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Conformity, Dissent, and the Death of Henry Barrow, 1570-1593

By

Sara Elisabeth Chetney

**Presented to the Graduate Faculty of Claremont
Graduate University in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in
History.**

**We certify that we have read this document and
approve it as adequate in scope and quality for the
degree of Master of Arts.**

Faculty Advisor Lori Anne Ferrell

Faculty Reader Joshua Goode

Date _____

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Introduction

In the early morning of 6 April 1593, the Separatist leaders Henry Barrow and John Greenwood were hanged at the gallows of Tyburn, having been condemned by the state for writing seditious works. The London Separatist congregation to which these men belonged was a group of particularly zealous religious radicals who believed that until worship in the Church of England was in perfect accordance with scripture, they could not in good conscience attend its services. To obey the Church of England over the mandate of scripture was “to disobey God’s will [and] to despise and reject him.”¹ The state disagreed with this sentiment, executing the leaders after subjecting them to nearly six years of imprisonment and numerous examinations by some of the highest officials in the land. What appears most unusual about their case, however, is the manner of their execution. Twice Barrow and Greenwood were taken out to the gallows only to be pardoned at the last moment. Then, on April 6th, their hanging was carried out in clandestine fashion, early in the morning and “as secretly as could be achieved.”² This seems at odds with what many historians agree was the purpose of a public execution in this period, this being to make an example of the condemned in a demonstration of state power over the body of the criminal; a ceremony designed not just to discourage crime but also to enforce ideological control.³ Such an exercise of control would seem to be the reason the Separatist leaders were executed, so the pardons and secrecy need to be accounted for. Barrow’s case came at a time when competing powers within the state disagreed on questions over Protestant dissenters, the power of ecclesiastical officials to persecute them, and the extent to which these ‘Puritans’ ought

¹ B. R. White, *The English Separatist Tradition: From the Marian Martyrs to the Pilgrim Fathers*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 74.

² Patrick Collinson, ‘Barrow, Henry (c.1550–1593)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1540>].

³ J.A. Sharpe, “Last Dying Speeches’: Religion, Ideology, and Public Execution in Seventeenth-Century England,” in *Past & Present Society*, No. 107 (May, 1985), 148.

to be punished. Perhaps Barrow and Greenwood's back and forth to the gallows, and their secretive end, is indicative of the internal strife the state was experiencing at the time of their deaths.

In this paper, I will suggest that the seemingly peculiar circumstances of Barrow and Greenwood's execution, which not coincidentally occurred at the same time as a crucial Parliamentary session, were due to the difficulties conformist authorities faced in trying to equate dissenting Puritans with treasonous Catholic offenders. Catholics could be easily framed as a dangerous 'other', whether a foreign invader or corrupted native, but Puritans were ostensibly acting out of the same concerns and principles that contributed to the Reformation, desiring only the completion of the reforming mission. Despite the power and efforts of conformist bishops, moderates had difficulty bringing themselves to say that a Protestant should be punished for desiring reform. Barrow's treatment shows that attempts to claim Puritans were as dangerous to the safety of the realm as Catholics was not wholly accepted, despite the apparent victory conformists achieved with his death. I will demonstrate this using Barrow's published works, correspondence, and legal documents pertaining to himself and his associates. Other sources will include the correspondence and works of contemporary Puritans, moderates, and conformists, as well as the various parliamentary proceedings, petitions, proclamations and acts relevant to the case.

For the purposes of this paper, I will be focusing primarily on Henry Barrow's works and experiences from his arrest in November of 1587 through his imprisonment, examinations, trial, and final execution in April 1593. Despite not being a long-standing member before his arrest, through his work in prison Barrow emerged as a leader of the London Separatist movement. Undoubtedly, he was one of its most important contributing members, as evidenced by his

surviving works, the high regard later Separatists showed for him, and the seriousness with which authorities regarded his dissent. Such was his influence that within his lifetime people began to refer to Separatist members as ‘Barrowists’.⁴ For government officials, especially of the ecclesiastical branch, his vocal obstinacy was dangerous in a time that required unity and conformity. The years leading up to the Barrow incident, from 1570 on, were particularly fraught with threats of invasion, assassination, and internal discord. Queen Elizabeth and her government responded to these threats with laws and actions aimed at reinforcing her authority over the temporal and religious lives of the realm’s inhabitants. Obedience and submission were always required of the queen’s subjects, but dangerous times led to stricter insistence upon this duty. As a result, Protestants who criticized the Church of England found themselves under attack by an emerging set of authoritarian, conformist clergy. The Separatists were not the only Puritans to challenge authority or hold fast to reformation ideals, but they were the most extreme and therefore a natural target for officials who wished to make an example of nonconformists.

Though Barrow is often included in studies of religious dissent and the evolution of the separatist movement, the political or extra-religious motivations for his execution warrant further exploration. Though the Separatists were a religious group whom MacCulloch has described as “sincere godly Protestants, in no way heretical in theology” their opposition to authorities who prioritized unity, conformity, and immediate concern for the realm’s safety over the ‘perfection’ of the Church of England made them criminals in the eyes of the state.⁵ During this period there was no separation of church and state; as Queen Elizabeth was the Supreme Governor of the former and head of the latter, to challenge any aspect of either side of government was to assault

⁴ Champlin Burrage, *The Early English Dissenters in the Light of Recent Research, 1550 – 1641*, Volume I, (New York: Russel & Russel, 1912), 129.

⁵ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Reformation: A History*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 388.

the whole of her authority. Henry Barrow may have been motivated by religious concerns, but his sect's refusal to attend state-mandated worship and his own intense criticism of the ecclesiastical government were considered political crimes, not heresy. Through their refusal to attend church, Separatists directly disobeyed the queen. Through attacking her appointed bishops, whose authority stemmed from her own, they indirectly disobeyed her.⁶ In espousing their extreme, though piously conceived, beliefs, Barrow and his followers were acting in a manner that bordered on rebellious in a period of increased paranoia and danger in which officials believed outward obedience was paramount in securing the country. Puritan sympathizers did exist in the government, though, and the case of Henry Barrow and the London Separatists provides a window into an internal conflict between conformists, moderates, and Puritans. These groups clashed as the state's need to enforce obedience came up against doubts over how, and whether, to punish the misguided but 'godly' men who desired to perfect England's religion. The need to protect the realm and assert authority would ultimately lead the conformists to defeat those with misgivings about equating Protestant dissent with that of Catholics, but Barrow's long road to execution shows that the doubt and disagreement which permeated the government resulted in a reluctance to formally punish even the most extreme dissenters.

⁶ David M. Loades, *Politics and Nation: England 1450-1660*, 5th ed. (Malden: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1999), 247.

Chapter One

Dangers Within the Realm or Without

Though Elizabeth I had to deal with a certain level of precariousness since the beginning of her reign, the years following 1570 were especially full of great threats, both external and internal, to her life, position, and authority. Though Elizabeth was as forceful and effective in controlling her court and commanding respect for her title as her father had been, her singularity meant that should she perish, the country would likely descend into chaos. With no obvious Protestant successor and danger always close at hand, the uncertainty of the future was acutely felt at all levels of government. The resulting paranoia led to increased measures of governmental control and demands for strict obedience among the populace. Though threats to the stability of the realm always existed, a display of power from overseas began a period of fear and danger in England that would have far reaching consequences in unpredicted places.

The spark that started this fire of paranoia was Elizabeth's official excommunication from the Catholic Church. In February of 1569/70, Pope Pius V released the Papal bull *Regnans In Excelsis*, the consequences of which went beyond the state of the queen's soul.⁷ Though the 1559 Act of Supremacy held that the Pope possessed no authority over the queen, for believers the bull deprived "Elizabeth, the pretended queen of England, the servant of wickedness" of her claims and spiritually released "the nobility, subjects, and people of the said kingdom...to be for ever [sic] absolved from any such oath, and all manner of duty of dominion, allegiance and obedience."⁸ By Pius's decree, faithful English Catholics were granted permission to disobey their monarch without fear of spiritual consequences, she "being an heretic and favourer of

⁷ MacCulloch, *The Reformation*, 334.

⁸ *Regnans in Excelsis*, as printed in: Claire Cross, *The Royal Supremacy in the Elizabethan Church*, (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1969), 152 - 153.

heretics.”⁹ By casting the queen out, the Pope implied that it would be no sin for any person, acting in defense of the Catholic religion, to remove her from power or even kill her.¹⁰ This encouragement of English Catholics to kill or depose Elizabeth was subtle compared to the more overt suggestions which developed in the years following the bull. At first, violent action was only an implied possibility, but by 1580 a Cardinal Giallo communicated without reservation the view that “there is no doubt that whosoever sends her out of the world with the pious intention of doing God’s service not only does not sin but gains merit.”¹¹ Prior to the excommunication, the state had been rather content to leave untroublesome Catholics relatively unmolested, but the bull sparked a wave of anti-Catholic sentiment. After all, the bull was not aimed solely at the queen, but extended to all English subjects who ignored the order “that they presume not to obey her, or her orders, mandates and laws;” the bull promised to “include...in the like sentence of anathema” any who chose to remain loyal to Elizabeth.¹² Pius’ bull was an assertion of power which made all Catholic subjects potential threats. English officials responded by taking measures to reinforce Protestant-led control over the country, making sure to impress the queen’s authority and assured power upon its subjects.

With the bull, the pope was very publicly asserting himself as an authority above any temporal monarch, and so the English government responded first by reasserting Elizabeth’s control over the realm and the importance of her person. In 1571 a Parliament was called to pass legislation aimed at limiting the bull’s damage and reinforcing the state’s official position on religion and authority. The first of these statutes to be passed was 13 Eliz. c. 1, “An Acte whereby certayne Offenses bee made Treason,” wherein “for the surety and preservation of the

⁹ *Regnans in Excelsis*, as printed in: Cross, *The Royal Supremacy in the Elizabethan Church*, 153.

¹⁰ K. J. Kesselring, “License to Kill: Assassination and the Politics of Murder in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England,” in *Canadian Journal of History* XLVIII, (Winter 2013), 427.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 427-428. Giallo was allegedly relating the view of the new pope, Gregory XIII.

¹² *Regnans in Excelsis*, as printed in: Cross, *The Royal Supremacy in the Elizabethan Church*, 154.

Queen's most Royal Person, in whom consisteth all the Happiness and Comfort of the whole State and Subjects of the Realm," any action that intended to harm the queen, deny her authority, or remove her from power, such as by attempting injury to her person or supporting invasion of the realm, was made treason.¹³ Though these may seem to be naturally treasonous actions, the purpose of the statute was not just to define treason, but to declaratively assert authority over the realm's subjects and demonstrate their opposition to the bull.

Though ostensibly created in response to a Catholic threat, 13 Eliz c. 1's wording made it applicable to any subject. It was a warning to subjects that their behavior was now under increased scrutiny. The text states that while in the past some questionable actions may have gone unpunished "by the neglecting and passing over...with winking eies," this state of affairs had come to an end.¹⁴ The fear caused by the papal bull made actions the government deemed subversive, whether truly malicious or not, intolerable. It forbade the declaration "by any Printing, Writing, Ciphering, Speech, Words, or Sayings...that our said Sovereign Lady Queen Elizabeth during her life is not or ought not to be Queen of the Realm of England..."¹⁵ The statute was vague enough in its wording to be applicable to "any person or persons whatsoever."¹⁶ With this the government hoped to discourage those with dissenting opinions from spreading them, and thereby prevent unrest. The second statute, 13 Eliz c. 2, was more directly aimed at condemning papal actions, being "An Acte against the bringing in and putting in Execution of Bulls and other Instruments from the Sea of Rome."¹⁷ This, naturally enough, sought to limit the dissemination of Catholic materials in the realm, "the effect whereof hath

¹³ Great Britain, *Statutes of the Realm. Volume 4, Part 1; [1547-1585]*, (Searchable text ed. Burlington, Ontario: TannerRitchie, 2007), 526.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 526.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 526.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 526.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 527-528.

been and is to absolve and reconcile all those that will be contented to forsake their due obedience to our most gracious sovereign lady the Queen's Majesty," with anyone found doing so liable to be charged with high treason.¹⁸ With these statutes the government positioned itself to better defend the queen's person and authority from the increased threats it would soon face both within and without the realm.

In the years following 1570, plots to assassinate or depose the queen were uncovered with alarming frequency, many of which were unquestionably inspired by the bull. One Dr. John Story was accused of plotting to kill the queen in 1571 on the grounds that "her excommunication made the killing lawful."¹⁹ Would-be assassin William Parry's February 1584 confession echoed this sentiment: "you may see withal how it is commended, allowed, and warranted in conscience, divinity, and policy, by the popes and some great divines."²⁰ Parry also challenged the queen's claims of supremacy from multiple religious angles, saying the queen should "...forget the glorious title of supreme governor. Trouble none that refuse to swear it; for it cannot agree with your sex. Luther and Calvin did not allow it. The puritans smile at it [secretly mock], and the catholic world doth condemn it."²¹ Parry, of dubious allegiance and an unreliable self-contradictor, may not have been truly earnest in his plot on Elizabeth's life, but

¹⁸ *Statutes of the Realm. Volume 4, Part 1; [1547-1585]*, 529.

¹⁹ Kesselring, "License to Kill," 427.

²⁰ John Strype, *Annals of the Reformation and Establishment of Religion and Other Various Occurrences During Queen Elizabeth's Happy Reign: Together with an Appendix of Original Papers of State, Records, and Letters*. Vol. III part II. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1824, 337.

