

The Parochial Roots of Laudianism Revisited: Catholics, Anti-Calvinists and 'Parish Anglicans' in Early Stuart England

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There is no end in sight to historical squabbles about the speed, impact and enduring cultural and ecclesiastical legacies of the English Reformation. The past two decades have witnessed a lively and stimulating debate about the reception and entrenchment of Protestant belief and practice in local contexts. Over the same period we have seen a series of heated and animated exchanges about the developments taking place within the early Stuart Church and the role they played in triggering the outbreak of hostilities between Charles I and Parliament in 1642. While the focus of the first controversy has been the relationship between zealous Protestantism and the vast mass of the ordinary people, the second has been conducted almost exclusively at the level of the learned polemical literature of the clerical elite. So far little attempt has been made to bridge and span the gap. This is hardly surprising – sensible scholars think twice before venturing into two historiographical minefields simultaneously. Nevertheless the problem of reconciling these parallel but largely discrete bodies of interpretation and evidence remains, and it is one which historians like myself, whose interests straddle the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century divide and the Catholic–Protestant confessional fence, can no longer afford to sidestep and ignore. This essay represents a set of tentative reflections and

HJ = *Historical Journal*; *HR* = *Historical Research*; *JBS* = *Journal of British Studies*; *P&P* = *Past and Present*; *RH* = *Recusant History*; *TRHS* = *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*

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speculations on recent research, a cautious exploration of three clusters of inter-related issues and themes.

First, did the ecclesiastical policies implemented by Archbishop William Laud and his episcopal allies in the 1630s have parochial appeal and roots? Did Caroline ceremonialism and Arminian theology strike chords with the populace at large, especially the laity below the rank of the landed gentry?

Secondly, is it feasible to link this potential constituency of support for Laud and his colleagues with those individuals who actively or passively resisted the mid sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation and became members of the Church of England almost by default? Can we trace a direct line of descent from the residually 'popish' congregations who clashed with Puritan preachers in the reign of Elizabeth I to those subjects of her Stuart successors who may have welcomed the reaction against high Calvinist tenets and Genevan liturgical emphases?

Thirdly, can any connection be established between the long-term recoil from Calvinism and the shadowy world of Catholic recusancy and occasional conformity? How far did the priorities of the ecclesiastical regime which rose to prominence during the Personal Rule assist and influence the process of winning converts from the Church of Rome? And was there a sliver of truth in the claim that the Laudian programme amounted to a kind of Counter-Reformation by stealth?

Such intriguing and challenging questions are far easier to formulate than answer. The task is complicated by the continuing lack of dialogue between historians of Protestantism and Catholicism and the resilience of sectarian paradigms. The aim of this article is simply to open up some fresh lines of enquiry and expose a few preliminary ideas to the light and air.

I

The shape and contours of the continuing debate about early seventeenth-century ecclesiastical developments are beginning to change. There is no need to review the dispute about the origins and impact of Laudianism in any detail here: its main outlines are all too familiar to scholars working in this crowded field. Suffice it to say that Nicholas Tyacke's powerful thesis about the rise of an innovating Arminian clique which destroyed a Calvinist 'consensus' held together by belief in the dogma of double predestination has proved to be highly contentious.¹ So too have the views

¹ Nicholas Tyacke, 'Puritanism, Arminianism and counter-revolution', in Conrad Russell (ed.), *The origins of the English Civil War*, Basingstoke 1973, 119–43, 'Arminianism and English culture', in A. C. Duke and C. A. Tamse (eds), *Britain and the Netherlands*, VII: *Church and State since the Reformation: papers delivered to the seventh Anglo-Dutch historical conference*, The Hague 1981, 94–117, and *Anti-Calvinists: the rise of English Arminianism c. 1590–1640*, Oxford 1987.

of Peter White, who denies the existence of any such ideological cement and stresses instead a broad spectrum of standpoints and attitudes in which no one group monopolised ecclesiastical office under Elizabeth and James.² Buttressed by the work of Kevin Sharpe, George Bernard and Julian Davies, this model presents Laud as a mild-mannered administrator who eschewed discussion of thorny issues and dedicated his career to upholding an ‘Anglican via media’ – to steering a middle path between the Scylla and Charybdis of popery and Presbyterianism. The policies enforced during the Personal Rule were simply a conservative extension of the objectives of earlier archbishops such as Matthew Parker, John Whitgift and Richard Bancroft, and their chief author and architect was not Laud but the king.³ Peter Lake and others, by contrast, find the Tyackean paradigm more compelling, but are nevertheless anxious to highlight the frictions and tensions inherent and evolving within the Calvinist camp.⁴ Perhaps the most persuasive interpretation to date is that embodied in the important recent monograph by Anthony Milton. For Milton Laudianism was a novel and distinctive synthesis of strands and patterns of thought embedded in a unified intellectual tradition which was gradually dissolving of its own accord.⁵

Moreover, whereas for some time historians were locked in combat about doctrines of grace, now interest is swinging towards other items on the Laudian agenda: the altar policy, the campaign for order and conformity, the shift towards a more sensuous and sacramental style of worship, the enhancement of clerical authority and wealth, the assault on the Puritan sabbath, and changing attitudes towards Christian history

² Peter White, ‘The rise of Arminianism reconsidered’, *P&P* ci (1983), 34–54. *Predestination, policy, and polemic: conflict and consensus within the English Church from the Reformation to the Civil War*, Cambridge 1992, and ‘The *via media* in the early Stuart Church’, in Kenneth Fincham (ed.), *The early Stuart Church, 1603–1642*, Basingstoke 1993, 211–30. See also White’s ‘Rejoinder’ to Nicholas Tyacke’s reply to his 1983 article: *P&P* cxv (1987), 201–29. At the time of writing Tyacke can be said to have claimed the last word: he has recently launched a spirited attack on his ‘revisionist’ critics in ‘Anglican attitudes: some recent writings on English history, from the Reformation to the Civil War’, *JBS* xxxv (1996), 139–67.

³ Kevin Sharpe, ‘Archbishop Laud’, *History Today* xxxiii (1983), 26–30, ‘Archbishop Laud and the University of Oxford’, in Hugh Lloyd-Jones, Valerie Pearl and Blair Worden (eds), *History and imagination: essays in honour of H. R. Trevor Roper*, London 1981, 146–64, and *The personal rule of Charles I*, New Haven 1992, ch. vi; George Bernard, ‘The Church of England, c. 1529–c. 1642’, *History* lxxv (1990), 183–206; Julian Davies, *The Caroline captivity of the Church: Charles I and the remoulding of Anglicanism 1625–1641*, Oxford 1992.

⁴ Peter Lake, ‘Calvinism and the English Church 1570–1635’, *P&P* cxiv (1987), 32–76.

⁵ Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: the Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant thought, 1600–1640*, Cambridge 1995. See also his ‘The Church of England, Rome and the true Church: the demise of a Jacobean consensus’, in Fincham, *Early Stuart Church*, 187–210.

and the status of the Church of England *vis-à-vis* Rome and Reformed congregations on the continent. Not all these trends can be explained as by-products of Arminian modifications of the dogma of predestination: theological precepts and liturgical preferences were not always inextricably linked. Indeed, it is becoming increasingly clear that soteriology was not the chief source of discord in the 1630s and early 1640s: ceremony, discipline and ecclesiology were far more important in igniting and stoking the conflict.⁶

If excessive emphasis on doctrinal disagreements produces a distorted and lopsided picture, so too does over-concentration on one set of contenders within the early Stuart Church. It would be quite wrong to lay the blame for destabilising the religious *status quo* entirely at the Laudians' door. As Tyacke and Lake are insisting with ever more vigour, early seventeenth-century Puritanism had distinctly subversive potential. Its radical character was not simply the consequence of aggressive confrontation with Laudian clerics, but a legacy of the militant Presbyterian movement of the 1580s and 90s, which, far from fizzling out completely by the end of the Elizabethan period, had survived underground.⁷ Having swung away from the 'Puritan Revolution' of Whig tradition to the Laudian coup championed by the revisionists, the pendulum is gradually coming to rest somewhere in the middle.

Most of those involved in this controversy carefully restrict themselves to considering the culture and thought of educated, literate Protestants, in particular that of ordained ministers and university divines. Likewise, the ideological rationale behind Laudian policies has elicited more attention than how they impinged on parochial life. The voices and opinions of lay people who were at the receiving end are very rarely heard. Both of these biases can be partly explained by the inadequacy and scarcity of the available evidence. It is intractably difficult to plumb the

⁶ Indicative of this shift is the recent collection of essays edited by Kenneth Fincham, *Early Stuart Church*. See especially Fincham's introduction and the essays by Nicholas Tyacke, 'Archbishop Laud', Andrew Foster, 'The clerical estate revitalised', and Peter Lake, 'The Laudian style: order, uniformity and the pursuit of the beauty of holiness in the 1630s'. A good summary of the overall Laudian programme, as well as a useful critique of the historiography, can be found in Andrew Foster, 'Church policies of the 1630s', in Richard Cust and Ann Hughes (eds), *Conflict in early Stuart England*, London 1989, 193–223.

⁷ Nicholas Tyacke, *The fortunes of English Puritanism, 1603–1640* (Dr Williams's Library Lecture), London 1990, and 'The "rise of Puritanism" and the legalising of dissent, 1571–1719', in O. P. Grell, J. I. Israel and N. Tyacke (eds), *From persecution to toleration: the Glorious Revolution and religion in England*, Oxford 1991, 17–28; Peter Lake, 'Anti-popery: the structure of a prejudice', in Cust and Hughes, *Conflict in early Stuart England*, esp. pp. 86–7, and '"A Charitable Christian hatred": the godly and their enemies in the 1630s', in Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales (eds), *The culture of English Puritanism, 1560–1700*, Basingstoke 1996. See also Jacqueline Eales, 'A road to revolution: the continuity of Puritanism, 1559–1642', in the same volume, who surprisingly makes no reference to Tyacke's earlier explications of this theme.

depths of the popular mind and generalisations about reactions in the localities founder in the face of the startling variety of circumstances prevailing in different parts of the country.⁸ Some historians are understandably sceptical about the relevance of high-flown scholastic debates about sub- and supralapsarianism to the average parishioner.⁹ Others argue that partisan commitment to a cause does not necessarily require a sophisticated understanding of all its arcana: academic infighting could find a ready and interesting echo in the perceptions and actions of the broader populace. Thus, though a cockney audience at Paul's Cross in 1601 had probably never read a word of Theodore Beza or Cardinal Bellarmine and evidently failed to grasp the polemical subtleties of the preacher's exposition, they none the less knew who to root for ('Bezer') and who to boo ('Bellamy').¹⁰ Even so, railing off altars, reinstalling religious images, bowing to the east and condoning traditional games after Sunday evensong clearly had more tangible repercussions in the villages and towns of early modern England.

