dared disagree with her.

The story of Vatican diplomacy and espionage in England did not come a close with the excommunication of Elizabeth. In fact, it could be said that the real Catholic espionage efforts did not begin in earnest until after 1570. Yet the crucial moments that set the tone for the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Kingdom of England all have their origins in the period lasting from Henry VIII's original break with the Church in 1534 to the excommunication. The attention-grabbing, cloak-and-dagger stories that are still made into films and television series today would never have occurred had it not been for the thirty-year long period during which time the Church was still apprising itself of the situation in England and deciding how to respond to it. It is this period, however, which does most to show just what motivated the Church to act in the manner that it did and would in decades following. After 1570, the religious situation in England was mostly consistent, and so were the covert efforts of the Church to minister

to recusant Catholics. Before 1570, however, the situation was constantly in flux, and so the various popes had to respond to unique challenges, thus setting the stage for the antagonism that would last at least until 1829, when full Catholic emancipation was finally achieved.

APPENDIX A: TIMELINE OF IMPORTANT EVENTS

- 1487 – The Wars of the Roses, which began thirty-two years prior, end.
- 1509 – King Henry VII of England dies and is succeeded by his son, Henry.
- 1533 – Henry VIII breaks with papal authority and marries Anne Boleyn.
- 1533 – Queen Elizabeth I is born to Anne Boleyn and Henry VIII.
- 1534 – Act of Supremacy makes Henry the head of the English Church.
- 1536 – Henry VIII orders the dissolution of the Catholic religious houses.
- 1536 – English Catholics revolt for the first time in the Pilgrimage of Grace.
- 1540 – The Society of Jesus (Jesuits) is established at Rome.
- 1545 – Pope Paul III convenes the Counter-Reformation Council of Trent.
- 1547 – King Henry VIII dies and is succeeded by his son, Edward.
- 1549 – The protestant revision of the Book of Common Prayer is adopted.
- 1549 – English Catholics revolt against the adoption of Prayer Book.
- 1553 – King Edward VI dies and is succeeded by his sister, Mary.
- 1553 – First Statute of Repeals is passed, restoring Catholicism in England.
- 1554 – Wyatt's Rebellion, against Queen Mary I, is suppressed.
- 1555 – Second Statute of Repeal reestablishes papal authority.
- 1558 – Queen Mary dies and is succeeded by her sister Elizabeth.
- 1559 – The new Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity are passed.
- 1559 – Pope Paul IV dies without taking action against Elizabeth.
- 1563 – The Council of Trent is ratified and closed by Pope Pius IV.
- 1565 – Pope Pius IV dies without taking action against Elizabeth.
- 1569 – English Catholic Rising in the North attempts to depose Elizabeth.
- 1570 – Pope Pius V excommunicates Queen Elizabeth I of England.
- 1587 – Mary executes her cousin and claimant to her throne, Mary Stuart.
- 1588 – The attempted invasion England by King Phillip II of Spain's armada fails.
- 1603 – Queen Elizabeth I dies and is succeeded by her cousin, James.

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