The works of John Strype, a 19th century historian, are recognized as crucial sources for the study of English church history as they include "valuable transcriptions of manuscripts now lost or never printed," but modern historians are warned to be aware that as a historian of a different era Strype's collections are also problematic. Critiques include his "neglect of chronology, his want of critical sense, and his transcriptions which were often silently abridged or poorly referenced." I have limited my use of Strype to his appendix volumes and have read them with these potential problems in mind. (G. H. Martin and Anita McConnell, 'Strype, John (1643–1737)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26690>.)

²¹ Strype, *Annals*, Vol III part II, 339.

this sentiment did not stir her to mercy, and he was executed in 1585.²² Though the greater part of Elizabeth's subjects did not attempt violent action against her, these attacks fueled the fear for her safety and the future of the realm, spurring the government focus on maintaining strict control and authority.

Plots on a larger, sometimes internationally involved scale also occurred with regularity, with many centering on the same figure, Mary Queen of Scots. In his confession Parry had mentioned the Catholic queen, perhaps as a veiled threat, saying to Elizabeth that "...it importeth you much: so long as it is well with her, it is safe with you. When she is in fear, you are not without peril. Cherish and love her. She is of your blood, and your undoubted heir in succession."²³ He was not alone in holding the noblewoman in high esteem. Mary Queen of Scots was the great Catholic hope, and the conspiracies that sought to place her on the English throne posed an immediate and complicated threat to Elizabeth's reign. As the queen's cousin, and of the old faith, Mary could conceivably make a claim to the throne, and was therefore a source of hope for Catholics both within and without England. Her kinship to Elizabeth made her a difficult figure to remove. A series of plots were uncovered which aimed to depose, kidnap, or assassinate Elizabeth and place Mary on the throne in her place. Mary's royal blood combined with her Catholicism inspired dangerous allies who were willing to work against Elizabeth. Of the most significant actions taken were the Ridolfi Plot of 1571, the Throckmorton Plot of 1584, and finally the Babington Plot in 1586, which provided the evidence necessary to indict Mary as complicit with the conspiracy, put her on trial, and execute her.

²² Julian Lock, 'Parry, William (d. 1585)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edition, Jan 2008.

²³ Strype, *Annals*, Vol III, part II, 338.

In the face of these plots it was again important that the queen's authority be impressed upon the people, with efforts to do so often drawing upon themes of the divine will. In celebration of the Babington Plot's undoing, Archbishop of York Sandys delivered a prayer at St. Paul's that reminded listeners of the queen's divine appointment, which he expressed by entreating God to "Grant that princes and magistrates, whom thou hast set in authority, may without fear or favour offer also this sacrifice, in upright deciding of controverted causes, and severe punishing of malefactors."²⁴ The monarch's actions were possible by God's will, they and their agents alone had the power to set policy. The 'deciding of controverted causes' and 'punishing of malefactors' was not only a right, but a duty to God as his chosen authorities on Earth. In a sermon at St. Paul's Cathedral on November 17, 1583, the anniversary of Elizabeth's accession, Archbishop of Canterbury John Whitgift used the significant date to stress the importance of dutiful submission in "these our corrupt days, so full of disobedience."²⁵ He reminded listeners that it was not enough to "profess and protest obedience in word," admonishing those who "say, and do not. As Christ said to certain that called him Lord and Master, *Why do yee cal me Lord, and do not the things I bid you?*"²⁶ One must prove their allegiance with actions, not words. Whitgift's sermon displays his disinterest in differentiating between types of disobedience, to him Protestants could be just as guilty as Catholics. Referencing the ongoing Puritan infatuation with removing *adiaphora*, elements of worship not expressly commanded by the Bible, from the Church of England, Whitgift countered that

²⁴ Strype, *Annals*, Vol III, part II, 371.

²⁵ Strype, John. *The life and acts of John Whitgift, D.D., the third and last Lord Archbishop of Canterbury in the reign of Queen Elizabeth : the whole digested, compiled, and attested from records, registers, original letters and other authentic mss. taken from the choicest libraries and collections of the kingdom*. Vol III. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1822), 70.

²⁶ Strype, *The Life and Acts of John Whitgift*, 73. Italics in text.

“obedience is nothing *indifferent*: to be taken, or shaken off at our own plesure [sic].”²⁷ Invoking the words of Christ, the apostles, and ancient doctors, the archbishop stressed the concept of divine will giving authority to the monarch: “Al [sic] power is of God...the magistrate is appointed, saith S. Peter, for the encouragement of the godly, and for the punishment of the wicked.” It was not for the multitude to dictate to princes, or to guide their actions. God chose their ruler, and they must trust that the disposition and actions of the leader reflected God’s will. Catholics broke this order by implicitly preferring a foreign leader over their anointed queen. Protestants offended by presuming to criticize and influence Elizabeth and her state agents. Actions such as these came too close to desiring equality, or an equal say in policy, for the highly authoritarian Whitgift. “Equality of persons engendereth strife,” he declared, “which is the cause of all evil.”²⁸ Lower subjects were expected to fulfill the role God gave them and to respect those he placed above them, which included refraining from questioning their betters’ actions. For authorities, maintaining this social order was no small part of ensuring peace, a message which extended to all, low, middle or high. In addressing the 1585 Parliament, Elizabeth reminded both Houses of their place, chastising “fault-finders...which so may make a slander to myself and the church; whose over-ruler God hath made me.”²⁹ The queen herself often spoke in such terms, refusing to be led in any matter by any subject. God was her source of power, she was authorized to act according to his will, and this ought to be enough to ensure the loyalty and obedience of her people. “For if I were not persuaded,” she told that same Parliament, “that mine were the true way of God’s will, God forbid that I should live to prescribe it to you.”³⁰ Here the queen’s own conscience offers proof that she acts as God wishes, and her declaration sets an

²⁷ Strype, *The Life and Acts of John Whitgift*, 71.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 72.

²⁹ Cross, *The Royal Supremacy*, 211.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 212.

example for her audience. In accordance with the social order, Elizabeth submits herself to God's will, but on the level which corresponds with the role of a monarch. As queen, her duty to God is to rule per his direction. If she would rather die before deviating from his path, his chosen role for her, surely her subjects ought to do no less than fulfil their God-given station. These reminders of the queen's divine appointment were meant to promote unity through obedience. Outbreaks of disagreement or social upset would only weaken the country, whose future was so fragile and its threats so great. If it were united, without internal strife, England could better counteract the continued campaign of England's Catholic opponents at home and abroad.

All the while, Catholics overseas continued to encourage English citizens into resistance, striving to support the country's remaining faithful as they could. Sending priests over to minister to the flock carried the risk of the missionary meeting a traitor's death, but these brave men were often supplemented with publications which were produced abroad then smuggled into the country. Forbidden by statute, these works were still dangerous to possess, but they were another means by which Catholics might covertly spread their message. A particularly vitriolic example of anti-Elizabethan Catholic writing was composed by the English Cardinal William Allen. Allen was concerned with maintaining the English Catholic identity, and founded a college at Douai with the intent to train "guerilla fighters for the Counter-Reformation," fearless priests to send to the island and maintain Catholic traditions.³¹ However, he did not let them do all his fighting for him. The cardinal wrote *An admonition to the nobility and people of England and Ireland*, published in 1588, which catalogued in no uncertain terms Elizabeth's sins and tore apart her claim to the throne. Allen also explicitly encouraged rebellion and insurgency, asking the faithful to support the King of Spain should he invade the island. Of course, Elizabeth's

³¹ Loades, *Politics and Nation*, 239.

styling as Supreme Governor of the church was unacceptable to the cardinal, who spat: “She usurpeth by Luciferian pride, the title of supreme Ecclesiastical government, a thing in a woman, in all men’s memory unheard of, nor tolerable to the masters of her own sect, and to Catholics in the world most ridiculous, absurd, monstrous, detestable, and a very fable to the posterity.”³² Elizabeth’s subjects were told to abandon her, “...that no man of what degree or condition so ever, obey, abet, aid, defend, or acknowledge her for their prince, or superior.”³³ The Elizabethan government needed to reinforce its own authority in the face of these attacks, for the bull did not just release Catholics from obligation to Elizabeth, it also ordered them to actively reject her authority and do their part to ensure the restoration of their religion to supremacy. As Cardinal Allen assured his readers, “There is no war in the world so just or honorable, as that which is waged for religion, whether it be foreign or civil: nor crime in the world deserving more sharp and zealous pursuit of extreme revenge, then falling from the faith to strange religions, whether it be in the superior or subjects.”³⁴ Divinely appointed monarchs, even tyrants, could not be resisted without opposing the will of God, but the bull removed this obstacle. This meant, in part, that Elizabeth was to be considered as no different from her subjects and therefore liable to be judged on the same terms as any of the lower castes of people. For obvious reasons, the English government could not sit idle as dangerous ideas like these circulated.

The intense displeasure and anger officials felt regarding Allen’s book and its dissemination in the realm can be felt in the recorded accusation of one Thomas Alfield, who was already liable to be condemned for treason as a Catholic priest. He was found to have

³² William Allen, *An admonition to the nobility and people of England and Ireland concerninge the present vvarres made for the execution of his Holines sentence, by the highe and mightie Kinge Catholike of Spaine. By the Cardinal of Englande*, (Antwerp : A. Coninncx), 1588.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

“feloniously, as a felon to said queen, at London in the parish of All Saints...advisedly, and with malicious intent did cause to be published and set forth to diverse subjects of the queen the said book of the said Will. Allen, containing the foresaid false, seditious, and scandalous matters in English words before recited, to the defaming of said queen, and raising insurrection and rebellion within this kingdom.”³⁵ One of the surest ways a person could bring the Elizabethan state’s wrath upon them was by writing, publishing, or distributing works deemed ‘seditious’. The publication of dissenting books, or even simply distributing them, was often considered a greater crime than simply voicing one’s contradictory opinion.³⁶ Alfield may have been doomed by his profession, but his ‘malicious intent’ in distributing literature like Allen’s singled him out to a government that wanted to contain and control anti-government materials.

The internal threat of rebellious Catholic subjects and the spread of seditious books were not the only factors which contributed to the heightened sense of fear for the queen’s safety and authority. In 1584 Prince William of Orange, leader of the resistance against the Spanish in the Protestant Netherlands, was assassinated by Balthasar Gérard, a Spanish sympathizer posing as a Protestant spy.³⁷ Prior to the murder, Spain’s King Francis II had released a proclamation in 1580 that authorized and encouraged loyal subjects to effect William’s death, even offering a monetary reward. The prince’s murder was authorized on grounds reminiscent of those Catholics laid against Elizabeth: that he was a tyrant, a traitor, and “by [his death] our said people [will be] the sooner delivered, from this tyranny and oppression.”³⁸ The murder of a fellow Protestant head of state by a Catholic agent highlighted the very real danger Elizabeth was in on a personal

³⁵ Strype, *Annals*, Vol III, part II, 370.

³⁶ David Cressy, *Dangerous Talk: Scandalous, Seditious, and Treasonable Speech in Pre-Modern England*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 30.

³⁷ Kesselring, “License to Kill,” 429.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 428.

level, but this assassination was also a significant event in England's ongoing struggle against Catholic Spain. Spain was the consistent threat throughout this period, a great religious rival perceived as constantly on the lookout for signs of English weakness. The paranoia stemming from this conflict stretched over many years, and even after the defeat of the Spanish Armada in July of 1588 the possibility of renewed invasion remained as Spain gained footholds in France. Therefore, it was important for all subjects to appear united in obedience to defend their monarch. "Yea, such is the wily malice of the enemy..." said Lord Keeper Puckering at the opening of the 1592/3 Parliament, "that the better to espie a hole or breach to make this speedy intended invasion of her Majesty and her realms, he hath at this present lodged in our bosoms his secret intelligencers" to report on signs of unrest, whether of "the discontentment of the papists, of the proceedings of the puritans, of all the offences (if any should happen) of the nobility, [or] grievances of the people."³⁹ This sentiment was indicative of the equation of dissent with aiding the enemy. The argument was that disobedient dissenters, intentionally or not, made the country and their queen appear weak and open to attack. When Puritan radicals began to push for reform in the 1570s, their arguments, though theologically sound, challenged the existing power structures in a time when the reinforcement of authority was prioritized in response to the papal bull. Catholic opposition to Elizabeth's rule caused this push, but Protestants would also experience the consequences of a draconian push for conformity and obedience. Government officials believed that in large part the safety of the realm was dependent upon the obedience of its subjects, and through this logic Protestant dissenters could be equated with recusant Catholics. The offender's intent became less of a consideration as a faction of conformist authorities, with little interest in making such distinctions, grew in power and influence.

³⁹ T. E. Hartley, *Proceedings in the Parliaments of Elizabeth I, Vol.3, 1593-1601*, (London: Leicester University Press, 1995), 17-18.

Protestant Dissent and the Question of Authority

It was in this unfortunate climate of fear, uncertainty, and emphasis on dutiful obedience that Protestant reformers continued their efforts to cleanse the Church of England of papal remnants. Just as the government was tightening the reins in response to danger, reformation efforts intensified and shifted focus. In a time when “the developing cult of the Queen required from her subjects passionate rhetorical declarations of love loyalty to her as the supreme godly prince,” Puritans started to challenge the very structures of church authority.⁴⁰ When loyalty to the prince included obedience to her rulings on all matters, religious institutions and appointed clergy not excepted, conformists would construe Puritan grievances as a form of rebellion. Though Protestant reformers could certainly not be accused of treason on the same grounds as the Catholics, their failure to submit or compromise religious principles caught many of them up in the same governmental crackdown which began as a response to Catholicism.