We should not ignore Keith Thomas's claim that many contemporaries were immune to the pull of any form of organised religion and remained utterly ignorant of the rudiments of Christianity until their dying day. Along with Peter Clark's 'Third World' of excommunicates, these individuals may well have regarded Laudian changes in ritual and liturgy with careless indifference and wondered why rearranging church furniture (among other things) was causing such a fuss.¹¹ But how did regular churchgoers respond? The godly Puritan minority is both vociferous and conspicuous, especially after the collapse of the Personal Rule: people like the 15,000 Londoners who signed the Root and Branch petition in December 1640 calling for the abolition of episcopacy; the crowds who cheered for Prynne, Bastwick and Burton as their ears were cropped by order of the court of Star Chamber and purchased the hagiographical prints of their heroes which circulated after their public mutilation in 1637; and the Northampton woman presented before

⁸ A point stressed by Sharpe, *Personal rule*, 332, 345, 383–4.

⁹ For example, Bernard, 'Church of England', 196; Sharpe, *Personal rule*, 298–300, 383–9; Ian Green, "'England's wars of religion'?: Religious conflict and the English Civil Wars', in J. Van Den Berg and P. G. Hofstijzer (eds), *Church, change and revolution: transactions of the fourth Anglo-Dutch Church History Colloquium*, Leiden 1991, 104–5. Green quotes the observation of Christopher Potter, dean of Worcester and chaplain in ordinary to Charles I, that not one in a thousand laymen understood the Arminian controversy.

¹⁰ Barbara Donagan, 'The York House conference revisited: laymen, Calvinism and Arminianism', *HR* lxiv (1991), 312 and passim; Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 425, 542–3. See also Lake, 'Anti-popery: the structure of a prejudice', esp. pp. 92–6.

¹¹ Keith Thomas, *Religion and the decline of magic: studies in popular beliefs in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England*, Harmondsworth 1971, 198–206; Peter Clark, *English provincial society from the Reformation to the Revolution: religion, politics and society in Kent 1500–1640*, Hassocks 1977, 156.

officials of the diocese of Peterborough for scolding some youths she caught playing sport one Sunday afternoon with the words 'they might choose whether the king should hang them for not obeying him or the devil burn them for so breaking the sabbath'.¹² Nor can we neglect those who participated in demolishing crucifixes, pictures and other Caroline 'idols' and in tearing down Cheapside Cross in 1643, lamented the suspension of stipendiary lecturers, or voted with their feet and left for America. Others seem to have objected to Caroline schemes for refurbishing churches for more practical reasons: their expense, resentment of the removal of family pews or profound distaste for neo-clerical and sacerdotal pretensions.¹³ It may be worth remarking that opposition to one element of the Laudian programme does not necessarily mean antagonism to all: individuals are rarely as logical and consistent as the 'isms' and 'ologies' historians dissect with the benefit of hindsight.

Evidence of positive approval for the episcopal initiatives and theological emphases of the 1630s is equally impressionistic, inferential and elusive. One might point to the anti-Puritan aldermen of Great Yarmouth whose views coincided with the priorities of local conformist divines;¹⁴ the city father of Coventry who energetically defended Arminian tenets over the council house dinner table,¹⁵ and to gentlemen and noblemen like Sir Robert Bannastre and Viscount Scudamore who thoroughly endorsed the renewed emphasis on reverence, ritual and the aesthetic and personally financed lavish restorations of their parish churches and private chapels.¹⁶ It could also be argued that in some areas official action merely spurred on and sanctioned architectural improvements that were already well underway. Churchwardens' accounts index a significant rise in expenditure on interiors which predates the Caroline campaign by several decades; and Diarmaid MacCulloch, Julia Merritt and Ian Archer have drawn attention to the 'minor building revolution' that was gathering momentum in both city and country parishes from the last years of the sixteenth century. As both MacCulloch and Merritt note, however, the priorities of these late Elizabethan and Jacobean schemes to restore church fabrics often seem to have clashed rather than concurred with the alterations later dictated by Archbishops Laud and Neile. Not all

¹² For the Root and Branch petition see *The Stuart constitution: documents and commentary*, ed. J. P. Kenyon, Cambridge 1986, 154–7. For an example of such hagiographical prints see A. M. Hind, *Engraving in England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries*, iii, comp. M. Corbett and M. Norton, Cambridge 1964, plate 178. The Northampton example is cited in John Fielding, 'Arminianism in the localities: Peterborough diocese 1603–1642', in Fincham, *Early Stuart Church*, 101. ¹³ Sharpe, *Personal rule*, 320, 394–7, 401.

¹⁴ Richard Cust, 'Anti-Puritanism and urban politics: Charles I and Great Yarmouth', *HJ* xxxv (1992), 1–26. ¹⁵ Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, 220–1.

¹⁶ I. Atherton, 'Viscount Scudamore's "Laudianism": the religious practices of the first Viscount Scudamore', *HJ* xxxiv (1991), 567–96; Fielding, 'Arminianism in the localities', 106.

the supporters of such beautification programmes fit neatly into a Laudian or proto-Laudian mould.¹⁷ Yet a sensitive reading of the same records suggests to Kevin Sharpe that at least some parishioners regarded the altar rails their neighbours hated with a passion as objects of communal pride. Why else, he asks, would they describe such items as ‘comely’, ‘handsome’ and ‘fine’?¹⁸ George Bernard maintains that the erection of such enclosures is a better test of commitment than their demolition, while Dr Sharpe insists that a willingness to pay for controversial furnishings, elaborate surplices, gilt candlesticks and communion plate implies sympathy if not enthusiasm for Laudian strategies.¹⁹ Here, however, we confront ‘a conundrum of compliance’ no less puzzling than the one which has long exercised revisionist scholars of the English Reformation.²⁰ Does silence and compliance really mean consent?

It is certainly striking that scholars such as Kevin Sharpe who suspect Laudianism may have had popular appeal are usually also those who reject the notion that it represented a radical break with the Elizabethan and Jacobean past. Historians like Nicholas Tyacke who see it as a radical challenge to established trends, on the other hand, are more inclined implicitly to dismiss this possibility or at least to reserve judgement discreetly. The underlying presupposition seems to be that the English people adhere, barnacle-like, to whatever represents established ‘tradition’. But the two issues should not be confused. The unpopularity of archiepiscopal policies in the 1630s is not a corollary of their novelty: even if the activities of Laud and his adherents disrupted settled parochial patterns it would be wrong to assume automatically that they aroused discontent. Changes ordained from above are sometimes warmly embraced by those upon whom they are imposed – a fact Reformation historians have perhaps been prone to forget. The most likely scenario is surely a deeply divided society, a society fractured along fault lines which

¹⁷ Diarmaid MacCulloch, ‘The myth of the English Reformation’, *JBS* xxx (1991), 13–14; Julia Merritt, ‘Reconstructing the Jacobean Church? Puritans, Laudians and the phenomenon of church building in early Stuart London’, paper delivered at the Early Modern Britain Seminar, University of Oxford, 9 Nov. 1995, and ‘The social context of the parish church in early modern Westminster’, in Richard Rodger (ed.), *Urban History Yearbook* xviii, Leicester 1991, 20–31; Ian Archer, ‘The nostalgia of John Stow’, in David Smith, Richard Strier and David Bevington (eds), *The theatrical city: culture, theatre and politics in London, 1576–1649*, Cambridge 1995, 33–4. See also Andrew Foster, *The Church of England 1750–1640*, London 1994, 58, 68.

¹⁸ Sharpe, *Personal rule*, 342.
¹⁹ Bernard, ‘Church of England’, 199; Sharpe, *Personal rule*, 390–2. E. R. C. Brinkworth notes general compliance with the order regarding the repositioning of the communion table: ‘The Laudian Church in Buckinghamshire’, *University of Birmingham Historical Journal* v (1955), 46.

²⁰ A phrase coined by Patrick Collinson in his review of Eamon Duffy, *The stripping of the altars: traditional religion in England 1400–1580*, New Haven 1992: ‘The papal state of England’, *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 15 Jan. 1993, 23.

may help us account for the structure of popular allegiance after the fighting began in 1642. Of course, as Ian Green has observed, there are hazards in trying to interpret the reign of Charles I merely as a prelude to the Civil War.²¹ It may be more useful to analyse it as the tail-end of attempts to turn England into a Protestant nation.

This was the perspective adopted by Christopher Haigh in a provocative essay on the Elizabethan Church, the Catholics and the people published in 1984. Working from within a tradition which sees the Reformation not as a Protestant walkover but as a prolonged and uphill struggle against conservative sentiment, Haigh argued that perhaps the majority of Englishmen and women remained unmoved by the missionary fervour of Calvinist pastors and preachers. Reluctant to surrender the Old Religion in 1559 and insulated from change by Marian priests who prudently subscribed to the Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity, by 1603 many were still subconsciously attached to 'popish' practices and beliefs. Absorbed into the new order through apathy, inertia and the attrition of time, these conformists came to centre their religious worship on those rites and ceremonies sanctioned by the rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer which reminded them of the faith of their childhood. They insisted that ministers wear the surplice, baptise with the sign of the cross, church women after childbirth, use wafers rather than bread when administering the eucharist and carry out funerals with fitting and old-fashioned solemnity – often hounding particularly recalcitrant vicars and curates into the local church courts. Dr Haigh concluded with the conjecture that a later generation of these 'parish anglicans' formed a natural reservoir and bedrock of support for Laudian reforms.²² In an article which appeared in 1985 he went further and suggested that popular hostility to predestination may have been as critical as the growth of Arminian teaching in the universities in amending the theological temper of the Church of England in the early seventeenth century.²³

If we accept the existence of a large body of individuals who hankered after the emotion and mystery of late medieval Catholicism and clung tenaciously to the idea of salvation by works, this line of argument is very alluring indeed. For those who found Genevan worship spartan and austere and disliked complex and protracted sermons, Caroline ceremonialism and Arminian doctrine may well have met a long-standing need. Perhaps the sacrament-centred style of piety championed by leading clerics in the 1620s and 30s was equally successful in satisfying a

²¹ Green, "'England's wars of religion'?", 107–8.

²² Christopher Haigh, 'The Church of England, the Catholics and the people', in C. Haigh (ed.), *The reign of Elizabeth I*, Basingstoke 1984, 195–219, esp. pp. 214–19.

