

**INFORMATION AND ALLEGATIONS OF CATHOLICISM  
IN ELIZABETHAN AND JACOBEAN ENGLAND**

by

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B.A., Dalhousie University, 2006

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis examines several aspects of the enforcement of conformity to the religious and political regimes of Elizabeth I and James I against Catholic political and religious opposition. I discuss the means by which royal and ecclesiastical officials obtained information about suspects through the use of churchwardens, spies, private informers, priest hunters, searchers, neighbours and Catholics themselves; why this information was forthcoming; and the reactions of Catholics and others who found themselves under scrutiny. I argue that those persons whose behaviour might be described as opportunistic, or even malicious, legitimized their actions by adopting the anti-Catholic rhetoric and concerns current in England at this time. Whether used as a tactic of empowerment against enemies, or a route to influence and reward, these acts signalled an acceptance of the argument that Catholicism was subordinate and a threat.

**Keywords:** information; communication; legitimation; denunciation; religion; Reformation

**Subject Terms:** Great Britain -- Politics and Government -- 1558-1603; Great Britain -- Politics and Government --1603-1625; Catholics --England --History --16<sup>th</sup> Century; Catholics --England --History --17<sup>th</sup> Century; England --Church History --16<sup>th</sup> Century; England --Church History --17<sup>th</sup> Century

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## **NOTES AND ABBREVIATIONS**

CRS Catholic Record Society

NRS Norfolk Record Society

ODNB Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

ORS Oxfordshire Record Society

SP State Papers Domestic

TRP Tudor Royal Proclamations

The dates that appear here are in the old style but with the year beginning at January 1.

The spelling and punctuation of quotations from the State Papers have been modernized. The letters that appear in the Appendix have their original spelling and punctuation but with contractions and titles silently expanded

## **INTRODUCTION: COMMUNICATION AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE REFORMATION IN ENGLAND**

Shortly before Christmas 1583, an Englishman delivered three letters to the inn under the sign of the silver lion in Dieppe. After he left, the son of the innkeeper asked John Woodman, who was staying at the inn, to tell him the name of the addressee since he had only a little English himself. The letters were for a man from Rye named Robert Gilford, and the innkeeper's son asked Woodman to open and read them as well. When Woodman was back in England, word of these events reached the lord lieutenant of Sussex, Lord Buckhurst, who then sent for him. Subsequently, Buckhurst wrote to Sir Francis Walsingham, the Secretary of State. He detailed his interview with Woodman, the content of the letters and his suspicions about Gilford, a man believed to be conveying letters for Catholics: 'though it seem but slender: yet it seemeth to me as strange that Richard Gilford should be a merchant of butter, candles or sheaves of arrows'.<sup>1</sup> A month later another letter was written, this one from Lady Anne Lee to her brother, the Catholic exile and conspirator Charles Paget, warning him about his associates, 'I pray you good brother Charles have great care with whom you converse'.<sup>2</sup>

While essentially unrelated, these letters are both indicative of the varied paths of information and the importance and dangers of communication in the political and religious struggles of early modern England. A local magnate investigated rumours about suspicious letters, interviewed a witness and sent his findings to the Secretary of State. A

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<sup>1</sup> Lord Buckhurst to Sir Francis Walsingham, 30 December 1583, SP 12/164/76.

<sup>2</sup> Lady Anne Lee to Charles Paget, 29 January 1584, SP 12/167/51.



woman wrote to her brother about what she has heard about him and others, and wished him to be cautious about what he says to them. Like these letters, this thesis tackles several topics: rumour and communication, informing and spying, parish politics and church law, conformists and Catholics. My larger subject is the means through which religious conformity was accepted, administered and enforced during the reigns of Elizabeth and James I. By examining the actual process of communicating—word of mouth, letters, reports—and the ways in which people used the message—the supremacy of the reformed English Church against the subversive Roman one—*for themselves*, I will explore how officials and non-officials related their actions to this message and supported the legal and religious dominance of the established Protestant faith over Catholicism.

For laws to be enforced, authorities required information on crimes committed. But spreading information, if false or defamatory, could also be a crime. This was the dual nature of communication in Tudor and Stuart England. Sanctioned forms of communication, such as ‘common fame’, were necessary for state or parish officials to prosecute transgressions ranging from ‘bawdy’ crimes to treason. Gossip and rumour, however, if on the wrong subjects, could also bring punishment.

The Tudor monarchs made proclamations against the spread of rumours on a range of subjects from coinage to invasion. In this period of religious transition, it is not surprising to see proclamations from Henry VIII and Edward VI dispelling stories about their religious intentions or permitted doctrine. In October 1536, Henry VIII pronounced against rumours that he would seize the ‘chalices, goods, and ornaments’ from churches

and collect fees for marriages, christenings and burials.<sup>3</sup> Edward VI had to contend with ‘other light and perverse persons’ spreading stories that he would be levying a fee for the same rites.<sup>4</sup> In 1549 anyone found spreading rumours about the revival of old religious practices and the abolition of newer ones was to be committed to prison until the punishment was determined.<sup>5</sup>

Punishments for spreading rumours varied; imprisonment was the most common penalty. More drastically, Edward’s 1549 proclamation ‘Providing Penalty for Rumours of Military Defeat’ instructed his officials to imprison rumour mongers until the initial source could be identified. That person would be sent to row in the galleys.<sup>6</sup> More lenient was Mary I’s declaration of 1558, ‘Suppressing Seditious Rumours’, which did not indicate any punishment for gossips, but instead expressed the desire that her subjects not believe everything that they hear.<sup>7</sup>

These two forms of communication—common report and harmful rumours—converged when there was a call for information about rumour mongers. Edward VI’s 1549 proclamation promised a sizeable reward and the king’s gratitude.<sup>8</sup> Choosing not to inform was not even an option for one 1551 declaration; it directed that if a person heard a rumour but did not report it to an official, he was ‘to incur no less pain than the first offender’.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, *TRP* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), I: 244-245.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, I: 421.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, I: 484.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, I: 455-456.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, II: 93-94. Her earlier proclamation from July 1553, however, did threaten prison and the pillory. *Ibid.*, II: 4.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, II: 470.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, I: 529.

Elizabeth I, too, tried to counter the spread of hostile opinions with appeals for information. A person who provided details about the authors of ‘traitorous or lewd and slanderous’ publications was promised unnamed, but apparently generous, rewards. From the same proclamation came the admonition that anyone who found themselves in possession of such a publication should take it to a local official ‘immediately without showing or report or speech thereof to any person’.<sup>10</sup> Clearly there was the worry that dangerous writings could become common talk if not quickly suppressed.

The calls for disclosure and the threat of denunciation did have success. As Geoffrey Elton wrote, ‘the government depended on its ability to buttress natural loyalties and eagerness to serve the King with a useful impression that someone was watching’.<sup>11</sup> Or listening. Elton provided an example of how one person’s indiscreet talk made its way to authorities:

David Leonard, hooper, an Irishman, was in gaol in 1535 awaiting investigation on a charge of having said: ‘God save King Harry and Queen Catherine, his wedded wife, and Anne at his pleasure for whom all England shall rue’. He had got there by these stages: John Horsey and Robert Hill, smiths of Bridgewater (Som.), and Robert Alwen of Lyme Pesham, husbandman, who claimed to have heard the words, informed John Gilling, high constable of the hundred of South Brent, and John Burkett, tithingman of East Brent. They in turn informed two justices of the peace, William Vowell and Thomas Clerk, who ordered Burkett to arrest Leonard, informed Cromwell, and requested instructions. The whole business had taken only a few days.<sup>12</sup>

In one report from 1581, Thomas Scot, ‘being by profession a preacher, by birth an Englishman & by baptism a Christian’ wrote of how he was told by another man that Henry Hawkins had said that the queen had had five children by the earl of Leicester;

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<sup>10</sup> Hughes and Larkin, *TRP*, I: 342-343.

<sup>11</sup> Geoffrey Elton, *Policy and Police: the Enforcement of the Reformation in the Age of Thomas Cromwell* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 372.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 332.

Scot immediately denounced Hawkins to a justice of the peace. Scot then wrote to Leicester about this incident because, he said, of the severity of the slander, his loyalty to the queen and the earl and the slanderer's relations with papists. He even suggested that the employer of the accused or another papist may have been the originator of the slander.<sup>13</sup> Nathaniel Bacon wrote to Sir Francis Walsingham in 1589 about a letter both pro-Spanish and critical of Protestants which was found near the highway and brought to him, a copy of which he sent as well. Although he did not find who wrote the letter or to whom it was sent, Bacon alluded to the existence of nearby Catholics and warned Walsingham that 'the liberty of our recusants will breed no good unto the country for it is already understood of meetings had in suspected places'.<sup>14</sup>

These are examples of rumours and demands for information. They indicate an awareness of the power of communication. My thesis takes a topic that is inherently about Catholicism in Reformation England and demonstrates how pervasive both suspicion and opportunism were, yet not restricting myself solely to Catholic recusants, but including others informed upon as well. This involves people from a broad spectrum of religious categories: recusants, conformists and avowed Protestants. This draws on a number of works which consider topics ranging from Catholic loyalism to the church courts. Modern historians of Elizabethan and Jacobean English Catholicism have covered a range of subjects within this field. Resistance, conformity, recusancy, missionaries, martyrdom, executions and conversion are just a few of the many themes that make their

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<sup>13</sup> Thomas Scot to Leicester, March 1581, SP 12/148/34.

<sup>14</sup> Nathaniel Bacon to Sir Francis Walsingham, 19 July 1589, SP 12/225/35.

appearance in either local or broader studies.<sup>15</sup> Noted authors of English Catholic history have only indirectly touched on the questions I am asking, though what they have found is certainly useful to this work. In his study of Elizabethan Sussex, Roger Manning followed the shift of local power from Catholic to Protestant families and described how officials, lay and ecclesiastical, administered the Elizabethan religious settlement in the face of Catholic or Puritan opposition.<sup>16</sup> It was this work which first started my thinking about the nature of local relations. In Manning's analysis of Sussex politics, the central government did not wish to act aggressively against Catholic officeholders in the area because 'both the government and the local governors agreed that social stability should be given primacy over the enforcement of religious conformity'.<sup>17</sup> However, I became interested in examples where co-operation was not in evidence, but where enforcement and opportunism existed instead. Although B.W. Quintrell's article on disarming recusants also stresses the occasional nature of action against them, it does describe the incident where a gentleman disappointed in not obtaining a local office used a measure intended for Catholics against his rival, a Puritan. The 1613 Privy Council instructions to disarm recusants also targeted those who were 'ill-affected in religion'. This was meant

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<sup>15</sup> For example J.J.N. McGurk, 'Lieutenancy and Catholic Recusants in Elizabethan Kent', *Recusant History* 12 (1973): 157-70; Christopher Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975); J.C.H. Aveling, *The Handle and the Axe: the Catholic Recusants in England from Reformation to Emancipation* (London: Blond and Briggs, 1976); Alexandra Walsham, *Church Papists: Catholicism, Conformity and Confessional Polemic in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1993); Peter Lake and Michael C. Questier, 'Agency, Appropriation and Rhetoric under the Gallows: Puritans, Romanists and the State in Early Modern England', *Past & Present* 153 (1996): 64-107; Questier, *Conversion, Politics and Religion in England, 1580-1625* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); and Anne Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom in the English Catholic Community, 1535-1603* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002).

<sup>16</sup> Roger B. Manning, *Religion and Society in Elizabethan Sussex: A Study of the Enforcement of the Religious Settlement 1558-1603* (Leicester, Leicester University Press, 1969).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, xii.

to include Catholics who conformed but were still suspect, but here it was used against a Protestant.<sup>18</sup>

Though it intentionally avoids discussing the interactions between English Catholics and the state and established church, John Bossy's *English Catholic Community* offers insight into the internal development of post-Reformation English Catholicism. Christopher Haigh's study on the Reformation in Lancashire includes evidence of a variety of circumstances where Catholic activity was under scrutiny by civil and ecclesiastical authorities trying to enforce change. Thomas Cogswell examined recusancy through the actions and dissatisfactions of the informer Thomas Felton who battled with the Crown and its officials for his share of recusant fines and forfeitures. Of the numerous publications by Michael Questier, his article on the Jacobean Exchequer and its dealings with recusancy fines sits closest to the present subject. 'Sir Henry Spiller, Recusancy and the Efficiency of the Jacobean Exchequer' investigates the problems faced by the Exchequer in collecting revenue from recusants.<sup>19</sup>

Other works that focus on English Catholics and their relationship with the English government come from Arnold Pritchard and Peter Holmes. *Catholic Loyalism and Resistance and Compromise* both consider the diverse and ever-changing approaches English Catholics took to contend with their position as minorities in or exiles from a Protestant country suspicious of their politics. Pritchard's central concerns were loyalists, how the conflict between their church and the crown affected them, and what separated

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<sup>18</sup> Quintrell, 'Recusant Disarming', 210-211.

<sup>19</sup> John Bossy, *The English Catholic Community, 1570-1850* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1975); Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance*; Thomas Cogswell, 'Destroyed for Doing My Duty: Thomas Felton and the Penal Laws under Elizabeth and James I', in *Religious Politics in Post-Reformation England. Essays in Honour of Nicholas Tyacke*, ed. Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2006): 177-192; Questier, 'Sir Henry Spiller, Recusancy and the Efficiency of the Jacobean Exchequer', *Historical Research* 66 (1993): 251-266.

them from the more militant English Catholics.<sup>20</sup> Holmes, however, argued against separating English Catholics into groups. He perceived no fundamental differences in the ideas and politics among what have been seen as separate groups or factions.<sup>21</sup>

The subject of communication has attracted historians of early modern Europe such as Perez Zagorin and Filippo de Vivo. Zagorin's study focuses on persecuted religious groups and how they developed religious justifications for practising deceit in order to survive. For English Catholics, attending the services of the established church to indicate outward conformity was a way to evade the penalties of recusancy while inwardly, or outwardly safely at home, maintaining religious loyalties to Catholicism. Zagorin's discussion of dissimulation offers insight into Catholics and casuistry; it corresponds with my interest in the interrogation of priests and lay Catholics who might have used equivocation to avoid giving answers that could condemn them. The Jesuit Harry Garnet wrote in his defence of equivocation that Catholics could lie to avoid divulging information about other English Catholics.<sup>22</sup> De Vivo, writing about early modern Venice, delved into the availability, role and power of communication and information. The author asserted that 'communication *was* politics' and engaged with various forms and sites of communication, from manuscripts passed among the elite, to gossip and graffiti.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Arnold Pritchard, *Catholic Loyalty in Elizabethan England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), x.

<sup>21</sup> Peter Holmes, *Resistance and Compromise: The Political Thought of the Elizabethan Catholics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 5-7.

<sup>22</sup> Perez Zagorin, *Ways of Lying: Dissimulation, Persecution, and Conformity in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), 190-192, 196.

<sup>23</sup> Filippo de Vivo, *Information and Communication in Venice: Rethinking Early Modern Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 16. De Vivo's emphasis.

One of the forms of communication I rely on extensively in this thesis is the letter. Through this medium one can see how in some letters the author chose words and related events likely to gain the interest and influence of the recipient. Gary Schneider's *Culture of Epistolarity* is one recent work that explores the subject of letters written for or read by a wider readership and the place and function letters had in this period. The author argued 'that letters worked within a dynamic of knowledge and effect—a dynamic that mediated epistolary articulations of authority, authenticity, credibility, emotion, and information'.<sup>24</sup> Although he analyzed these articulations through the medium of letters about news, Schneider did not include official reports. Regarding intelligence, he discussed the use of letters and the language contained therein, with some attention to cyphers, interception and reports on court happenings. These aspects of intelligence, however, remain tied to the author's primary interest in the act of letter-writing. Letter-writing and influence are central to the articles written by James Daybell and Alison Thorne about the epistolary efforts of female authors. In common are their discussion of women's political influence and the use of their perceived female weakness as a rhetorical device to strengthen their appeals.<sup>25</sup> My thesis has little correspondence from women, but there are others in subordinate positions, such as debtors, ex-Catholics and Catholics, whose language drew attention to their circumstances in their appeals to those in more powerful positions.

Other areas of research, beyond recusancy and English Catholicism, are indispensable to this thesis. Several authors, including Martin Ingram, Ralph Houlbrooke

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<sup>24</sup> Gary Schneider, *The Culture of Epistolarity: Vernacular Letters and Letter Writing in Early Modern England, 1500-1700* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005), 15.

<sup>25</sup> James Daybell, 'Scripting a Female Voice: Women's Epistolary Rhetoric in Sixteenth-Century Letters of Petition', *Women's Writing* 13 (2006): 3-20; Alison Thorne, 'Women's Petitionary Letters and Early Seventeenth-Century Treason Trials', *Women's Writing* 13 (2006): 21-37.



and Ronald Marchant, have investigated the workings and successes of the church courts in the sixteenth century.<sup>26</sup> Among the differences in their studies are their opinions over the place of the church courts in the period of the Reformation. Ralph Houlbrooke, for example, saw the church courts as gaining importance after the initial changes in the Reformation period, but the Reformation also led ultimately to the courts' decline. Ingram argued that the church courts were a successful and influential means of administering justice and not on the decline. Though their conclusions on the church courts vary, these studies lay bare the structure and functions of the church's legal system and the roles filled by officials and parishioners in the regulation of their communities.

An important part of the legal system, though often (if not always) unappreciated by their contemporaries, informers have received some attention from modern historians of the Tudor and Stuart period. Elton's article 'Informing for Profit' focuses on the efforts of one informer interested in market offences whose actions were thwarted by aggressive targets or juries sympathetic to the defendants. The ambitious haberdasher and informer, George Whelplay (active in the 1530s and 1540s) had two means by which to begin an action against someone: seize the goods in question and try to claim half, or the value thereof, or lay information of an offence at the court. Elton's article shows how unenthusiastic the courts were about informers' information and cases. M.G. Davies' book on apprenticeship provides a good explanation of the legal framework in which informers worked: it considers the work of informers who brought action against apprentices. The larger purpose of her study is to follow the application of the seven-year

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<sup>26</sup> Martin Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Ralph A. Houlbrooke, *Church Courts and the People During the English Reformation, 1520-1570* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979); Ronald A. Marchant, *The Church under the Law: Justice, Administration and Discipline in the Diocese of York, 1560-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

apprenticeship rule. The above studies concentrate for the most part on trade offences, but detail the role of common people in enforcing the law.<sup>27</sup>

While I will use the works of these historians for background information and their opinions, I have chosen to base my analysis of the communication of information of alleged Catholicism on ideas of empowerment, legitimation and the co-option of the state. James C. Scott's *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* potentially offers a lens through which to look at my subject. Denunciation is a way for people of lesser stature to become empowered, especially in circumstances where servants denounce their employers, or in other hierarchical situations. For Scott, it is clearly those in subordinate positions, peasants, slaves and others who are resisting. But in the case of English Catholics in Jacobethan England, who is really resisting here? Is it the servant denouncing his priest-concealing masters, or is it those found to be breaking the religious-political statutes of the realm? The religious turmoil of the age added another dimension to the complexity of English society. Social hierarchy held only some protection for dissenters. Scott's work does have relevance in cases where there is a clear distinction of elite and subordinate. However, those of higher social position who did not conform to the religious standards or broke the laws of the realm left themselves vulnerable to the patriotic, or self-interested, activities of their social inferiors.<sup>28</sup>

Michael Braddick and John Walter have addressed the applicability of Scott's view to early modern society in their introduction to the collection *Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society*. While they considered Scott's ideas on public and hidden

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<sup>27</sup> G.R. Elton, 'Informing for Profit: A Sidelight on Tudor Methods of Law-Enforcement', *Cambridge Historical Journal* 11 (1954): 149-167; M.G. Davies, *The Enforcement of English Apprenticeship: A Study in Applied Mercantilism, 1563-1642* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1956).