Elizabeth I herself was often the central cause of stagnation in the Church of England’s reformation. Unwilling to be led, bullied, or dictated to on religious or state policy, the queen was consistently the greatest obstacle to religious reform for the entirety of her reign. Her accession to the throne in 1558 had initially been a source of great relief and hope for the Protestants who had suffered under her Catholic sister. Marian exiles returned from overseas expecting to bring the Church of England to the state of perfection which they had witnessed on the continent, but their optimism did not last long. Elizabeth, though undoubtedly Protestant, was conservative in her beliefs and given to advantageous compromise on religious matters. For instance, she hated married priests to such an extent that historian Patrick Collinson has suggested the only reason marriage was still permitted to the clergy after her accession was due

⁴⁰ Christopher W. Marsh, *The Family of Love in English Society, 1550 – 1630*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 114.

to a large number of bishops already having wives. Unlike some of their predecessors, with their secret spouses, "...the Elizabethan bishops were never required to conceal their wives in chests, or to send them packing to Germany. Instead they found safety in numbers. Of the seventy-six bishops consecrated in Elizabeth's reign, at least fifty-five were married men."⁴¹ Elizabeth was also known to keep a silver cross and candlesticks in her own private chapel, a display of idolatry that so horrified leading clergy that a formal debate was held regarding the objects.⁴² Elizabeth's more zealous bishops attempted to push her into abandoning her own conservative practices as an example to the people and gut the Church of England's remaining Catholic elements, but throughout the 1560s the queen continually blocked their legislative efforts to modify church practices.⁴³ As it became clear the queen would give no ground on the matter, many officials swallowed their disappointment and accepted that the church they experienced on the continent would be slow to arrive in England. One was Bishop John Jewel, a Marian exile who upon his return to England in 1559 had praised the queen as "unwilling to be addressed, either by word of mouth, or in writing, as the head of the Church of England," later wrote the influential *The Apology or Answer in Defense of the Church of England*, supporting and defending the royal supremacy, a significant shift from his earlier opinions.⁴⁴ Jewel's conformity exemplifies the attitude of compromise and patience many reformers adopted in response to their stubborn monarch, with the hope that cooperation in the present would lead to gains in the future. They chose to prioritize the Church of England's enduring survival above perfecting its form, at least for the time being.

⁴¹ Patrick Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society 1559 – 1625: The Ford Lectures 1979*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 37.

⁴² Margaret Aston, *England's Iconoclasts, Volume I*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 312.

Bishop John Jewel wrote to a friend that he intended to resign should the "ill omened" cross remain in the queen's chapel. Though he did in fact lose the ensuing debate on the matter, Jewel declined to follow through on this promise.

⁴³ MacCulloch, *The Reformation*, 291.

⁴⁴ "22 May 1559. John Jewel to Henry Bullinger," in Cross, *The Royal Supremacy*, 138.

These early leading clergymen may have conformed with hope for the future, but as Elizabeth's reign progressed with no further reform in sight, the mantle of zealotry was picked up by Puritan groups. For Puritans, to compromise in the present was nothing less than supreme endangerment of one's soul. Rather than patiently endure, members of these sects felt compelled by personal conscience to speed progress. Some historians have described them as having a "Piebald Mentality," seeing such matters only in black and white terms, unable and unwilling to set aside their religious convictions for temporal considerations.⁴⁵ Puritans "did not appreciate the political necessity to heal and settle the realm," which necessitated a degree of religious compromise, and this would eventually cause a crisis of authority as radically zealous members and sects challenged the queen's edicts, refused to obey the Act of Uniformity, and even tried to lead their own services in its stead.⁴⁶ Despite Elizabeth's inclinations, these religious purists were compelled by conscience to carry on the fight to perfect the church, whatever the consequences might be to themselves. Where Catholic agitators were liable to be charged with treason, the words of such Protestant dissenters would soon be primarily viewed, in the eyes of the state, as sedition.⁴⁷

As well as being a time of political crisis, danger, and paranoia, the 1570s and 1580s were a period marked by increased efforts to force ecclesiastical reform. Puritans objected to any aspect of worship that resembled Catholicism, including but not limited to prescribed worship ceremonies, prewritten sermons, feast days for saints, and images in churches. All these elements were abhorrent in their eyes, but by this time the primary focus of radical criticism shifted. Instead of complaining about *adiaphora*, "ornaments and vestments" and other such details, as in

⁴⁵ Keith Wrightson, "10. The Elizabethan Confessional State: Conformity, Papists and Puritans." Lecture. Yale Open Courses, Fall 2009. Viewed online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GPyNc0kd2z4>.

⁴⁶ Loades, *Politics and Nation*, 215.

⁴⁷ Cressy, *Dangerous Talk*, 82.

the 1560s, reformers increasingly chose to challenge the Church's entire structure of ecclesiastical governance.⁴⁸ As it stood, bishops and archbishops held the highest office, and gained their sees by the queen's donation. It was they who received the brunt of Puritan critique. In 1570, Thomas Cartwright used his position at Cambridge to deliver lectures against the Church's current offices of authority and advocated a Presbyterian system of ministry in its stead. Following Calvinist theory, Presbyterians believed that since the office of bishop had no scriptural basis it should not be a part of the church hierarchy. They also believed spiritual merit, rather than state appointment, ought to be the basis for bestowing ecclesiastical authority. Their preference had a proto-democratic bent to it, as the people of each congregation would choose and confirm their own authorities. Presbyterians proposed a congregational selection of ministers who "ha[d] received the inward call of the Spirit," and would then fill either the role of pastor, charged with the oversight and instruction of the flock, or that of doctor, a teacher and perfect expert in the scriptures.⁴⁹ This was clearly against the social order supported by authority figures. Espousing these opinions cost Cartwright his position, though he found a protector in Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester, who was sympathetic to the reformer's cause.⁵⁰

In 1572, in the same Parliament in which the acts responding to the crisis of the Papal Bull were passed, William Strickland and Thomas Norton, of the House of Commons, attempted to introduce a bill that would reform the Book of Common Prayer by removing from it all "objected ceremonies."⁵¹ The men did not wish to exclude bishops from the discussion of reform at this point, but their actions angered the prelates nevertheless. Patrick Collinson identified this

⁴⁸ Loades, *Politics and Nation*, 246.

⁴⁹ Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 335.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 112.

⁵¹ Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 117.

historical moment as the “critical stage in the estrangement of the Puritans and the bishops.”⁵² Elizabeth’s actions in these matters made it clear where her support lay. The queen herself intervened in the 1572 Parliament to put a stop to the Puritans’ legislative efforts, declaring that “in [the] future no bills on religion were to be introduced unless they had first been approved by the bishops.”⁵³ Though Elizabeth sometimes quarreled with her bishops, their authority stemmed from hers, making attacks upon their power an attack upon her own position as supreme governor.⁵⁴ Blocking potential bills in this manner was only part of the government’s efforts to impose religious conformity. Ecclesiastical leaders met Puritan challenges with force, reacting, or attacking, as necessary.

If any prelate was Elizabeth’s champion of conformity, it was John Whitgift. A successful academic and preacher, Whitgift enjoyed a long career at Queen’s College Cambridge and was named Bishop of Worcester in 1577 before finally ascending to the Archbishopric of Canterbury in 1583.⁵⁵ In addition to this lofty position, he would eventually become the first clergyman to hold a position on the Privy Council since Cardinal Pole’s death in 1558.⁵⁶ He enjoyed the queen’s support and trust, and when she lay on her deathbed it was to Whitgift’s hand that she held, demonstrating the bond which Patrick Collinson has called the “sheet-anchor of the late Elizabethan Church.”⁵⁷ This highly successful career might be attributed in part to the steadfast support he showed for the established authority in religious matters, the queen being head of a ‘dual government’ where the monarch ruled in both civil and ecclesiastical affairs with the advice of each side’s appropriate officials and governing bodies. For civil matters, this was

⁵² Ibid, 117.

⁵³ Loades, *Politics and Nation*, 247.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 247.

⁵⁵ William Joseph Sheils, ‘Whitgift, John (1530/31?–1604)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29311>].

⁵⁶ Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 386.

⁵⁷ Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants*, 6.

Council and Parliament, for ecclesiastical, bishops and Convocation.⁵⁸ His views would make him the Puritans' central opponent and their chief antagonist. The High Commission over which he came to preside sought out dissenters, questioning suspects under circumstances that earned the court comparisons to Catholic inquisitions.⁵⁹ Henry Barrow would himself be examined by the archbishop on many occasions, and if his accounts are to be believed Whitgift was as uncompromising in his conformity as Barrow was in his Separatism. Edmund Grindal, Whitgift's predecessor at Canterbury, had been tolerant of the Puritans but fell out of favor with Queen Elizabeth in the year preceding his death.⁶⁰ Whitgift and his allies represented the less tolerant wave of incoming ecclesiastical leadership, the conformists whose dedication to authority and hatred of dissent was long-standing and unlikely to change.

Whitgift consistently demonstrated his anti-radical and authoritarian views throughout his career. An early example of his personality and his passionate rejection of Puritan grievances can be seen in his response to the notorious *Admonition* controversy. This multi-year conflict began in 1572 with John Field's *Admonition to Parliament*, a critique of Church policy styled as a letter to the recently called Parliament. It expressed the dismay felt by its authors over the unjust treatment of dissenting ministers, who were "unbrotherly and uncharitably intreated, and from their offices and places removed," for failing to subscribe to the Articles of Religion.⁶¹ Urging speed and unity, it bemoaned the "long time brethren have bene at unnatural warre and strife among themselves, to the hinderance of the gospel, to the joy of the wicked, and to the greefe and dismay of all those that professe Christes religion, and laboure to attain Christian

⁵⁸ Claire Cross, *The Royal Supremacy in the Elizabethan Church*, (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1969), 35.

⁵⁹ Strype, *The Life and Acts of John Whitgift*, 106.

⁶⁰ Patrick Collinson, 'Grindal, Edmund (1516x20–1583)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008.

⁶¹ John Field, Rudolf Gwalther, and Theodore Beze, *An Admonition unto Parliament*. (Hemel (Hempstead?): Printed by J. Stroud, 1572), 16.

reformation.”⁶² The discord among reformers and authorities was invoked as unnatural, not their desire, and something that should, with all haste, be resolved. It was up to authorities, Field urged, to lay down their pride and work with the Puritans as fellow Christians, not enemies. The *Admonition* was a relatively short 18 pages, but the future archbishop answered it the following year with an impassioned, 245 page point-by-point rebuttal. Whitgift attacked not just their grievances, but refuted each and every scriptural citation provided as proof, offering his own as counterpoints. In this book’s pages one can see the man who would so passionately prosecute dissenting Puritans in the subsequent years. Throughout the *Answer to the Admonition*, Whitgift’s answers revealed the intolerance for nonconformists that would come to define him. He attacked the tract not just on its points, but also accused the compilers of being prideful and unlearned. “Now you are in your ruffe [pride or vain-gloriousness], but you show your ignorance, and contemptuous stomach,” he answered to one of their charges, then challenged them in turn, “...if you can prove all these points, it is time the church were transformed, and the whole kind of government of this Realm altered. But if you cannot prove them, then is it high time that such infalencie should be repressed and perturbors of Churches and common weales reformed.”⁶³ From the tone of his *Answer*, it seems clear Whitgift felt sure the dissenters would never be able to adequately prove their case, and he would soon have the power to make good on his promise to reform *them*. As his career advanced Whitgift would do just that, creating controversies and enemies as he attempted to bring the radicals to heel.

One such controversy began in December 1583, when the newly-made Archbishop Whitgift introduced a series of articles aimed at enforcing conformity among the ministry and the people

⁶² Field, *An Admonition unto Parliament*, 16-17.

⁶³ John Whitgift, *An ansvere to a certen libel intituled, An admonition to the Parliament, by Iohn VWhitgifte, D. of Diuinitie*. 1572), 64-65. All [sic].

of the realm, a major move in his anti-Puritan campaign that would upset radical and moderate alike.⁶⁴ The articles left no doubt that the man who wrote *The Answer to the Admonition* had not softened his opinions in the intervening decade. Though the articles were mostly typical declarations of the beliefs espoused by the Church of England, among them were what came to be known as the Three Articles, three declarations to which ministers were required to subscribe. The first and third were hardly objectionable, except “to the tenderest of consciences”, but the second was a matter of grave concern to Puritans.⁶⁵ It stipulated that the oath taker must admit that there was nothing objectionable in the Book of Common Prayer, and that the current ecclesiastical offices were lawful. It read:

That the Book of Common Prayer and of ordering bishops, priests and deacons containeth nothing in it contrary to the word of God. And that the same may be lawfully used; that he himself will use the form of the said book prescribed in public prayer and administration of the sacraments and none other.⁶⁶

This article contained two of the greatest sources of controversy and objection radical reformers currently fought, and yet it was expected that all aspiring ministers should swear to it. With these articles, Whitgift sought to impose complete conformity by pruning out ministers with Puritan leanings.

The reaction against the articles was generally negative, for both religious and political reasons. The Puritans were appalled that they might be made to swear to the Book of Common Prayer’s perfection, when its lack thereof was one of the main issues they had with the state of the Church. Some recognized the its potential to further fracture relations between authorities and reformers, the Puritan George Withers believed “wherein unity is to be sought, the urging of

⁶⁴ Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 245.