²³ Idem, 'Revisionism, the Reformation and the history of English Catholicism', this *JOURNAL* xxxvi (1985), 400. See also J. J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English people*, Oxford 1984, 187, and the comments of Foster, *Church of England*, 57, 66.

craving for the numinous which, at least in the eyes of some, Calvinism did little to nurture or indeed supply. Recent research is overturning the all-too-common assumption that receiving the sacrament played an insignificant role in the religious lives of committed Protestants with Puritan proclivities: Margaret Spufford's latest work stresses the importance seventeenth-century dissenters attached to frequent communion and, as Leigh Eric Schmidt has shown, great open-air celebrations of the Lord's Supper were a key feature of evangelical Presbyterian culture in early modern Scotland.²⁴ But it is still hard to deny the potential appeal to certain elements of the churchgoing populace of a fresh liturgical emphasis on the eucharist at the expense of the sermon. Laudian encouragement of religious ornamentation and vindication of the old ecclesiastical calendar might likewise have pleased those who looked back wistfully to bygone days. It is interesting to note in this regard the high praise which Caroline clergymen heaped on the pre-Reformation Church as a place of ritual and ceremonial splendour. In holding it up for unqualified emulation and loudly lamenting the Henrician and Edwardian stripping of the altars, were they echoing the sentiments of conservative parishioners?²⁵ Even Peter Smart, prebendary of Durham and one of the sharpest critics of the ecclesiological policies of the Caroline regime, openly admitted that they often won plebeian approval. '[S]eing, and perceiving the simple people inveigled and beguiled, by... popish baits and allurements of glorious pictures, and Babalonish vesturs, and excessive number of wax-candles burning at one tyme', he was provoked to launch a violent assault from the pulpit in 1628 on the 'superstitious vanities' Bishop Neile and his chaplains had introduced into the cathedral since 1617. Smart's perception was undoubtedly clouded by prejudice, but to discount it as mere Puritan hysteria or a specious polemical pretext would, I think, be overly cynical. Some inhabitants of the city and surrounding countryside do seem to have displayed a genuine appreciation of the innovations linked with Laudian prelates.²⁶

There is also much to suggest that the vision of social unity and harmony embodied in the notorious 1633 Declaration of Sports coincided with popular conceptions of good neighbourhood, hospitality and the moral community. David Underdown's work on Somerset, Dorset and Wiltshire identifies two opposing cultures: one revolving around the

²⁴ Margaret Spufford, 'The importance of religion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', in M. Spufford (ed.), *The world of rural dissenters, 1520-1725*, Cambridge 1995, 86-102; Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Holy fairs: Scottish communions and American revivals in the early modern period*, Princeton 1989. See also Patrick Collinson, 'Elizabethan and Jacobean Puritanism as forms of popular religious culture', in Durston and Eales, *Culture of Puritanism*, 53-4.

²⁵ Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 314-16.

²⁶ *The correspondence of John Cosin, D.D. Lord bishop of Durham, together with other papers illustrative of his life and times*, ed. George Ormsby (Surtees Society lii, lv, 1869-72), i. 165-72.

festivities and rhythms customarily associated with ‘merry’ Catholic England – wakes, ales, may poles, football, bear-baiting and games – and the other spinning on the axis of rigid sabbatarianism. Heaven-bent on eliminating profane pastimes and reforming the evil manners of their peers, Puritans did little to endear themselves to those who did not share their views and merely earned a reputation for being ‘precisians’, ‘busy controllers’ and ‘pickthankly knaves’. While the ecological and socio-economic dimension of Underdown’s ingenious theory about cultural conflict may be open to question, it surely helps illuminate the attractiveness of some Caroline priorities to a sector of the early Stuart laity. The vigorous and occasionally violent resistance attacks on traditional recreations evoked from rural parishioners alerts us to the presence of people who can only have applauded the turn official policy took after Laud’s long-expected elevation to the see of Canterbury. Official sanction for time-honoured leisure activities must have stiffened the resolve and boosted the confidence of those ranged against the godly in Patrick Collinson’s ‘street wars of religion’.²⁷

Nor should we ignore those who castigated hot Protestant preachers as ‘blacke Ravens come from hell’ and ‘Doctors of despaire’, or cases of suicide apparently inspired by a gnawing conviction that the victim was not numbered among the elect. As Michael MacDonald and John Stachniewski have shown, there was a social reality behind the anti-Puritan commonplace that melancholy and self-murder were the pernicious consequences of predestinarian doctrine.²⁸ To these anxious souls Arminian emphasis on free will and human responsibility may well have been very consoling. It is by no means inconceivable that such complaints subtly influenced the tide of clerical reaction against high Calvinist ideals. If Arminianism has often been presented as an intellectual movement whose origins lay almost solely in academic circles, this is at least partly because historians have been so preoccupied with the controversial literature produced by learned clerics. Perhaps more attention should be paid to the pastoral environments in and from which it grew, and more effort made to exploit oblique evidence of popular

²⁷ David Underdown, *Revel, riot and rebellion: popular politics and culture in England 1603–1660*, Oxford 1985, esp. ch. iii. See also Patrick Collinson, *The birthpangs of Protestant England: religious and cultural change in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries*, New York 1988, ch. v; Ronald Hutton, *The rise and fall of merry England: the ritual year 1400–1700*, Oxford 1994, ch. v; Elliot Rose, *Cases of conscience: alternatives open to recusants and Puritans under Elizabeth I and James I*, Cambridge 1975, 169–76.

²⁸ For these phrases see Bartimaeus Andrewes, *Certaine verie worthie, godly and profitable sermons*, London 1583, 169; Robert Bolton, *The workes of the reverend, truly pious, and judiciously learned Robert Bolton*, London 1641, 178. For cases of suicide and despair see Michael MacDonald, *Sleepless souls: suicide in early modern England*, Oxford 1990, 64–7; John Stachniewski, *The persecutory imagination: English Puritanism and the literature of religious despair*, Oxford 1991, esp. ch. i.

views, such as sermons and other works of practical divinity designed to address common concerns on precisely these points.²⁹

Dr Haigh has promised to pursue his hypothesis and to document it at greater length elsewhere, and we await with much interest his forthcoming book. Here I should like to explore some aspects of the proposition that Laudianism had parochial roots in the light of what is coming to be styled 'post-revisionist' research.

II

'Parish anglicanism', in Haigh's view, is an essentially negative phenomenon, a function of the failure of both Protestant and Catholic evangelism in the 1570s, 80s and 90s. It was a 'residual religion' which demonstrates both the inability of Puritan teachers to 'sell' the reformed Gospel to the unlearned and illiterate and the disastrous logistical mistakes made by the secular priests and Jesuits sent over to England from 1574. 'Parish anglicans' were the 'spiritual leftovers' of Elizabethan England, church papists who might have become recusants and remained loyal to Rome had they not been neglected and abandoned by Tridentine missionaries in favour of the aristocracy and gentry. They are an offshoot of Haigh's argument that 'survivalism' matters more than 'seminarism' in explaining the crystallisation of the post-Reformation Catholic community into a largely upper-class sect. If these religious conservatives were eventually integrated more fully into the Established Church, he implies, this had little to do with the proselytising techniques of Calvinist ministers, who remained stubbornly out of touch with the real concerns and spiritual yearnings of most of their parishioners. Protestantism represented a sharp disjuncture with medieval Catholicism; initially greeted with hostility and contempt, it remained an alien creed which no amount of force-feeding could induce many ordinary parishioners to digest.³⁰

Recent work, however, has refined and qualified this pessimistic picture in several respects. We are beginning to recognise that, notwithstanding

²⁹ In this respect William Haller's *The rise of Puritanism: or the way to the New Jerusalem as set forth in pulpit and press from Thomas Cartwright to John Lilburne and John Milton 1570-1643*, New York 1938, deserves a revival.

³⁰ Haigh, 'The Church of England, the Catholics and the people', the argument of which dovetails with Haigh's broader thesis about the pace and success of the Reformation and the evolution of the post-Reformation Catholic community. See the following works by Christopher Haigh: 'Puritan evangelism in the reign of Elizabeth I', *EHR* xcii (1977), 30-58; 'The fall of a Church or the rise of a sect? Post-Reformation Catholicism in England', *HJ* xxi (1978), 181-6; 'From monopoly to minority: Catholicism in early modern England', *TRHS* 5th ser. xxxi (1981), 129-47; 'The continuity of Catholicism in the English Reformation', in C. Haigh (ed.), *The English Reformation revised*, Cambridge 1987, 176-208; *English reformations: religion, politics, and society under the Tudors*, Oxford 1993, chs xv-xvi, esp. p. 291.

its early unpopularity, in the long run the Reformation was, in Diarmaid MacCulloch's words, a 'howling success'.³¹ Revisionism seems to have reached its high-water-mark and to be in retreat. Even the doyen of revisionists, Eamon Duffy himself, has conceded that within two generations the Catholic heritage had been obliterated and the papacy demonised.³² Attention is now turning to resolving the paradox of how this unwanted revolution became, by 1600, a permanent fact. Emphasis on the iconoclastic effects of the early Reformation is giving way to an exploration of the strategies by which early modern people adjusted to the loss of key elements of the old religious culture – the new rituals, customs and even 'superstitions' which evolved to fill the ensuing vacuum, and the practical and philosophical continuities between past and present which helped ease the passage into the Protestant era. Important here are the patriotic Protestant 'holydays' examined by David Cressy and Ronald Hutton and a broad and diffuse body of beliefs about the intervention of divine and demonic forces in the world which the Reformation did more to reinforce than to suppress.³³ Tessa Watt's prizewinning study of cheap print is also helping us to understand how traditional piety was gradually modified and how reformed ideas and concepts were able to put down lasting roots.³⁴ And Patrick Collinson, who has long defended the notion of Puritanism as a 'popular' religion, is at last finding a chorus: historians are starting to appreciate anew the communal and psychological satisfactions of a voluntary religious culture rooted in sermon-gadding, bible-reading, psalm-singing and those sombre and yet festive religious occasions that were Puritan fast days.³⁵

³¹ Diarmaid MacCulloch, 'The impact of the English Reformation' (review article), *HJ* xxxviii (1995), 152.

³² Duffy, *The stripping of the altars*, 593. In his Neale lecture, 'The long Reformation: Catholicism, Protestantism and the multitude in England, c. 1500–1800', delivered at University College London on 19 Jan. 1996, and published in N. Tyacke (ed.), *England's Long Reformation 1500–1800*, London 1998, Dr Duffy echoed Diarmaid MacCulloch's remarks in admitting that by the late Elizabethan period Protestantism was a 'runaway success' (p. 36).

³³ On Protestant 'holydays' see David Cressy, *Bonfires and bells: national memory and the Protestant calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England*, London 1989; Hutton, *Rise and fall of merry England*, ch. v, and 'The Reformation and the evidence of folklore', *P&P* cxlviii (1995), 89–116. For providential beliefs see Michael MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam: madness, anxiety and healing in seventeenth century England*, Cambridge 1981, esp. pp. 217–20, and *Sleepless souls*, esp. pp. 28–41; Peter Lake, 'Deeds against nature: cheap print, Protestantism and murder in early seventeenth century England', in Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake (eds), *Culture and politics in early Stuart England*, Basingstoke 1994, 257–83; and Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in early modern England*, Oxford forthcoming. See also Collinson, *Birthpangs*, ch. iv, and 'Elizabethan and Jacobean Puritanism as forms of popular religious culture', 32–57.

³⁴ Tessa Watt, *Cheap print and popular piety, 1550–1640*, Cambridge 1991.