<sup>28</sup> James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

transcripts and hegemony valuable, they found that his conceptions of powerful and powerless were too restrictive for the early modern societies they study. What is needed, they argued, is ‘a more elaborate model of the multivalency of power relations’ in order to encompass the variety of connections within English society.<sup>29</sup> Especially pertinent to my own study is their estimation that ‘the negotiation of social relationships of power was accordingly more complex than Scott’s analysis would suggest, and many people found themselves looking in two directions—to those above and to those below them’.<sup>30</sup> To this I would add a third direction—sideways—since relations between neighbours presumably could determine whether people volunteered information to officials or stayed silent.

Another aspect to communication was legitimation. Braddick and Walter wrote:

If someone does something knowing it will be regarded as reflecting consent, they will have at some level actually consented to the power relationship in which they are involved. Such consent can, of course, spring from a number of motives, but the sincerity or otherwise of these professions of principle is not necessarily their most important feature. Legitimizing languages may be used tactically by both the powerful and the weak; the crucial issue is the plausibility of their use and the extent to which their invocation elicits comment.<sup>31</sup>

For this study, the concept of legitimation speaks to the central question of how people gained power through communication and used information to navigate power relations. Those writing information about others’ alleged misdeeds, or their own past ones, used words and ideas which appealed to the current environment of anti-Catholic suspicion,

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<sup>29</sup> Michael J. Braddick and John Walter, ‘Introduction. Grids of Power: Order, Hierarchy and Subordination in Early Modern Society’, in *Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society: Order, Hierarchy, and Subordination in Britain and Ireland*, ed. Braddick and Walter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 10, 11.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

laws, and other measures, thereby legitimating their position as complainant. By reporting on neighbours' religious nonconformity or strangers' gossip, or actively seeking out information about suspected persons, for whatever reason—dutiful or self-seeking—English people validated certain political and religious directions present. My use of legitimation here will focus not only on a petitioner's place in the power relationship, but also on the place of Catholicism within the domain of the political, legal, religious and popular. Legitimation and empowerment are thus intertwined as people used the language of loyalty or religion or both and drew on the unfavourable position of Catholicism/popery to make their voices heard.<sup>32</sup>

Further treatment of legitimation, as well as power and the state, is found in Michael Braddick's monograph, *State Formation in Early Modern England*. Part of the author's analysis of the state lies in examining the conduct of officeholders. Their dependence on the legitimating authority of the state and their acceptance by those affected by the power of their office influenced the formation of the state institutions they represented. Braddick argued that officeholders 'had to demonstrate that their actions fell within the formal limits of their office but also sought to justify these actions with reference to beliefs current in society at large'.<sup>33</sup> His discussions on officeholders, religious conformity, local reactions and the use of legitimating languages fit well with

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<sup>32</sup> The terms 'popery' or 'papist' have more than one meaning. Initially referring to anything Roman Catholic, or non-Protestant, it became a broader insult against someone for their religious opinions and practices. Alexandra Walsham states that 'nicknames, derogatory epithets like 'papist' and 'puritan', are indices not so much of popery and puritanism, as of anti-popery and anti-puritanism'. Walsham, *Church Papists*, 111. The terms were used by Protestants at opposite ends of the spectrum to attack each other. The usage of 'popery' and 'papist' both in my writing and in that from the documents cited refer to actual Roman Catholic practices. The denunciations included in this study generally mention a precise action or object associated with Catholicism, such as priests or Masses.

<sup>33</sup> Braddick, *State Formation in Early Modern England c. 1550-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 47.

my subject not only in regard to the actions of officials, but also those of non-officials who displayed similar behaviour and justifications.

My thesis, therefore, serves a number of purposes. I wish to assess and build on Braddick's ideas on legitimation, the state and local influence by applying them to the subject of the efforts to control and limit potentially subversive Catholic activities. I also want to extend his ideas on officeholders who justify their actions through the authority of the state and popular opinion to non-officeholders. Above all, this thesis is about the power of communication and information. Following Braddick and Walter's call for a better conception of power relations in early modern England, I use information and its communication to shed light on a number of relationships based on inequalities of power: not only the one between members of the Protestant regime and the Catholic minority, which here is taken to be the dominant subordinating relationship, but also the interactions between English subjects in unequal social, economic and legal circumstances. I argue that legitimating languages relied upon by authorities to validate their enforcement of laws prohibiting certain Catholic activities came to be used by non-officeholders. This was evident in the actions of informants, witnesses and slanderers, and more specifically, in the language they used when communicating their information. Furthermore, I contend that the origins of information, its intent and the language in which it was phrased reveal how Englishmen and women, official and non-officials, used communication about Catholic activities as a means to navigate 'power relations' present at that time.

The following chapters consider the actions of ecclesiastical and secular officials, members of the parish and the community, as well as the actions and reactions of

Catholics and others targeted by accusations or the authorities. The first chapter focuses on occasions of informing within the ecclesiastical sphere. By analysing the source and direction of information as well as the reason for its communication, I show how church officials, clergy and parishioners supported and contributed to the implementation of church efforts against Catholic non-conformity. The next chapter follows the various sources of information made available to royal officials interested in the application of Catholic penal laws and gathering further information on illegal activities. Complaints and suspicions of others about their neighbours, and official measures taken to discover information or illicit acts and the forms of resistance to these efforts, further exhibit how people enforced, negotiated or resisted the existing power inequalities. The final chapter examines the language and justifications of spies, ex-Catholics and Catholics working for the English government at home and abroad. The willingness of certain people to exploit their connections with English Catholics gave legitimacy to the state's subordination of these subjects. In turn, the authorities' need for information provided circumstances for those claiming to co-operate with the state to empower themselves and legitimize their own actions.

The matter of 'plausibility', as mentioned in an earlier quotation, is something that needs to be considered before going much farther. Ethan Shagan has defined rumour as 'unofficial or improvised news, whose claim to legitimacy depends more upon the resonance of its content than upon the reliability of its source'.<sup>34</sup> My sources are letters and reports, and it is beyond the limits of this study to seek out verification for what various authors alleged. Instead, my focus will be the context and power, or 'resonance'

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<sup>34</sup> Ethan Shagan, 'Rumours and Popular Politics in the Reign of Henry VIII', in *The Politics of the Excluded, c. 1500-1850*, ed. Tim Harris (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2001), 36.

of the information given. De Vivo, writing about communication in early modern Venice, saw value in suspect information because ‘even the most unjust calumny made to spite an enemy or obtain an advantage must be phrased in credible terms, and thus can be used as evidence of the manner in which some contemporaries thought that, for example, conspiratorial talk *could* be framed’.<sup>35</sup>

The following chapters will draw on sources ranging from visitation records to the confessions of captured priests. The sources for my arguments are largely taken from the correspondence and legal documents in the State Papers Domestic. The process by which I sought out and selected these items began with a consultation of the Calendars for the reigns of Elizabeth and James I. I looked for references to recusancy, levies, informers, and denunciations that suggested Catholic-related material. After photographing the microfilm of the documents, I transcribed what appeared most relevant to the areas I wanted to discuss. My sources from the State Papers Domestic include letters from state and church officials containing instructions, reports of house searches, examinations of suspects; testimonies from witnesses; petitions and statements from those affected by arrests or searches; the legal depositions of parishioners and the local clergy; and more specifically, letters between officials or from petitioners and spies to key members of the Privy Council such as Sir Francis Walsingham, William Cecil, Lord Burghley or his son Robert Cecil, the earl of Salisbury. Information from local parish accounts comes from the Norfolk, Oxfordshire and Catholic record societies. For some opposition perspective, I include material taken from Catholic sources, such as the memoirs of the Jesuits Robert

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<sup>35</sup> De Vivo, *Information and Communication*, 11. De Vivo’s emphasis.

Persons (aka Parsons) and John Gerard, some details from the correspondence of Cardinal Allen and the Jesuit John Garnet and a modern biography of Edmund Campion.

Letters make up the bulk of the material used here though they have their advantages and disadvantages as a source. Letters contain a wealth of detail; they reveal not only descriptions and accounts of people and events, but also indicate what is important to the writer. This appears especially in petitionary letters or letters about official business that become petitions. Letters in published collections are an easily accessible resource for the researcher. However, letters too can be frustrating. Often absent from the correspondence in the State Papers are replies or enough contextual information behind the writing of the letter. Nevertheless, what information senders presented, the wording they used, and to whom they sent it all provide information about communication. I have included in an Appendix three letters whose contents I discussed closely so that the reader may evaluate and experience the full effect of the language used.

The time span of this study is c.1560-1620. I have chosen to study the reigns of both Elizabeth I and James I because the issues of recusancy, missionary priests and plots continued from one reign into the other. The year 1603 is too artificial a break, and this period offers a span of relatively stable years in politics and religion. I have decided to end before James's death, close to the time when the major Catholic topic in England had become the Spanish Match, the proposed marriage between James's heir and a Spanish princess. This in itself determined the limit, for many of the State Papers' references to Catholicism relate to this alliance and I felt that the reactions to the Spanish Match went beyond the goals of this study. This is also an appropriate time span since I discuss



informers and, as M.W. Beresford wrote, 1550-1624 were the years when cases from professional informers, while mostly concerning other infractions, were highest.<sup>36</sup> This does not imply a strict attention to a linear narrative on my part. While of course policies and enforcement fluctuated with events and officials, it is reasonable to look on these as years of political continuity. Thus, I am claiming the privilege to pass back and forth through the decades for the sake of making specific points of analysis.

I should qualify to some degree my representation of the enforcement of anti-Catholic policies during the reigns of Elizabeth and James. Numerous authors have described these efforts as inconsistent. Local officials may not have wanted to enforce rules against their neighbours. In the 1620s, Catholics and those with Catholic relatives still held local offices.<sup>37</sup> Often Parliament wanted harsher rules and more enforcement against recusants or crypto-Catholics, but the Crown did not necessarily accede to these demands. Such high-ranking officials as Burghley might step in and stop a private informer's action against a recusant.<sup>38</sup> As Caroline Hibbard wrote 'Pressure from the central government for enforcement of the penal laws was intermittent, and local initiative was often lacking'.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, I believe more can be said about the relationship of enforcement and local initiative.

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<sup>36</sup> M.W. Beresford, 'The Common Informer, the Penal Statutes and Economic Regulation', *Economic Historical Review* 10 (1957): 221.

<sup>37</sup> Quintrell, 'Recusant Disarming', 212.

<sup>38</sup> Questier, 'Sir Henry Spiller', *Historical Research* 66 (1993): 253.

<sup>39</sup> Caroline M. Hibbard, 'Early Stuart Catholicism: Revisions and Re-Revisions', *Journal of Modern History* 52 (1980): 4.

## **CHAPTER ONE: THE CHURCH, DENUNCIATION, COMMON FAME AND REPORT**

‘Reformation was not simply a matter of passing on with all speed the latest official directive. It entailed sustained pressure and supervision’.<sup>1</sup> So wrote Ralph Houlbrooke in his work on the church courts of England. State officials and bishops and their employees needed to be actively attentive to the implementation of religious reform and conformity in their areas for it to succeed. Despite both conservative resistance and godly enthusiasm, it is not an exaggeration to state that all orders of society had a role in maintaining religious conformity in the parish, whether they were implementing the rules or reporting infractions. This chapter focuses on aspects of the ongoing struggle to enforce conformity to the Elizabethan and Jacobean church against any residual or obdurate Catholic practices occurring in the parish. Parliamentary and ecclesiastical laws demanded certain behaviour from clergy and parishioners and church officeholders, from high-ranking churchmen to the local churchwardens had the responsibility to enforce these regulations.

Communication of information from a number of sources was the primary way in which these officials and those under their jurisdiction participated in the enforcement of religious policies. Those who co-operated with the laws, regulations and system of information collection upheld the state’s position on religion. A reflection of these efforts against condemned practices, however, also appeared in other types of communications. In denunciations made by non-officeholders, what might be legitimating languages were

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<sup>1</sup> Houlbrooke, *Church Courts*, 257.

used in order to justify complaints and the role of the complainant. Moreover, in some cases, the authors employed accusations of this sort because negative connotations of Catholicism could affect the reputations of persons of low or high status. Officeholders might also turn to similar legitimating languages and actions as a way to improve or defend their reputations.

The laws for religion which contributed to and justified the negative implications of Catholicism were those made, or re-introduced, during the Elizabethan years. In her first parliament Queen Elizabeth moved to make the Church of England legally Protestant again. The Act of Supremacy abolished Rome's authority in England and once again pronounced the monarch the head of the English church. The Act of Uniformity directed the way religion was to be practised in England. This included a return to the English Book of Common Prayer, and any minister who spoke against it would be punished. This Act also set out the initial penalty for non-attendance at services at 12 pence for each week missed.<sup>2</sup> While James I's rule in England began with reduced enforcement of recusancy fines, these penalties and other anti-Catholic laws were reconfirmed by the first parliament held in his reign.<sup>3</sup> This disappointed many Catholics, and a few were disappointed to such a degree that the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 ensued. The discovery of the Plot produced even stronger anti-recusancy laws. Non-attendance at church services still brought a fine of £20 per month (as it had since 1581) but could go as high as two-thirds of an offender's property. A person who might attend service could now face a fine for not taking communion.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> 1 Eliz. c. 1, c. 2.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Jac. I. c. 4

<sup>4</sup> 23 Eliz. c. 1; 3 Jac. I c. 4.

Ecclesiastical courts were in part responsible for the discovery and conviction of such offenders. These courts had existed long before the Reformation, but with religious change came new forms of proscribed behaviour. The following discussion illustrates a number of aspects of the ecclesiastical systems for informing: the different church courts and officials, their roles and interactions, regulations and infractions related to nonconformity and community participation and resistance. The information churchmen asked for indicated what were acceptable and unacceptable practices in parishes of their dioceses.

Implementation of these standards, however, was deeply dependent on local co-operation. Events and relations within a locality were important because of local residents' participation in governance. The earlier examples drawn from royal proclamations showed how central authority concerned itself with the words spoken and repeated throughout the realm; in reality the application of the law depended on local enforcement. In his treatment of state and central power, Steve Hindle conceptualized these as very present in the lives of people physically far from the centre:

The structures of authority did not merely extend horizontally across geographical space, they penetrated vertically through the social order...In practice this meant that those individual officers who exercised public responsibilities in parish and township, many of them living in the communities over which they exercised authority, were representatives of the state.<sup>5</sup>

Viewing early modern government from the perspective of local communities, we can see how people from different ranks of society, and in various civil and ecclesiastical roles, responded to the tasks of enforcing conformity or made use of existing laws and

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<sup>5</sup> Steve Hindle, *State and Social Change in Early Modern England, ca. 1550-1640* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 21.

customary suspicions for their own benefit. Braddick emphasized the importance of local power with regards to local religion: 'At every stage in the propagation of official religion and the discipline of the laity, significant lay influence gave force to local standards of religious behaviour'.<sup>6</sup> The examples in this chapter from letters and records are indicative of the role of local standards; what information was communicated to authorities about non-conforming practices in the parish depended on the co-operation or obfuscation of members of the parish. The power of information lay in the consequences of its reception, though authorities had to take into consideration the limits of communication in the early modern period.

There were different levels of ecclesiastical courts. The highest were the provincial courts of Canterbury and York. Next came the consistory courts under the bishop, then the more local archdeaconry courts, ranging from one to several per diocese. Some dioceses had other judicial bodies, such as an audience court or one headed by commissaries. Alongside these traditional courts were the more recently established royal courts of the High Commissioners for Causes Ecclesiastical, which had the authority to exact charges or use the threat of prison to make someone come to court and could summon suspects who moved across dioceses.<sup>7</sup> The officials of the archdeaconry courts made two visits every year to receive presentments and hear cases.<sup>8</sup>

Each parish had churchwardens, and courts had apparitors. Apparitors communicated with different levels of society. They worked for the bishops and through the churchwardens. Archdeaonries had apparitors for submitting information to the court about illicit actions and then delivering summons to the offenders as well as bringing

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<sup>6</sup> Braddick, *State Formation*, 301.

<sup>7</sup> Ingram, *Courts, Sex and Marriage*, 35-39; Marchant, *Church under the Law*, 33.

<sup>8</sup> E.R. Brinkworth, ed., *The Archdeacon's Court: Liber Actorum 1584* (Oxford: ORS, 1942), I: xi.

information from authorities to local parishes. Ingram stated that ‘their work, which involved constant footslogging and sometimes exposed them to odium and abuse, was very arduous’.<sup>9</sup> John Whitgift, an archbishop of Canterbury, made changes to try to stop people from being charged based on an apparitor’s information instead of through presentments from churchwardens.<sup>10</sup> Around the same time, Bishop Richard Bancroft did the same in the diocese of London, in order to curb apparitors’ attempts to increase court activity.<sup>11</sup> Although apparitors were a part of the machinery of the church courts, there also appears to be wariness about having them. Among Bishop Richard Vaughan’s articles from his 1605 London visitation are questions asking how many apparitors has each ‘judge ecclesiastical. And wherein, in what manner is the country overburthened by the said apparitors? And whether doth any of the said apparitors cause any parties to appear in the said courts without first a presentment and citation from the judge of the court’. This is less serious, however, than the first article in this section on ecclesiastical officers, which asks about bribes taken ‘for suppressing or concealing of excommunication or other ecclesiastical censure of, or against any recusant’.<sup>12</sup>

The authors of presentments, the churchwardens, were members of the parish; generally two were chosen to serve for the year. Their duties were to oversee church expenses, and many churchwardens’ accounts detail these minutiae: costs for burials, new bell ropes, candles, repairs, etc. At the end of their term they settled their accounts with the parish. Their other responsibility was the presentment of answers to the diocesan

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<sup>9</sup> Ingram, *Courts, Sex and Marriage*, 66.

<sup>10</sup> Marchant, *Church under the Law*, 180.

<sup>11</sup> R.B. Outhwaite, *The Rise and Fall of the English Ecclesiastical Courts, 1500-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 66.

<sup>12</sup> Bishop Vaughan, ‘Bishop Richard Vaughan’s Articles for London Diocese, 1605’, in *Visitation Articles and Injunctions of the Early Stuart Church*, ed. Kenneth Fincham (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1994), I: 32.

articles. These enquired into the conduct of the people of the parish, from clergy to lay persons. Although there was no national standard for diocesan articles, bishops usually based theirs on the Royal Articles and Injunctions set out after Elizabeth's accession and on additional questions raised during her reign.<sup>13</sup> Contained in the Royal Articles of 1559 was the question 'whether [clergy] declare to their parishioners anything to the extolling or setting forth of vain and superstitious religion, pilgrimages, relics, or images or lighting of candles, kissing, kneeling, or decking of the same images'.<sup>14</sup> Seven years later Archbishop Parker's Advertisements instructed that 'if any preacher or parson, vicar or curate, so licensed shall fortune to preach any matter tending to dissention, or to the derogation of the religion and doctrine received, that the hearers denounce the same to the Ordinaries, or the next bishop of the same place'.<sup>15</sup> While this applied as much—if not more, given official efforts in the 1560s onward—to Protestant nonconformity, its application to expressions of conservative religion too was evident.