⁶⁵ Sheils, ‘Whitgift, John (1530/31?–1604)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

⁶⁶ Cited in Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 245.

this subscription, I fear, will make our division greater.”⁶⁷ Sensible Puritans knew reform would have to come from cooperation. Many members of the court and council were concerned on political grounds, since the bishops were growing more powerful and far-reaching in their influence. The forced subscription and the *ex officio* oath combined gave Whitgift and the High Commission the means to root out radical Puritans, which was seen as a dangerous increase in the power of the bishops.⁶⁸ The open nature of the oath meant that “Puritans who were not formally accused of any crime were forced to swear oaths requiring them to incriminate themselves if they had committed a wide range of ecclesiastical offenses.”⁶⁹ Though many moderate Privy Councilors and other government officials, such as Sir Francis Walsingham, Earl of Leicester Robert Dudley, and Sir Francis Knollys objected to Whitgift’s growing powers, use of the *ex officio* oath, and compulsory subscription program, it might be best to view the objections through the interactions of one of Elizabeth’s most steadfast and powerful ministers: Lord Treasurer William Cecil, also known as Lord Burghley.⁷⁰ Cecil served the queen until his death in 1598, aiding her through the many crises of state she faced. Politically savvy and highly capable, Burghley was moderate and diplomatic where Whitgift was uncompromising and severe.

Though Burghley was hardly the champion of radical reformers, his attitude and actions towards them was a great deal more understanding than those of his conformist peers. The Lord Treasurer was much more moderate and even kind in his methods and dealings with dissenters, though as an authority figure he still in no way tolerated outright disobedience. Should an

⁶⁷ Strype *Annals*, Vol III part II, 271.

⁶⁸ Ethan H. Shagan, “The English Inquisition: Constitutional Conflict and Ecclesiastical Law in the 1590s,” in *The Historical Journal* Vol 47, No 3 (Sep 2004), 547.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 544.

⁷⁰ “Cecil Papers: October 1584,” in *Calendar of the Cecil Papers in Hatfield House: Volume 3, 1583-1589*, (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1889), 67-72. *British History Online*, accessed August 20, 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-cecil-papers/vol3/pp67-72>.

offender need correction, Burghley was one for persuasion rather than force; he opposed Whitgift's Three Articles partially on the grounds that they were "not the charitable instruction that [he, Burghley] thought was intended."⁷¹ Though Burghley was no advocate of radical agitation, stating "if they [dissenters] be disturbers in their churches, they must be corrected," he disagreed with the manner of correction that Whitgift employed.⁷² The Lord Treasurer seemed able to act with patience and persuasion even in cases of the most extreme opposition, as when he arranged the submission of the infamous Separatist Robert Browne, a schismatic under threat of death who claimed the bishops had "so polluted the church that a new beginning had to be made."⁷³ Following a 1593 proclamation against Browne's works, which carried a death sentence for their creation or distribution, Burghley intervened and convinced the man to submit to church authority, even settling the Separatist in a schoolmaster position after he had done so.⁷⁴ The Acts of the Privy Council contain examples where Burghley's consideration of mitigating factors and preference for persuasion can be felt, such as in the 1593 case of a pair of elderly recusant priests. A Council letter instructed that these aged men be treated kindly "in respect of their age...and in hope of some good to be done on them in matters of religion, to pray and require you in our names," to give them over to good preachers and "persuade them by all means to conformity."⁷⁵ That same year Archbishop Whitgift was instructed to release the recusant Edward Eccleson, whose father had "made humble suite" for his son in order save him from the plague ravaging London prisons, on the promise that the man "himself being very conformable in religion" would "do his utmost endeavor to have his son reduced to conformity."⁷⁶ Moderates

⁷¹ Strype, *The Life and Acts of John Whitgift*, 106.

⁷² *Ibid*, 107.

⁷³ Watts, *The Dissenters*, 28.

⁷⁴ Watts, *The Dissenters*, 33.

⁷⁵ Great Britain, and John Roche Dasent, *Acts of the Privy Council of England : New Series; Volume XXIV; 1592/3-1593* /. Searchable text ed. Burlington, Ont.: TannerRitchie Pub. 2009 , 475.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 283.

often made concessions or deals when approached with such humanistic pleas and promises of obedience. Their methods and their influence was, however, threatened by the articles and Whitgift's growing power.

Burghley and his fellows had reason to fear the potential political consequences of the articles. The Court of High Commission, which Whitgift headed, and its power to both enforce subscription to the articles and to interrogate people under the *ex officio* oath, was a source of concern among more moderate government officials.⁷⁷ Among Cecil's papers dating January 1584/5, there was an unattributed note proposing that Whitgift's subscription campaign was such that it constituted tyranny.

Major Proposition.—The practice of Popish tyranny is, when any clergyman, by any pretended authority (above the common authority equally given by the word of God to all lawful ministers of the church), will take upon himself to make any interpretation of the Scriptures, according to the private opinion of himself and Some others, to bind or to loose men's consciences, or thereupon will urge his poor brethren of the ministry to subscribe to his said interpretation, and, for refusing to subscribe, doth bar the refusers from preaching the Word of God.

Minor Proposition.—The Archbishop of Canterbury, and other Bishops by and under him, have practised this pretended authority aforesaid of supreme power to interpret the Scriptures, and to urge subscription thereunto as aforesaid.

Conclusion.—Therefore the Archbishop of Canterbury hath practised Popish tyranny, to the endangering of her Majesty's safety.⁷⁸

“Popish tyranny,” as expressed in this document, seems to be more of a political than a religious accusation of papal leanings on the archbishop's part. Whitgift's attempt to force subscription to his articles was to force his own opinion and interpretations upon the people, an action that can be called tyrannical. Though this document has no noted author, it is conceivable that the

⁷⁷ Shagan, “The English Inquisition,” 545.

⁷⁸ Cecil Papers, January 1584/5.

Treasurer wrote it as one of his exercises of logic, which he was known to do.⁷⁹ Little else is to be found on the paper, but it is possible that he did not wish for the private exercise to be attributed to him in case it were discovered. This may be due to the political climate, in which the bishops were secure enough to deflect the concerns of even a powerful official like William Cecil.

Even with his misgivings about Whitgift's influence and methods, there was little Burghley could do. The political situation was in the conformists' favor as they were unquestioned supporters of authority and obedience. Even the normally secure Burghley, no advocate of disobedience, found himself subject to checks from the bishops. In 1579, when the Treasurer admonished bishop of London John Aylmer of failing to adequately perform his clerical duties, the prelate replied that if this was so it was Burghley's own "words and countenances [by which] my government is hindered," because of the Councilor's tacit encouragement of reformers.⁸⁰ One of Burghley's fears regarding high ecclesiastical offices was that "the places altered the men:" that even a good person might be corrupted by the power of a bishopric.⁸¹ In his reply to the Treasurer's 1584/5 letter of caution following the articles, Whitgift acknowledged that he knew of Burghley's fear, answering that he "never esteem[s] the honour of the place...nor the largeness of the revenues...nor any other worldlie thing, I thank God, in the respect of doing my duty."⁸² However, this answer was prefaced with a reminder to the Treasurer of the archbishop's power to defend against agitators "...for this State and Church; whereof, next to her Majestie, though most unworthy or, at least, most unhappie, the cheafe care is committed

⁷⁹ Wrightson, "10. The Elizabethan Confessional State: Conformity, Papists and Puritans." Lecture. Yale Open Courses, Fall 2009.

⁸⁰ Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants*, 36.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 41.

⁸² Strype, *The Life and Acts of John Whitgift*, 111.

to me.”⁸³ A not-so-subtle reminder that the prelate had the queen behind him. A later incident illustrates Burghley’s continued inability to change the bishops’ behavior. An anonymous letter dated March 12, 1591 recounted an instance when Burghley accused Whitgift of abusing his power, only to be easily rebuffed:

...There was a jar between the Treasurer and Archbishop of Canterbury, because the Treasurer said the spiritual courts would fall into praemunire for taking oaths of men against law. The Archbishop answered stoutly, as if the other affected patronage of the Puritans. The Treasurer was sick for a few days upon it.⁸⁴

Whitgift demonstrated in this incident the security of his position, and the fact that any support of the Puritans had become politically unwise by the 1590s. Whitgift and the other conformist bishops could continue their practices despite the misgivings of moderates as the prelate knew and shared the queen’s desires.⁸⁵ The more sympathetic councilors could try and soften the impact, but Puritans were faced with a difficult choice now that their old protectors were either dead or rendered nearly politically impotent. Reformers could either make a show of conformity in the hope that the tide would later turn in their favor, adapt the way they fought, or they could quit the church entirely. At least one extremist group chose the latter option.

Separatism, as a term, is applied to the various religious groups who were nonconformist to the point of complete disassociation from the state church, and has origins tracing back to the pre-Reformation Lollards and connections to the underground Protestant congregations of Mary’s reign.^{86 87} They represented an extreme end of the Puritan spectrum. Separatist views and

⁸³ Ibid, 111.

⁸⁴ Green, Mary Anne Everett. 2008. *Calendar of State Papers : Domestic Series of the Reigns of Elizabeth and James I; Addenda--1580-1625*. The offense of *praemunire*, or of asserting papal authority and jurisdiction in England, was a treasonable action.

⁸⁵ Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 387.

⁸⁶ White, *The Separatist Tradition*, 10.

actions, as MacCulloch put it, "...could be represented as the ultimate fruit of espousing Puritan opinions."⁸⁸ Despite their agitation for reform, some Puritans did in fact choose to compromise with authorities for the sake of peace. In what has been described as a "church within a church," branches such as the Presbyterians learned to work within the system, conforming outwardly by attending Church of England services while quietly worshiping in the manner they preferred.⁸⁹ In contrast to this, Separatists believed it was better to completely abandon state worship rather than endanger their own souls by participating in a corrupt institution. The London Separatists of the 1580s and 90s defined "Four Causes of Separation;" grievous faults in the Church that would have to be mended before they agreed to attend. These were:

1. The false manner of worshiping the true God. Esaias 66:17; Deuteronomy 17:1.
2. The profane and ungodly people received into and retained in the bosom and body of their churches. Esaias 65:11, 12.
3. The false and antichristian ministry imposed upon their churches. Numbers 16:21, 35.
4. The false and antichristian government wherein their churches are ruled.⁹⁰

As "Causes" author Henry Barrow wrote, "God is a righteous God, and a holy God, and a jealous God; he cannot justify sin, nor bless them remaining in this manner in their sin."⁹¹ Separatists were those who did "anoint their eyes with eye salve that they may see and flee from these unholy assemblies...lest they be partakers of their sins and their plagues."⁹² To themselves, Separatists were not schismatic, but only following the pure instructions of worship given to

⁸⁷ Ibid, 2.

⁸⁸ MacCulloch, *The Reformation*, 388.

⁸⁹ Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 333.

⁹⁰ Henry Barrow, "Four Causes of Separation," in *The Writings of Henry Barrow 1587 – 1590*, edited by Leland H. Carlson, (London: Ruskin House, 1962), 54. Quotes from these volumes will be cited with either "Barrow" for primary source transcriptions or "Carlson" for the editor's commentary on same.

⁹¹ Ibid, 66.

⁹² Ibid, 66.

them by scripture. It was the corrupt ecclesiastical government, which imposed terrible impious conditions upon the people under threat of punishment, and the men and women who wished for reform but conformed to state orders, who “justif[ied] sin” by rationalizing away the Church of England’s imperfections.

Partially for this reason Separatists were often called Donatists by their adversaries, a term which referred to an early schismatic sect in North Africa which rejected impurity in their ministers and membership.⁹³ It was a common charge levelled against dissidents. The *Admonition to Parliament* also mentioned the accusation of Donatism, saying authorities “slanderosly charge poore men (whom they have made poore), with grievous faults, calling them Puritaines, worse than the Donatistes.”⁹⁴ Though they might deny it, Separatists and other types of Puritans did share varying degrees of commonality with these early schismatics. The African sect’s grievances began with a controversy over impious bishops, they did not believe sacraments administered by unworthy ministers were valid, and they refused admission to all but those who had lived ‘blameless lives.’⁹⁵ It is easy to see, then, why conformists used the heretical sect as a comparison point. Though calling the Puritan group heretical was an unsupportable accusation, the Separatists would share the Donatist’s fate in facing the anger and persecution of angry conformist authorities.

The sect became a target for not only hardline conformist authorities, but moderates and other Puritan groups as well. The reason Separatists attracted such ire was a combination of their disobedience, unrelenting attacks on church government, and the harm their divisive nature was

⁹³ “Donatism,” on Theopedia, <http://www.theopedia.com/Donatism>.

⁹⁴ Field, *An Admonition unto Parliament*, 2.

⁹⁵ Albrecht Vogel, "Donatism," Philip Schaff, ed., *A Religious Encyclopaedia or Dictionary of Biblical, Historical, Doctrinal, and Practical Theology*, 3rd edn, Vol. 1. Toronto, New York & London: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1894. pp.659-661. Read at <https://earlychurch.org.uk/donatism.php>.

doing for the reformation's cause. Theologically, there was nothing wrong with the Separatists, but their agitation was viewed as hurting Puritan efforts by increasing authoritarian anger and keeping the two groups from cooperating. Leader Henry Barrow scorned any type of conformity, condemning those who "to save their own skins whole and purchase peace with the bishops by proclaiming open war with us, or rather with God, whose we are and whose cause we defend against them and the bishops."⁹⁶ Presbyterians and other Puritans argued the same points that the Separatists did, but they were just not willing to go as far as leaving the fold. More cooperative Puritans and reformers even began to attack the Separatists themselves as unhelpful to effecting lasting change. To make a modern comparison, the Separatists were to the Puritans what vegans are to today's morally-motivated dietary trends. Though the analogy is not perfect, a similarity between the vegans and the Separatists is the fact that at the foundation, their views cannot be refuted by a solid argument. You eat meat because you enjoy it and it is socially easier, and you attend Church of England services because you are told to and it is easier. Is there really a *reason* to do either? If you have misgivings and do not act on them because it makes your life easier, you are doing harm, whether to the planet or to the state of your own soul.⁹⁷ Separatists were the vocal minority irritant which annoyed and angered the mainstream, normative group and attracted the displeasure of their ostensible allies by giving them a bad reputation by association. Non-evangelical vegans often complain of the effects the small but visible minority has on the perception of their choices, a phenomenon recent psychological studies have called "Do-gooder derogation," where a group, in anticipation of receiving judgement from a moral minority, reacts

⁹⁶ Barrow, *Writings of Henry Barrow 1587-1590*, 59.