³⁵ See, especially, the following works by Patrick Collinson: 'Voluntary religion: its forms and tendencies', in his *The religion of Protestants: the Church in English society 1559–1625*,

As a result ‘parish anglicans’ and their ilk are now appearing in a far more positive guise. As Margaret Spufford, Martin Ingram and Judith Maltby have insisted, the ‘unspectacular orthodoxy’ of the ‘silent majority’ must be treated seriously as a valid and active strand of piety within the Established Church.³⁶ Rather than the byproduct of a thwarted revolution, it should be viewed as testimony to the extent to which the Homilies and vernacular Protestant liturgy became a familiar and much-loved part of the fabric of parochial life.³⁷ This may have been the stuff of ‘countrie divinitie’ but we can hardly accept at face value the verdict of godly preachers like George Gifford and Arthur Dent who equated it with crypto-popery, Pelagian neutrality and outright ‘atheism’.³⁸ Zealous professionals should not be allowed to set the standard for ‘success’: animated conformity no less than experimental Calvinism bears witness to the Reformation’s ultimate entrenchment. Dr Maltby has conclusively demonstrated that some of these ‘prayer book Protestants’ were as anti-Laudian as they were anti-Puritan. Nearly two dozen petitions in support of the liturgy and bishops presented to the Long Parliament between 1640 and 1642 suggest that people from right across the social spectrum disapproved of Caroline innovations and Presbyterian discipline alike.³⁹ We ignore the ‘passive strength’ of this type of ‘Anglican survivalism’, John Morrill has stressed, at our peril.⁴⁰

Current research is also casting doubt on the ineffectiveness of the Church of England and its personnel as an evangelising agency. Preaching was not always as repellent as isolated outbursts which reached the ears of the authorities often make it seem. Indeed some sermons exploited all the arts of drama and suspense, rousing their hearers to a pitch of excitement and leaving them weeping in their seats.⁴¹ Despite allegations

Oxford 1982; ‘The godly: aspects of popular Protestantism’, in his *Godly people: essays on English Protestantism and Puritanism*, London 1983; ‘The English conventicle’, in W. J. Sheils and D. Wood (eds), *Voluntary religion* (Studies in Church History xxiii, 1986); ‘Elizabethan and Jacobean Puritanism as forms of popular religious culture’.

³⁶ Margaret Spufford, ‘Can we count the “godly” and the “conformable” in the seventeenth century?’, this JOURNAL xxxvi (1985), 428–38, and ‘The importance of religion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries’, 1–102; Martin Ingram, *Church courts, sex and marriage in England, 1570–1640*, Cambridge 1987, ch. iii; Judith Maltby, ‘“By this book”: parishioners, the prayer book and the Established Church’, in Fincham, *Early Stuart Church*, 115–37, and *Prayer book and people: religious conformity before the Civil War*, Cambridge forthcoming. ³⁷ See also Collinson, *Religion of Protestants*, 191–2.

³⁸ I allude to George Gifford, *A briefe discourse of certaine pointes of the religion, which is among the common sort of Christians, which may be termed the countrie divinitie*, London 1581, and Arthur Dent, *The plaine mans path-way to heaven. Wherein every man may clearly see, whether he shall be saved or damned. Set forth dialogue wise*, London 1601.

³⁹ Maltby, ‘“By this book”’.

⁴⁰ John Morrill, ‘The Church in England, 1642–9’, in J. Morrill (ed.), *Reactions to the English Civil War 1642–1649*, Basingstoke 1982, esp. p. 90.

⁴¹ See my *Providence in early modern England*, ch. vi, and Francis Bremer and Ellen Rydell, ‘Performance art? Puritans in the pulpit’, *History Today* xlv (Sept. 1995). See also

that many ministers shot high over their congregations' heads, many appear to have made heroic efforts to accommodate the rigidities of doctrinal Calvinism to the reality of a national Church encompassing all subjects of the realm. Systematic catechising can scarcely not have had a cumulative effect; Puritan enthusiasm for print as a homiletic instrument was steadily swelling; and Peter Lake's case studies of murder pamphlets reveal that, like the earliest reformers, at least some Jacobean and Caroline clergymen continued to hijack popular media imaginatively to serve pious and polemical ends. They skilfully harnessed the Manichean structures of plebeian thinking to transform gory tales of homicide into stories illuminating central Protestant tenets and truths.⁴²

Moreover, as Chris Marsh has recently reminded us, the 'gentle and moderate persuaders' of early modern England deserve more notice than they have hitherto received. Fierce and aggressive proselytisers who hammered away at hardened papists are certainly prominent in our history books, but the more courteous and conciliatory stance of their milder colleagues may have been more decisive in the long run in assimilating Catholics and other nonconformists into the mainstream.⁴³ We need to look more closely at the tactics embodied in the *Treatise tending to pacification* Edmund Bunny appended to his bowdlerised version of the Jesuit Robert Persons's *Book of Christian exercise*, first published in 1584 – a tract designed to entice recusants to attend Church of England services and assuage their niggling doubts.⁴⁴ Anthony Milton would argue that the irenic stance Bunny adopted in this discourse was largely a function of the particular rhetorical context in which he wrote.⁴⁵ Yet does this, in the end, diminish the significance and perhaps the success of this less iconoclastic method of approach? Greater attention might also be paid to private conferences between vicars and curates and the recusants of their parishes, a duty enshrined in the Canons of 1604. In this regard, the homely dialogues reconstructing such colloquies composed by both Puritan and conformist preachers like George Gifford and Oliver

Collinson, 'Elizabethan and Jacobean Puritanism as forms of popular religious culture', 47–50, and Arnold Hunt's forthcoming Cambridge PhD diss. on English sermons 1600–40.

⁴² On catechising see Ian Green, "'For children in yeeres and understanding": the emergence of the English catechism under Elizabeth and the early Stuarts', this JOURNAL xxxvii (1986), 397–425, and *The Christian's ABC: catechisms and catechizing in England c. 1530–1740*, Oxford 1996. On Protestant use of print see Collinson, *Birthpangs*, ch. iv; Watt, *Cheap print*; Lake, 'Deeds against nature'.

⁴³ Christopher Marsh, 'Piety and persuasion in Elizabethan England: the Church of England meets the Family of Love', in Tyacke, *Long Reformation*.

⁴⁴ Edmund Bunny, *A treatise tending to pacification: by laboring those that are our adversaries in the cause of religion, to receive the gospel, and to join with us in profession thereof*, appended to *A book of Christian exercise, appertaining to resolution*, London 1584.

⁴⁵ Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 40–1.

Ormerod may have much to disclose about everyday oral exchanges about which we know all too little.⁴⁶ And while Queen Elizabeth may have declined to open windows into souls, some of her bishops were clearly determined to make the machinery for enforcing statutory conformity more than a mere administrative procedure. As Michael Questier's monograph shows, many ecclesiastical officials were not satisfied with bare church papistry: they envisaged something approximating to an internal conversion experience. On occasion, moreover, they could claim to have achieved this.⁴⁷ Despite the assertions of Dr Haigh, then, some 'parish anglicans' can hardly be summed up as the flotsam and jetsam of a shipwrecked Reformation.

No more can they be labelled the cast-offs of a Catholic mission which manifestly failed to reclaim England for the Mother Church and maximise the size of the rump community that remained. The pressures of persecution may be a more humane explanation for the gradual contraction of available clergy into wealthy households than a deliberate and unjustifiable prioritisation of the religious needs of the social elite.⁴⁸ At the same time, those Jesuits and seminarians who did don the mantle of the itinerant popular evangelist and *sacerdos pauperum* and travel about the countryside conducting services in forest clearings and barns should not be overlooked; nor the creative and theatrical strategies they used to win over converts – exorcism of unclean spirits, anti-Protestant plays, martyr cults and the staging of spectacular conversions by condemned criminals at the foot of the gallows.⁴⁹ Such 'successes' can be found notched up in the annual newsletters of the Society of Jesus and the

⁴⁶ Canon LXVI of 1604. See *Synodalia: a collection of articles of religion, canons and proceedings of convocations in the province of Canterbury, from the year 1547 to the year 1717*, ed. E. Cardwell, Oxford 1842, i. 284; George Gifford, *A dialogue between a papist and a protestant, applied to the capacitie of the unlearned*, London 1582; Oliver Ormerod, *The picture of a papist*, London 1606, 'compiled in the forme of a Dialogue, or conference betweene a Minister and a Recusant'.

⁴⁷ Michael Questier, *Conversion, politics and religion in England, 1580–1625*, Cambridge 1996, chs v–vi, esp. pp. 108–11, 157. I am grateful to Dr Questier for allowing me to read his book in proof.

⁴⁸ Patrick McGrath, 'Elizabethan Catholicism: a reconsideration', this JOURNAL xxxv (1984), 414–28. See also his reply to Haigh's 'Revisionism, the Reformation and the history of English Catholicism', this JOURNAL xxxvi (1985), 406.

⁴⁹ On exorcism see D. P. Walker, *Unclean spirits: possession and exorcism in France and England in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries*, London 1981, 43–9; on anti-Protestant plays see Hugh Aveling, *Northern Catholics: the Catholic recusants of the North Riding of Yorkshire 1558–1790*, London 1966, 289–90. Little sophisticated work has been done on Catholic martyr cults. See, however, Claire Cross, 'An Elizabethan martyrologist and his martyr: John Mush and Margaret Clitherow', in Diana Wood (ed.), *Martyrs and martyrologies* (Studies in Church History xxx, 1993), 271–81. On gallows conversions see Peter Lake and Michael Questier, 'Prisons, priests and people', in Tyacke, *Long Reformation*, and 'Agency, appropriation and rhetoric at the foot of the gallows: Puritans, Romanists and the state in early modern England', *P&P* cliii (1996), 64–107.

published and unpublished lives of clerical martyrs. Hagiographical material and internal propaganda was undoubtedly subject to a degree of embellishment designed to boost Catholic morale, but, handled with care, it does none the less suggest that the priesthood managed to make considerable impact.⁵⁰ The clergy were also adept at preparing small devotional books which could act as ‘dumb preachers’ to semi-literate individuals who had only intermittent access to the Catholic ministry.⁵¹ And surviving manuals and memoranda prove that priests sent on the mission were not simply seeking to reconcile the schismatic and lapsed; reclaiming heretics was high on their agenda. ‘Heresy’ and ‘schism’ may have been technically distinct; in practice, however, the line between them was rather vague and blurred.⁵²

All this suggests that John Bossy’s ‘seminarist’ model for the evolution of the post-Reformation Catholic community has much life in it yet. ‘Survivalism’ can no longer be written off as geriatric and inert, but Christopher Haigh may have overstated the case for continuity rather than conversion as the principal engine behind the growth of recusancy after 1570. Clearly, separated Catholicism was not a body recruited exclusively by baptism and birth. In this regard the conclusion of Bill Sheils’s recent study of Egton on the North Yorkshire moors is salutary: family and genealogy played a part in the transmission of belief but so too did missionary zeal.⁵³

These insights have obvious implications for the thesis that Laudianism had parochial roots in the Elizabethan period. If kin and lineage was only one of many factors determining religious allegiance, where does this leave Dr Haigh’s ‘parish anglicans’? Were they really the descendants of cradle Catholics who had sullenly conformed with the 1559 settlement and carefully nurtured their children and grandchildren in nostalgia for the medieval Church? By the 1630s there can only have been a handful of

⁵⁰ Many of these newsletters and martyrological accounts are conveniently reprinted in *Records of the English Province of the Society of Jesus*, ed. Henry Foley, London 1877–84, and in various volumes published by the Catholic Record Society.