Questions about Catholicism in the parish continued throughout the reigns of Elizabeth and James. Allegations like those mentioned above still had power because of suspicions about the numbers of people who failed to conform to the official church. In 1584, a little more than a quarter-century after Elizabeth's accession to the throne, a man at an archdeacon's court had to deny 'that he knoweth of any vestments, copes, chalices, crucifixes or such like kept in the parish of Souldren [in Oxfordshire] by any man there or

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<sup>13</sup> J.F. Williams, ed., *Diocese of Norwich: Bishop Redman's Visitation 1597. Presentments in the Archdeaconries of Norwich, Norfolk and Suffolk* (Norwich: NRS, 1946), 9; *The Archdeacon's Court*, II: v.

<sup>14</sup> 'The Royal Articles of Queen Elizabeth 1559', *Visitation Articles and Injunctions of the Period of the Reformation vol. III 1559-1575*, ed. Walter Howard Frere (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1910), 101.

<sup>15</sup> 'Archbishop Parker's Advertisements', in *Articles and Injunctions*, 173.

elsewhere'.<sup>16</sup> The same year a bell-ringer named Clement from Combe, Oxfordshire, answered his presentment for ringing the bells on All Hallows' day with the explanation that this happened after service and because there was a wedding that day 'and not in any superstition' or 'contempt of the Queen's laws'.<sup>17</sup> Archbishop Bancroft's articles for his 1605 archiepiscopal visitation include several questions about recusants and the parish minister's dealings with them: how many do not attend service or take communion and what is their profession? Does anyone have guests who do not go to church or take communion? Do the popish recusants try to persuade others away from the established religion and only consort with 'such as concur with them in opinion of religion'? Do any recusant papists keep a schoolmaster who also does not attend church or take communion? One article that stands out as addressing a new worry for religious authorities is number 65. It enquires about the duration of recusant behaviour, 'Whether any of long time, or only since his majesties reign?'.<sup>18</sup> The increase in non-attendance following James' accession and the reduction of enforcement in 1603 had been noted and now became a part of the recording of parish information.<sup>19</sup>

The church also monitored their clergy's conformity in belief and practice to the established religion. Visitations provided a means of gathering such information as reflected, for example, in Bishop Bancroft's visitation question 'Whether is your parson, vicar or curate, to frequent or to be over-conversant with, or a favorer of recusants,

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<sup>16</sup> Brinkworth, *The Archdeacon's Court*, II: 247.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, I: 155.

<sup>18</sup> Archbishop Richard Bancroft 'Articles for His Metropolitan Visitation of Ten Diocese, 1605', in *Visitation Articles*, 11-12.

<sup>19</sup> Questier, *Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England: Politics, Aristocratic Patronage and Religion, c. 1550-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 276.



whereby he is suspected not to be sincere in religion'.<sup>20</sup> People responded to the type of official observance required of churchwardens and other parishioners. The directions of these questions fostered conceptions of which types of allegations would derive the right effect.

Presentments from the 1597 visitation of the diocese of Norwich provide a wide spectrum of ecclesiastical concerns. The first information for any parish was any shortcomings of its clergy, whether designated rectors, curates, vicars, ministers or preachers. These could include holding multiple benefices, not wearing the surplice, or insufficient catechising of youth. The churchwardens themselves were at fault if the church buildings were found in a poor state. They were responsible for repairing the church fabric and furnishing, and for the necessary supplies for a parish church. After this the visitation records describe a myriad of offences, such as not attending church or not taking communion, working on holy days, practising medicine without a licence, swearing, bigamy, couples living apart, incontinency (listed quite often) and witchcraft (rarely mentioned). Many of these presentments went unanswered by those accused, leading to their sentence of excommunication. Those who answered often had their charges dismissed, or dismissed after a correction of the problem or postponed. There was no sentence given for the already deceased Thomas Thompson who 'did one Sunday morning in harvest time last mow barley', although his offence was still presented.<sup>21</sup> Death was only partially an escape from justice. Some omissions or offences by the clergy would be clear to those attending, and, as we will see, people were willing to speak out against that which they disapproved. For the churchwardens, their faults also

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<sup>20</sup> Bancroft, 'Articles', 9.

<sup>21</sup> *Bishop Redman's Visitation*, 153.

could be obvious. If the parish did not have a 'table of the degrees prohibited in marriage' to show, it meant that the churchwardens had not acquired one. Meanwhile, the state of the church and churchyard were there for all to see.

From where and from whom else did the information for the presentments come? Fundamental to the process of information gathering in a parish was voluntary information from members of the community. People in certain positions might take an interest in certain behaviour. Midwives were supposed to convince a woman to identify the father of her child if she was unmarried and also report when a woman gave birth too soon after marriage.<sup>22</sup> In some presentments, gossip was the source. Godfrey Andrew, from the parish of St. Stephen's, Norwich, 'hath as common fame goeth two wives living'.<sup>23</sup> Another man from St. Margaret's in King's Lynn was excommunicated after failing to answer the charge 'for keeping a certain woman as his wife which is not his wife by common report'.<sup>24</sup> Most intriguing are the charges against the wife of John Mosse, who was 'vehemently suspected for a witch according to the common fame and report', and against John Mosse himself, that 'he liveth not with his wife nor have done by the space of half a year. He is suspected to have married an other woman, as the common fame and report goeth, and as his wife have affirmed'.<sup>25</sup>

The use of hearsay, or the lack thereof, is also evident in records of recusancy. The 1595 presentments for the Archdeaconry of Nottingham reveal the dependency on, and limitations of, hearsay. Regarding some of the recusants cited, the churchwardens were unable to say whether they had been indicted or penalised by the law for recusancy,

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<sup>22</sup> Outhwaite, *Rise and Fall*, 8.

<sup>23</sup> His defence was that he was a widower when he married the second woman. *Bishop Redman's Visitation*, 36.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

or to list the value of their assets. In a few cases, those presenting could not supply their subjects' full names. Churchwardens in Pocklington in York, who knew the name of the employer, presented the servant Marie 'whose surname they cannot learn although they have enquired of her and others'.<sup>26</sup> One William Harwell was absent from church services for nearly a year before returning, 'but whether he be a popish recusant or not the minister and churchwardens there say they cannot depose'.<sup>27</sup> Neighbourhood information had its limits then in that people would or could not supply necessary details.

The sound of neighbourhood gossip rings out in the presentment of George Collingwood of Newburne in the Deanery of Newcastle, who is 'supposed to be married to a notorious recusant by some seminary'.<sup>28</sup> It also resonates outside the house of George Skelton, of the parish of Wetheral in Cumberland, wondering where his children had been baptised, since it was not done in the local church. In Skelton's case 'the presenters hear of the said George hath a corner about his house wherein he keepeth it both those popish priests that baptize children and all other recusants that resort to his house'.<sup>29</sup> Up in Lancashire, the 1604 presentment for Farnworth Chapel offered several damaging reports on John Lynaker of Widnes. He was

vehemently suspected to have masses in his house many times since her majesty's death, especially upon the Purification of St. Marie last past and is further reported to have had as many wax candles that day burned in his house as a man would carry and also is reported to have had the same day the number of an hundredth men and women reported to his house contrary to his Majesty's good and Godly laws.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Clare Talbot, ed. *Miscellanea. Recusant Records* (London: CRS, 1961), 43-44.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

If John Lynaker really did have a hundred people, or at least a large number, at his house to celebrate the Purification, it is no wonder officials got to hear of it.

Information could come from a variety of sources; whether it was forthcoming, complete, or reliable was another matter. Martin Ingram mentioned that in some places churchwardens mostly heard about and thus reported the infractions of repeaters. Different areas had different standards for how often a person had to attend service and also who was expected to go to church.<sup>31</sup> Local and lay influence shaped how far enforcement of religious policies would affect their non-conforming neighbours. Whether or not information made its way from neighbours to the courts depended on the choices of those whose co-operation was necessary to the implementation of the regulations.

Local connections mattered when it came to the use of information. This applied to the suppression of offences, whether corrupt or not, by churchwardens and apparitors, and to sympathetic bishops. It was generally a requirement of clergy that they try to persuade recusants back into the church. Archbishop Bancroft asked in his articles from 1605 ‘whether your minister being a preacher doth, endeavour and labour diligently, to reclaim the popish recusants, in his parish from their errors’.<sup>32</sup> John Parkhurst, bishop of Norwich, aware of the recusancy of notables in his diocese, made his own appeal, reflecting the spirit of Bancroft’s later regulation. In 1571 he wrote to Thomas Townsend of Braken Ashe after he had ‘been often times advertised that you and my Lady your wife do absent your selves from church and hearing divine service and the receiving of the Sacraments’. He entreated them to conform and indicated that he would have to inform

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<sup>31</sup> Ingram, *Courts, Sex and Marriage*, 106-107.

<sup>32</sup> Bancroft, ‘Articles’, 9.

the queen if they did not.<sup>33</sup> The bishop wrote two years later to another gentleman, William Plator, about his recusancy:

I hear of you that I am right sorry to hear of, that since the death of your good father...you refuse to resort to the church to hear God's Word and to receive the Sacrament...And although I must justly call you and proceed against you herein, or otherwise cause you to appear before the high commissioners, yet have I thought good to spare you upon hope of amendment. These are therefore friendly to exhort and require you, and nevertheless by authority as your ordinary to charge you, that you frame and prepare your self to the receiving of the communion, and that between this and midsummer now next coming[.]<sup>34</sup>

The bishop's pastoral approach to local recusancy is but one indication of the problems within the system. Houlbrooke described Parkhurst as 'a poor administrator and judge of men, over-dependent on officials who exploited his lenity and naivety, whose incompetence earned him stinging rebukes'.<sup>35</sup> He also disliked punishing recusants, although religiously he was more supportive of those practising a more reformed style of religion.<sup>36</sup> The bishop, however, still insisted on conformity to the religious settlement and threatened, in accordance with his duties, to take official measures against offenders for recusancy.

The discussion above presented examples of how church officials and parishioners responded to their duties to supply information on religious infractions. Within these records of hearsay, presentments, court documents and personal pleas were the ways in which locals engaged with the state over religious matters. Church officials and those reporting to them had the authority of the church and state behind them, but not

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<sup>33</sup> Bishop Parkhurst to Thomas Townsend, 12 February 1571, *The Letter Book of John Parkhurst, Bishop of Norwich, Compiled During the Years 1571-5*, ed. R.A. Houlbrooke (Norwich: NRS, 1975), 119.

<sup>34</sup> Bishop Parkhurst to William Plator, 23 May 1573, *Letter Book of John Parkhurst*, 188.

<sup>35</sup> Houlbrooke, *Church Courts*, 23.

<sup>36</sup> *Letter Book of John Parkhurst*, 44, 48.

everyone participated. The communication of information was essential to how local influence affected the application of government and ecclesiastical policies.

The ecclesiastical system was not the only route by which information on suspect religious habits in the parish reached authority. Denunciations of suspected popery appear in the State Papers and elsewhere which seem also to rely on the legitimation provided by religious policies to articulate and justify the complaints made. As James C. Scott stated, 'Neither gossip nor character assassination, for example, makes much sense unless there are shared standards of what is deviant, unworthy, impolite'.<sup>37</sup> Others then made use of the existence of suspicions of Catholicism and popery within the church for their own motives. Allegations of popery sometimes developed from local rivalries and disputes over religious doctrine and practice. A reputation for being a 'papist' was seen as an impediment to office-holding and so might be alleged to attack a person's suitability for a position of authority. People made denunciations of nonconformity to damage an opponent's reputation and cast doubts upon their suitability for office. Though motives are not always obvious, in the cases of complaints against clergy, it is possible this was a way to steer the local practice of religion in either a more traditional or more reformed direction by citing or exaggerating existing practices as being improper. While of course there were denunciations truly based on concerns over papistry, I believe that the situations I have highlighted here raise the opportunity for other interpretations of motivation.

A 1570 petition to the Privy Council from persons in Cirencester, Gloucestershire complained that a man named Horton gave a sermon that disparaged the Bible as 'false

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<sup>37</sup> Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), xvii.

and full of errors, as untruly translated and therefore not mete amongst the common people to be read or taught'.<sup>38</sup> The parson at Hangleton in Sussex, Henry Shales, faced accusations made in 1583 by another preacher that he had gone to a Catholic seminary, had been involved with Masses said in England, had spoken in favour of the doctrine of justification by good works and on the existence of purgatory and had preached on the necessity of reading the church fathers in order to understand scripture.<sup>39</sup> For each accusation against Shales there were two to six other ministers and preachers who had heard the two offending sermons and were willing to testify on oath in support of the allegations and stated that other hearers would testify also.<sup>40</sup> In his response, Shales admitted to a Catholic past, for which he had been pardoned, but insisted that he was never a priest. Shales maintained that he now preached against papistry and that the other allegations were either false or based on misunderstood meaning.<sup>41</sup>

One case from 1572 shows how laws intended for Catholics might also affect Protestants when seized on by opponents. Two Norfolk gentlemen wrote to the bishop of Norwich protesting against a conspiracy to deprive a chaplain of a benefice. The chaplain's enemies had alleged that he did not read 'certain articles of religion', but in the letter to the bishop the gentlemen, one being the patron of the cleric, argued that 'it may appear by the preamble of the statute that the purvey [purview] of the said statute was made for such as were suspected of papistry, of which infection my said chaplain is most

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<sup>38</sup> June 1570, SP 12/71/30. Complaints are also made against a few local officeholders for mistreating these writers.

<sup>39</sup> Articles against Henry Shales, 8 March 1583, SP 12/159/14.

<sup>40</sup> Testimony of Jackson's witnesses, possibly 8 March 1583, SP 12/159/15.

<sup>41</sup> Henry Shales' answers to the articles, April 18 1583, SP 12/160/12.

clear as it is well known'<sup>42</sup> The most likely statute to which they referred is the 1571 'Act to reform certain Disorders touching Ministers of the church' because it addresses the 39 Articles of religion. However, there is no explicit mention or allusion to papists in the preamble, other than the inclusion of the full title of the 1562 Articles which includes the phrase 'avoiding of the diversities of opinions and for the establishing of consent touching the true religion'.<sup>43</sup> If this is indeed the statute, it is telling that the gentlemen interpreted it in such a way. It appears that the authors had no dispute with laws against papists, except when used maliciously against a Protestant.

Another case of denunciation involved the rector of the parish of Heydon in Essex, William Sheppard, whose use of the term 'Jesuit' in a 1581 sermon led to his denunciation for supposedly praising the Jesuits. The three complainants first wrote to the Privy Council which after some months acceded to the request for an investigation of Sheppard. The minister not only lost his privilege to preach, but he also had to recompense the three men who testified against him and hire another cleric to come to the parish and give a sermon condemning him.<sup>44</sup> In Mark Byford's explanation of the events, part of the cause of dissension between Sheppard and his accusers was the traditionalism and mere conformism of Sheppard's religion in conflict with the more Protestant

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<sup>42</sup>They also claimed that the chaplain did say the articles of religion. Francis Jermye and Thomas Felton to Bishop John Parkhurst, 11 February 1572, *Letter Book of John Parkhurst*, 162.

<sup>43</sup> 13 Eliz. c. 12.

<sup>44</sup> 'During his preaching he drew a simple analogy between *Christiani a Christe* and *Jesuite a Jesu*, or more fully *a Christo dicimus Christiani sic in celesti gloria ab ipso Jesu dicemus Jesuite*. But the name Jesuits got the rector into 'great trouble', for he added, 'Let us study to be true Christians, true Jesuits'.' F.G. Emmison, *Elizabethan Life: Disorder* (Chelmsford: Essex Record Office publications, 1970), 48-49; M.S. Byford, 'The Price of Protestantism: Assessing the Impact of Religious Change on Elizabethan Essex: The Cases of Heydon and Colchester, 1558-1594' (D.Phil., Oxford, 1988), 55-60.



preferences of men who, originally from other parishes, did not owe their religious conceptions to Sheppard's long tenure in Heydon.<sup>45</sup>

Around the same time as Sheppard's trouble, Nicholas Robinson, bishop of Bangor, too was denounced for popery. His letters on this matter to Sir Francis Walsingham and the earl of Leicester are full of pleading as he expressed in detail his loyal and rigorous actions in his church career. Robinson's letter to Walsingham told how he had heard from Leicester 'that some evil willers had freely informed the Lords of her majesty's most honourable privy council, that I was a papist or liking of that way'. He called this a 'heinous accusation' and stated that his reason for writing was so Walsingham could judge whether Robinson 'were such a dissembling hypocrite, as is alleged, or the informers were malicious accusers'. Against the accusations of popery, he described all the ways he combated 'that chaos of false religion'.<sup>46</sup> Whoever they were who sought to harm the bishop of Bangor, their allegation of popery was taken seriously enough that Robinson was made aware of it. The situation must have been serious enough to the bishop that he replied with such vehement language. In his response Robinson too appealed to standards set by the religious reformation in order to make his case.

Fulfilling responsibilities against recusants might be an opportunity for a person to appear in a more favourable light. In a 1577 letter to the Privy Council that supplied reports of local recusants in his archdiocese, Archbishop Grindal included an appeal to the Privy Council and especially to Leicester, the queen's favourite, asking them to

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<sup>45</sup> Byford, 'Price of Protestantism', 62-65.

<sup>46</sup> See the complete letter in the Appendix for the language of Robinson's response to the charge of popery. Nicholas Robinson, bishop of Bangor, to Sir Francis Walsingham, 28 May 1581, SP 12/153/66. Also Bangor to Leicester, 28 May 1581, SP 12/153/67.

intercede for him with the queen. Grindal was out of favour with Elizabeth because of his support for prophesyings and refusal to limit preaching. At the time of writing, he had already spent a short time sequestered at Lambeth, and in the month after this letter he was called to attend the Star Chamber where he might have been removed as archbishop.<sup>47</sup> Given the situation, it is not surprising that he asked for their help: 'I am bold further humbly to beseech your good Lordships to be a means for me to her Majesty to receive me again into her gracious favour after so long restraint of liberty joined with great grief of mind & decay of bodily health'.<sup>48</sup> It is striking that this piece of official correspondence, ostensibly over parish matters in his archdiocese initially displaying his attention to duty—the duty here being the efforts against recusants—was used as proof of his worthiness as an archbishop of the church. The defensive letters from both Archbishop Robinson and Bishop Grindal attest to Braddick's remark that 'Officeholders who claimed to be defenders of the Protestant religions...had to sustain their credibility by acting in ways which appeared to do that.'<sup>49</sup> In these cases, however, they were trying to increase their credibility by appealing to examples of their enforcement of laws against recusancy and other Catholic practices.

Parliament might pass laws and councillors and archbishops might enact new policies, but their implementation depended on the officers of state and the members of a community. Methods of transmitting information remained a problem and officials high and low might temper their response depending on their convictions or thoroughness.

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<sup>47</sup> Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Later Reformation in England 1547-1603* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), 41-43; Patrick Collinson, 'Grindal, Edmund (1516x20-1583)', *ODNB*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11644>, accessed 30 June 2008].

<sup>48</sup> Archbishop Grindal to the Privy Council, 24 October 1577, SP 12/117/9.

<sup>49</sup> Braddick, *State Formation*, 10.