⁹⁷ For the record, I am neither vegan nor vegetarian. However, this analogy may have been inspired by a family member's recent conversion to dietary Separatism.

negatively.⁹⁸ This sensitivity to having one's moral choices and identity questioned leads to even greater backlash against the "do-gooder:" the more the mainstream person felt judged, the greater their reaction.⁹⁹ Is it any wonder, then, that the 'moderates' of that same moral group might turn to attack their extremist fellows, pointing the annoyed mainstreamer to the vocal agitator as the real problem in order to deflect this effect, attempt to coexist, and practice their choice in peace? Due to their irritation of authorities and their judgmental, divisive nature, the London Separatists of the 1580s and 90s alienated other Puritans and had few supporters besides their own dedicated membership.

Friendless, disobedient, and small, the London Separatist groups became the target of a government crack-down.¹⁰⁰ By 1590, there were fifty-nine "Barrowists" imprisoned in various London jails.¹⁰¹ The government round-up of London's Separatists was meant to silence and frighten them into submission, but the effect could not have been less desirable. Henry Barrow, until 1587 and unremarkable member of the congregation, seemed to thrive and draw strength from his imprisonment. The "Brownists" the conformists hoped to silence instead gained a new, more uncompromising leader and a new identity: "Barrowists."

⁹⁸ Julia A. Minson and Benoit Monin, "Do-Gooder Derogation: Disparaging Morally Motivated Minorities to Defuse Anticipated Reproach," in *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, Vol 3 Issue 2 (July 2011), 200.

⁹⁹ Ibid, 201.

¹⁰⁰ MacCulloch, *The Reformation*, 388

¹⁰¹ Burrage, *The Early English Dissenters*, 132.

Chapter Two

Henry Barrow and the Separatist Threat to Authority

If Separatists were the most dangerously disobedient type of Puritan, Henry Barrow was one of the most dangerously disobedient Separatists. Not a great deal is known of Barrow's life prior to his arrest. Probably born around 1550, by his own account Barrow matriculated at Clare Hall, Cambridge, and studied law for a short while at Grey's Inn.¹⁰² Despite his time in these places, however, he described himself as "hav[ing] no learning to boast of."¹⁰³ Often represented as a "gay courtier turned strict Puritan," the circumstances under which Barrow met John Greenwood and joined his Separatist congregation in St. Andrew's Parish of London are not known.¹⁰⁴ His real story starts with his arrest at the Clink Prison on 19 November, 1587, when he attempted to visit his recently incarcerated friend. Greenwood and around twenty other Separatists had been arrested the previous month while gathered at a conventicle held at a member's home. Apparently, one of the man's servants had tipped off authorities to their whereabouts.¹⁰⁵ Barrow was obviously not among them at the time, but he must have been known to authorities, for while visiting Greenwood in the prison, "where we had not been the space of one quarter of an hour," the keeper apprehended him, "saying he had commandment from his Lord's Grace [the Archbishop of Canterbury] so to do."¹⁰⁶ From this point on Barrow would remain in various prisons for six years, undergoing multiple examinations and writing prolifically, until the day of his execution.

¹⁰² Barrow, *The Writings of Henry Barrow 1587-1590*, 93 and 96.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, 185.

¹⁰⁴ White, *The English Separatist Tradition*, 70.

¹⁰⁵ Barrow, *The Writings of Henry Barrow 1587-1590*, 91.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 92.

Though he was neither a founder, nor even a very long standing member, of his congregation, Barrow's writings made him the most influential figure of the movement, and the chief formulator of Separatist policy.¹⁰⁷ Barrow produced a voluminous body of work during his years incarcerated in various London prisons. Though both he and Greenwood contributed to the corpus of Separatist literature, Barrow wrote its defining works, including the massive tome *The Brief Discovery of the False Church*, *A Plaine Refutation*, and *Four Causes of Separation*. Despite being closely imprisoned, Barrow's network of friends and supporters allowed him to run what Collinson has described as a "clandestine publishing house."¹⁰⁸ Each piece was apparently smuggled from his cell a page at a time by his visiting friends and circulated in manuscript form before being printed in Amsterdam, after which the finished books were smuggled back into England. Burghley, Walsingham and others made attempts to intercept and destroy such books, but they did not succeed in finding them all.¹⁰⁹ Of all Barrow's works, however, some of the most illustrative of his antagonism and contempt for the Church and its officials are those which recount his examinations by the authorities of both ecclesiastical and temporal government.

Barrow's accounts of his examinations are, as historian John Knott has convincingly argued, as much performance pieces as they are records of his court experiences.¹¹⁰ Though there is no doubt truth in the accounts of his exchanges between himself and the various officials who interviewed him (or attempted to do so), they follow patterns of martyr narratives that would have been familiar to a reader of Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*.¹¹¹ Whitgift seems at times to set

¹⁰⁷ Burrage, *The Early English Dissenters*, 129.

¹⁰⁸ Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 412.

¹⁰⁹ Carlson, *The Writings of Henry Barrow, 1590-1591*, 370.

¹¹⁰ John Knott, *Discourses of Martyrdom in English Literature, 1563-1694*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 119.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, 120.

Barrow up too well for a pithy demonstration of Separatist conviction, and the author was obviously describing the scene with his audience in mind. The accounts sometimes read like a tract written only for Separatists, not to convince, necessarily, but to celebrate a martyr (Barrow was executed at the time of printing, 1595) who would rather die than compromise.

Notwithstanding these elements, these are the only existing records of his examinations, excepting a register's version of the fifth session.¹¹² Though colored with Barrow's characteristically anti-authoritarian style, they offer a look at what an accused nonconformist could expect to face in the court of the High Commission, and shows Barrow's tactics in responding to the traps and challenges set by Archbishop Whitgift.

The very first issue Barrow faced in examination was the *ex officio* oath, the same oath that caused such consternation to Lord Burghley, his like-minded councilors, and Puritans alike. Perhaps showing the legal savvy he picked up in Grey's Inn, Barrow refused to take the oath, but framed his refusal in religious terms. He may have known that the *ex officio* was a tool used to extract incriminating and indictable statements, and attempted to use legal maneuvers to avoid the oath while using the platform to speak on religious issues. Whitgift and his assistant Robert Cosins allegedly attributed his refusal and his objections to his extremism, saying:

Cosins: Schismatics are clamorous always. It is a perpetual note to know them by.

Archbishop Whitgift: Dr. Cosins saith true, such were the Donatists always in their counsels, and such art thou and all other schismatics such as thou art.¹¹³

Barrow's religious objection to the ceremonial gestures that accompanied oath-taking, however, should not be interpreted as a ruse. In refusing to lay his hand on a bible to swear, Barrow was

¹¹² Carlson, *The Writings of Henry Barrow, 1587-1590*, 190.

¹¹³ Barrow, *The Writings of Henry Barrow 1587-1590*, 94.

not simply employing a legal maneuver. He was standing against not just the ceremony, but the fact that it was required by law. “A[rchbishop]: Well, will you lay your hand on the Bible and take an oath? B[arrow]: I use to join no creatures to the name of God in an oath. A: Neither shall you, this is but a custom commanded by law. B: The law ought not to command a wicked custom.”¹¹⁴ In the Separatist view, the government should not force people to perform actions that went against Scripture, and against their own religious consciences. It could be said that in this one incident, Whitgift was committing both political and religious tyranny. Political in that he was forcing subscription to the articles and the dubiously legal *ex officio* oath, and religious in that he would not allow any deviation from the prescribed liturgy, even though the dissenters were in no way heretical. Whitgift continued the interrogation by asking the means by which Barrow would find it acceptable to swear. The appropriate circumstance, according to Barrow, was that it “...be not commanded and made of necessity.”¹¹⁵ As far as the charge of schism went, Barrow countered by claiming the very act of charging him was proof the Church of England was false. As historian B. S. White succinctly explained, “The true Church was the Church under the cross; to impose the cross of persecution was to prove oneself of the church malignant; to evade the cross was to abandon Christ.”¹¹⁶ This was a twofold accusation; it at once accused the persecuting Church of England of proving its own falsehood while shaming Puritans who were willing to compromise with it in order to avoid their own persecution. The ‘cross’ of persecution, according to Barrow, should be a happy burden, and would be the natural choice for one of God’s elect.

¹¹⁴ Barrow, *The Writings of Henry Barrow 1587-1590*, 94.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, 94.

¹¹⁶ White, *The English Separatist Tradition*, 69.

The current Church government's continued connection to Catholicism was an ever-present part of Barrow's writings. Throughout his accounts, Barrow made an effort to point out the prelates' papal preferences and ill tempers when confronted. Barrow repeatedly called attention to Whitgift's use of Latin to refer to prayers and the Bible. When Barrow failed to correctly cite a scriptural quote, for example, the Archbishop is quoted as saying, "I would like it well if you cited your place in Greek or Latin," to which Barrow replied, "why, you understand English: is not the word of God in English?"¹¹⁷ Likewise, in Barrow's final examination Whitgift asked whether "it is lawful to say the *Pater Noster* publicly in the church, or privately, as a prayer or no?" Most certainly feigning a lack of understanding in order to make a point, Barrow answered, "I know not what you mean by your *Pater Noster*, unless peradventure that form for prayer which our savior Christ taught his disciples, commonly called the Lord's Prayer."¹¹⁸ The Bishop of London, John Aylmer, is described in the fourth examination as appearing "in his pontificalibus," a word meaning vestments befitting a cardinal or pope, the root of which is clearly shared with 'pontiff'.¹¹⁹ The most transparent comparison of the Church of England's clergy to that of Rome is reserved for the gathering of religious officials at Barrow's second examination, a scene described as "such an appearance of well-fed silken priests, as I suppose might well have beseeemed the Vatican."¹²⁰ Details like these reveal the agenda behind Barrow's accounts, but he was ultimately unable to keep the argument in the realm of religion. If authorities wanted to convict him, they would have to do so on political grounds.

The state could not convict Barrow for religious crimes. As with the Catholics condemned for treason rather than heresy, the state needed to frame Barrow's actions as extra-

¹¹⁷ Barrow, *The Writings of Henry Barrow 1587-1590*, 95.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, 195.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, 178.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, 102.

religious. Separatist beliefs were not heresy, but their disobedience and agitation could be construed as seditious. Consequently, as the examinations progressed a shift occurred. The questions became less about recusancy and religious reasoning, and more about how Separatist beliefs affected the monarch's powers. Though Whitgift ostensibly called the March 24, 1588/9 meeting because he believed he could charge Barrow with heresy, the questions turned instead to the extent to which a monarch has the right to rule as head of both the church and, by extension, of the state.¹²¹

Two written versions of the fifth examination exist, one written by Barrow and one prepared by the court register. They generally agree in comparison, though Barrow's was padded by his commentary, details of his interactions with his interrogators, and extended answers to the questions asked. The official register was much more brief, only showing the questions and Barrow's answers as taken down. Finally out of patience, Whitgift decided to forego the oath on this occasion, saying that "a Christian man's word ought to be as true as his oath. We will proceed with you without your oath."¹²² Unable to intimidate or out-argue the headstrong Barrow on previous occasions, the archbishop now came prepared with a list of questions, and apparently, a plan.

The questions began with topics from previous arguments such as the rightness of prescribed prayer and whether sacraments delivered in an imperfect church by imperfect ministers were legitimate and holy. It could be these were meant to lull Barrow, for the questions gradually turned to matters with underlying civil connections, such as "Whether he thinketh the queen's majesty be supreme governor of the church: and whither she may make lawes for the

¹²¹ Barrow, *The Writings of Henry Barrow 1587-1590*, 185.

¹²² *Ibid*, 195.

church, which are not contrary to the word of God, or no?” and “Whither it be lawful for the prince to alter the judicial law of Moses according to the state of her country and policy, or no?”¹²³ The trap lay in the tenth question, on “Whither he thinketh that any private man may take upon him to reform, if the prince will not or neglect.” Perhaps sensing the snare, to this Barrow asked if public or private inner reformation was meant, and on the former being confirmed duly answered that “no man may meddle with the prince’s office.”¹²⁴ This seems to have been the point they wished to trip Barrow on, however, and it was asked again in a slightly different form, “wither the church of Christ, if the prince deny or refuse to correct abuses, may, without staring for the prince, reform them?” This time Barrow answered “it might and ought, though all the princes of the world should prohibit the same upon paine of death.”¹²⁵ The register version of the answer puts the answer in different terms, saying “that the church need not to stay for the prince in the reforming of the abuse, but may reform it, though the prince say no.”¹²⁶ Barrow may have thought himself safe in this instance because the question was on the Church specifically, but the queen’s authority over Church and the state could not be exclusive from one another. Conformist prelates now had a written answer from Barrow that denied the queen’s prerogative and implicitly advocated disobedience. Protestations of loyalty to the contrary did not matter when they were not accompanied by submission to authority, and Barrow only recognized Christ as the true head of the Church.