⁵¹ I pursue this point in the section on Catholic publishing I have contributed to John Barnard and D. F. McKenzie (eds), *A history of the book in Britain*, iv, Cambridge forthcoming. See also the remarks of *A critical anthology of English recusant devotional prose, 1558–1603*, ed. John R. Roberts (Duquesne Studies Philological Series vii, 1966), introduction, pp. 5, 38–41. Good examples are John Bucke, *Instructions for the use of the beades, containing many matters of meditacion or mentall prayer*, Louvain 1589, and *A methode, to meditate on the psalter, or great rosarie of our blessed ladie*, Antwerp [English secret press] 1598.

⁵² Questier, *Conversion, politics and religion*, 69, and ch. vii, esp. pp. 178–86.

⁵³ John Bossy, *The English Catholic community 1570–1850*, London 1975, esp. pt 1. For Haigh’s ‘survivalist’ argument see the articles cited in n. 30 above, esp. ‘The continuity of English Catholicism’. See also W. Sheils, ‘Catholics and their neighbours on the North Yorks moors: Egton chapelry 1590–1780’, *Northern History* forthcoming. I am grateful to Dr Sheils for inviting me to read a draft of this essay. See also the remarks of Patrick McGrath, ‘Elizabethan Catholicism’.

octagenarians and centenarians with more than a dim and muddled memory of the Henrician and Marian regimes.

There is much, therefore, to recommend Judith Maltby's view that conformists who pressed for ritual and ceremony in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were not disgruntled church papists but loyal Prayer Book Protestants. Nevertheless, this does not demolish Christopher Haigh's suggestions completely. Here, as elsewhere, we need to think not in terms of a dichotomy but of a finely-graded spectrum. We cannot dismiss the possibility that some individuals with vestigial Catholic sympathies may have regarded Caroline policies as a refreshing change for the better – individuals like the Salisbury women who paid homage to an old stained-glass window depicting God the Father as 'a little old man in a blue and red coat' in 1633, prompting the iconoclast Henry Sherfield to smash it with a stick, or the Somerset youth a future Augustinian nun found praying before an undefaced image in 1622.⁵⁴ By the dawn of the seventeenth century Puritan conflation of crypto-popish conformity with 'cold statute Protestantism' was beginning to wear decidedly thin, yet well into the early Stuart era it is not always easy to differentiate instinctive conservatives from stalwart Catholics who wholly or partially conformed to the Church of England for pragmatic or political reasons. Fifty, sixty, even seventy years after the 1559 Settlement many people continued to confound watertight categorisation and defy the denominational labels so beloved of modern historians.

One revealing example is the father of the Benedictine monk Augustine Baker. A Welshman born midway through the reign of Henry VIII, at Elizabeth's accession he 'easily digested the new religion' and 'accommodated' himself 'thereto', but remained throughout his life caught in a kind of liturgical and theological limbo. A regular churchgoer and an inquisitive reader of recusant books, even in his very old age he persevered daily in vocal prayer aided by a missal.⁵⁵ No less suggestive is the case of Edward Lapworth, a Kentish doctor of physic who died in 1625. Widely known to 'bee inclined to the Romish Religion', he nevertheless came occasionally to church and communicated annually, except in 1623 when Charles and Buckingham went to Spain to negotiate a match with the Catholic Habsburg Infanta, the prospect of which, it was said, 'made many befoole themselves'. Significantly, Lapworth had never been to

⁵⁴ For the Salisbury woman see the proceedings of the famous trial of Henry Sherfield, iconoclast, in 1634, in *A complete collection of state trials and proceedings for high-treason, and other crimes and misdemeanours*, ed. Sollom Emlyn, London 1742, 399–400, 404. For the Somerset youth see *The years of siege: Catholic life from James I to Cromwell*, ed. P. Caraman, London 1966, 46. Tessa Watt stresses the survival of old images well after the Reformation: *Cheap print*, esp. pp. 137–8.

⁵⁵ *Memorials of Father Augustine Baker and other documents relating to the English Benedictines*, ed. J. McCann and H. Connolly (Catholic Record Society xxxiii, 1933), 15–19, 74–5.

mass and declared that he knew not 'what it meant'; he willingly prayed with the relatives of his Protestant patients, and gratefully accepted the ministrations of the local vicar on his deathbed.⁵⁶ How individuals like Baker and Lapworth might have responded to the altered circumstances of the 1630s is one of the frustratingly unanswerable questions of early Stuart ecclesiastical history. Even at the end of the Jacobean period, it seems clear, outward adherence to the Church of England's rites continued to camouflage a bewildering range of religious convictions and standpoints. Confessional identities were still in a state of transition and flux.

As I have argued elsewhere, church papists, as a race, were very slow to expire.⁵⁷ John Earle's well-known caricature of the more principled species of this breed dates from as late as 1628, and they were certainly a familiar feature of the parochial landscape throughout the following decade.⁵⁸ Could it be that some of those who put in a weekly or monthly appearance at church to save their family fortunes, stoically refused Calvin's supper, and 'frowned out' the sermon hour under their hats actually came to find the new sacramental and ceremonial emphases of Laudian worship rather agreeable, coinciding, as they did, quite closely with their own devotional preferences? It is worth pondering part of a 'description' of the 'symptomes' of a 'Church Papist, or Popish Protestant' in a tract dated 1642:

You shall be sure to have him constantly at Church upon Holidayes, but seldome or never upon the Sabbath day, he loves a life to heare out all the service, read out by the Curate at large, and highly commends him for his devout reading, he thinks it hath some Affinity with the Masse, and liketh it never the worse for that.⁵⁹

Writing in the context of the Long Parliament's ongoing attempts to undo the damage to 'tradition' effected by the Caroline regime, the author of this anti-Catholic pamphlet may well have been taking a subtle sideswipe at recent ecclesiastical developments.

It is not implausible that Laudianism forced some conforming Catholics to rethink their religious allegiance completely. The casuistical existence of the church papist was hard to sustain in the long run and the shifting character of the episcopal establishment in the 1630s may well have been

⁵⁶ John Phillips, *The way to heaven*, London 1625, a funeral sermon preached at the burial of Lapworth. See esp. sigs A3v-B2r. I owe my knowledge of this item to Dr Alan Cromartie.

⁵⁷ Alexandra Walsham, *Church papists: Catholicism, conformity and confessional polemic in early modern England*, Woodbridge 1993, esp. ch. iv. See also P. R. Newman, 'The problem of definition', *RH* xv (1979-81), 148-52.

⁵⁸ John Earle, *Earle's Microcosmography*, ed. Alfred S. West, Cambridge 1897, 47-8.

⁵⁹ *The discription, causes, and discovery, or symptomes of a church papist, or popish protestant, which may stand in stead this yeare, 1642*, London 1842, sig. A4v.

enough to tip the balance in favour of ‘haemorrhage’ towards the *status quo*.⁶⁰ If Lambeth seemed to be drawing ever closer to Rome, was there much point in stubbornly insisting that English Protestants were damnable heretics? Did recent policy changes seem to be rendering strict recusancy and even partial separation from the Church of England rather unnecessary? And to what extent did evolving trends stem or promote the flow of converts to popery? In short, did ecclesiastical policies and priorities in the 1630s serve to make the boundaries between the two Churches more porous and fluid? In the last section of this essay I should like to pursue these questions and suggestions a little further, building partly upon, as well as engaging with, some of the insights of Anthony Milton.

III

In this regard, the decline of anti-popery as a positive mode of religious expression, so deftly traced in *Catholic and Reformed*, is surely particularly significant. Milton detects a deep-seated conviction on the part of Laudian clerics and their intellectual precursors that apocalyptic anti-Catholicism was counter-productive: it did nothing to deter potential deserters to Rome or induce obstinate recusants to turn up to Anglican services. Indeed, it merely alienated such persons yet further from the Church of England and drove them into the arms of Tridentine priests. As Laud declared at his trial, denouncing the pope as AntiChrist never converted ‘an understanding Papist’.⁶¹ It was ostensibly a desire to appease those on the ‘popish’ margins of conformity which led the archbishop and his colleagues to depict Rome as a true if flawed Church, reinterpret the Reformation as a political and jurisdictional schism rather than a theological revolution, and tactfully play down the differences between English Protestantism and Catholicism in respect of religious practice and belief.

Dr Milton treats these allegations as ‘a handy polemical weapon’, as a form of legitimating rhetoric for ecclesiological innovations that broke rather drastically with cherished shibboleths of the Calvinist past. When pressed, he seems reluctant to take at face value the repeated claims of leading prelates that their programme was, if only in part, underwritten by evangelical motives.⁶² Yet the characteristic set of arguments alluded

⁶⁰ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The later Reformation in England 1547–1603*, Basingstoke 1990, 150.

⁶¹ Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, pt I, and esp. pp. 77–85. Quotation from William Laud, *The works of the most reverend father in God, William Laud, D.D.*, ed. W. Scott and J. Bliss, Oxford 1847–60, iv. 309, quoted in Milton, ‘The Church of England, Rome and the true Church’, 199.

⁶² Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 77. I am grateful to Dr Milton for helpful discussions on this point.

to above can be found being articulated in pastoral as well as apologetic contexts – insofar as it is possible to uphold that problematical distinction. They are, for example, implicit in a short manuscript tract written by Richard Montagu, bishop of Chichester, sometime between 1628 and 1637, ‘a little writing for recusants’ devised to persuade committed Romanists not only to come to Common Prayer but also to receive the Communion.⁶³ The genesis of Montagu’s notorious *New gagg for an old goose* is also worth recalling. The book was a thundering retort to a proselytising Catholic priest who had dared to tamper with his parishioners in the Essex village of Stanford Rivers, an attempt to counteract scandalous allegations about the English Church which had shaken the faith of a neighbouring lady. Viewed from this angle, only obliquely did it involve an attack on dominant ideological tenets and trends.⁶⁴ Laud himself engaged in head-on combat with the Jesuit Fisher in the 1620s to recover the countess of Buckingham from the clutches of Rome and insisted, in the course of his trial in 1644, that he had ‘settled’ or converted some twenty-one persons of quality to the Protestant religion – a claim which cannot be dismissed as merely a Machiavellian riposte to the charge of conspiring to reintroduce popery into post-Reformation England, since Laud supplied a detailed list of their connections and names.⁶⁵ Dr Milton is certainly right to stress the extent to which polemical circumstances shaped and influenced the actions and assertions of leading bishops and ministers, but there does seem a case for adopting a different perspective on the same evidence and according their stated intentions at least a shred of sincerity and credibility.