Rumour and gossip still surfaced and officials so inclined carried out enforcement against religious offences within an area. Some caution was taken with regards to this dependency on information. Officials desired information to carry out their responsibilities but needed it to be reliable. The Privy Council wrote to Archbishop Parker in 1569 requesting ‘that you do circumspectly, and as quietly as you may (with [out any] manner of proceeding likely to heed public offence), enquire or [cause to be] enquired by such as are faithful officers and not dissemblars’, who has not been attending their parish church, or prayers, or taking the sacrament and for how long.<sup>50</sup> In these efforts to gain knowledge of religious practice, not just any information would do. When Archbishop Parker wrote to Bishop Parkhurst in November 1572 to encourage him to investigate ‘such unordered persons papistically set, not coming to prayers according to the laws, nor bearing good will unto the religion received’, he stated that this information ‘must not be proved by surmises but by their deeds, words, or letters’.<sup>51</sup>

The previous examples involved denunciations of neighbours, clergy or competitors within the laws and suspicions of the state and church. People found in these laws a way to privilege their religious preferences or a way to empower themselves in their disputes. The power of information, especially information about neighbours’ religious practices, was a visible part of life in Reformation England. Houlbrooke concluded: ‘In their efforts to enforce the new settlement, the early Elizabethan bishops could count on the whole-hearted support of no more than a minority’.<sup>52</sup> In a way, those

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<sup>50</sup> Lords of the Council to Archbishop Parker, 6 November 1569, *Correspondence of Matthew Parker, D.D., archbishop of Canterbury, comprising letters written by and to him, from AD 1535 to his death, AD 1575* ed. John Bruce and Thomas Thomson Perowne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press for the Parker Society, 1853), 356.

<sup>51</sup> Archbishop Parker to Bishop Parkhurst, 2 November 1572, *Letter Book of John Parkhurst*, 147.

<sup>52</sup> Houlbrooke, *Church Courts*, 257.

who did *not* inform had their own influence on the effect of religious policies; by not reporting or penalizing religious nonconformity they allowed its continued existence. Nevertheless, the Elizabethan religious settlement became the predominant practice of the realm and the church courts continued to prosecute those brought to its notice for their offences. The need for local denunciation of alleged deviation from ecclesiastical expectations granted people opportunities to give a voice to their beliefs and complaints, as long as they corresponded (in earnest or just using the right language) to the wishes of the church and state.

## **CHAPTER TWO: STATE INFORMATION, SITES, SOURCES AND TACTICS**

During the reigns of Elizabeth and James, an assortment of secular officers worked to detect religious subversives and law-breakers in their areas. Royal officials, working with their own sets of regulations and directions, collected information on Catholic recusants and sympathizers for a multitude of reasons, from the (relatively) benign purpose of levying from recusants a higher quota of horses and money, or seizing their armour and weapons at politically tense times, to searching their houses if suspicions or evidence indicated that illicit items or persons might be there. Information gathered by different levels of government flowed in diverse directions depending on the relevance for an official.

There was no strict delineation between civil and ecclesiastical spheres when it came to the flow and usage of information, though that is how I have divided it here. This is not only for convenience, but also because of the different regulations and offices involved. In the previous chapter I argued that the example set by informing within the ecclesiastical system justified for others similar actions in their personal disputes. I also demonstrated the role that communication of information played in the implementation of religious policies as well as some of the features of a system dependant on information. This chapter now examines the means of discovering information and illegal conduct within the civil sphere. Here too I focus on the co-operation of locals and interested officials. In the application of laws in the secular system, as in those of the ecclesiastical, there were a range of participants and motivations. Suspicions or evidence of ‘papist’

behaviour were included in allegations against opponents, attesting to the perception of the power of legitimating languages. The admission and collection of information and the carrying out of certain duties reinforced the legal realities of the subordination of Catholicism and Catholic practices in England. Officials, neighbours and even some Catholic prisoners participated in the entrenchment of this dynamic whether for duty, advantage or both. Whereas the earlier chapter concentrated primarily on the language of officeholders and informants in the ecclesiastical system, this chapter will include examples of the reactions of the targets of state sanctioned efforts against religious and political deviancy. This, together with the language and actions of those with the authority of the state behind them, reveal how people might negotiate the obstacles presented by power inequalities within law and society.

One illustrative example concerns the justice of the peace Thomas Tasburgh from Buckinghamshire. According to Tasburgh, he was a victim of slanderous tales of Catholic practices levelled in response to an altercation he had with one of his neighbours. A set of interrogatories which do not explain who administered them or for what reason but covered a range of events, included questions about his behaviour to his accusing neighbours, the Stiches, his search of Joan Handforde's house, his alleged marriage by a priest and an alleged gift of a gold cross said to contain wood from the True Cross. Tasburgh answered that he had threatened to sue the Stiches for slanderous accusations of popery, for which Mr Stiche apologised and blamed his wife. Mrs Stiche made these comments after Tasburgh, in his office as justice of the peace, had come to her house to carry out orders investigating innkeepers and victuallers. They fell into heated words and she began to spread stories about his popery. He claimed his reason for searching Joan

Handforde's house was that one of his manservants was often there and Tasburgh had heard that he was bringing Handforde items stolen from Tasburgh's kitchen. Tasburgh further cited the Stiches' son-in-law, a minister, and Joan Handforde for fomenting these accusations.<sup>1</sup> In Tasburgh's version of events, Mrs Stiche's revenge on the J.P. took the form of making allegations of papist practices which were cause enough for Tasburgh to threaten a suit for slander.

Seekers of local offices were also vulnerable to religious allegations that put their suitability in doubt. In stating why a certain candidate, Paul Awbrey, should not be elected sheriff for Brecknock in Wales, William Solers listed Awbrey's practice of baptising his children at home instead of at church prior to even the allegations of his involvement in murders along with his kin and servants.<sup>2</sup> In 1590, John Dannyell wrote to the Privy Council that Richard Topcliffe, a man known for his role in examining and sometimes torturing Catholic suspects for the government, had slandered him as a papist with the intent to 'hinder his preferment'.<sup>3</sup> These examples reflect the availability of religious denunciation as a means of attacking rivals. Social inequality was clear in the Tasburgh incident because the Tiches tried to use the negative connotations of Catholicism against a person more powerful than them. In the other two situations there is not enough detail to know the circumstances of those named, but it seems that others used the negative connotations of Catholicism to project an inferior status on their competition.

As non-attendance at church was made an offence with penalties set out in parliamentary acts, so too were other activities related to Catholics and their religion. The

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<sup>1</sup> March 1595, SP 12/251/51, 12/251/52.

<sup>2</sup> William Solers' exceptions against John Awbrey, possibly 1583, SP 12/165/31.

<sup>3</sup> John Danyell to the Privy Council, possibly 1590, SP 12/235/28.

next parliamentary statute that affected Catholics in the realm came after both the Northern Rebellion and the papal Bull excommunicating the queen. In 1571 importing papal Bulls became illegal, as did the import or receiving of ‘Agnus Dei, or any crosses, pictures, beads or such like vain and superstitious things from the Bishop of Rome, or from any person or persons authorized or claiming authority by or from the said Bishop of Rome to consecrate or hallow the same’.<sup>4</sup>

Once the Mass was abolished and replaced by a new service, a number of English Catholics went into exile on the continent. Among them was the Oxford academic William Allen who, with other university exiles, set up the English College at Douai in 1568. The college served for the education of English Catholics and as a seminary for the training of priests to travel to England to maintain and serve the Catholic presence there. Further English colleges were established in Rome, Spain and Portugal. The school at Douai relocated to Rheims for 15 years.

English authorities responded to the existence of these schools and their students’ missionary efforts in England with several statutes meant to restrict their activities. One law prohibited parents from sending their children abroad without permission. Another, hoping to reduce the financial support for these establishments, made it illegal to send money overseas without permission. Royal proclamations demanded the return of students while Parliament enacted laws which made it treason for a person ordained overseas to return to England, and to ‘withdraw’ a person ‘from the religion now by her Highness’s authority established within her Highness’ dominions, to the romish religion’. It was under such a law, for the act of reconciling persons to Catholicism that the Jesuit

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<sup>4</sup> 13 Eliz. c. 2.



missionary Edmund Campion was to have been charged, although the indictment which led to his execution was for conspiring to start a rebellion and commit regicide.<sup>5</sup>

The local state offices in part responsible for discovering violations of these laws included bailiffs, sheriffs, J.P.s, commissioners of the peace and lord lieutenants. Towns and cities also had aldermen and mayors. The administration of searches, levies and examinations might fall to them, as well as to bishops or pursuivants (a type of royal messenger or person bearing a warrant). Their sources of information ranged from local informants to the Privy Council. In various ways the information used in local delations, examinations and torture of prisoners, and house searches was interconnected. Names originally recorded for indictments for recusancy might be later sent to officials responsible for removing worrisome Catholics from their homes in 1588.<sup>6</sup> Central to the execution of political and legal responsibilities was the consent of officials in carrying out their duties and the willingness of others to supply information.

One source of information for local authorities was official lists, but these could be unhelpful or incorrect. In 1585 the sheriff of Northampton informed Sir Francis Walsingham that he had difficulty locating several on his list of recusants.<sup>7</sup> In other cases, those named on a list as recusants may not have been so. For example, Sir Fulke Greville and Sir Thomas Lucy of Warwick responded to their list with the information that Francis Smythe 'is well known to us to be no recusant but one that in such times as he doth be in Warwickshire doth usually go to the church as a good and dutiful subject but his abode is most in Leicestershire where he is in the commission of the peace and as we here doth

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<sup>5</sup> Michael A. R. Graves, 'Campion, Edmund [St Edmund Campion] (1540–1581)', *ODNB*; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4539>, accessed 4 Sept 2008].

<sup>6</sup> McGurk, 'Lieutenancy and Catholic Recusants', 159.

<sup>7</sup> Eusebie Isham to Sir Francis Walsingham, 23 October 1585, SP 12/183/46.

likewise go to the church there'.<sup>8</sup> These men with their local knowledge tried to intervene for Smythe, to save him from further attentions reserved for recusants. Sometimes, however, the laws stymied the efforts of authorities. The justices of Kent wrote to the Privy Council in 1577 with a list of recusants, but of the value of their lands they could not be sure: 'Of our selves without inquisition we do not perfectly know them and by this Letter authority have we none to make a lawful inquisition of them. And therefore must we guess at them'.<sup>9</sup>

Sometimes even arrested Catholics provided crucial information. In 1583, the mayor and aldermen of Norwich wrote to the Privy Council to report on the arrest of persons suspected of having attended Masses. What information these authorities gleaned from the examinations of these prisoners about others from Norfolk who had attended the Masses, they passed on to the justices of the peace in that county, who 'will also signify to your honour their proceedings therein'. The letter itself quickly established a conventional tone on the subject of Catholics by first describing how they had received news about 'evil disposed persons' assembling for Mass nearby. The officials then described the offences committed by others revealed in the examinations: 'diverse persons... have heard the same Masses and some of them have been shriven and received hallowed beads (as they term them) with charge to wear them about them and to absent themselves from the Church of England'. After presenting these details, the writers asked for mercy on behalf of some of their suspects:

for certain of them which we have committed (by whose examinations the other offenders were revealed and disclosed) we have promised to be

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<sup>8</sup> Sir Fowlke Grevyle and Sir Thomas Lucy to the Privy Council, 12 April 1586, SP 12/188/14.

<sup>9</sup> It is also worth noting that the names of recusants supplied were divided into the categories 'by record' and 'by public fame'. Sir Thomas Scott, Thomas Watton and Archdeacon Redmon to the Privy Council, 21 October 1577, SP 12/117/5.

humble suitors to your Lordships for favour and mercy they being poor persons of mean accompt and condition and seem to be penitent.<sup>10</sup>

This generous behaviour towards some of the prisoners may appear as a contrast from their earlier 'evil' characterization. Although the mayor and aldermen do not say what induced the prisoners to confess and it is unclear whether the writers or the prisoners were the original source of this plea based on inferior standing, these Catholics gained advantages by giving information, and might possibly benefit from rhetoric based on their circumstances. This served to reinforce the legal and social disparity between these officials and their Catholic prisoners while obtaining further information for additional arrests.

The examination of suspected or arrested persons was a way of deriving information on illegal activity, but this depended on how willing the examinee was to confess. Clergy and laymen faced questions about their religious and political allegiances, which they might answer or try to avoid answering. Under questioning by Solicitor-General Sir Edward Coke and another official, the yeoman John Bolt admitted how long he had been away from church and stopped taking communion, but would not say, though under oath, who reconciled him to Roman Catholicism and he refused to answer the questions regarding a Spanish or papal invasion of England.<sup>11</sup> From a set of earlier interrogatories with unnamed examiners, the questions asked of the priest Lawrence Vaux and a man described only by the name Tichebourne, included: where they have been, for what reason, with whom, what religious articles they brought back, for whom or what are they intended, why have they come back, what news, instructions,

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<sup>10</sup> Thomas Gleane, Robert Sucklyng et al. to Privy Council, 16 January 1583, SP 12/167/30.

<sup>11</sup> Examination of John Bolt, 21 March 1594, SP 12/248/38, 12/248/39.

or items have they carried between persons, and what was their secret purpose in England.<sup>12</sup> The record for another recusant examined supplied similar information: with whom he had been staying and that he had not carried messages or items between those ‘suspected in religion’.<sup>13</sup>

Such examinations indicate the government’s interest in knowing where its religious non-conformists were, who rendered assistance to priests and recusants and how information and illicit articles travelled. The authorities asked a mix of questions on religious and treasonous activities which reinforced the suspect nature of Catholicism and the legally compromised position of those accused of involvement. Bishop Whitgift sent to Walsingham the information drawn from questioning two aged priests seized in Worcestershire. One priest, John Felton, admitted where he had lived and with whom, a few of the places where he had said Mass and the names of some of those present, whether he had reconciled anyone to Catholicism—an activity recently made treason<sup>14</sup> — and who had given him the authority to do so. He answered ‘he cannot tell’ to inquiries for further names other than those already named and for other places where he had celebrated Masses. Nor would he say ‘who is the head of that catholic church’, answering again that ‘he cannot tell’. The other priest excused his recusancy on the grounds of infirmity, not all surprising for an eighty-two-year-old. He reported that he had not said Mass since its ban but had shriven sick people.<sup>15</sup>

Refusal to answer, or infamously, the use of equivocation or mental reservation was a tactic available to those under questioning, although it was a controversial one. A

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<sup>12</sup> SP 12/165/18.

<sup>13</sup> SP 12/206/77.

<sup>14</sup> 23 Eliz. c. 1.

<sup>15</sup> The questioning is extensive and the full report appears in the Appendix. Bishop Whitgift to Sir Francis Walsingham, 24 December 1582, SP 12/156/29.

person could answer less than truthfully or withhold details if the information would be used to someone else's, or their own, harm. Depending on a person's perception of equivocation, this was either a justified form of self-preservation or a contrived license to perjure oneself.<sup>16</sup> The two priests above were relatively forthcoming about their pasts, but certain questions they would not answer.

During a house search for escaped prisoners, the J.P. Edward Unton found Catholic books and items at the home of Francis Yates in Lyford, Berkshire. He also examined two men, one a servant to the owner and the other known to the servant. In their examinations they both answered questions on the last Mass they had attended, who reconciled them to Catholicism and when. The servant gave answers about the relics and cross found in the house, though the subject named as the provider of the relics denied it and suggested that a priest had supplied them. What was equally significant was what the servant would not, or could not, tell: the name of the jailer at Newgate who locked him in a priest's cell to hear Mass or the name and location of the goldsmith in Cheapside who supplied the cross. To the question of whether he knew of any other priests, he stated that 'he knoweth nothing and sayeth he will answer nothing against his conscience to accuse him self or to appeach any other'. The other man claimed not to know who reconciled him, but it was when the Jesuit missionary Edmund Campion was at Lyford,<sup>17</sup> and as Unton reported, he added that 'he would gladly hear a Mass and receive the sacrament according to the papistical law'. After providing a little more information, he refused to

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<sup>16</sup> See Chapter 9 of Zagorin, *Ways of Lying*; Elliot Rose, *Cases of Conscience: Alternatives open to Recusants and Puritans under Elizabeth I and James I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), Chapter 6.

<sup>17</sup> This is the house from where Campion was finally caught in 1581.

answer any further questions.<sup>18</sup> This search and the subsequent interrogation of recusants were part of local endeavours to carry out the enforcement of Catholic penal laws. While those who refused to answer certain questions or claimed conscience no doubt did so to avoid implicating themselves or others they also exerted some power through the control of information.

Unton was dissatisfied with the information supplied by the servant, which contained inconsistencies, and suggested to Walsingham that if the man 'were roughly handled in such sort as he should be being one in whom his Master reposed great confidence, I think there might farther matters be bolted from him'.<sup>19</sup> Violence could play a part in the extraction of answers and certainly torture was practised as another means of obtaining information. Officially it was carried out in fewer than a hundred cases over the eighty years before 1640, but unofficial torture took place as well, with Richard Topcliffe its most notorious practitioner.<sup>20</sup> One report of Edmund Campion's interrogation while on the rack describes the efforts of his interrogators to discover his reasons for being in England, where he had stayed and said Mass and his opinion on the papal Bull excommunicating the queen. There were also questions to see if he was involved in the raising and sending of money to rebels in Ireland.<sup>21</sup>

In 1594 Richard Young wrote to Lord Keeper Sir John Puckering about the backlog of recusants in prison needing to be examined. He was concerned because this

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<sup>18</sup> Edward Unton to Walsingham, 12 February 1587, SP 12/198/12. I am unsure of any significance in this, but it seems notable that the servant's name is John Doe.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Alan Haynes, *Invisible Power: the Elizabethan Secret Services, 1570-1603* (Phoenix Mill: Allan Sutton, 1992), 51.

<sup>21</sup> Richard Simpson, *Edmund Campion A Biography* (London: John Hodges, 1896), 341-342.

delay meant ‘matters of great importance are hushed & hid’.<sup>22</sup> Government efforts to maintain political and religious stability in England required current information on treasonous plans, prohibited practices, illegal travels out of the country, harbourers and abettors of priests, plotters and other Catholics. These matters directed their examinations of prisoners, and suspects provided at least some information about their own illegal actions and about secret happenings within the realm. The participation of officeholders upheld certain state tenets on unsanctioned religious activity and gave legitimacy to the state through the consent implied by their actions.

Some of the priests and recusants mentioned above came to official attention as a result of searches of houses within their areas. Co-operation and communication among different offices led to the undertaking of these endeavours. Some of the reports for the proceedings of house searches come from the local bishop who generally wrote to Burghley, Sir Francis Walsingham, or the Privy Council. In other cases it was a civil official who wrote. These reports follow a standard narrative: information was received about priests or a Mass celebrated, and evidence of these and prohibited religious items were discovered or not. Unfortunately the sources of information were not always recorded. Different levels of officialdom might become involved in a search. On the information heard from Sir Thomas Gargrave, Archbishop Grindal wrote to Lord Shrewsbury, the lord lieutenant in Yorkshire and a lieutenant-general in the north, asking him to search the house of Lady Northumberland. The search uncovered priests, one of whom went up before the Ecclesiastical Commissioners in the county of York.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Richard Young to Lord Keeper Puckering, 14 April 1594, SP 12/248/68.

<sup>23</sup> Archbishop Grindal to Sir William Cecil, 10 November 1570, SP 12/74/32; Elizabeth Goldring, ‘Talbot, George, sixth earl of Shrewsbury (c.1522–1590)’, *ODNB*; online edn, May 2006 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26928>, accessed 7 June 2008].