The fifth examination was the last time Barrow would face authorities before his trial in March of 1592/3. Even though his behavior did little to endear him to his captors, there was still recourse for the imprisoned leader and his people. Barrow would petition many times for

¹²³ Barrow, *The Writings of Henry Barrow 1587-1590*, 198 - 199.

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, 200.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, 201.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, 207.

consideration of their situation, release from prison, or a conference in which to debate religious points. In November of 1590, he and Greenwood unsuccessfully petitioned Lord Burghley for a conference, sending a sample of their work to the Lord Treasurer.¹²⁷ His fourth examination before the Privy Council was the result of a petition to the queen, though his behavior did not gain him any friends in court.¹²⁸ Now, in the last year before his execution, Barrow attempted again to reach authorities through petitioning.

In 1592 three petitions, most certainly authored by Barrow and possibly Greenwood, were sent to major authority figures on behalf of the Separatists. In April they petitioned the queen directly, to Lord Burghley in December 1592, and one addressed to the Privy Council, dated only by the year. These three petitions all had one thing in common: they were utterly unapologetic and insisted only on the righteousness of the separatist cause and complained of their unjust treatment by the bishops. Each of the petitions, though they have the standard appeals to mercy, complaints of their condition in prison, and insistence on their loyalty to the crown and authority, contain not a declaration of submission or apology, but requests to be heard and reiterations of their beliefs. Though they address the charges against them, of not taking the oath, schism, rebellion, etc., but offers an argument against them. Though they promise to “behave ourselves in so peaceable and dutiful sort in every respect, as may give no just cause of your highness’ offense,” they give no concession, saying they would do so “according to our callings, both in doctrine and example.”¹²⁹ The petition to Burghley is much the same, though shorter. The

¹²⁷ The Cecil Papers, November 1590.

¹²⁸ Carlson, *The Writings of Henry Barrow 1587-1590*, 177. The queen ordered the hearing in response to “A Lamentable Petition Delivered to the Queene’s Majesty the 13 of March 1588 [1588/9].” This shows that the monarch was not entirely unwilling to have the grievances of Puritan dissenters heard, but by 1592/3, and after so many examinations that proved Barrow was only interested in argumentation, he was never to be as successful.

¹²⁹ John Strype, *Annals of the Reformation and Establishment of Religion and Other Various Occurrences During Queen Elizabeth’s Happy Reign: Together with an Appendix of Original Papers of State, Records, and Letters*, Vol. IV, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1824), 127.

Separatists are even somewhat threatening, saying that “if this suppression of the truth, the oppression of Christ in his members, contrary to all law and justice, be without restraint prosecuted...not only the persecuted shall daily cry from under the altar for redress, but God’s wrath be so kindled for the shedding the innocent blood of men...”¹³⁰ Barrow’s plea for help reads more like a threat of reprisal from God, should the Separatists not be set free. This could hardly have endeared him to Lord Burghley.

The 1592 petition to the Privy Council, of which Whitgift was a member, asked again for their deplorable conditions to be improved, and their views properly considered. The writer purported to approach the council “in all humility, to express before your honours our most lamentable usage and distressed estate,” and professed “loyalty to our sovereign, obedience to our governors, reverence to our superiors.” They nevertheless could not help but state that they “find the whole public ministry, ministration, worship, government, ordinances, and proceedings Ecclesiastical in this land, by authority established, to be strange, and quite dissenting from Christ’s testament.”¹³¹ Furthermore, they refused to show any compliance, asserting that “we dare not by any means defile of subject ourselves in any outward subjection or inward consent” to the Church of England.¹³² Indeed most of the letter rails against the abuses of the church. Rather than ask for release because they have come around to obedience, the letter writer asked that the group “be tried by the scriptures of God,” not the laws of man, “with any that is of contrary or diverse judgment, before your [the Privy Council’s] honorable presence. Where we confidently undertake, both to disprove their public ministry...and also to approve our present

¹³⁰ Ibid, 128.

¹³¹ Ibid, 131.

¹³² Ibid, 132.

course and practice by such evidence as our adversaries shall not be able to withstand.”¹³³ The examinations were not the type of audience that Barrow was looking for, but an open debate wherein his opinions would not be dismissed outright, and he would be given an opportunity to defend them. No wrong is admitted here, and given the letter’s tone coupled with the records of his past examinations, he does not seem likely to ever do so.

If anything, these letters probably served to hurt their chances of deliverance. Though they reacted harshly to dissent and schism, officials often showed themselves to be perfectly willing to forgive should the offender provide an adequately convincing submission to authority and admission of their past error with expressions of great regret for their wrongdoing. Even men involved in some of the most notorious controversies of the day could save themselves by submitting to authorities, though the intervention of a powerful friend was a key component. Robert Browne, Barrow’s predecessor in the Separatist movement, was able with Lord Burghley’s help to narrowly avoid a death sentence by convincing Whitgift of his sincere conformation.¹³⁴ The former leader of the ‘Brownists’ lived out the rest of his life as a schoolmaster, an act of cowardice for which Barrow and Greenwood attempted to vehemently disassociate from the former Separatist leader.¹³⁵ John Udall, who was convicted for his role in the Martin Marprelate controversy, received a sentence of death for publishing seditious works just as Henry Barrow had, and also attempted to make a petition to authorities. He stated that “so do I promise, in all humble submission to God and her majesty, to carry myself in the whole course of my life in such humble and dutiful obedience as shall befit a minister of the gospel and

¹³³ Strype, *Annals*, Vol IV, 136.

¹³⁴ Watts, *The Dissenters*, 33.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, 33 and 37.

dutiful subject.”¹³⁶ He wrote many such letters to diverse people, and eventually he gained the support of figures as influential as King James VI, who was willing to intercede on his behalf.¹³⁷ Udall’s campaign convinced the state to commute his sentence of death into service abroad.¹³⁸ Though Udall died in prison before he could begin his reduced sentence, the case demonstrates the prerequisites necessary for state-sanctioned mercy. Udall committed a crime nearly identical to Barrow’s, but his submission was earnest enough to convince influential people to support him, and for the upper echelons of government to spare him. Since Henry Barrow could not bring himself to submit or admit fault on any level, his petitions were doomed to be ineffective. The 1592 petitions were the Separatist’s last attempts at gaining release or a fair conference prior to the event that sped Barrow and Greenwood to their deaths, the Parliament of 1592/3.

1592/3: A Parliament, a Trial, and an Execution

Summoned in response to the many dangers facing the realm, not the least of which being the ever-present threat of Spanish invasion, the Parliament of 1592/3 was significant not just for the laws it passed, but also for the contentious nature of its proceedings. As we have seen, the queen and her bishops were concerned with maintaining authority, silencing dissent, and enforcing conformation in ecclesiastical matters. However, this parliamentary session demonstrated quite clearly that strong opposition to the bishops, their methods, and the mission of conformity persisted. As in the past, the House of Commons was the primary site of this discord, having grown to be “an effective forum for pressure and agitation” by this time.¹³⁹ Despite the queen’s express instruction “not to spend the tyme in devising of new lawes and

¹³⁶ Strype, *Annals*, Vol IV, 37.

¹³⁷ Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 407.

¹³⁸ *Ibid*, 407.

¹³⁹ Loades, *Politics and Nation*, 217.

statutes,” and to avoid “vayne discourses and tedious orations,” speeches and bills against the bishop’s powers and proceedings were introduced and discussed there.¹⁴⁰ These challenges were prompted in large part by a piece of legislation introduced by Whitgift, modifying the statute of 23 Eliz c.1 to become a unique act against Protestant recusants and sectaries.¹⁴¹ For nearly three months, the Commons debated and blocked this bill, demanding clarifications and reductions that would protect non-extremist reformers. Compelled to act, Whitgift, the queen, and the authorities in the House of Lords worked to bring the Commons into line by whatever means necessary.

The proceedings of the 1592/3 Parliament provide an example the way the goals of the state and the concerns of the Commons could be at odds with one another. Even when the session was ostensibly called to address urgent threats to the country, the House of Commons could not entirely turn its thoughts away from concerns of religion and the bishops’ power. Authorities sought to place the looming threat of Spanish invasion at the forefront, and part of the purpose of the Parliament was to approve a subsidy for the queen’s defensive efforts. In his speech at the opening of the 1592/3 Parliament, which was quoted earlier, Lord Keeper Puckering emphasized the danger in his opening speech:

Yea, such is the wylie malice of the enemye, that the better to espie a hole or breach to make this speedy intended invasion of her Majestie and her realms, he hath at this present lodged in our bosomes his secret intelligencers expresslie charged with direccions to advertyse him from tyme to tyme, not onlie of the estate in bodie of her Majestie and her greatest councilors, but also of the discontentment of the papistes, of the proceedings of the puritaines, of all the offences (if any should happen) of the nobilitie, and greevances of the people, and of manye other his like serviceable articles of treacherous inquisition.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Hartley, *Proceedings in the Parliaments*, 19.

¹⁴¹ Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 431.

¹⁴² Hartley, *Proceedings in the Parliaments*, 17-18.

Puckering's speech articulated state's pressing need for unity and quiet obedience, a theme repeated throughout the proceedings. The queen reiterated these points and, as in past Parliaments, forbade the discussion of religious issues, thus hoping to preemptively silence those who would seek to "frame a forme of religion, or a state of government as to their idle braynes shall seem metest."¹⁴³ She would not tolerate discord nor be dictated to, her opinion being that "no king fit for his state will suffer such absurdities."¹⁴⁴ However, it would prove futile to forbid a discussion of religion when her own archbishop intended to use this parliament to introduce a religious bill of his own, one that sought to punish Protestant dissidents directly. Parliament's response to this piece of legislation bared the deep divisions in religious opinion and continued mistrust of conformist bishops and the High Commission.

Whitgift's bill to discourage protestant dissenters through banishment, loss of property, or life, encountered its greatest opposition in the House of Commons. Henry Barrow long contended that he was being unlawfully charged under a statute not intended for Protestants, and Whitgift sought to remove any such argument in future cases. On 26 February 1592/3, the "Acte to retayne the Quenes Subjets in Obedyence" [sic] was read to the Commons for the first time.¹⁴⁵ Though members of the Commons often expressed the opinion that they were not opposed if it was meant to be applied to Separatists like Barrow, and many insisted that the wording refer to Brownists or Barrowists explicitly as they were troubled by the vague nature of the bill and its possible application to anyone desired reform of the church.¹⁴⁶ The High Commission's actions and misgivings about the bishops clearly remained on their minds, and they were unwilling to give them more power. As Protestants themselves, and at least a few of them Puritans, the

¹⁴³ Hartley, *Proceedings in the Parliaments*, 22.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 22.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 71.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 123-4.

members were uncomfortable with the prospect of punishing their well-meaning co-religionists, even when they erred, with the same aggression normally reserved for Catholics. It is not coincidental that that Barrow and Greenwood met their ends while this parliament was in session. It was said that the Archbishop had them executed “out of malice for the Commons” when it appeared his bill would be defeated.¹⁴⁷ Such a reaction might be considered extreme, or even petty, but Whitgift’s decision to kill the Separatist leaders was a demonstration of power following the realization that there was still great reluctance to accept his proposal. The queen herself intervened in the proceedings multiple times, removing overly antagonistic members of the Commons and sharply reminding the rest of their duty to stay on topic, decreeing “...there should be no dealing in matters of estate, eyther civill or ecclesiasticall.”¹⁴⁸ The fact that members of the Commons were willing to directly disobey the queen’s instructions to leave religious matters alone demonstrates the depth of feeling the bill inspired. On the 27 of February, the day after the proposed act was read, a demonstrative speech spurred by irrepressible religious feeling and opposition to conformist action set the stage for the debate to come.

James Morice was a Puritan lawyer, one of several who were in attendance in the House of Commons that February.¹⁴⁹ Compelled, in his own words, to address what he saw as a great abuse of power, Morice launched into a prepared speech against the “ungodlye and intolerable inquisition; by a laweless subscription; and by a bindeing absolution.”¹⁵⁰ This was not his first attempt to correct these errors, but,

...finding neverthesse the same bad courses to be still continued and noe regard had of my freindlye admonition, I could no, except I should have whollie forgotten my religion towards

¹⁴⁷ Hartley, *Proceedings in the Parliaments*, 428.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 40.

¹⁴⁹ Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 399.

¹⁵⁰ Hartley, *Proceedings in the Parliaments*, 31.

God, and my alleageance and love towards my princ [sic]and country, but seeke some other way of redresse of these and some other enormyties.¹⁵¹

The lawyer ended his speech by proposing a bill that would challenge the authority of the bishops, an “Acte ageinst unlawfull imprisonment and restraint of libertie.”¹⁵² The response to the proposed bill demonstrates the split nature of opinion in the house. Mr. Dalton opposed the entire speech and the bill, and “with vehemency fell to inveighe against Puritans.”¹⁵³ Sir Francis Knollys and others spoke in its favor, calling the bishops’ actions and powers odious and unlawful, in direct opposition to the queen’s express wish that no new legislation be introduced nor discussed.¹⁵⁴ For his trouble, Mr. Morice was called out of Parliament, informed of the queen’s intense displeasure. Moderate as ever, Lord Burghley appeared sympathetic to Morice, taking issue with the form of his complaint but not the “good matter they contayne,” or so the Puritan lawyer alleged, but the queen’s wishes and order came first.¹⁵⁵ Relegated to the custody of a local nobleman for the remainder of Parliament, Morice was silenced, but his display laid bare the rift between reformers in the Commons and the conformists in authority. Not quieted by the lawyer’s loss or the queen’s displeasure, members of Commons fought on.