While Laudianism admittedly sits uneasily in the shoes of a missionary religion, strenuous efforts to coax Catholics into an inclusive, visible Church do seem to have been a fairly central feature of the Caroline episcopal programme. Surely no one would disagree that Laud and his colleagues regarded the task of reconciling Catholics as infinitely more urgent than that of accommodating Puritans – and they may well have stood a better chance than Calvinists in the mould of Thomas Cartwright who turned a cold shoulder on Romanists until they had ‘purged themselves of the suspicion of popery’. It is tempting to present them as the successors and descendants of Chris Marsh’s ‘gentle persuaders’, to situate them in a long line of distinguished conformist clergymen who, like Archbishop Whitgift, believed that the Church on earth could and should embrace both sinners and saints, the elect and the reprobate. To shut papists out of its doors forcibly was deemed to be a

⁶³ Richard Montagu, ‘Certaine considerations touching recusancy’, Cambridge University Library, ms Gg. 1. 29, fos 98v–103v. See also Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 80–1.

⁶⁴ Richard Montagu, *A gagg for the new gospell? No: A new gagg for an old goose. Who would needes undertake to stop all Protestants mouths for ever, with 276 places out of their owne English Bibles*, London 1624, ‘To the Reader’.

⁶⁵ Laud, *Works*, iii. 413–14; iv. 62–6, 379.

positive dereliction of its divinely imposed duty to draw waverers in.⁶⁶ Far from repelling them as the servants and entrails of AntiChrist, Laud was eager to urge hesitant Romanists to set aside their scruples and attend the public services of the Reformed Church of England. He conceded that no Catholic should outwardly profess the Protestant religion in defiance of a conscience that insisted it was false. Yet since Catholicism and Protestantism were in all essentials and fundamentals the same, he declared, this objection was inconsequential.⁶⁷

At this point it may be worth recalling the strategy which ostensibly lay behind the Declaration of Sports, originally proclaimed by James I in that darkly Catholic corner of the land, Lancashire, in 1617, and reissued by his son in 1633. Passing through the county after a visit to Scotland, James had been convinced that over-precise Puritan enforcement of the sabbath was to blame for the growing cancer of popery in the north-west. It had the harmful effect of ‘hindering... the conversion of many, whom their priests... take occasion hereby to vex, persuading them that no honest mirth or recreation is lawful or tolerable in our religion, which cannot but breed a great discontentment in our people’s hearts, especially of such as are peradventure upon the point of turning’. By granting permission for participation in lawful leisure pursuits after the end of the evensong service, the king hoped thereby to prevent the rot of Roman Catholicism from further setting in. Significantly, all known recusants were to be barred from ‘this benefit and liberty’.⁶⁸ The Declaration was thus partly designed as a proselytising device: Sunday sports were bait to draw confirmed papists into the Reformed Church of England, a sugar lump to make it easier to swallow the unsavoury medicine of Protestant discipline and doctrine.

When the ordinance was republished by Charles I following the furore over the suppression of church ales in Somerset, circumstances had, to be sure, decisively changed.⁶⁹ Now there were different issues at stake – the defence and promulgation of a new vision of religious unity and social solidarity, a rival, anti-Puritan conception of the Christian community.⁷⁰ Even so, the rhetoric of religious evangelism in James’s proclamation was retained, and it is possible that qualified endorsement of the old festive

⁶⁶ John Whitgift, *The works of John Whitgift*, Cambridge 1851, iii. 104. See also Questier, *Conversion, politics and religion*, 187–91.

⁶⁷ Laud, *Works*, ii. 413–17.

⁶⁸ *The king’s majesty’s declaration to his subjects concerning lawful sports to be used*, repr. in *The constitutional documents of the Puritan Revolution 1625–1660*, ed. S. R. Gardiner, Oxford 1906, 99–103. For the Lancashire context see James Tait, ‘The Declaration of Sports for Lancashire’, *EHR* xxxii (1917), 561–8; Collinson, ‘Elizabethan and Jacobean Puritanism as forms of popular religious culture’, 36–7.

⁶⁹ See T. G. Barnes, ‘County politics and a Puritan cause célèbre: Somerset church ales, 1633’, *TRHS* 5th ser. ix (1959), 103–22; Kenneth Parker, *The English sabbath: a study of doctrine and discipline from the Reformation to the Civil War*, Cambridge 1988, 178–216.

⁷⁰ Peter Lake, ‘The Laudian style’, in Fincham, *Early Stuart Church*, 178.

culture may actually have helped to endear at least some papists to the Caroline regime. Certainly sectarian conflict often had cultural overtones. It was frequently alleged that Catholics organised piping, morris dancing and other activities on the village green ‘purposely by these means to draw the People from the service of God and to disturb the same’,⁷¹ and a group on the borders of Lancashire in 1622 were surely protesting against the godly Protestant assault on customary rural pastimes like baiting when they ‘brought a great beare into a church whilest the Minister was preaching’.⁷² It can hardly be a coincidence that the mastermind behind the revival of traditional midsummer games in the Cotswolds in the early Stuart period was a Norfolk man with a recusant upbringing and background, Robert Dover.⁷³ Celebrated by Ben Johnson and other court poets, Dover’s ‘Olympic games’ reflect the way in which Catholic cultural preferences and Laudian policies had the potential to converge.

Concerns about conversion also seem to have encouraged Laudian censorship of rabid anti-popery in print and the drive for more elaborate ceremonialism. Laudian censors contended that they sought to restrain immoderate forms of Protestant polemic against Roman Catholicism because this served to estrange recusants still more sharply from the ecclesiastical establishment. Revealing here is a remark reputedly made by Samuel Baker to justify his refusal to license a new edition of a viciously anti-Catholic *History of the gunpowder treason* by the London schoolmaster and poet John Vicars in 1637. He asserted ‘that we were not so angry with the Papists now as we were about 20 yeares since, and that there was no need of any such bookes as these to exasperate them, there being now an endeavour to winne them to us by fairnesse and mildnesse’.⁷⁴

Similar priorities underpinned John Cosin’s controversial *Collection of private devotions*, an anthology of private prayers which drew heavily on pre- and post-Reformation books of hours, published in 1627. This professed to be an attempt to rival the rich and emotionally satisfying devotional and liturgical tradition of the Church of Rome, which, it was feared, was luring court ladies and unlearned Protestants over to popery. William Prynne and Henry Burton vehemently denounced it as evidence of an insidious scheme to re-Catholicise England, a ‘virulent and popish poyson’ and ‘venom’ disguised in ‘Amiable dress’ and ‘Honie Potions’ which might cause lukewarm Protestants to stagger in their faith, ‘like

⁷¹ *Records of early English drama, Lancashire*, Toronto 1991, 27–8, 228, quoted in Collinson, ‘Elizabethan and Jacobean Puritanism as forms of popular religious culture’, 36.

⁷² BL, ms Harley 389, fo. 233r.

⁷³ Collinson, ‘Elizabethan and Jacobean Puritanism as forms of popular religious culture’, 40.

⁷⁴ William Prynne, *Canterburies doome or the first part of a compleat history of the... tryall... of William Laud*, London 1646, 184. See also Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 77–81.

young Hercules in his Bivium, not knowing what Religion for to chuse'. It is at least possible that in some instances they were not neurotic but right. On the other hand, these anxieties, born of a growing apprehension that the tradition they stood for was under serious threat, may well have been unfounded and misplaced. In some quarters perhaps the book did function, as it was intended, as an effective antidote to the attractions of Catholicism.⁷⁵ Cosin was by no means the first to adapt, purge or simply reissue Roman Catholic devotions and meditations for Protestant use. The practice dates back to the Elizabethan period and embraces works like Persons's *Book of resolution* bowdlerised by Edmund Bunny in 1584 and Robert Southwell's *A short rule of good life*, which received sanction from the censors and was entered in the Stationers' Register in November 1598. The ideological ambiguity of texts that underwent this kind of treatment alerts us to the existence of a constituency which thirsted for spiritual literature of a type some wings of the post-Reformation Church of England were slow and even rather reluctant to provide.⁷⁶ There are at least some grounds for thinking that Laudianism may have helped to fill this particular lacuna.

Laud, Cosin and others likewise appear to have thought that semi-popish gestures and trappings might prevent Protestant waverers from defecting and entice impressionable Catholics over the fence.⁷⁷ These high hopes may not always have been mere pipe dreams. Occasionally we do find Protestants wondering aloud why they were deprived of the aesthetic consolations enjoyed by their confessional enemies: this was the reaction of the earl of Bath on being escorted to Easter Mass in 1638 by the papal agent George Con. While it is unlikely that the Laudian style of service played much part in preventing him from formally going over to Rome, future research may unearth individuals for whom the newly introduced liturgical embellishments did make a significant difference.⁷⁸

As far as successfully alluring recusants and church papists into the Protestant fold is concerned, the evidence available is even more equivocal. Laud and his deputies were certainly anxious to create the impression that the movement to restore the beauty of holiness was a leading incentive for public religious conversion. The apostate Richard

⁷⁵ John Cosin, *A collection of private devotions: in the practise of the ancient church, called the houres of prayer*, London 1627; William Prynne, *A briefe survey and censure of Mr Cozen his couzening devotions*, London 1628; Henry Burton, *A tryall of private devotions: or, a diall for the houres of prayer*, London 1628. Quotations are from Prynne, sig. ¶12v, pp. 1–2, 83–4. See also Martin J. Havran, *The Catholics in Caroline England*, Stanford 1962, 51.

⁷⁶ For Bunny see *A book of Christian exercise* cited above at n. 44, and Brad S. Gregory, 'The "true and zealous service of God": Robert Parsons, Edmund Bunny, and the *First Booke of the Christian Exercise*', this JOURNAL xlv (1994), 238–68; Robert Southwell, *A short rule of godly life*, London [1597?] RSTC 22969.

⁷⁷ Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 77–82; Laud, *Works*, iii. 407.

⁷⁸ Cited in Caroline Hibbard, *Charles I and the popish plot*, Chapel Hill 1983, 57.