Participants other than those holding a regular office contributed to law enforcement. A person could obtain a warrant that allowed them to seek out Catholics. Jeffrey Gates held a warrant from the archbishop of Canterbury and the Commissioners of Causes Ecclesiastical. He wrote to the Privy Council that he, 'to his no small charge long watching and great danger apprehended three notorious recusants companions to the Seminaries', including a tutor and Lady Ann Ratcliff.<sup>24</sup> Initially, authorities in Winchester, including the bishop and the mayor, learned from a messenger holding a search warrant for Jesuits, that there was to be a Mass said in the area. The messenger suspected one man's house, but there they found nothing; however 'some tokens of suspicion happening in our search' led them to Lady West's house. That search produced all sorts of items for Mass, from vestments to Latin service books. The report and an inventory were sent to Walsingham.<sup>25</sup>

John Gerard wrote about the role played by the acquaintance of his hosts in his capture after a search. John Frank warned authorities about the Wiseman home of Braddocks in Essex where Gerard was staying. After the initial search, which lasted two days, his hostess asked Frank to go to the area where Gerard was and say so he could hear from his hiding place that it was safe to come out. Instead, he notified the guards and they alerted the searchers, though these men's renewed efforts in searching the house were unsuccessful. Later, Frank delivered a letter from Jane Wiseman to Gerard in London and then let a group of pursuivants know where he was. This time Gerard was caught.<sup>26</sup> Along with answering questions Gerard was also asked to confirm handwriting

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<sup>24</sup> Jeffrey Gates to the Privy Council, 1583, SP 12/157/77.

<sup>25</sup> Bishop Watson, Mayor John White and others from Winchester, 10 December 1583, SP 12/164/14.

<sup>26</sup> *The Hunted Priest: Autobiography of John Gerard*, trans. Philip Caraman (London: Collins, 1964), 72-78.



as his own and to try on clothes found at the Wiseman house. Gerard denied they were his, although he acknowledged the opposite in his autobiography.<sup>27</sup>

Michael Braddick argued that the central issue in the enforcement of laws against Catholic recusants is the concept of neighbourliness, where foreign-trained priests and their hosts 'were people less protected by notions of neighbourliness and who were not perceived in terms of a range of local relationships'.<sup>28</sup> This may not have been the case with Gerard whose hosts were betrayed by someone they knew. In other cases, locals co-operated with authorities' search for offenders, particularly those Braddick identified as without strong ties to the community. Local informants provided different types of information. These might be details about a suspect subsequent to the search, or their information may have prompted the search initially. In Warwickshire, Job Throkmorton found nothing incriminating in William Skynner's house, but he believed this was because it had been searched before. What he did have in evidence against Skynner were the sworn statements of locals. A minister told how he had heard that a priest named Baker was staying at Skynner's house a year ago. The minister's servant told him that he had heard the man saying prayers in Latin in the garden behind the house and the minister himself noticed the absence of two of Skynner's children from the parish church. The local summoner guessed by his mode of dress that Baker was a priest. A yeoman testified that years ago Skynner had said words against the queen as supreme governor of the church and had more recently spoken in favour of Mary Queen of Scots inheriting the throne. In this case a total of nine members of the community provided a wealth of evidence against the suspects, as especially evident in the testimony of the yeoman,

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<sup>27</sup> Gerard, *Hunted Priest*, 87. Frank told Young that Gerard had been to a tailor to have clothes made for him in the same examination from 12 May 1594, SP 12/248/103.

<sup>28</sup> Braddick, *State Formation*, 306.

Thomas Slye, who reported that he was suspicious of the claim that Baker was a school master for Mr Fortescue's children, because 'he hath heard' the children went elsewhere for school.<sup>29</sup>

Members of the community might also provide the physical means of getting information. The bishop of Carlisle received information about a priest at a certain house too late in the evening to contact Lord Scrope, so he relied on his own 'servants and tenants as for their fidelity and knowledge of the place I thought fit for that service'. They did not find anyone but the bishop sent a copy of the examination of the original source, a curate, to Cecil.<sup>30</sup> Servants might not be enthusiastic about these sorts of duties, as can be seen, for example in Richard Simpson's description of Edmund Campion's capture twenty years earlier. After the first search for Campion at Yates' house, the men 'all Berkshire men and quiet neighbours, who had no taste for this kind of work, were sulky' and the magistrate apologized to Mrs Yates that he was only doing his duty. He blamed the informer George Eliot and his warrant.<sup>31</sup>

Some of the people involved in supplying information appear to have done so dutifully, some on their own initiative. Like churchwardens and bishops, they performed their duties, obedient to their orders, even if they were not happy about it. As Braddick and Walter stated about consent, a person only has to act in a way that suggests consent in order to agree to 'the power relation in which they are involved'. In these cases, the power relation in which locals and local officials were involved was as of supporters of the government's policies against illegal Catholic conduct.

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<sup>29</sup> Job Throkmorton to Ralphe Warcuppe, 13 January 1584, SP 12/167/21.

<sup>30</sup> Bishop Henry Robinson to Sir William Cecil, possibly 20 January 1601, SP 12/278/7.

<sup>31</sup> Simpson, *Campion*, 317-318.

The Tudor proclamations cited in the introductory chapter took a severe view of seditious talk about the monarch. Some people dutifully brought it to the attention of the authorities. It was the same under James I. Words supporting Catholicism and negating Protestantism were also dangerous to the speaker, or alleged speaker. In the following examples, the slanders contained language that involved or referenced popery and the hearers complied with expectations to inform on suspicious and offensive actions and words. John Parker offended several people in 1605 with his seditious talk of King James and the late Queen Elizabeth, and his Catholic proselytising. Interestingly in this set of depositions, the witnesses were women who had spoken with Parker, and women who heard from those women afterwards about it.<sup>32</sup> Report reached the mayor of Canterbury who examined witnesses and sent their statements to the archbishop. William Buckhurst testified that he told Edward Foster that his employer

was a papist and said it were no great matter that those papists that were no true subjects were hanged and then good man Foster made answer and wished that all the Protestants in England were hanged and then he said that half the council were papists so we bid him take heed what he said for the king is a true Protestant and so we left him.

Another man corroborated Buckhurst's deposition.<sup>33</sup> Leonard Worrell made a number of accusations against John Tydsdale such as, 'he did seduce my wife and family to popery...the means whereby he did it was by discrediting the state and government and many defamations against the professors of the gospel and otherwise'. Tydsdale supposedly also wrote libels, ridiculed the Bible's translation into English, discussed how the king would die ('there were five kings James, they came all to untimely ends and so

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<sup>32</sup> Depositions against John Parker, 3 August 1605, SP14/15/43.

<sup>33</sup> Mayor of Canterbury to Archbishop Abbot, 13 April 1618, SP14/108/37.

would he’) and suggested that James was of illegitimate birth.<sup>34</sup> John Fortho at Cambridge seemed a little abashed about informing on a dead man, but he felt that what had occurred was too important. He had heard Andrew Bendloss, ‘a learned Papist’, say on his death bed that he had killed the king and Fortho ‘feared such speeches (though idly spoken in extremity of sickness) might proceed from some former treacherous design intended by himself (now dead) or others yet living’.<sup>35</sup> The connection between papistry and danger existed in the minds, actions and words of these informants. Whether from a personal grievance against, or offence taken at the speaker, or from a genuine concern for the king and affairs of state, these informations reveal the continuing anxiety over popish plots in the public domain and either the genuine belief that a subject’s duty lay in informing, or at least the appearance that it was so.

The incorporation of topical subjects into the communication of an allegation of popery went both ways. At times James was the target of papist threats, but some of his subjects suggested that it was he who was too close to popery. In 1618 Thomas Swan, a servant of a wax chandler testified against a haberdasher named Thomas Ashton, alleging he had spoken various seditious things about the king, that he preferred hunting and swearing to the church and went to Scotland to build cathedrals ‘which it was not fit he should favour or erect seeing there is so much popery used therein’. Ashton had also voiced opinions against episcopacy and said that the bishop of Ely ‘leaned toward the pope’.<sup>36</sup> Another servant, Henry Awdy, in his statement, said that he heard the remark that the king ‘had more mind of hunting then of scripture’, and that Ashton had spoken

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<sup>34</sup> This is too early to have been the King James Version of the Bible but must refer to English translations in general. Possibly May 1606, SP 14/21/52.

<sup>35</sup> John Fortho to Salisbury, 11 April 1611, SP 14/63/26.

<sup>36</sup> 18 January 1618, SP 14/105/51.

well of two preachers. However, Awdy did not hear any of the other alleged comments. This servant also mentioned that Swan and his employer had had a disagreement over some stolen wax.<sup>37</sup> Finally, in Ashton's examination, he attacked Swan's and Awdy's characters, claiming that one was a thief and the other a drunk, denied having said anything about the king's hunting or swearing, approved of episcopacy and took 'great comfort' from the bishop of Ely's preaching.<sup>38</sup> These allegations and Ashton's defence showed signs of borrowing from the religious and political disputes of the day which were meant to add legitimacy to the different sides of a local conflict.

Revenge, as in the above case, money and ideology are all explanations of why a person might report on someone else. Here was reciprocal legitimation where informers acted with the sanction of the state because they were upholding its tenets—whatever their motivation or politics—and the state's goals were affirmed with the support of these subjects. Here I will return again to the activities of officeholders or persons acting in an official capacity for whom money was certainly a powerful inducement. In one of Geoffrey Elton's cogent observations, he revealed the logic of a legal system that provided financial rewards to informers by observing that 'it interested the largest possible number of people in the enforcement of the law'.<sup>39</sup> In short, a person could launch a suit in the Court of Exchequer against someone who had transgressed a law that bore a fine as punishment. If prosecuted successfully, the informer won a share of the fine.<sup>40</sup> While most informers investigated mercantile offences, other informers were in the business of investigating the assets of recusants. Robert Bury wrote to Salisbury to

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<sup>37</sup> 18 January 1618, SP 14/105/52.

<sup>38</sup> 19 January 1618, SP 14/105/53.

<sup>39</sup> Elton, 'Informing for Profit', 150.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 149-150.

report on the money left by the widow of an attainted traitor. He reported that Jane Shelley, ‘did convey and demise by lease diverse lands and tenements in the county of Sallop [Shropshire] to one Roger Barnsley, a gentleman according to her own heart in affection to raise money which she appointed to be given to certain colleges of Jesuits and Seminaries’, although Bury was not sure if this has been done already. Her income was £3,000 per year and Bury, of course, was investigating the situation out of duty and to the king’s profit.<sup>41</sup>

Thomas Felton was an informer who felt the Crown’s remuneration did not match his ambitious efforts against recusants. Felton convinced the government to grant him commissions to seek out assets from Catholic recusants who had not been paying the full price for their nonconformity. Not that conformity deterred him. In a few cases Felton tried to go after the possessions of Protestants and the newly conformed. In return for his successful endeavours he obtained favourable leases, an annuity and thousands of pounds in monetary rewards from the queen and—after his death and much haggling—a pension for his widow. Enforcing and collecting the recusancy penalties from wealthy Catholics could be a profitable enterprise for those determined enough. The queen had expensive wars to fund and Felton a large family to support.<sup>42</sup> Felton obtained the sanction of the Crown to extract penalties owed by recusants whereby he sought to raise himself economically through assiduous attention to the opportunities presented by the law.

Within these systems of detection, surveillance, punishment and profit were the means for people to contribute to the regulation of their community and the realm at

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<sup>41</sup> Robert Bury to Salisbury, 20 July 1611, SP 14/65/45.

<sup>42</sup> Despite these occasions of wealth and success, Felton ended up in prison for debt, as did his eldest son, and another son made his mark on English history by assassinating the duke of Buckingham in 1628. See Cogswell, ‘Destroyed for Doing My Duty’, in *Religious Politics in Post-Reformation England*.

large. People in positions of authority in the community might be placed in difficult situations affecting their status when it came to how they fulfilled their duties.<sup>43</sup>

However, attention to the work of punishing Catholic recusancy and the right language testifying to that work might also be seen as helpful in a career; the examples of Archbishop Grindal and Bishop Robinson appeared in the previous chapter. Something in this vein appeared in a 1599 report from the archbishop of York and the Council of the North to Robert Cecil, then Secretary of State. It describes a search of Groman Abbey in Yorkshire led by Lord Sheffield and its vividness deserves repeating: Sheffield, ‘upon two hours warning did very sufficiently perform and came in person with xxxvi of his servants and with great celerity did beset the house, broke open the doors and continued there in person until all the whole house was searched’. The angle of this letter with its praise of Sheffield’s work, ‘the advancement of Religion and her Majesty’s service’, was to suggest to Cecil that Sheffield be appointed to the Council of the North.<sup>44</sup> Sheffield had experienced difficulty attaining high position because of his marriage to a Catholic. His zeal against recusants was part of his effort to compensate for any unreliability attached to him because of that connection, and he gained a reputation for his vigorous efforts against Catholics. He did win honours and posts and James I made him president of the Council of the North in 1603.<sup>45</sup> Sheffield’s actions in defence of Protestantism, and the Council’s language which framed them that way, were employed to enhance his status as a reliable Crown servant. Previously a victim of power differences for Catholics in the realm, Sheffield used these against others in a bid to obtain higher office.

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<sup>43</sup> Braddick, *State Formation*, 35.

<sup>44</sup> July 1599, SP 12/271/72.

<sup>45</sup> Victor Stater, ‘Sheffield, Edmund, first earl of Mulgrave (1565–1646)’, *ODNB*; [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25293>, accessed 7 June 2008].

While the actions of officials and non-officials legitimized some of the government's policies towards Catholics, and the same gained legitimacy for themselves by adopting similar language, the intended targets of all these efforts were not without their own means of power. Craftiness, violence or petitions were some of the ways Catholics might resist or negotiate their role as objects of interest to the law. John Gerard's biography provides evidence of the precautions taken in case of a search and what was done during one, down to flipping over the bed in order to hide the warmth of a body recently lying there.<sup>46</sup> This was not being over careful. In another place a house owner was unable to explain away a warm bed and a chamber pot's proof that someone had been staying in a room.<sup>47</sup> John Croke's letter to the Council describes a search he undertook of two men's houses in 1586. The first turned up nothing, not even the householder. The search of the second, which Croke reports lasted ten hours, at first produced very little. When Croke indicated to the suspect George Brome that 'we did greatly marvel that in all a search we could not find so much as one letter written to him five years before, he answered that he used to burn all his letters presently after he had read them'. This precautionary measure was not enough. The searchers soon after discovered a number of books, relics and images.<sup>48</sup> After this search, the father of George Brome wrote in protest to Walsingham. He claimed that the house belonged to his son-in-law John Dinham and that only sometimes did his son stay there. Brome further alleged that Croke had treated the family poorly in the past. Lastly, Brome pleaded 'that if my

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<sup>46</sup> Gerard, *Hunted Priest*, 58.

<sup>47</sup> 27 August 1584, SP 12/172/112.

<sup>48</sup> John Croke to the Privy Council, 26 August 1586, SP 12/192/54.



son's cause be small, & thereby the more to be favoured, it will please you the spediliar to release him, for in truth he hath a weak body, & is very sickly'.<sup>49</sup>

People were not passive in the face of searches and arrests. They might write to complain, like Sir Christopher Brome, or take the searchers to court, or even physically refuse entry to them. Jeffrey Gates, who arrested a Lady Ratcliff in the early 1580s, lost his warrant after a friend of hers complained to Cecil about Gates' actions.<sup>50</sup> A woman whose house was searched in Wiltshire made a complaint in the Court of Star Chamber, although a 1584 document from the case details the proper behaviour of the defendants and the many papist items found in the house.<sup>51</sup> Searchers in the mid-1580s were unable to enter Hugh Catlyne's house the first time they tried since Catlyne 'kept the door, having his weapon in his hand'. The bailiff and constable and others returned again with a warrant and entered successfully.<sup>52</sup> Curiously, there is also record of good treatment during a search. Elizabeth Fowlar signed a certificate in 1588 to attest to the 'mildness' of the searcher of her husband's house and the presence of witnesses among the servants to repudiate what was 'now reported that he did in cruel and rigorous sort carry himself in the execution thereof and should take away not only such writings as appertained to my said husband but sundry parcels of his goods'.<sup>53</sup>

Those accused of, or imprisoned for, illicit behaviour could resort to petitioning the authorities. Henry Haggerston wrote to the Lord Chancellor and the members of the Privy Council in 1619 to protest his indictment for the crime of harbouring a priest. According to the prisoner, the witness was 'a man of lewd life', who had not been in Haggerston's

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<sup>49</sup> Sir Christopher Brome to Sir Francis Walsingham, 3 September 1586, SP 12/193/12.

<sup>50</sup> Jeffrey Gates to the Privy Council, 1583, SP 12/157/77.

<sup>51</sup> SP 12/168/6.

<sup>52</sup> Report of Edward Soer and John Bartlem, 27 January 1585, SP 12/176/16.

<sup>53</sup> Certificate of Elizabeth Fowler, 6 December 1588, SP 12/219/12.

house in eight years. The man who arrested Haggerston had brought the witness out from prison for debt and was also delaying the trial.<sup>54</sup> For the more creative, or perhaps for those without friends or influence, there was magic. An earlier case heard in 1590 took place in Newgate prison, when a Mrs Dewes approached Robert Birche, whom she had heard was a conjurer, for help. She wished to make wax ‘pictures’ of the priest hunter Justice Young, the London alderman and former Lord Mayor Sir Rowland Hayward and another man and stick pins in them as revenge for their actions against Catholics. Birche contacted Justice Young and eventually a search produced the items.<sup>55</sup> While many Catholics went untroubled by officials or neighbours, the ones above did experience legal action against them. The means of resistance to their situation might depend on the influence their social circumstances allowed them.

Generally targets of searches took a hostile view of these policies. In a letter from Dr. William Allen to the head of the English College at Rome, regarding information from his brother Gabriel, Allen wrote that ‘spies are often sent into such houses as are more suspected of Catholic faith. These gentlemen however come more for the purpose of stealing chalices than of arresting persons’.<sup>56</sup> Robert Persons’ sister ‘died half a martyr...she was so frightened of the knaves’ after searchers discovered a number of religious items in her house.<sup>57</sup> But, according to Gerard, searches might be fatal for the instigator, as he claimed was the case of Justice Young:

Not merely did he die in the devil’s service, but it was the actual cause of death. Day and night he toiled to bring more and more pressure on

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<sup>54</sup> September 1619, SP 14/110/66.

<sup>55</sup> January 1590, SP 12/230/30.

<sup>56</sup> William Allen to Father Azagario, Rector of the English College at Rome, 2 March 1583, ‘Memoirs of Fr. Robert Persons’, *Miscellanea IV*, ed. J.H. Pollen (London: CRS, 1907), 77.

<sup>57</sup> ‘Extracts of Father Garnet’s Correspondence’, *Miscellanea II* (London: CRS, 1906), 37.

Catholics, drawing up lists of names, giving instructions, listening to reports. Then one rainy night, at two or three o'clock, he got up to make a search of some Catholic houses. The effort left him exhausted; he became ill, contracted consumption and died'.<sup>58</sup>

Young's alleged cause of death excepted, the reporting and pursuit of recusants was generally beneficial for a dutiful official or profit-driven informer. The policies of the Jacobethan period towards recusants were built on specific religious, political and financial goals. Both officials and their targets had a range of tactics either to gather and react to information about religious offenders and threats, or to evade detection and penalties. Some Catholics had friends in high or local places. Deals could be made with corrupt exchequer officials or fines could be reduced to a lower amount.<sup>59</sup> Policies might change temporarily, as when attention to recusants diminished during negotiations with the Spanish for a marriage between the future Charles I and the Infanta.<sup>60</sup> Sometimes the limits on information gathering, whether legal or functional, reduced the capabilities of the state to discover prohibited or suspect behaviour as did those sympathetic to their neighbours or Catholicism itself, but enough officials responded to laws, instructions and warrants to maintain the system of enforcement. Although some cases validate Braddick's assertion that 'neighbourliness' shielded some religious transgressors while outsiders lacked this protection, it is also clear that relationships *between* neighbours produced their own elements of conflict. Competition or revenge might influence behaviour and provide the material for reasons why locals gave information or made accusations.