For nearly a month and a half after the Morice incident, the Lower House continually blocked the House of Lord’s efforts to pass the recusant bill. Sniffing out the ambiguities, members demanded changes, softer penalties, and clarifications on the criteria which defined a recusant within the bill. Though there was no great love for the “Brownists” or “Barrowists” expressed in the opposition to the bill, some of the speeches show that the members of the

¹⁵¹ Hartley, *Proceedings in the Parliaments*, 30.

¹⁵² *Ibid*, 39.

¹⁵³ *Ibid*, 39

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 39.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 40.

Commons were aware of its inherent dangers. The court of High Commission's actions were already of concern to many of them, so naturally they showed reluctance to pass a bill that would make ecclesiastical proceedings against Protestants less difficult to prosecute. Sir Walter Raleigh expressed his concern that though "...in my conceit the *Brownists* are worthy to be rooted out of a Commonwealth," he questioned "...what danger may grow to ourselves if this Law pass, it were sit to be considered. For it is to be feared, that men not guilty, will be included in it."¹⁵⁶ A Mr. Finch echoed this sentiment, saying that the bill "...pretendeth [to be] a punishment only to the Brownists and Sectaries, but throughout the whole Bill, not one thing that concerneth a Brownist; and if we make a Law against *Barrowists* and *Brownists*, let us set down a Note of them, who they are. But as the Bill is, not to come to Church, or to speak against the government established, this is not the opinion of the Brownists."¹⁵⁷ He also commented on, "the Clause of speaking against the Law" as being "...very dangerous: For who can be safe from this?"¹⁵⁸ It seems that the House of Commons was wary that the bill was a ploy to make all religious dissent punishable by banishment, and consequently they were unwilling to make all forms of dissent equal. Even though they did not support the Separatists directly, they knew that this legislation and their punishment would have implications for any future attempts at reformation. The vocal minority had caused this trouble, but a bill that targeted them only vaguely could be turned against anyone with common, though less extreme, feelings. Attacking the Separatists appears to have been a means of deflecting away from other Protestant dissenters, by using the extremists as the measure of unacceptable disobedience the Commons could hope to protect the rights of moderate reformers and check the growing power of the government's ecclesiastical branch.

¹⁵⁶ Simonds d'Ewes. "Journal of the House of Commons: April 1593," in *The Journals of All the Parliaments During the Reign of Queen Elizabeth*, (Shannon, Ire: Irish University Press, 1682), 513-521. *British History Online*, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/jrnl-parliament-eliz1/pp513-521>.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

Impatient and angry when faced with this opposition, and still stinging from the attack on his authority, Whitgift made the decision to kill the Separatist leaders, thereby sending a message to the people who conspired to defeat his ambitions.

So now, amid the heated debate over the recusant statute in Parliament, Henry Barrow and John Greenwood entered the final phase of their long ordeal. They were put on trial for their prison writings, “the tendency of which was ‘to cry down the Church of England and to lessen the Queen’s prerogative in matters spiritual.’”¹⁵⁹ Though Barrow, Greenwood, and the men who helped them publish their work were tried for the general creation of seditious texts, the most objectionable was 1590’s A Brief Discovery of the False Church, from which quotes were taken for evidence during his trial.¹⁶⁰ This lengthy tome, at around five hundred pages, contained pointed attacks aimed at nearly every aspect of the Church of England. As Barrow’s examination showed, authorities were interested in opinions which challenged authority, not just religious differences, and the Brief Discovery was full of questionable examples. On the subject of the bishops, Barrow wrote that “when they cannot defend their pride and blasphemy by the word...they then run to their last shot anchor, to uphold their tottering states by the prince’s donation,” which he believed was a “weak defense for them, against the wrath and judgment of God that condemneth them, and a mighty sin (and yet no novelty) for the kings of the earth to give their crowns unto the beast.”¹⁶¹ This accusation, that the bishops have no authority from scripture and their claim to gain legitimacy from their appointment by the monarch is guilty desperation, was problematic for a number of reasons. Besides flagrantly denying the authority of the highest Ecclesiastic office, this denies the power of the monarch to choose officers and

¹⁵⁹ J. Payne Collier, ed., *The Egerton Papers*, (London: John Bowyer Nichols and Son, 1840), 166.

¹⁶⁰ Carlson, *The Writings of Henry Barrow, 1587-1590*, 261.

¹⁶¹ Barrow, *A Brief Discovery of the False Church* in *The Writings of Henry Barrow 1587-1590*, 340.

even accuses princes of committing a great sin in doing so. Yet another attack also criticized the restrictions placed on the people, where authorities unjustly silence the godly by forbidding criticism and maintaining obedience:

...even as that flood of bitter waters which the dragon casteth forth of his mouth and the miserable people of the earth swallow up, partly through their general blindness, partly through their servile subjugation, which have not the power or liberty publicly to control or censure any error, be it never so blasphemous.¹⁶²

The dragon represented the bishops, who give the people false sacraments and information, but Barrow was criticizing the passive acceptance on the part of the people as well as their inability to protest without punishment. It could be that he was thinking about himself and his own congregation, but this passage can be read as an encouragement to cease outward conformity to the current church norm. In turn this can be construed as incitement to disobedience to the queen, who was the governor of that church and responsible for choosing its ministers. These elements were enough to try Barrow and his associates, and to convict them.

The trial was quite brief, with interviews taking place between March 11th and March 20th, focused entirely upon the crimes of writing, printing, and distributing Barrow's works.¹⁶³ Besides Greenwood and Barrow, four other men accused of helping publish Separatist literature were tried by Lord Chief Justice John Popham and the rest of the Queen's Bench, examined separately and apparently quite briefly.¹⁶⁴ Unlike previous examinations, these were recorded only by court officials, and contain none of the insights into any exchanges that may have taken place between Barrow and his judges, only the most basic information regarding the accused's responses. The questions focused entirely on who was part of which process in making the

¹⁶² Barrow, *A Brief Discovery of the False Church in The Writings of Henry Barrow 1587-1590*, 546.

¹⁶³ Collier, ed., *The Egerton Papers*, 170-179.

¹⁶⁴ Collins, ed., *The Egerton Papers*, 170-179.

books, who “sett forth” the words, who smuggled them out, who printed them, and where.¹⁶⁵ Once the depositions were completed, on March 21st, there was no long wait for the verdict. Barrow and Greenwood were found guilty and sentenced to death on March 23 1592/3, with their execution set for the following day.¹⁶⁶ This example of swift justice, however, was soon hindered.

Accounts of the execution itself are sparse, but several unusual elements of the case are acknowledged. Before their final trip to the gallows at Tyburn, the condemned men received two stays of execution, and the final, successful attempt to hang them was conducted in an unusually clandestine fashion: early in the morning with few witnesses. In the revised 1601 edition of his *Chronicles of England*, John Stowe devoted a sparse paragraph to Barrow and Greenwood’s trial and execution. It read as follows:

The 21 of March, *Henry Barrow*, gentleman [and] *John Greenwood*, clarke...were indited of felony at the Sessions hall without Newgate before the maior, the two lord chiefe justices of both benches, and sundry of the other commissioners of Dyer and determiner: the said *Barrow* and *Greenwood* for writing sundry seditious books, tending to the slander of Queen and state...and on the 23rd they were all arraigned at Newgate, found giltie, and had judgment. On the last of March *Henry Barrow* and *John Greenwood* were brought to Tyborne in a carry, and there fastened to the gallowes, but being staide and returned for the time, they were there hanged on the 6 of April.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, 176. The other defendants were Robert Bowle, accused of taking the manuscripts to the Netherlands for printing, Robert Stookes, who brought them back to England, Danyll Studley, who smuggled the written pages from Barrow’s cell, and James Forester, who edited and wrote copies of the [Brief Description](#), though he claimed he tried to soften its language. Forester disavowed his former association with the Separatists, saying “he began to incline that way, but has since seen, he thanketh God, their great error.” (Egerton Papers, 179). Stookes claimed to have been “seduced” by the Separatists, but “hath been persuaded from it by the space of a year and a half,” by one of Whitgift’s chaplains (Egerton Papers, 173).

¹⁶⁶ Patrick Collinson, ‘Barrow, Henry (c.1550–1593)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1540>].

¹⁶⁷ John Stowe, *Chronicles of England*, 1272. The passage was also misidentified in the index, which puts the event under “Penry” for John Penry, who is not mentioned in the entry and was himself executed several weeks after Barrow and Greenwood for involvement in the Martin Marprelate controversy.

Stowe's account leaves out the state's first attempt to execute the men on 24 March, when they were "taken to the place of execution, only to be pardoned."¹⁶⁸ Finally, on 6 April, Barrow and Greenwood were brought to Tyburn early enough in the morning to be hanged 'as secretly as could be achieved.'¹⁶⁹ Barrow himself provided the account of his two near-death experiences in a letter to a mysterious potential savior, whom Leland H. Carlson has identified as Anne Russell, the Countess of Warwick.¹⁷⁰ The Countess was married to Ambrose Dudley, the elder brother of the deceased Sir Robert Dudley, who had been a proven friend to Puritans.¹⁷¹ In his letter Barrow described his own behavior as peaceable, claiming that he and Greenwood had prayed for the queen and for her subjects to obey her, in an apparent acknowledgement of the political reasons for his conviction.¹⁷² When the queen's messenger appeared at the last possible moment to reprieve them, Barrow reported that people cheered in the streets as he and Greenwood were returned to prison.¹⁷³ Such a last moment reprieve was not uncommon, a coercive move "in which the state chose to exercise mercy, pardoning the condemned and so securing her or his grateful tears and submission."¹⁷⁴ In this case, however, lasting pardon was not to be had. Barrow's execution before Whitgift's seditious bill even passed was a show of power – that with or without his legislation he could have these men killed. When he succeeded, however, it was not the exemplary spectacle that one might expect.

¹⁶⁸ Patrick Collinson, 'Barrow, Henry (c.1550–1593)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1540>].

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ Knott, *Discourses of Martyrdom*, 132.

¹⁷¹ Simon Adams, 'Dudley, Anne, countess of Warwick (158/9 – 1604)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/69744>].

¹⁷² Knott, *Discourses of Martyrdom*, 133.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 133.

¹⁷⁴ Andy Wood, "The Deep Roots of Albion's Fatal Tree: The Tudor State and the Monopoly of Violence," in *The Journal of the Historical Association*, Volume 99, Issue 336 (July 2014), 416.

The circumstances of Barrow's trial and execution seem, on the surface, to contradict the usual theories about the purpose of a public execution in this period; this being to visibly and ritualistically dispatch criminals in a performance calibrated to dissuade future offenders and showcase the state's power to enforce its laws. Historians such as Peter Lake, Michael Questier, and J. A. Sharpe have explored the performative and ceremonial aspects of imprisonment and public execution, and revealing the extent to which they permeated society.¹⁷⁵ Lake and Questier's examination of exemplary narratives in pamphlets and plays found a "stock of assumptions and narrative expectations about sin, repentance, and salvation," where the condemned are used to illustrate the beliefs of, depending on the case, Catholic or Protestant commentators and observers.¹⁷⁶ Sharpe's work on 'last dying speeches' shows how early modern gallows speeches were 'scripted' as part of "the way in which the civil and religious authorities designed the execution spectacle to articulate a particular set of values, inculcate a certain behavioral model and bolster a social order perceived as threatened."¹⁷⁷ The Elizabethan state was certainly willing to utilize corporal and capital punishment to maintain strict control over subject's words and deeds. As historian Andy Wood has pointed out, "at the first moment at which meaningful statistical evidence becomes available, the Tudor state was to be found executing a greater proportion of its subject population than at any other subsequent point in English history," using these instances to broadcast its message of obedience and submission.¹⁷⁸ Even non-lethal punishments were usually demonstrative in nature. The sentence for petty crimes or spoken slander could include public pillories, stocks, whipping through town,

¹⁷⁵ Peter Lake and Michael Questier, *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists and Players in post-Reformation England*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2002).

J.A. Sharpe, "'Last Dying Speeches': Religion, Ideology and Public Execution in Seventeenth-Century England," in *Past & Present* No. 107 (May 1985), pp 144-167.

¹⁷⁶ Lake and Questier, *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat*, xxvii.

¹⁷⁷ Sharpe, "Last Dying Speeches," 148.

¹⁷⁸ Wood, "The Deep Roots of Albion's Fatal Tree," 409.

branding, ear cutting – all were performed in full view or left lasting marks of shame on the body which set the offender apart from his or her peers as a living example of the consequences of defiance.¹⁷⁹ As a vocal and hated schismatic, it would be reasonable to think that the state would wish to make a public spectacle of Henry Barrow as a message to other dissenters. There are several potential explanations for his reprieves and the secrecy of the ultimate hanging, but it is my suggestion that the concurrent contention in Parliament over Whitgift's legislation, general disagreement between conformists and reformers within the government, and the reluctance to equate dissenters of all types influenced these strange circumstances.