Carpenter, who crossed sides at least five times in the course of the early seventeenth century, alleged he had been pressured to declare in his recantation sermon that ‘the sight and love of the orders and ceremonies, newly begun in the Church of England’ was one chief reason for his latest official change of faith. Alas for the argument that the enhancement of worship helped win over adherents of Rome, this was ‘a thing, which (the Lord knows) had not entred into my thoughts, before this admonishment’.⁷⁹ Meanwhile, the northern Catholic matriarch Mrs Dorothy Lawson seems to have had nothing but contempt for the ritual and ceremonial modifications of the 1630s. According to a contemporary account of her life, she concluded that Caroline quasi-Catholicism was ‘like a beautifull sepulcher, fair without and foul within, and nothing in reality semblable’ to the original.⁸⁰ Dr David Lamburn, however, has suggested that some of her coreligionists in County Durham were more readily swayed. He argues that liturgical developments, in tandem with the policy of suppressing Puritan lecturers and appointing ministers with an anti-Calvinist temperament, did succeed in attracting former recusants back into the Protestant Church. How else, he asks, can we account for the steep decline after 1619 in the number of gentry families in the West Riding of Yorkshire seriously infected by Romanism? By 1642 nearly half of those previously recorded as riddled with popery had ceased to concern the authorities and many heads of prominent households vanished from the presentments for nonconformity.⁸¹ Yet Lamburn surely misinterprets one episode he cites in support of his claims: that of two Newcastle papists who attended a lecture at St Nicholas’s Church delivered by John Cosin and afterwards bragged that ‘my Lord of Canterbury and he are both ours’.⁸² To my mind this incident highlights neither approval of the current ecclesiastical regime nor even a willingness to meet the heretics half way, but rather a sanguine conviction that if Catholics waited long enough England would be re-integrated into Roman Christendom in any case.

⁷⁹ BL, ms Stowe 743, fo. 163r; Thomas Gataker, *Discours apologetical; wherein lilies lewd and lowd lies... are cleerly laid open... Together with an advertisement concerning two allegations produced in the close of his postscript*, London 1654, 65. I owe both these references to Dr Alison Shell.

⁸⁰ William Palmes, *The life of Mrs Dorothy Lawson, of St Anthony’s, near Newcastle-on-Tyne*, London 1855, 62.

⁸¹ D. J. Lamburn, ‘The influence of the laity in appointments of clergy in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century’, in Claire Cross (ed.), *Patronage and recruitment in the Tudor and early Stuart Church* York 1996, 117–18. I am grateful to Professor Claire Cross for this reference. For the figures from Yorkshire see Hugh Aveling, ‘The Catholic recusants of the West Riding of Yorkshire 1558–1790’, *Proceedings of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society (Literary and Historical Section)* x (1962–3), 242–4.

⁸² *Memoirs of the life of Mr Ambrose Barnes, late merchant and sometime alderman of Newcastle upon Tyne*, ed. W. H. D. Longstaffe (Surtees Society 1, 1866), 319.

This seems to have been a not uncommon response. In September 1635 Archbishop James Ussher reported to Samuel Ward, Master of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, that the Jesuits were exploiting Robert Shelford's powerful exposition of Laudian themes, *Five pious and learned discourses*, to their own advantage: they were sending them over to Ireland 'to confirm our papists in their obstinacy and to assure them that we are now coming home unto them as fast as we can'.⁸³ Equally instructive is the commotion caused in Catholic circles by the publication of the Franciscan Christopher Davenport's treatise asserting that the Thirty-Nine Articles could be harmonised with the Catholic faith and the two Churches rejoined 'if we would come up a step to them, and they come down a step to us'. Learned members of the Society of Jesus responded with horror: 'twas impossible that the church of Rome should ever descend in the least degree'.⁸⁴ There is little more than silence to suggest that most of the educated recusant laity were anything other than fiercely resistant to Davenport's maverick vision.

Even so, we know too little to insist that there were no Catholics who supported the reunion scheme championed by Richard Montagu and secretly discussed with the papal agent Gregorio Panzani in the mid 1630s.⁸⁵ As hard as they are to detect and track down, figures like Secretary of State Sir Francis Windebank may have been more typical than it is widely assumed. A staunch Laudian with undisguised Catholic sympathies, he reputedly called Henry VIII a 'pig' for instituting the schism and was unperturbed by the entry of two of his daughters into a Parisian nunnery.⁸⁶ On both sides of the confessional divide, zealots and bigots tend to eclipse men and women who shared the moderate cast of mind David Smith has discerned in the person of Edward Sackville, fourth earl of Dorset – a cast of mind which eschewed extremes, transcended conventional black-and-white polarities, heartily wished for an end to theological wrangling, and refused to allow differences of religious opinion to interfere with normal political and personal relations.⁸⁷

⁸³ James Ussher, *The whole works of the most rev. James Ussher, D.D.*, Dublin 1847–64, xvi. 9. On Shelford see Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, 53–6.

⁸⁴ Francis Peck, *Desiderata curiosa: or, a collection of divers scarce and curious pieces relating chiefly to matters of English history*, London 1779, 473; Thomas H. Clancy, 'Papist–Protestant–Puritan: English religious taxonomy 1565–1665', *RH* xiii (1975–6), 245; *The memoirs of Gregorio Panzani: giving an account of his agency in England, in the years 1634, 1635, 1636*, ed. Joseph Berington, Birmingham 1793, 165–8.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 237–48; Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 345–73.

⁸⁶ *DNB*; Havran, *Catholics in Caroline England*, 136–7; Hibbard, *Charles I and the popish plot*, 34; *Memoirs of Gregorio Panzani*, esp. pp. 163–4.

⁸⁷ David L. Smith, 'Catholic, Anglican or Puritan? Edward Sackville, fourth earl of Dorset and the ambiguities of religion in early Stuart England', *TRHS* 6th ser. ii (1992), 105–24.

In this regard insufficient attention has arguably been paid to internal divisions within the English Catholic community itself. Starting with the Wisbech ‘stirs’ in the late 1580s, cracks began to emerge between the Jesuits and seculars and between leading members of the laity, cracks which had widened into canyons by the time of the Archpriest and Appellant controversies at the turn of the century. These unseemly factional struggles were ruthlessly exploited by Archbishop Richard Bancroft, whose shady dealings with loyalist gentlemen and anti-Jesuit priests still await their historian.⁸⁸ The whole ethos of Laudianism may have been particularly appealing to those for whom the spiritual and jurisdictional primacy claimed by the papacy had ceased to be a sticking point. The contentions within the Romanist camp regarding the Oath of Allegiance of 1606 suggest some were ready to repudiate the doctrine of papal deposing power which had been so central to Catholic self-identity since the promulgation of Pius v’s bull, *Regnans in Excelsis*, in 1570. So do the sixteen recusant lords who took the Oath in 1610.⁸⁹ Nor should it be forgotten that occasional conformity was often the ploy of upstanding citizens who refused to choose between their family faith and political loyalty to the monarch: church papistry could embody a tacit rejection of the right of the Bishop of Rome to interfere in secular domestic affairs which was sometimes the first step towards whole-hearted conversion. Such individuals are indicative of a gradual drift towards the erastian Protestantism of the English state which William Laud and his colleagues were evidently eager to assist and encourage.

Nevertheless, there remains much to suggest that many well-informed Catholics were neither deceived nor appeased by the attitudes and strategies of the Laudians and their precursors. This may partly be explained by the fact that, notwithstanding the conciliatory temper enshrined in sermons and works of controversy from the late 1620s and 30s, there does not seem to have been a notable relaxation of anti-Catholic intolerance in practice. To be sure, the execution of missionary priests for treason was almost suspended completely and the presence of Queen Henrietta Maria at court ensured that it became a haven and centre for both crypto- and full-blown popery. Those who flocked to Somerset House and other ambassadors’ chapels in London also enjoyed

⁸⁸ The best account of these complex internecine disputes is Arnold Pritchard, *Catholic loyalty in Elizabethan England*, London 1979. See also Bossy, *English Catholic community*, ch. ii. Some of the materials for such a study will be found in *The Archpriest controversy*, ed. T. G. Law (Camden Society 2nd ser. lvi, lviii, 1896, 1898).

⁸⁹ See Robin Clifton, ‘Fear of popery’, in Russell, *Origins of the English Civil War*, 154. See also C. J. Ryan, ‘The Jacobean Oath of Allegiance and English lay Catholics’, *Catholic Historical Review* xviii (1942). But cf. the rather different interpretation of M. C. Questier, ‘Loyalty, religion and state power in early modern England: English Romanism and the Jacobean Oath of Allegiance’, *Historical Journal* xl (1997), 311–29.

considerable licence.⁹⁰ Yet, contrary to received wisdom and popular belief, the Personal Rule was not a period of exceptional leniency and ease for recusants. Indeed, it seems to have been an era of heavier and more systematic penal repression than the reign of James. Not only did Laud hate papists with a passion, initiating a series of sharp proclamations against them and taking stringent measures against pilgrims to the shrine of St Winifred at Holywell in Wales in 1637–8; but, as Keith Lindley has shown, the fines nonconforming Catholics paid to the Exchequer were an important source of revenue to a monarch in severe monetary difficulties. Charles I and Exchequer officials made sure that they were rigorously enforced, not just against the elite but also, to an unprecedented degree, against their social inferiors.⁹¹ Rich and poor papists alike were also subject to higher subsidies than their Protestant neighbours. This can have done little to convince recusants that the Caroline regime had really called a truce: one disgruntled woman was examined in 1638 for exclaiming that if she were queen she would hang the king for dealing with Catholics so harshly. Perhaps many would have echoed her sentiments.⁹² It also comes as no surprise that some stubborn recusants were in the forefront of local taxpayers' strikes against Ship Money: one John Cross of Liverpool was imprisoned in 1636 for his intransigent stance.⁹³

But a caveat or two should be added here. Despite the harsh financial exactions suffered by Roman Catholics during the decade before 1642, they may have been more immune to other forms of harassment like unwelcome visits from rough-and-ready local commissioners and priest-detectors. A regime which regarded Catholicism as a legitimate if imperfect strand of Christianity was surely less likely to tolerate spontaneous, vigilante action than one which confronted it as a diabolical heresy and the epitome of all earthly evil. It was one thing to levy a luxury tax on recusants for religious practices now perceived as little more than misguided; intruding in private homes and subjecting law-abiding citizens to aggressive search and bodily assault was quite another. Of course, relative levels of sectarian violence in this period are impossible to measure.

At a personal and parochial level, however, it might be suggested that the irenic and ecumenical pretensions of leading clergymen and prelates led not to a lessening of confessional tensions, but paradoxically to a heightened atmosphere of interdenominational distrust as Puritans reacted to prevailing trends by recoiling even more sharply from the

⁹⁰ See Hibbard, *Charles I and the popish plot*, chs ii–iii; Alan Dures, *English Catholicism 1558–1642*, Harlow 1983, 74–80.