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<sup>58</sup> Gerard, *Hunted Priest*, 103.

<sup>59</sup> Questier, 'Sir Henry Spiller', 252, 253, 262.

<sup>60</sup> Cogswell, *The Blessed Revolution: English Politics and the Coming of War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 20, 32-33.

Ordinary people contributed to the system and showed their consent for the laws by providing the initial information or evidence against others for papist practices. Others drew from contemporary political and religious matters relating to papists in their allegations and quarrels. Informers and royal officials found legitimation of their actions in the expectations of the state, whether in its central or local manifestation.

Officeholders, other members of the community and those targeted by efforts to apply the Catholic penal laws negotiated or enforced existing power inequalities present in the law and realm through their actions and words.

### **CHAPTER THREE: SPIES, INFORMERS AND SUPPORTERS AMONG JACOBETHAN ENGLISH CATHOLIC COMMUNITIES**

This chapter leaves behind officeholders and their actions to focus instead on the direct actions of English subjects beyond the contexts of the parish and community. Examples of denunciations made or supplementary information supplied by ordinary people were discussed previously; this chapter involves people who actively engaged in the political and confessional enmity of their time. Here I will examine a number of ex-Catholics, Catholics and pretended Catholics to analyze how they collaborated with the authorities. These include a broad spectrum of participants: converts, prisoners, spies—including Catholics—and a group of priests and lay Catholics willing to support the government against a common opponent. What links them is the concept of legitimization. All these agents wanted something, even if this was a desire to do their duty, and tried to show through their words and actions that they had something to offer in defence of the state. This ‘something’ in particular was their claim to have knowledge about English Catholic activities because of their connections within the domestic and exile communities.

Spies and informers have long been used to seek out and report on the reputed enemies of the political, religious and ideological interests of their day. People in early modern England could find a receptive audience in the authorities’ suspicions. Two historians of denunciation in modern Europe, Sheila Fitzpatrick and Robert Gellately, both find in their respective areas—the USSR in the 1930s and Germany in the 1930s and 40s—that ideological conviction and patriotism did not lie behind citizens’ denunciations

of others. It was instead self-interest and the knowledge that a system which encouraged informing could work for their own ends.<sup>1</sup>

Within the Tudor context, Ethan Shagan has considered how everyday collaboration with religious reforms contributed to the success of those reforms, irrespective of the religious views of the participants. This political environment allowed a person to 'co-opt the state' for their own purposes. But it was not just self-interest that moved a person; there was also a change in mentality, caused by the government's example, which enabled a person to take these steps. In Shagan's view, a person's choice facilitated religious change whether or not they themselves supported the doctrine behind that change, which led to its broader acceptance.<sup>2</sup>

Although ideology may not lie behind their informations, spies and informers gave support to the Crown's policies and strategies by contributing to, and thus sanctioning, the authorities' pursuit of plots and Catholic religious deviance. Public co-operation in this regard also signified the growth and acceptance of anti-popery in the overlapping spheres of politics, religion and culture. Whether co-opting the state or sincerely co-operating, these subjects justified themselves with regard to the interests of the state. The legitimizing languages used by informants in various communications with government officials, or in government-friendly actions, invoked themes prevalent in the religious and political climate of Elizabethan and Jacobean England. These themes included the activities of secret Catholic networks, of Spain, of plots and treason and other perceived dangers. Such language implied the writer's consent to the government

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<sup>1</sup> Sheila Fitzpatrick and Robert Gellately, 'Introduction to the Practices of Denunciation in Modern European History', in *Denunciation in Modern European History, 1789-1989*, ed. Fitzpatrick and Gellately (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 10.

<sup>2</sup> Ethan Shagan, *Popular Politics and the English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 14, 16, 266, 267.

line while contrasting their own beliefs and actions to the legally subordinate Catholics or—in the cases with Catholic participation—disloyal Catholics. State interest in threats of Catholic hostility opened up opportunities for people to co-operate with the government with the promise of pardon, financial gain and political advantage.

Spies and paid informers were a necessary part of statecraft, but historians have not looked kindly upon them. Conyers Read opined: ‘One cannot expect to find honourable gentlemen in such a kind of trade’.<sup>3</sup> Another writer called some of them ‘downright ruffianly rascals’.<sup>4</sup> Even more caustically, the editors of an early volume of Catholic records referred to their ‘repulsive character’, when describing former Catholics who attended Mass in order to identify those present.<sup>5</sup> Of greater relevance is J.H. Pollen’s discouraging statement that ‘the reports of spies are of all sources the most profuse and the least worthy of credit; for to say nothing of other reasons, they neither were nor could be verified and were handed in for the most sordid motives’.<sup>6</sup> Veracity, however, is not the most important aspect of communication. More relevant to the reports of spies and others are the background of the writer, what information they presented and its plausibility, why they are giving it, and how they have chosen to say it and justify themselves for their actions. From these we can consider the ways in which the author hoped to gain influence in applying certain language and content to contemporary circumstances.

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<sup>3</sup> Conyers Read, *Mr. Secretary Walsingham and the Policy of Queen Elizabeth* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1967), II: 338.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Deacon, *A History of British Secret Services* (London: Panther Books, 1980), 48.

<sup>5</sup> J.H. Pollen and W. MacMahon, eds., *English Martyrs, Vol. 2: The Venerable Philip Howard, Earl of Arundel, 1557-95* (London: CRS, 1921), 66.

<sup>6</sup> Pollen, ed. ‘Official lists of Catholic prisoners during the reign of Queen of Queen Elizabeth, Part II, 1581-1602’, *Miscellanea II*, 219.

Who engaged in this kind of work for the government? Alison Plowden lists informers as ‘men of ‘broken fortunes’, discharged soldiers, drop-outs and debtors and the black sheep of respectable families’.<sup>7</sup> However, men of education also undertook employment for the government. Christopher Marlowe, during a break from his studies at Cambridge, sent reports about the English embassy in Paris as part of his intelligence work.<sup>8</sup> Another literary spy, who worked for himself and a variety of patrons over his career, was Anthony Munday. In 1582 Munday published an account of the months in 1579 he spent at the English College at Rome, including damning allegations about the school and sensational descriptions of Catholic religious customs.<sup>9</sup> Later in England, Munday was able to make claims against others who had attended the College.<sup>10</sup>

All kinds of people found service with the most important officials of the Elizabethan government—Leicester, Burghley and Walsingham. The latter was most famous for his intelligence network, having over a hundred contacts, but the others too had their sources.<sup>11</sup> These men, according to Alan Haynes, ‘purposed two essential things (as did their immediate successors): the defeat of foreign threats to Elizabeth; and the consolidation of the grip of Protestantism’.<sup>12</sup> Those willing to fulfil, or take advantage of, the need for information on international and domestic dangers played a part in the protection of England’s political and religious establishments.

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<sup>7</sup> Alison Plowden, *The Elizabethan Secret Service* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), 25-26.

<sup>8</sup> Haynes, *Invisible Power*, 93

<sup>9</sup> See Anthony Munday, *The English Romayne Lyfe* (London, 1582).

<sup>10</sup> Such as against George Haddock at this priest’s execution. Pollen, ed. *Unpublished Documents Relating to the English Martyrs. Vol I: 1584-1603* (London: CRS, 1908), 61. The original account was sent to Robert Southwell in Rome from a friend who was at the execution. See page 57.

<sup>11</sup> Haynes, *Invisible Power*, 13.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.



It was not uncommon for former Catholics to disclose information about other Catholics.<sup>13</sup> This is evident in letters from men who at one time joined the Roman church before changing their minds and rejoining the Elizabethan church. In the following letters the writers reinforced assumptions about Catholicism while making denunciations of former colleagues, perhaps in order to repair their reputations. In the early 1580s, one William Coole wrote to Sir Francis Walsingham about his conversion to Catholicism, Catholics with whom he had associated in England, and his travels in Europe. While in Europe he went to the English Catholic college at Rheims and there again changed his mind on religion. Coole said that at Rheims,

finding it a place, where nothing but impiety towards God, [and] treachery towards my country is usually practised I studied by what means I might deliver myself from among that company, without impairing my credit that whether I returned unto them again or passed into England, I might the better do my country service.<sup>14</sup>

Coole here declared that he decided while at Rheims to maintain the pretence of being Catholic in order to inform on others later on. His statement contains both conventional attacks on a seminary for its Catholicism and supports the idea that these schools sponsored treason. In his letter of confession, Coole maintained the popular beliefs and government-promoted ideas about the activities at the English colleges.

The tone in two other letters from ex-Catholic converts is different. Aside from the usual phrases of humility and deference there is little in the way of ideological and patriotic enthusiasm. The authors come closest with remorse for their former ways when they discuss their personal sentiments. Henry Thirkell concluded a letter of 1594 to Burghley about his efforts in Europe and his desire for support to continue such work by

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<sup>13</sup> Questier, *Conversion*, 48 no. 42.

<sup>14</sup> William Coole to Sir Francis Walsingham, probably early 1580s, SP 12/168/25.

asking the ‘pardon of her majesty and your Lordship for my former error promising that that error shall turn and redound unto my country’s profit. I end committing myself unto your Lordship’s favour which I will endeavour to deserve as I may’.<sup>15</sup> Even more contrite was Ralph Betham, a minister who in 1583 statement affirmed:

I have thought it my bounden duty both towards God and my country to declare & set down my knowledge and probable suspicion of certain papists, priests, and others: I beseech you to consider myself not as I have been heretofore, but as I now am. I have been (I confess to my great grief) a papist heretofore but now I trust it shall plainly appear unto you that I am become a true Christian, and a dutiful subject.<sup>16</sup>

Although phrases of an explicitly political or theological nature are few in this letter—Betham simply cited his ‘bounden duty both towards God and my country’—perhaps actions speak louder than words. Betham followed this introduction with a dozen pages of details about Catholics who had gone overseas and been made priests, those who performed or hosted Masses in England and of the places where they had done so. To be a ‘dutiful subject’—and one with past failings to compensate for—in Betham’s terms meant not just practising the established faith, but also supplying the authorities with information on prohibited religious activities within the country. Whether to confirm his conversion, or to relieve his conscience, or even to gain recognition and patronage, this minister used the regime’s determination to detect and penalize its religiously and politically active Catholic subjects as the means.

The willingness of former Catholics to inform was a problem for their previous co-religionists. Information held by such people was of value to the government and a threat to Catholics involved in illicit activities. Suspicions about others in their midst was

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<sup>15</sup> Henry Thirkell to Burghley, 2 May 1594, SP12/248/90.

<sup>16</sup> SP12/168/25.

a part of English Catholic existence in England and overseas. In his memoirs, Robert Persons said that while he and his companions were escaping England, ‘they remained in great fear of being suspected or betrayed by some one, especially as there was with them a young man who soon after, returning to England, apostatized and became a public spy and pursuivant of Catholics’. This was Persons’ own servant, Robert Alfield.<sup>17</sup> Catholics, ex-Catholics and others able to insinuate themselves among English Catholics were valuable to authorities involved with capturing priests, seizing banned religious items and discovering plots. John Anthony, who was once a convert to Catholicism, was able to supply details about English Catholics and Jesuits on the continent. In a letter to Salisbury in 1611 he wrote, ‘I have been drawn to their belief by some of their sect and supposed by them yet to continue zealously in the same whereby I am come to the knowledge hereof’.<sup>18</sup> The following year Sir James Perrot wrote to Salisbury asking his recommendation for someone ‘known to your Lordship by former experience to be judicial and well-affected to his majesty’s service and safety, being yet of the Romish religion (or at least so noted to be for I conceive no other will be trusted with their secrets)’ to go into certain districts, and make himself known to local recusants in order to find out where priests stayed and what they were doing in the area.<sup>19</sup>

The Jesuit John Gerard met at least one priest-turned-informer, William Atkinson, in prison. Doubts about Atkinson’s ‘steadiness’ necessitated precautions on Gerard’s part and helped him elude capture a little longer. The future Cardinal Allen, in a letter penned in 1583, also described the wariness felt towards two priests who after their seizure were

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<sup>17</sup> In fact, Robert’s brother Thomas was a priest who was eventually captured and executed, an irony which is possibly why Person attributed to Robert his brother’s denunciation, though this was not the case. ‘Memoirs’, *Miscellanea IV*, 29, 30\*, 31. Persons discusses Robert again pages 49-55.

<sup>18</sup> John Anthony to Salisbury, possibly 16 July 1611, SP 14/65/36.

<sup>19</sup> Sir James Perrot to Salisbury, 13 March 1613, SP 14/68/75.

understood to have been given good treatment, allowed back their confiscated rosaries, Agnus Dei and other unnamed items, and eventually let go. Allen wrote: 'we do not trust them anymore on that account, since at the same time they [the authorities] have been treating most severely the confessors who are in the Tower of London'.<sup>20</sup> One of these two priests mentioned by Allen, William Tedder, did indeed abandon the priesthood and turn informer.<sup>21</sup> A means of detection, defectors assisted government endeavours in seeking out trouble-makers. Their co-operation gave legitimacy to such efforts and made the laws and policies viable.

Not everyone was as careful as Gerard and Allen. A 1603 report from a haberdasher journeying in France offers an image of enthusiastic, yet naïve, Catholic emigrés. The haberdasher, Peter Hardy, made the acquaintance of a young man who, Hardy said, assumed him to be Catholic because he had refused meat on a Friday, although Hardy's reason was seasickness. This youth told Hardy that he was a Catholic and when Hardy claimed to be also, was taken into the youth's confidence and shown private letters which Hardy then kept. While in contact with the English ambassador in Paris, Hardy let other English Catholics in Paris believe he was Catholic and gained entry into their company. Hardy hoped they would give him letters to carry into England, so he invented a story about needing to return there. He also expressed worry to his young friend about being captured in England on his return. The young man, concerned for

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<sup>20</sup> William Allen to Fr. Agazario, March 1583, *Miscellanea IV*, 81.

<sup>21</sup> Questier, *Conversion*, 48 no. 42.

Hardy, imparted to him the names and addresses of priests and lay Catholics in England who could help him.<sup>22</sup>

So not all Catholics were sufficiently discreet. But why did Hardy choose to take advantage of that fact? Unfortunately I have not been able to find his name elsewhere, but it is not out of the question that he was a regular informer. Although he did not say as much in this letter, it is possible that Hardy was interested in being officially employed as a spy. Here it is his intent and the content of the letter, rather than specific wording, that indicates the means by which Hardy sought to empower himself and, seemingly, the state. In his letter he portrayed himself as someone who travelled beyond the seas, was quick-witted and successful at gaining letters and information. This says much about the age in which he lived. Discovering and passing on information to governments about others was not an unusual act. These activities denote a type of engagement between Crown and subject. If he were in search of patronage, Hardy certainly took advantage of the current hostility to popery, anxiety over domestic religious subversion and the need for information on the thoughts and actions of emigrés. If patriotism and love for his king motivated Hardy's actions, then an acceptance of those political matters is certainly present in his letter. Hardy took it upon himself to report on Catholics in exile and their domestic and foreign social networks and networks of communication; for decades these had been a cause of alarm for the Crown.

Those in prison might also use the appearance of patriotism to gain patronage by reporting on the actions and words of Catholic fellow prisoners. For persons in difficult circumstances, the state's interest in illegal behaviour gave them opportunities for

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<sup>22</sup> See the complete letter in the Appendix for Hardy's account of his subterfuge. His alleged dealings with English Catholics are remarkable for his success in fooling so many. Peter Hardy possibly to Sir Robert Cecil, late 1603, SP14/5/24.

reporting on others. Lowly among the locations Catholic practices took place, from private homes to ambassadors' houses, prisons were nevertheless sites where Catholics could meet other Catholics, hear Mass or other liturgies, or pass messages to the outside.<sup>23</sup> Here was another place where spies and informers could garner information relevant to the authorities' campaign to limit the spread of religious dissent, whether by dishonesty or through careful attention. One Philip Bennet, having been in jail for a few years already, wrote to Salisbury in December 1605 with an account of what he said he had learned from imprisoned Catholics with whom he had spoken. In this letter he stated that he had worked for Walsingham in times past, reported that some inmates slandered the late queen and the current king, wrote down rumours about a large number of Catholics prepared to pay the king an annual sum in exchange for religious toleration, and that a pretended Protestant was behind the distribution of 'seditious' books. Bennet included only one name but promised he would supply Salisbury with the rest when contacted.<sup>24</sup> For Bennet, writing the month after the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot, here was a means of using the state's worries about the latest Catholic threat to bring attention to himself in the guise of loyalty to the Crown. Perhaps he hoped at least for a pardon or maybe a reward sufficient to pay the debt which kept him in Westminster's Gatehouse.

Because of the number of Catholics in jails, another information-gathering tactic was to place professional spies among the prisoners. The prison letters of Walter Williams, a man who had at one time been in the employ of an English Catholic on the

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<sup>23</sup> See page 46 above for a Catholic examinee who admitted to hearing Mass in Newgate. The biography of John Gerard contains several accounts of carrying out religious practices in prison and smuggling letters to the outside. See Gerard, *Hunted Priest*, 89-90, 126-127, 138.

<sup>24</sup> SP 14/17/47.

continent,<sup>25</sup> described the information he had gleaned from a Catholic prisoner by his ‘politic handling’. With money and food, Williams thought he had gained the trust of this person despite his reputation among others who ‘hath known [him] an enemy to papists’. Indeed, Williams bragged to Walsingham that the prisoner ‘hath such a seal to me that he will disclose anything what I demand’.<sup>26</sup> There is evidence, however, that this source knew of Williams’ game.<sup>27</sup> If so, it was with more than irony that the prisoner told Williams that ‘the cause of his coming into England a spy...is only for want and to win credit among the papists and rebels’.<sup>28</sup>

Conyers Read described Williams as ‘a thorough-going rascal...a fellow of no morals and of very little religion’.<sup>29</sup> This might seem a harsh depiction of his character, but Williams seems to have been an opportunist, having gone from the service of an English Catholic aristocrat, Thomas Copley, into the service of Walsingham as a spy. His Catholic connections must have appeared at first to be profitable. Williams traded on his experience with English Catholics in order to enter government employ. In doing so he became one of a number of English people whose loyalties changed in this time. By his willingness to work as a spy, he upheld the government’s position regarding active Catholicism in the realm.

Williams and the following examples of spies, even Catholic ones, were able to exist among Catholics and betray them. Their connections with the English Catholic community were of benefit to themselves while their co-operation gave consent to the

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<sup>25</sup> Thomas Copley who was living in France. He too corresponded with Walsingham. Read, *Walsingham*, II: 325.

<sup>26</sup> Walter Williams to Sir Francis Walsingham, August-September 1582, SP12/155/29, 12/155/30, 12/55/37.

<sup>27</sup> Read, *Walsingham*, II: 326-7.

<sup>28</sup> Williams to Walsingham, SP 12/155/30.