Excepting the secrecy of his hanging, certain aspects of Barrow's execution do seem to fit into expected modes of capital punishment. It was carried out in London, the location of most public executions and show trials during this time, and it was to Tyburn, perhaps the city's most notorious gallows, that Barrow was taken to die.¹⁸⁰ The location suggests the expectation of a typical execution, since traitors often met their deaths here in gruesome style – Tyburn is a place associated even today with bloody public demonstrations. Examples could be made without loss of life, however, which offers a possible explanation for Henry Barrow's two stays of execution. The reprieves came from the queen, which seems at odds with her campaign for obedience and recognition of authority,¹⁸¹ but it could be they were an effort to induce a public apology. As previously mentioned, Andy Wood has identified the last moment reprieve as a coercive tactic, one that was designed to elicit a show of thankfulness and submission from the condemned at the receipt of state mercy.¹⁸² Should such a submission take place in front of a large crowd gathered to witness an execution, authorities would benefit from a dual display: imposing its will on a

¹⁷⁹ Cressy, *Dangerous Talk*, 43.

¹⁸⁰ Lake and Questier, *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat*, xxvii.

¹⁸¹ Knott, *Discourses of Martyrdom*, 133.

¹⁸² Wood, "The Deep Roots of Albion's Fatal Tree," 416.

notorious schismatic and showing mercy even in the face of extremism. A living, contrite Barrow could possibly even serve as an asset to the conformist cause, showing that the state was willing to accept sincere apologies, no matter the offender's past actions. There was no point of no return, authorities would graciously forgive past error so long as subjects showed the appropriate contrition. The fact that Barrow and Greenwood were even offered the opportunity, though, hints at the continued existence of doubt behind the scenes. Somehow, there was enough pressure of opinion to convince the queen that she should extend mercy to these men. The Separatists did not take it, of course, but if opinion was entirely turned against them it seems unlikely that they would have been treated with such trepidation, especially in the final phase of their deaths.

Another possible explanation for the circumstances of their deaths was that authorities now wanted to avoid making a martyr out of Barrow. When the reprieves failed to gain his submission, Barrow had to be killed, but the government knew from experience that a show trial and death could inspire unintended sentiments in its audience. As historian John Knott has shown, Barrow utilized the Protestant martyr narrative made widely known by Foxe's Acts and Monuments to frame his own persecution in the terms of those Marian martyrs, which served to affirm his faith's legitimacy through conviction in the face of death.¹⁸³ The 1580 case of Jesuit priest Edmund Campion, had demonstrated that even the most carefully orchestrated spectacle had the potential to send the wrong message, should the condemned convincingly play the martyr role.¹⁸⁴ The Jesuit had been granted an official disputation, the situation which Barrow craved, but rather than achieving the crushing theological victory Protestant officials desired, Campion's "rigged" disputation, as Lake and Questier put it, "allowed [him] to cast himself as a

¹⁸³ Knott, *Discourses of Martyrdom*, 119.

¹⁸⁴ Lake and Questier, *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat*, 258.

victim triumphing over almost impossible odds.”¹⁸⁵ Audiences were moved to compassion by Campion’s behavior throughout his ordeal, and so the government failed to give the impression officials wished. He and his fellow prisoner Robert Persons drew from Catholic martyr stories, as Barrow drew from the Marian martyrs, to inform their behavior and shape the interpretation of their own trial, and later, death.¹⁸⁶ An early start time may have been the state’s attempt to forestall a similar incident. The decision did not eliminate witnesses on Barrow’s day of reckoning, but it seems to have succeeded in limiting and muddling the word of mouth reports. Though Barrow did become a martyr to the remaining Separatists, “a blessed witness of his most holy ordinances, to the loss of life,” the state’s management of his death appears to have kept this perception within Separatist bounds.¹⁸⁷ However, the fact that the state feared such an outcome shows that opinion was such that the state recognized the possibility of spreading sympathy for the man. Conformists were politically secure thanks to the queen’s support and the pressure for obedience that followed in the wake of threats to the realm, but their actions and concerns surrounding Barrow’s death shows that religious opinion was not as uniform as they desired.

In the end, Elizabeth’s authority, and the authority of her bishops, took precedence, both at Tyburn and in the House of Commons. Barrow’s error was in challenging the queen’s authority, a queen who said she would not “make windows into men’s souls” but certainly required strict outward obedience from her subjects.¹⁸⁸ While the Commons tried their hardest to make the bill apply only to Separatists, rather than all recusants, Whitgift showed that even without the act he could have agitators eliminated. Barrow’s death was meant to send a message to a specific audience, one that was within the state itself, and the broken nature of Barrow’s

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, 258-259.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, 255.

¹⁸⁷ Anonymous, *The Writings of Henry Barrow*, 1587-1590, 227.

¹⁸⁸ Loades, *Politics and Nation*, 254.

execution reflected the still fractured landscape of religious opinion. Conformists only kept them quiet and forced outward obedience, but when unleashed in Parliament men fought and when a man like Barrow was imprisoned his pen spilled his people's grievances upon the page. Doubt and pressure was strong enough to earn reprieves for the condemned, and there was enough worry about a sympathetic populace that their execution was conducted in secrecy. But despite this, the conformists claimed victory and the Puritans were driven even further to the fringes.

The swift resolution of Whitgift's bill quickly followed Barrow's death. The Commons succeeded in imposing several series of revisions upon it, but to prevent further delay committees were formed in the upper chamber where "every one that would take any exception to the bill" was required to attend, and on April 7th 1593 the issue was resolved.¹⁸⁹ At Parliament's closing on 10 April 1593, themes of obedience and the queen's power, righteousness, and authority dominated the ceremony. In his closing remarks, Speaker Lord Edward Coke struck a conciliatory tone. His speech focused on the queen as the source of all prosperity in the realm, where "under your happy government we live upon Honey, we suck upon every sweet Flower," though he obliquely addressed the discord which colored the proceedings, saying "...but where the Bee sucketh Honey, there also the Spider draweth Poyson. Some such venoms there be."¹⁹⁰ Coke refrained from making outright statements on either the Separatists nor the fierce opposition the Protestant sectary bill received in the House of Commons. Instead he referred to their assured loyalty and protective attitude towards the queen, asserting that "such Drones and Door Bees" as would challenge or seek to harm her "we will expel [from] the Hive and serve your Majesty, and withstand any enemy that shall assault

¹⁸⁹ Hartley, *Proceedings in the Parliaments*, 168.

¹⁹⁰ Simonds d'Ewes, 'Journal of the House of Lords: April 1593', in *The Journals of All the Parliaments During the Reign of Queen Elizabeth* (Shannon, Ire, 1682), pp. 463-467. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/jrnl-parliament-eliz1/pp463-467>.

you.”¹⁹¹ In his summary of the laws passed, the much contested statute warranted only a brief mention, as the “Law to suppress the obstinate Recusant and the dangerous Sectary, both very pernicious [sic] to your Government.”¹⁹² Coke’s deferential speech may have been preemptive, since the queen had to intervene on multiple occasions over the course of the session to remind the members of her orders.

Despite Coke’s humble speech, Lord Keeper Puckering was instructed by the queen to express her displeasure with the nature of the session’s proceedings. Though she and her bishops had received all they desired out of the Parliament, the display of dissent apparently still needed to be addressed. Though she thanked the Parliament for performing its duty, she noted that “...in some things they had spent more time than needed. But she perceived that some men did it more for their satisfaction than the necessity of the thing deserved.”¹⁹³ The lack of proper respect and deference to authority was chastised: “She misliketh also that such irreverence was shewed towards Privy Councillors, who were not to be accounted as common Knights and Burgesses of the House, that are Councillors but during the Parliament; whereas the other are standing Councillors, and for their wisdom and great service are called to the Council of the State.”¹⁹⁴ Whatever the divisions of opinion members might hold, authority came first. Order and deference, obedience and submission; these were the foundations of peace and prosperity in the realm. Elizabeth provided the honey, all prosperity, and to benefit of it her subject owed her protection and obedience. An unruly hive in discord was liable to be destroyed from within and attacked from without. This Parliament and the execution of the Separatist leaders showed that

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ D'Ewes, 'Journal of the House of Lords: April 1593'.

her mercy extended only so far as her subjects showed themselves willing to conform, and she would not refrain from chastising and punishing those who failed in their dutiful obedience.

Conclusion

The Elizabethan state's persecution of the Separatists, and the execution of its leaders, was an undertaking which revealed the myriad difficulties faced by the English government and the issues of religious conscience which plagued subjects of all ranks. The Papal Bull and its consequences amplified existing concerns about the security and future of the realm at the same time as a new push for further reform in the Church of England. The state's countermeasures against Catholics eventually began to effect Protestant dissenters because Puritan reformers were incapable of placing political concerns before religious ones, even temporarily. Reassertion of power and the need to put up a united front against Catholic opposition meant that all dissent, even complaints from professedly faithful subjects, became increasingly intolerable to a growing conformist faction. Elizabeth's legitimacy was being questioned by powerful foreign forces, and to have her own subjects challenge her role and actions as Supreme Governor of the Church just as the Pope stripped her of the title was unacceptable, no matter the soundness of the Puritan's theological arguments. Moderate officials like Lord Burghley might have sympathized with the Puritans' concerns, but circumstances did not permit outright support. Such officials could, however, attempt to soften the blows and protect well-meaning and less confrontational dissenters. Henry Barrow was an extremist, one that conformists and other Puritans alike seemed to turn from, but even he was given many chances to conform and patiently await a more opportune time to push his agenda. Parliament was unable to agree on punishing the man and his followers for fear of the wider applications of the law on other Protestants. Despite appearances, it seems there was not a universal desire to silence dissent. Hardline conformists were only one faction, but one that was strengthened and empowered by a climate of fear. The discord in the 1592/3 Parliament and Barrow's odd end suggest that this fear was not enough to end the hope

that reform was in the Church of England's future, and that defining all Protestant dissenters as dangerous on the same level as Catholics was not be fully accepted. Barrow might have been reprehensible in his extremism, but moderate officials and legislators were not so blinded by hatred to miss the wider implications of the laws Whitgift introduced to punish Protestant nonconformity.

Ultimately, what was at stake in this case was the future of reform in the Church of England. Henry Barrow drew the anger of conformist officials and the queen in a time of great danger, but moderates who harbored their own desires for reform realized that if dissent laws were too harsh, even in the interest of protecting the realm from its present dangers, future attempts at perfecting the Church of England could be severely set back. Elizabeth's reign demanded compromise, asking that in the name of stability and peace reformers wait patiently until the time was right. Puritans presented a particular problem to the authorities of the Church of England, the state at large, and those Protestants who were willing to conform while still retaining hope for reform. Zealous Puritans, the most extreme of course being the Separatists, were those who could not wait for the Church of England to come to perfection, but those who *could* wait did not want to jeopardize the future they hoped for by increasing conformist power through demonizing their fellow Protestants, no matter how objectional their stance may be. Barrow and the Separatists endangered ecclesiastical reform by angering authorities and sparking legislative backlash against dissent in general. The 1592/3 House of Common's attempts to limit nonconformity bills to only 'Barrowists' or 'Brownists' indicated a concern for ensuring the survival of 'good' Protestant dissenters: those who desire reform yet outwardly obey the queen's directives. 'Puritan' as a term can refer to any number of groups, of varying degrees of extremism. Moderates did not want to uniformly punish nonconformity because dissent of a

gentler brand than Barrow offered would be necessary for future reform. Giving hardline conformists the power to eliminate criticism entirely might very well end the chance to continue the work in more stable times. The depth of this hope is evident by the fact that moderates and less extreme Puritans in Parliament were willing to challenge the conformist Archbishop Whitgift at the height of his power, to ignore the queen's directions against religious arguments, and to defend dissent even when the bill in question was ostensibly against mutually despised extremists. The difficulty Whitgift had in executing Barrow and Greenwood shows that even though he was in the queen's favor and acted according to her wishes, there was enough sympathetic or merciful feeling in high places to delay the Separatists' ends and give them opportunities to save themselves through recantation. Barrow was convicted of political crimes, but the potential religious consequences of the actions taken against him and his followers were not lost on moderate officials.

Though his execution has been cited as the end of overt Puritan dissent in the sixteenth century, Barrow's death did not end the Separatist movement.¹⁹⁵ Though his fellow prisoners from the London congregation remained in jail for some time after his death, Francis Johnson, a man converted by Barrow's own texts, swiftly took on the mantle of leadership.¹⁹⁶ Later congregations made their separation from the Church and State of England a physical as well as spiritual one. Later adherents sought refuge across the sea in Amsterdam and, eventually, the shores of North America.¹⁹⁷ Reprinted versions of Barrow's writings celebrate his martyrdom: the title to a reprinted 1611 version of The First Part of the Platform celebrates the text as being "Penned by that worthy servant of Jesus Christ, and blessed witness of his most holy ordinances,

¹⁹⁵ MacCulloch, *The Reformation*, 388.

Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 431.

¹⁹⁶ White, *The English Separatist Tradition*, 91.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 167.

to the loss of life: Mr. Henry Barrow.”¹⁹⁸ The Separatist group he headed uncomfortably confronted Protestants of all degrees in particularly dangerous time for dissent. Conformists sought his death but the end was stalled by the doubt and disagreement surrounding the rightness of prosecuting fellow Protestants and the lurking danger of hindering future reformation. The need to impose authority defeated religious misgivings in this case, and Barrow is often considered a minor character in the larger Puritan struggle of the Tudor and Stuart eras. Henry Barrow’s brief life as a Separatist firebrand and end as a martyr provide, through his work and the state’s response, a window into the complicated and restricted political climate which may have strengthened conformists, but did not leave them unchallenged.

¹⁹⁸ Anonymous, *The Writings of Henry Barrow, 1587-1590*, 227.

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