<sup>29</sup> Read, *Walsingham*, II: 327.

government's pursuit of, or at least information on, foreign-trained priests, Catholic networks and other activity. Thomas Rogers (alias Nicolas Berden) was one of Walsingham's spies whose work relied on their place within the English Catholic community at home and abroad. Berden spied for Walsingham in the 1580s but was originally a servant of George Gilbert—an important convert to Catholicism who formed a group in London whose residence hosted priests and was a site for Masses.<sup>30</sup> Berden sent reports on the priests in London, on some prisoners' communication to those on the outside, on the trade in Catholic books and on missionary priests' routes into the country.<sup>31</sup> Demonstrating the potential for profit in this line of work, Berden kept bribes from Catholics who trusted him to use his influence and their money with government officials to let certain priests and recusants out of prison. His success in doing so led to his even greater influence among Catholics. This increased his worth as a spy for Walsingham.<sup>32</sup>

Gilbert Gifford, another of Walsingham's spies, used his connections with the exile Catholic community to foil those conspiring against the Crown. A former student at Douai, Rome and Rheims, Gifford got involved in the autumn of 1585 with Thomas Morgan and Charles Paget and their plans to help the captive Mary Queen of Scots. Gifford was one of the chief actors in facilitating and then betraying the Babington Plot in 1586. His role was to transfer mail between Mary and the French ambassador, with a

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<sup>30</sup> Thompson Cooper, 'Gilbert, George (*d.* 1583)', rev. Thomas H. Clancy, *ODNB*, 2004 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10689, accessed 2 July 2008].

<sup>31</sup> Read, *Walsingham*, II: 330-332.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, II: 334.



detour to Walsingham. For his part in this, Gifford was given an annual pension of £100.<sup>33</sup>

As a Catholic trusted by others, Gifford was able to assist Walsingham's efforts to monitor and trap the Queen of Scots. His reasons for doing so are not entirely clear. Alison Plowden concluded: 'The only certain thing about him is that he was thoroughly untrustworthy and ready, without hesitation, to betray any person or cause in order to survive in the murky world he inhabited'.<sup>34</sup> The struggle between Catholic conspirators and the English authorities provided such men such as Gifford with opportunities to profit. In this case the Crown gained by it too.

Another Catholic whose efforts for the government brought him money and influence was Sir Anthony Standen. This man originally from Surrey provided important information to the government about preparations for the Armada.<sup>35</sup> Initially, Standen left England for Scotland to serve Lord Darnley and Mary Queen of Scots. He was in France when Darnley died and Mary's prestige plummeted. Afterwards, in Spain he gained a pension from Philip II and worked for the Spanish in France. Standen's career is not entirely clear in certain aspects. His motives for working for Walsingham may have derived from his need to make up for his past with the Scottish queen, or out of loyalty to James VI who was supporting Elizabeth.<sup>36</sup> While Paul Hammer wrote about the contradictory reports about Standen's loyalties as a double-agent, informing for England

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<sup>33</sup> Plowden, 'Gifford, Gilbert (1560–1590)', *ODNB*, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10660>, accessed 14 June 2008].

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Haynes, *Invisible Power*, 87.

<sup>36</sup> Paul E. J. Hammer, 'An Elizabethan Spy who Came in from the Cold', *Historical Research* 65 (1992): 279; Geoffrey Ashe, 'An Elizabethan Adventurer: the Career of Sir Antony Standen, Part 1' *The Month*, ns, 8 (1952): 88; Leo Hicks, 'The Embassy of Sir Anthony Standen in 1603, Part 1' *Recusant History* 5 (1959): 93.

and Spain, Leo Hicks interpreted Standen's employ with the king of Spain as a part of his cover, providing a reason for being in Spain and other places, in addition to being another welcome source of income.<sup>37</sup>

Standen's personal Catholic politics were also uncertain. Ashe wrote that Standen did write to officials with his opinions on toleration. The spy 'favoured complete freedom of Catholic worship as long as it remained non-political. Priests who meddled in State affairs should be prosecuted without mercy; others should be left alone'.<sup>38</sup> Hicks was not overly impressed by Standen's lobbying and thinks his stance in favour of toleration was just part of his role as a loyal Catholic, considering that at the same time he was betraying English Catholics in Philip's pay who themselves had vulnerable families at home.<sup>39</sup>

Standen returned to England in 1593 to seek reward and employment and after James ascended the English throne, he was sent to bring news of this event to European courts. While abroad, Standen involved himself in continental religious and English exile politics for which he was later imprisoned in England. After 1605 he moved to the continent.<sup>40</sup> These latter adventures aside, Standen's actions during the Elizabethan period reveal how those with the ambition and the right opportunities were able to benefit from the political and religious circumstances of the age.

These spies obtained, or at least sought, advantages in exchange for their work. If their reports were true, English authorities gained valuable information. Regardless of information, since veracity was problematic, the acts and existence of spies contributed to the religious and political dynamic of the country. Gathering intelligence was clearly an

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<sup>37</sup> Hammer, 'Elizabethan Spy', 283-286; Hicks, 'The Embassy', 99.

<sup>38</sup> Ashe, 'Elizabethan Adventurer, Part 2' *The Month*, ns, 8 (1952): 222.

<sup>39</sup> Hicks, 'The Embassy', 102.

<sup>40</sup> Ashe, 'Elizabethan Adventurer', 227-229; Hammer, 'Standen, Sir Anthony (*d.* in or after 1615)', *ODNB*, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/39703>, accessed 2 July 2008].

unsteady career, all the more so when working for different employers. Personal religious affiliations could be put aside when engaged in furtive government service against one's co-religionists. Influence was important to those in compromised positions because of past activities, whether their religious opinions had changed or not. The exchange of information or action for patronage worked doubly in favour of the government.

The existence of sincere Catholics who spied abroad or informed at home for the English government may seem surprising, especially since the contention of this thesis is that people who gave information about Catholics enforced the laws and ideas that subordinated Catholicism. The subject of, and debate over English Catholics and their loyalty to their Protestant monarchs has a long history. Different people at different times saw the situation from a variety of perspectives and goals. Among these were the clergymen in exile Allen and Persons, who wrote polemics against the English government and, in Allen's case, wrote in defence of the soldier Sir William Stanley who defected to the Spanish, taking his regiment and the Dutch town he governed with him.<sup>41</sup> Contrary to the notorious examples of intrigue were the words and efforts to demonstrate political loyalty, such as those from the Appellants, a Catholic faction who tried to resist Jesuit influence in England and gain official recognition of their loyalty from the Crown. There is, however, a notable distinction between a Catholic raising troops to defend queen and country if the Spanish invaded—as Lord Burghley claimed Lord Montague did in 1588<sup>42</sup>—and actually going to the continent to discover details of any such plans. Those Catholics who turned spy had their own priorities or separated their personal religion from the political Catholicism to which the government was hostile.

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<sup>41</sup> Allen, 'The Copie of a letter by M. Doctor Allen: concerning the yielding up of the citie of Daentrie unto his Catholike Maiestie, by Sir William Stanley knight', (Antwerp, 1587).

<sup>42</sup> Pritchard, *Catholic Loyalism*, 44-45.

To finish this chapter I will discuss how some Catholics used the efforts of the government *against* Catholics for their own religious and political purposes. Government interest in Catholic activities also became a tool for devout Catholics against other Catholics. One Jesuit missionary priest was threatened with betrayal to the authorities by a member of the Catholic laity angered by his insistence on adopting the more lenient Roman fasting practices in place of the stricter, traditional ones.<sup>43</sup> Conflict within the Catholic community could be a boon for the government. The dissension between the Jesuits and secular clergy produced hostility and division. Secular clergy and their supporters were concerned about the amount of influence the Society of Jesus had in the mission and the seminaries. This particular faction tried to legitimize themselves with reference to the state by supporting its actions against Catholics with whom they disagreed.

Part of this history of fracture among English Catholics took place at Wisbech Castle in the 1590s when rivalry and disagreement developed among the prisoners kept there, almost all of them clergy. The personalities and views of the priests William Weston and Christopher Bagshaw clashed after Weston and a group of his supporters tried to form a group with stricter rules of behaviour with Weston acting as enforcer. Others, led by Bagshaw, resisted the implications against their own behaviour and Weston's elevated position. In this quarrel, partly over authority, the anti-Weston group looked to the castle keeper as the arbiter of disputes. After the issues had been resolved through mediation, divisions again arose over differences in opinion and the belief—

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<sup>43</sup> Haigh, 'The Continuity of Catholicism in the English Reformation', *Past & Present* 93 (1981): 63.

apparently true—that Bagshaw had given information to the authorities about an escaped priest, Francis Tillotson.<sup>44</sup>

The Wisbech stirs, as they were called, went on to be part of the Archpriest and Appellant controversies where the divisions and arguments between Catholics were emphasized or reinterpreted in terms of pro- and anti-Jesuit sentiment.<sup>45</sup> Jesuit and anti-Jesuit factions were already in existence and the 1598 appointment of the Archpriest Blackwell, who was known to favour the Jesuits, provoked the situation further. Those who objected to him appealed to Rome unsuccessfully. Although the affair quieted down after this, Blackwell inflamed matters when he labelled his opponents schismatics, whereby the rivalries and polemics resumed.<sup>46</sup>

Also during Elizabeth's reign, some members of the lay English Catholic community tried to persuade the Crown of their allegiance to the monarch with a declaration.<sup>47</sup> Before the queen died, thirteen secular clergy signed a Protestation of Allegiance, which while not an oath, declared their loyalty to Elizabeth and their intention to defend the country against invasion.<sup>48</sup> Appellant clergy joined this cause as a way of harnessing the support of the gentry and government. Bossy described the incentives as dual: 'while the gentry proposed to get rid of the Jesuits as a means of affirming allegiance, the priests offered declarations of allegiance in the hope of getting rid of the Jesuits'.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Pritchard, *Catholic Loyalty*, 89-90, 93.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 94-101.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 122-124.

<sup>47</sup> Bossy, *English Catholic*, 37.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 39-40

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

The English government was an obvious opponent of the Jesuits, and Bishop Richard Bancroft of London extended certain advantages to the Appellants: access to printers, passports for their representatives to petition the papacy, principal Appellants were allowed out of jail and a priest was allowed to move about the country freely to gather funds to finance the mission to Rome.<sup>50</sup> Some Appellant writings praised the queen and government and placed responsibility for any persecution of English Catholics on the Jesuits. *They* had been the ones to instigate treasonous plots and cause trouble between England and Spain. The government would tolerate Catholicism in England if there were no Jesuits. Other works attacked Jesuit theories on equivocation and even questioned certain powers held by popes.<sup>51</sup> The dilemma of the Appellants, Pritchard writes, was:

that the propaganda emphasis most likely to gain them favor with the English government and perhaps with the important Catholic laity—violent attacks on Parsons, the Jesuits, Spain, and Catholic conspiracies and invasions, and strong loyalty to the crown and to the basic structure of English society—was also the most likely to lose the sympathy of the papacy.<sup>52</sup>

Appellants legitimized their position in the eyes of English authorities by supporting some of their attitudes towards Catholics but this came at the price of the support of Catholic authorities. In Peter Holmes' words, 'Any stick would serve to beat the Jesuits'.<sup>53</sup> Appellant polemicists used their hatred for the Jesuits as a means of enhancing their status and goals with the government.

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<sup>50</sup> Holmes, *Resistance and Compromise*, 188; Pritchard, *Catholic Loyalism*, 125; Patrick McGrath, *Papists and Puritans under Elizabeth I* (London: Blandford Press, 1967), 291-292.

<sup>51</sup> Holmes, *Resistance and Compromise*, 190-191, 198-203.

<sup>52</sup> Pritchard, *Catholic Loyalism*, 155.

<sup>53</sup> Holmes, *Resistance and Compromise*, 198.

The Appellants' co-operation with the government was a way to decrease the illegality of Catholicism in the realm; they participated in the subordination of a subgroup for their own internal politics and, in their view, the good of the whole. As Braddick and Walter claimed: 'To assert legitimacy... is not only to create a publicly acceptable version of relations of domination and subordination, but it is also to offer a standard against which conduct can be measured'.<sup>54</sup> The Appellants in this case played up their opposition to Spanish and Jesuit plots and interpreted the government's actions against Catholics as a response to these plots. Acceptable Catholic behaviour was loyal to queen and country. The members of the Society of Jesus and their work in England and on the continent held particularly negative connotations for Protestants in England. One example of this was the aforementioned punishment of the minister William Sheppard after an unfair denunciation for supporting Jesuits.<sup>55</sup> Now some members of the domestic English Catholic community were adding their voice to the political and growing cultural hostility towards this specific group.

Authorities in early modern England needed the transmission of information from unofficial sources given the limits of its state machinery. Civil courts needed informers and churchwardens needed neighbourhood reports in order to prosecute those who had transgressed the laws. Crown officials, in their efforts to detect and end conspiracies, discover, monitor or punish political and religious opposition made use of spies. In exchange for a supply of information, those in power had to contend with questionable reports and dubious informants. But the government gained by the information given, and

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<sup>54</sup> Braddick and Walter, 'Grids of Power', 10.

<sup>55</sup> See pages 32-33 above.

by the actions of informers who recognized and sanctioned the authorities' attempts to restrict certain Catholic practices and the mission.

Ex-Catholics, undercover agents and Appellants, for a diverse range of reasons and through a number of ways, sanctioned the policies and efforts of the government against secret activities of the English Catholic communities in England and on the continent. The trade in information could bring monetary reward, but also influence and forgiveness for past actions. The changing political scene among nations and internal factions, as well as the spiritual changes experienced by individuals themselves, created a demand and a supply of information. Opportunities of this sort benefited the patriotic, needy or unscrupulous. The political and religious dynamics within the realm gave them the necessary justification.



## CONCLUSION

In the early years of Elizabeth's rule, 'persuasion rather than coercion', according to Susan Doran, was deemed the most politic way of attracting Catholics to accept the return to a Protestant English church.<sup>1</sup> Government reaction and an increase in attempts to punish those whose activities they considered dangerous followed a number of events. Elizabeth's reign saw the growth of recusancy, the 1569 Northern Rebellion, the foundation of continental seminaries and the mission to England, both with their Jesuit connections, schemes and threats of invasion that involved the queen of Scots, the pope and the Spanish king. The presence of recusancy and missionaries in the realm continued under James I who was also a target of the Gunpowder Plot. The Crown was interested in any politically and religiously subversive activities in the realm and abroad which threatened to undermine the supremacy of the monarch and the established church. Attention was paid to non-conformists, Protestant or Catholic, but the latter were more of a liability due to their rejection of religious reforms and their international associations with powers hostile to the realm.

Catholics were not one homogenous group with the same views of loyalty, conformity, religion and politics. The actions of officials, too, differed considerably across the realm. Collusion and concealment existed and those who did attract official attention, depending on the severity of their offence, felt it in diverse forms, from Parkhurst's polite exhortations to Topcliffe's rack. Depending on position, connections,

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<sup>1</sup> Susan Doran, *Elizabeth I and Religion 1558-1603* (London and New York: Routledge), 51.

behaviour and risk, a Catholic might live undisturbed—or, in the more extreme cases, end his or her life upon a scaffold. Although conformity might serve as an indication of success for the established church, it was not always so. Some parishioners who conformed, such as church papists, were at church to avoid the fines imposed for recusancy, and their opposition to Protestant services might be exhibited through their behaviour in church and avoidance of communion. Furthermore, it is clear that the actions of ecclesiastical and royal officeholders were not absolutely above reproach since some sought to protect family and neighbours or were Catholic themselves. The administration of ecclesiastical and political conformity was also inconsistent, since it depended on the co-operation of parish officials and parishioners, civil officeholders and community members, ex-Catholics and Catholics. Their reasons for supporting the government varied: duty, zeal, reward, exoneration and empowerment.

Actions such as these maintained the established religion while contributing to the subordination of Catholicism in the realm. How people perceived Catholicism or popery and acted on those perceptions is an important area of study in the fields of Reformation England and English Catholic history. The deliberately broader approach taken here allows for a wider scope of themes to be incorporated into the subject such as religion and religious minorities, power, language, communication, the relationships between authorities and the populace and the use of the law. Evidence relating to these different themes demonstrates how the anti-Catholic environment fostered by ecclesiastical and civil laws, propaganda and current events was absorbed by the populace and showed itself in depositions, complaints and offers to work with the authorities. The acceptance of religious changes, of Jacobethan politics, popular beliefs and fears, can be seen in the

ways in which people used and adapted this changing discourse for their own ends. Neighbours and opponents revealed their acceptance and consent by slandering or exposing others to be papists, or through adopting popular rhetoric about Catholics to enhance or lend credibility to their position against another's.

The main purpose of this thesis has been to examine how the actions of officials and individuals enforced and validated the domination of the established, Protestant faith over Catholicism. The context of this question came in response to a variety of statements made by Michael Braddick and John Walter concerning the role of legitimation and language in early modern England. Although this study does not claim to have created the 'more elaborate model of the multivalency of power relations' called for by Braddick and Walter, it does offer a useful way of considering and explaining interactions between neighbours, officials and the state. The concerns about the politics of English Catholicism and religious conformity have been presented as a means of empowerment when dealing with opposition or situations of dominance and subordination. The central reliance on information for law enforcement and security provided examples and opportunities for giving consent as part of one's sense of duty or in exchange for other benefits.

While I have referred to the state throughout, the underlying stress has been on the effects of the religious reformation in England. I emphasized that people who co-operated with government measures, or took initiatives that appear congruent with civil and ecclesiastical laws, directly or indirectly gave their consent to those policies and in doing so demonstrated support for the establishment and continuation of the Elizabethan church. My central topics throughout this thesis have been communication, the power of information, prospects for opportunism, consent and co-operation, language, hierarchy

and ‘power relations’. Though these subjects may seem disparate, together they shed light on the question of how England became Protestant.

This is not a return to the debate over whether the Reformation came about through statute or from popular acceptance of reformed religion.<sup>2</sup> Rather, this thesis suggests that reactions to the needs and uses of information disclose evidence of Protestantism’s deepening hold in England. This is to take Braddick’s discussion about how legitimating languages and actions affected the office and the institution and redirect it towards the subject of the application of laws and policies which affected Catholics. As certain demands, expectations and legitimating languages affected the development of state institutions and the state, so too did these shape the religious settlement in England. Although Braddick incorporated the subjects of religion and the church in his analysis of *State Formation*, he limits his analysis primarily to ways in which institutions and officeholders of the state were charged with enforcing conformity to religious laws. Not surprisingly, given the scope and power of local and lay influence, he argued that religious conformity and uniformity could not happen in England. When we look more closely at the language of information, the conclusions are rather different. My argument is that legitimating languages used by officials and non-officials, and their actions, sanctioned the Reformation or, at least in the case of Catholics like the Appellants, acceded to the government’s authority in matters that touched religion and Catholicism. People got involved, participated in local enforcement and international espionage. Yes, many offences went unreported, but some here did their part, though of course, for their own and a myriad of reasons.

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<sup>2</sup> For example see A.G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (New York: Schocken Books, 1964); J.J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English Peoples* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984).

## APPENDIX

**Letter from Nicholas Robinson, bishop of Bangor, to Sir Francis Walsingham. 28 May 1581. This was the bishop's defence against an accusation of popery. See page 33 above.**

SP 12/153/66.

In Christe Jesu health and peace etc

My humble dutie remembred to your honour. where it pleased the right hon my verey good Lord the Earle of Leycester to signifie unto me that somme my evill willers had freely informed the Lords of her maiesties most hon privey consail, that I was a papist or liking of that waye as farre as I durst, I imboldened myselve though unacquanted to flee to your godly zele in so haynouse an accusation, humbly desiring your honour to stave your opinion of me untill such tyme as you might be more certainly Informed wither I were such a dissembling hypocrite, as is alleged, or the Informers were maliciouse accusers, where as with the former I was never hither unto synce I was a preacher (I thanke God) touched, and the later I doubt not, but shall fall out in prooffe. What my Iudgement hath bene touching the synceritie of christes ghospell ere I was Byssshop, was publikly knowen in Court, at London and Cambridge in which places I continewed preacher 7 yeres: what it hath bene sithence I was byssshop, both the Archbyssshops of this realme, the bisshops of worcester, Cichester, Carlile and Chester with whom I am familiar, can and will testifye what I now am my continewall teaching and doying maye sufficiently declare. For I publikely interprete every sondaye (beyng in my dioeces and not sicke) and other daies of assembles, somme part of holly scripture: I have expounded this Lent tyme twice every weeke (as I have doone thes 15 yeres other partes of scripture) owt of the Epist. to the Galatians certaine chapters: I have and doe preache in assises before the cheefe Iustices and whole countrey: at all which tymes I know thatt I have uttered no doctrine but that was pure and according to the proportion of true faith. I have 4 chapleins preachers who be zelouse and learned mrs of art, who through the dioeces teach Christes trueth and Impunge papistrie that chaos of false religion, agaynst the which what my doynge hath bene and is, but that I am thus compelled, I had rather others did report, yet thus it is, that I have bene divers tymes in daunger of my life in suppressing pilgramages, prayng to Images, night watches at tombes of saintes and other superstitions, (which I founde used in this dioeces) as all this cuntry knowith: that I am threatened dayly for searching owt of such superstitious poeple and exequuting Iurisdiction against them, as many can witnes: that I am termed by letters from my countrymen beyond the seas a persecutor, for that of long tyme I have laied wait for their massing priestes, and such as heare them, and doe make Inquisition twice every yere through every parishe of such, whereby (prayse be geven to God) though somme tymes there were many that did withdrawe themselves from the Church yet now in my whole dioeces there be but six, whom why they were not this last yere Indited nether in the Quarter seascions nor

Assises, suppose your honor knoweth by my certificat to the right hon Lords of the Councail Therefore if nether in doctrine or doynge I have in my dioeces ether taught or mantayned papistrie, I humbly crave at your handes to weigh what myne accuser is: what errorrs of papistrie he allegeth to be in me: what proofes he bringeth: what hath moved him thus to deale with me: and I doubt not but that I shall be founde Innocent in so great an offence: and he iudged giltie of so malicious an accusation The Lord Iesus encrease his manyfold graces in your honour to the promoting of his holly ghospell.

Bangor 28 maii 1581

your honours at  
commaundement in Christe  
Bangor

**Bishop Whitgift to Sir Francis Walsingham. 24 December 1582. This includes the report of the interrogations of two priests over their whereabouts, actions and other Catholics. See page 45 above.**

SPD 12/156/29

Right honorabl, There are taken herein Worcestreshire by Monday and his Fellowe two old and very ignorant massing preistes whose examinations I have sent unto you here enclosed It seemeth that they are of some accompt Among our Recusantes There are also dwelling at Rippell in this County, two brethren the one called Thomas Moore theother Rees Moore pore men but very daungerous Thomas more was Bonners porter in Queen Maries tyme Many Papistes resort to their house (as it seemeth) to heare masses and to have other conference I have sondry tymes layed wayte for them, but could not by any meanes have them taken before this tyme. They are watermen and dwelling hard upon Severn syde and in the edge of Glocestreshire Rees moore is nowe here in prison in Worcestre but will confesse nothing to any porpose The other who is the Lewder cannot yet be come by I think there are not two worsse affected any where, of there calling, nor that doo more harm Thus beseching allmightie god to geve you many prosperious and happy yeres, and to direct you in all your dooinges with his holy Spirit, I commytt you to his tuytion From worcestre the xxiiiith of Decembre, 1582

your honors to comaund  
Jo wigorn

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The confession and examination of John Felton priest being of the age of lxxiiii yeres or thereabactes, taken before the Reverend Father in god John Bishopp of Wigorn the xvth day of December 1582 Anno Regine Elizebethe &c xxvto

First thesayd examinant beeing demaunded where hee lyved all Queen maries tyme sayth that he served at a place called Lokyns in Barkshire And two yeres after the Queens majesty that nowe is came to the Crowne he served at a place called Silby in Leycestreshire and after that about one yere at Stretton in the Dale in com Salop. From

thense he went to Neather Wallop in Hampshire where he served also for the space of xvii weekes: After which tyme he gave over to serve and went from that place because he was threatened by one Lambert a gentleman, for cyting of him And from thense went to one mr Fowlers house nere unto Stafford, where he founde Doctor Poole late Bishopp of Peetreborough, who reconcyled him to the catholyke churche agayne (meaning the churche of Rome) And being demaunded

in what manner he reconcyled him, hee sayeth by shryving him, absolving him and enioyning him pennaunce of fastinge &c After which tyme he wondered abrode among his frendes and some tymes was with mr Willm Gattakar at a place called Gattakar in the parish of clareley in com Salop sometymes with one mr Thomas Farmer at Hoordes parke nere Bridgenorth in com Salop sometymes with mr Jerome Hoord in worvilde homme in com Salop sometymes with mr Frauncis hoord of Bridgenorthe aforesayd and sometymes at one Hilles of Hilles(?) in com Stafford

And for the space of theis tenn yeres last past he hath bene most in worcestreshire Gloucestreshire and Hereffordshire

In Worcestreshire with one Robert Stringer of Upton warren with one Brooke nere unto Henlypp, with one mr Jeffreys of Crambe with one Thomas more of Rippell. And a litle before harvest last with mr Reignold Williams of Throkmorton synce michaelmasse last with the Ladie Throkmorton of Feckenham about fower yeres ago with mrs Heath of Allnechurche within theis two yeres at the Ladie wyndsors synce Easter last with mr myddlemore of Hawkslowe about a Twelvemoneth ago with mrs Packington of chaddisly within theis two yeres at mr Talbottes of Graston: about fower yeres ago at John Badgers of Poolehouse gent and within this twelvemoneth at Hugh Liggons of Upton Severn gent To all which places I resorted as occasion served

In Glocestreshire about fower yeres ago at Forthhampton with in mrs Blount In Hereffordshire at one George Fydoes in the parish of Rocheford And being examyned howe often he hath sayed masse with in this twelvemoneth he aunswereth hee cannot tell but he sayth peradventure he hath sayed mass sondry tymes.

And beeing furder examyned where he hath sayed masse, hee aunswereth, that he hath sayed masse sondry tymes within this twlevemoneth at Thomas mores of Ripple and namely on Tuesday last was a sevenight, where there was present at the sayd

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masse the sayd thomas more Rees more and Frauncis more their Sister And being demaunded who were elles at his masses there he aunswereth, he cannot tell

And furder sayeth that either in July or August last paste mrs Sheldon the wyfe of Ralf Sheldon Esq sent for him to the house of one Reignold Williams of Throkmorton to come to her to Streonsham in com Wigorn which hee did accordingly and at his coming beeing likewise requested by her, sayed masse there fynding at Streonsham suche vestimentes and other furnytüre as is usually occupied in the celebration of masse At which masse were present the sayd mrs Sheldon mrs Russell and one other gentlewoman whose name hee kneweth not And one man which helped him to say masse, whose name lykewise he kneweth not And furder sayeth that at the same masse mrs Sheldon and mrs Russell received the Sacrament And when he had sayed masse he was sent away

And sayeth also that mrs Sheldon gave him two shillings and mrs Russell gave him Fyve shillings for his paynes taken  
 And being demaunded where elles he hath sayed masse, he aunswereth hee cannot tell  
 And beeing furder examined whether at his mass sayed at Streonsham (where mrs Sheldon and mrs Russell receaved the sacrament) hee shryved them before they receaved it or no aunswereth he did shryve them and absolve them And so hath hee lykewise shryven the sayd Thomas more & Rees more  
 Beeing demaunded whether he knoweth any Popish preistes Jesuites or others come from beyond sea he sayeth that he knoweth none but onely one Barnes the sonne of one Barnes of Hanley Castell in com Warw who is a preist and with whom this examinante once spake at Thomas More aforsayd  
 And being demaunded whether he have authority to reconcyle or no he aunswereth yf the Indulgence or Jubilee doo contynue, he hath autoritie so to doo, and furder sayeth that he reconcyled the sayd mrs Russell yf it were within the tyme of the aforesaid Jubilee  
 And beeing examyned whom elles he hath reconcyled within this twelvemoneth he aunswereth that he hath reconcyled one Willm Jeffreys of Warrwike at Coughton in com Warrwike  
 Being demaunded whereuntoo he did reconcyle the sayd mrs Russell and wllm Jeffreys aforesayd aunswereth that he did reconcyle them to the catholyke churche and beeing asked who is the head of that catholike churche hee sayeth he cannot tell And furder sayth that mrs russell confessed unto him that shee was reconcyled to the catholike churche by another also before that tyme The cause whereof was because shee had bene at the service nowe used in this churche of England  
 And beeing furder examyned by what autorite he did reconcyle the persons aforesayd hee aunswereth that hee receaved authority by word from Doctor Allen beyond seas

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The confession and examination of Symon Southern Priest being of the age of lxxxii years or thereabouts taken before the Reverend ffather in god John Byshopp of Wigorn the xviiiith of Decembre 1582 Anno Regine Elizabeth &c xxv to

First this Examinant sayth that for the space of viii yeres synce her majesty came to the crowne he was with the Bushopp of Wynchester that nowe is, then being (?) of Sir cusset where he served as stuard of household and there resorted to churche as others did.  
 Being demaunded how long he hath bene Preist he aunswereth he hath bene Preist one and fyftie yeres and all.  
 Being demaunded whether ever he served any cure since the beginning of her majestes reigne, he aunswereth he hath not but sayeth that he hath come to churche during the tyme of his being with the B of Wynchestere aforesayd and that since his coming into this contrey where he hath contynued theis viii yeres and more he hath not come to the churche And being asked why hee aunswereth for his Infirmittees  
 Being demaunded whether he will nowe come to the churche or no, he desiereth not to be moved thereunto, till he feele himself better  
 Being farder demaunded where he hath remayned for the most parte since his coming into Worcestreshire, hee aunswereth sometymes at Birlingham with a Nevewe of his



sometymes at Charleton with mr Dingley: sometymes at Throckmorton with mr Reignold Wiliams but he never lay there: sometymes at John Badgers of Poolehouse: and at one Frewens of Harley castell and sometymes at Thomas mores of Rippell  
Being demaunded whether he hath sayed masse since her majestes coming to the crowne and since it hath bene forbydden by the lawe hee aunswereth of his creadite and honestie hee hath not sayed any masse synce that tyme.  
And being demaunded whether hee hath shryven any or no he sayeth that he hath shryven and absolved dyvers after the old manner when they had bene sicke and namely Rees more. Others also he hath in lyke manner shryven, but he remembreth them not.

**Peter Hardy to possibly Lord Cecil. 1603. This letter sent by a travelling haberdasher contains the story of his insinuation among English Catholics in France and his efforts to gain information from them. See pages 69-70 above.**

SP 14/5/24.

My very good lord aboute the 16 of november 1603 I petter Hardy haberdasher of london beieng bond over into france aboute my buissennes to buy some conedictes beieng arived at dover I mett with one youthe of the age of 19 yeares or their aboute wiche asked me whether I was bond over into france his name whas laurence buewell a notherne gentleman sonne withe a white grewhond in his hand and I tolld him I was bond over to paris he saied his was glad of it for he was bond allso to parris to my lord embasadur and I tolld him I was so to and when wee weire arived att callias we could nott be suffered to come to the townne but went to the suberbis and we were about somme xxx pasengers and when we came to a logieng we weire about somme xii parsons it was apon a friday we had a camone a bakon brouthe to bourd and saden milk and I beieng it sea sik I woolld not eat nothieng ells but milk and this youthe apon that touke me for a papist and forsouk all the company to go withe me and did rune with me from callis a fout to diepp and by the way did disclosse his mind to me and saied thus to me I tolld you I went to my lord inbasader of england but I dow not for sayeth he I am a cotholique romaine and quod I so am I then saied he to me I have a letter hiere wiche he gave me to kepe wiche is sent from my very good father mr doctor cicill beieng saied he that sir robart darmers so my very good lord saiet I to him what is that good mr doctor cicill he toold me that it was prist wiche was at sir robart darmore so I kept the letter and at depe leaft him to come up and went to roan as fast as I could and at roan took post to paris and went to my lord embasader and sewed his honour the letter wiche letter I have brouths hiere withe me beieng mr doctor cecill hand and is in spanish and this letter was derveded withe this yong man to one mr hille att parris at minion collegge my lord embasader did open the letter and read it nonne ells read it wheire apon my very good lord I staid still and louked for the yong man every day att paris for I had derveded him to come to roan att the withe crosse and he came to roan and so on iii dayes affter to paris and as he was att roan theire mett him onne mr Laurence michellbonne a catollike romaine and the yong man maid him sellffe knoewn to him and this michellbonne brouthe a letter to one mr constable on his behallff wiche letter I allso intercepted and

have here to sew this michellbonne my very good lord I take it is one that received all the papist letters out of england and allso sended somme in to england now my very good lord to come to this yong man againe I maid him belleve that I was come to france for no other intent but for lyberty sake of concience and that I had solld a great dealle of land bicausse I woould avoid the land of things I feared woould come to pass amongst those catolliques romaine

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and allso tolld him that I woould remaine in paris allthogether and by chance my very good lord therre came to my logieng in the fanbourg of st german onne of the college minion a englissemann and his name is Churche for he had loged there beffore he went to lie att the college minion and my hostesse had linin of his to wassehe and seieng me to be a englissemann asked me wathe news out of england I tolld him I could tell no other news but that the Lords where araigned and thouth it woould go hard withe the good papistes wheire in upon they maid muche of me and mr constable man saied their never came good news out of england now my very good lord they tooke me for a papist and they asked me iff I weire I tolld them I was and therefore I was cume and had solld all wheire upon they went and told mr doctor bagsha and doctor stendis and hill and constable that there was a englissemann come over and then bagsha sent to my logieng desirrieng me to come to speake withe him now my very good lord I maid my lord embasador aquented withe it and my lord bad me go and see what I coulld gather of them and I did go theither and found no body att the collegge but mr constable man so he beieng joyefull I was come yeat sory they weire not their request me I woould whake with him to the lady churche and there I shoould find him or some of them and so goyeng withe him to the churche he went to the holly water and all to besprinkle him sellff and crossed him sellff and knelled downe and so did I bicausse I woould see whether I coulld gather some what of them but I coulld not speak withe none of them that day the next day I went againe and there I fond mr doctor bagsha and doctor stennens and so they bad me very welcome and asked me whether I was a catollique romaine I tolld him I was and that I had solld a greathe parte of land in the Ille of withe and that I was to have received v or vi hundreth ponds but I had received but ii hundreth crownes and that I touthe to go in to england once againe for my money if it came not speedlily so he asked me wheire I was att masse in england I told them I was somme times at the frenche embasader and some times at sir robart darmours and some times att sir John carell at chichester and he asked me whether I knew mr doctor cicill I tolld him very well he asked me whether I knew mr muche apriest there I said very well I saied withe that they maide very muche and tolld me if I wanted any thing theye coulld dow they weire att my command they asked me further yf I coulld not tell wheirefore they lords Sir wallter Raulley and watsson weire in trouble and I told them I knew nott saied bagsha it is but of there mallice sayet he thus the good saints of god are thus masacred but I call them

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so muche longe sins if they had benne wisse they mouthe have prevented but I trust they rest will take hid how to trust to muche to heritikes but one or other will turne I trust to god all these heritikes to dust and I pray god that if he dow nott retourne that his time may be shortt affter this I see there came ayent and they weire goyeng to masse and so I

told them I was goyeng to receve a hudrethe crownes and shewd my bill of exchange wiche as good louke was to be receved that same houre and so touke my leve of them and they request me to have my compnay and I tolld them that as soone as I could gett all my money I would come and inhabite amongst them for my reson was to see if I could gett any letters from them in to england

Now my very good lord to come to the yong man againe all this was affore the youthe was come to paris when he arived by greathe chance fond him in as he was loukeng out for me so I brouthe him to my logieng and the nexst day I louked very angryly and he asked me what was they matter I tolld him that it was by reason I had receved but ii hundred crownes and I louked for xv hundrethe mor but I thout I showlld go to diepe againe and yf I could not hierie of it I showld be inforced to go in to england againe and so beffore I had prothed withe my lord enbasader affore and I tolld him that I should be faine to leave him att my lord enbaseder till I came againe out of england and so beffore him intreated my lord steward to kepe him till I came againe and I caused him to heine the steward his grey hond affter this I wallked in the street I asked that of him now I woould have you to tarry hierie till I come againe and you shall serve me and in regard I have dune for you put casse I showld go into england and that it showld so falle out I swoold be pursued etheire in the maine or niere the cost apon my comieng over againe I pray the tell me where I mithe be saffe for you must take hede you dow not tell nonne of my lord enbaseder men that I am a catollik no sayethe he I warant you apon my liffe none shall kno it but if you chance to go in to england to bukingamsheire go I pray to Sir robart darmore and when you move their you shall find by meanes of mr butler his name is John dennietand say you come from me and he will bring you to mr doctor cicill or to mr muche prist or to henry hevilla what is that same henry hevilla it is a prist allso a lusty fellow a sayethe he hathe swourne the knike deathe if he dow nott permit liberty of concience to the catolliques romains if you go theither you shall be as saffe as yf you were hier then he tolld me the butler name is John dennieth one humfrey chandler phellip rannenne phellipe the frenche man any of this saye these will bring you to them if you come frome me but other wyse they are but \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ places in the house.

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he told me allso if I weire in danger in the cost I showlld go to chichester to Sir John careill att the friers and theirie I shoould aske for mr thomas collbek and mr laurence foster and desire them that they swoold hellpe me to the speche of mr thomas smithe a prist theirie a talle man and a paille couler allso the steward name is mr houker allso he tolld me he was att masse divers times when he dwellt at Sr John careill att mr cottnon by havan and theirie the butler names is rauffe simmes mr thomas perkins and the will heallp me to the speche of one Johnson the prist the house keper name is Jarret mr willam daye att fisheborne by chichester lieng att mr laime housse and thus is all that I can say that I have hard and have as nier as I came discred

thus muche I can say allso my very good lord one mr phillpott wiche brout the pakethe taries after the post came to my lord enbasader xvii dayes and when he was arived went straithe wais to minion college and I take it lieathe ether their or very nier unto it allso mr constable did shewe unto my lord enbasadour to com unto england for his passe allso apon the vii of december the kinge was at a sermon by the loure att noterdame churche

and there did here a Jesuite preache and also hath restored them all in to the reallme of france also upon friday the xii of december the embasader of venise came (in his coche to visite my lord embasader where upon the venicion coche and men being att the doore the frenche men and the veniciens fell at striff and forced in to the housse of my lord embasader and their d: beat and hurt divers of my lord men and the venicien men and nothieng couldd apeace then my lord sent monsieur st sonaviene his secretaire to one of the presidents and by the way he beatt him and tooke his cloke and rapier and laied him for deaf and as many englishe men that they met they put them in prison more over it can no be thout but it was some pretende matche of the frenche went the weire of the prince of condy men and their allies also my lord tolld me that the papists had then news of any thing that was donne in england beffor him and that if their weire any good regard att the ports they could not be chossen but they swoold be intercepted.

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