⁹¹ See Havran, *Catholics of Caroline England*, ch. vi; K. J. Lindley, 'The lay Catholics of England in the reign of Charles I', this *JOURNAL* xxii (1971), 199–221; Sharpe, *Personal rule of Charles I*, 301–8. ⁹² Quoted *ibid.* 304. ⁹³ Dures, *English Catholicism*, 73.

disciples of the papal AntiChrist and all who appeared to be pandering to the whore of Babylon. The wave of anti-Catholic panics and scares of the early 1640s analysed by Robin Clifton probably needs to be discussed in this context.⁹⁴ Peter Lake's suggestive remarks about the way anti-popery functioned to fuse disparate groups of Puritan zealots and people who cannot otherwise be described as godly Protestants must also be built into any attempt to test this hypothesis.⁹⁵ The increasing hegemony of Laudian ideals may, then, have helped to destroy the effective *modus vivendi* between the adherents of rival creeds which Chris Marsh would argue had long been established in many communities.⁹⁶ Could this, in turn, have bolstered the anti-Protestant identity of Catholics and buttressed the iron curtain of prejudice that cut them off from the self-consciously Calvinist inhabitants of their villages and towns? We must await detailed case studies to see how far this sort of polarisation actually happened in practice.

Nevertheless, some Catholics do seem to have warmed to individual representatives of an outlook that was clearly so much more amenable to their own values and ideals. Not without relevance here is the evidence uncovered by Diarmaid MacCulloch of patronage ties between East Anglian recusant gentry and proto-Arminian clergy. From the 1570s leading Suffolk Catholics like Michael Hare, Sir Thomas Cornwallis and Sir Thomas Kitson were actively presenting avant-garde conformists to livings within their gift – ministers who moved in the circles of that arch anti-Puritan Richard Bancroft.⁹⁷ In Beverley in the 1590s the domination of the magisterial bench by local gentry with known popish tendencies facilitated the advancement of non-preaching, anti-Puritan clergy who were inactive in the prosecution of moral and sabbatarian lapses.⁹⁸ Michael Questier's current research on the hazy connections between Sussex conformists and Roman Catholics before 1626 and David Crankshaw's keenly anticipated Cambridge PhD on the patronage of Elizabethan peers are likely to yield further illuminating examples, and we may well wonder whether this type of clientage continued under Laud. Equally interesting is the support church papists in parliament and

⁹⁴ Clifton, 'Fear of popery', 144–67, and 'The popular fear of Catholics during the English Revolution', *P&P* lii (1971), repr. in Paul Slack (ed.), *Rebellion, popular protest and the social order in early modern England*, Cambridge 1984, 129–61. See also William Hunt, *The Puritan movement: the coming of revolution in an English county*, Cambridge, Mass. 1983, ch. xi, and Keith Lindley, *Popular politics and religion in Civil War London*, Aldershot 1977, 74–9.

⁹⁵ Lake, 'Anti-popery', 92–6.

⁹⁶ Note especially the remarks of Christopher Marsh, *The Family of Love in English society, 1550–1630*, Cambridge 1994, 14–16, 249–51. See also Anthony Fletcher, *A county community in peace and war: Sussex, 1600–1660*, London 1976, 101.

⁹⁷ Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors: politics and religion in an English county 1500–1600*, Oxford 1986, 210–11, and 'Myth', 17. See also the remarks of Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 53–4, 541.

⁹⁸ Lamburn, 'The influence of the laity', 118.

crypto-Catholic aristocrats at court gave Richard Montagu in the wake of the hornet's nest stirred up by the publication of *A new gagg for an old goose*: Sir Thomas Riddell, MP for Newcastle upon Tyne in the 1620s, was one of those whose associations with leading Arminians might repay further attention.⁹⁹

Christopher Dent has suggested that Catholic survivalism in Elizabethan Oxford may also have been more important as a source of developing tendencies within the seventeenth-century Church than is often supposed.¹⁰⁰ More recently Nicholas Tyacke has intimated that Laud's own religion owes much to the atmosphere of his *alma mater*, St John's, a college founded during the Marian Counter-Reformation in the 1550s. It would be going too far to brand his anti-Calvinist tutor Buckeridge a crypto-Catholic, but this was certainly an environment in which conservative opinions died hard and lingered long.¹⁰¹ As for Cambridge, the posthumous influence exercised by that notorious turncoat and nominal Protestant, the Elizabethan Master of Peterhouse, Dr Andrew Perne, can hardly be forgotten;¹⁰² and David Hoyle has discovered that the line between Laudianism and Romanism in the Caroline University was extremely hazy.¹⁰³ As Diarmaid MacCulloch remarks, 'one does not need to be a believer in conspiracy theory' to wish for more research into these 'intriguing sidelights' on the long-term reaction against Calvinist orthodoxy.¹⁰⁴

Contemporary fears about a causal link between Roman Catholicism and the rise of anti-Calvinism may, then, contain a kernel of truth. Already in the 1620s Arminianism was being heralded as a Trojan Horse: the 'subtle and pernicious spread' of this faction, it was alleged in parliament in 1629, would incline 'unstable minds' to papistical errors.¹⁰⁵ By 1640 enemies of the current bench of bishops were convinced that they were attempting to bring in popery by the back door. It was a polemical commonplace that Laud was 'the spawn of a Papist' and that the alarming new theological and liturgical trends of the 1620s and 30s sowed

⁹⁹ Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, 147.

¹⁰⁰ C. M. Dent, *Protestant reformers in Elizabethan Oxford*, Oxford 1983, 232; MacCulloch, *Later Reformation in England*, 96–7.

¹⁰¹ Tyacke, 'Archbishop Laud', in Fincham, *Early Stuart Church*, 54–6. See also Patrick Collinson, 'Archbishop Laud' (a lecture on the 350th anniversary of the death of Laud delivered at St John's College, Oxford, 25 May 1995). I am grateful to Professor Collinson for allowing me to read the typescript of his lecture shortly after it was delivered.

¹⁰² Idem, 'Perne the turncoat: an Elizabethan reputation', in David McKitterick (ed.), *Andrew Perne: quatercentenary studies* (Cambridge Bibliographical Society Monograph xi, 1991), 1–34, repr. in P. Collinson, *Elizabethan essays*, London 1994, 179–217.

¹⁰³ David Hoyle, 'A Commons investigation of the Arminianism and popery in Cambridge on the eve of the Civil War', *HJ* xxix (1986), 419–25, and "'Near popery yet no popery": theological debate in Cambridge 1590–1644', unpubl. PhD diss. Cambridge 1991, ch. v.

¹⁰⁴ MacCulloch, *Later Reformation in England*, 97.

¹⁰⁵ *The Stuart constitution*, ed. J. P. Kenyon, Cambridge 1966, 157.

the seeds of idolatry in the individual soul and opened the way for a national reconversion to Rome. The ecclesiastical hierarchy was a crypto-Catholic fifth column seeking to take over the Church of England and subvert it from within. A bogus letter cited at Laud's trial has a Jesuit gleefully declare: 'Now we have planted that Sovereign drugg Arminianism, which we hope will purge the Protestants from their heresie, and it flourisheth and bears fruit in due season.'¹⁰⁶ The dangers inherent in Laudianism and Catholicism were thus powerfully conflated in some early Stuart minds. As Peter Lake has shown, anti-popery served ideological purposes to which the reality and scale of the identified threat are almost irrelevant. It helped to isolate, label and exorcise trends and tendencies that appeared to be jeopardising the integrity of Protestant England.¹⁰⁷ The statements above certainly reflect anxieties about the failure and perversion of the English Reformation, but perhaps they cannot always be explained away as psychological projections. That such allegations were not entirely Puritan scaremongering is suggested by the handful of future Catholic converts who found a home with Bishop Neile and other members of the Durham House group – figures like Benjamin Carier and Humfrey Leech.¹⁰⁸ These clerical cases were well-publicised, but were they unique and atypical? We must guard against jumping too quickly to the conclusion that, in the context of the developments of the 1630s, the majority of those lay people who are now invisible to view

¹⁰⁶ See Lake, 'Anti-popery'; Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 52–3; Hibbard, *Charles I and the popish plot*, passim; Clancy, 'Papist–Protestant–Puritan', 236–7. The forged Jesuit letter is quoted in Clancy. For typical fears about the link between popery and Arminianism/Laudianism see *The years of siege*, 98. No document embodies anxiety about Laudian trends as the thin end of a Roman Catholic wedge more memorably than the Grand Remonstrance of December 1641.

¹⁰⁷ Lake, 'Anti-popery', esp. pp. 74, 82–3, 97. See also Carol Z. Wiener, 'The beleaguered isle: a study of Elizabethan and early Jacobean anti-Catholicism', *P&P* li (1971), 27–62, where anti-Catholic prejudice is interpreted as a far more dysfunctional phenomenon.

¹⁰⁸ Kenneth Fincham, 'Prelacy and politics: Archbishop Abbot's defence of Protestant orthodoxy', *HR* lxi (1988), 54; Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 53; Questier, *Conversion, politics and religion*, 53–4, and 'Crypto-Catholicism, anti-Calvinism and conversion at the Jacobean court: the enigma of Benjamin Carier', this *JOURNAL* xlvii (1996), 1–20. Note Questier's careful refinement of the argument that Carier was effectively forced out of the English Church because he embodied trends that had not yet displaced the consensual Calvinism of the Jacobean establishment. Also of interest here is a curious tract entitled *An apology of English Arminianisme or a dialogue, betweene Jacobus Arminius, professour in the University of Leyden in Holland; and Enthusiastus an English Doctour of Divinity and a great precisian*, published in St Omer in 1634 by one 'O.N.', an Oxford don who evidently abandoned Calvin for Arminius and then Arminius for the pope, and appears to have written this tract to encourage other Protestants to follow his lead and take up residence in the halfway house of doctrinal Arminianism. On reflection, I am inclined to think this is more likely to be a subtle form of Catholic propaganda designed to exploit and exacerbate frictions and fractures within the Protestant camp, than a piece of ingenious advice.

remained passive and unmoved. As Dr Questier would stress, conspicuous examples of interdenominational conversion are simply the tip of an iceberg of contemporary religious vacillation. Fluctuations in faith cannot be contained within the narrow boundaries of overt and celebrated changes in institutional allegiance.¹⁰⁹

In assessing the practical impact of Laudian and proto-Laudian policies on Roman Catholics, then, we are hampered by both methodological problems and a paucity of suitable sources. On the one hand, there is the difficulty of sifting fact from fiction in polemical literature and deciding just how much credit can be given to observations made through a lens of mutual hostility and hatred. On the other, there is no obvious body of evidence to prove or disprove the hypotheses with which we began. ‘Papists’ were far less prone than their Puritan counterparts to record the intricate twists and turns of their inner religious lives in private journals or diaries, and pious biographies of contemporary saints will, almost by definition, draw a total blank in respect of such questions. Family papers and the reports of foreign ambassadors might provide some miscellaneous snippets, but the most fruitful way forward may well be the technique of microhistory. Perhaps only painstaking reconstitution of communities, and of the networks of religious affiliation criss-crossing them, can put flesh on the skeleton of the suggestions made in this section.

It would be inappropriate to draw any bold conclusions at the end of an essay which consists so largely of speculation and conjecture. Clearly more careful archival research is required to redress the neglect of this interesting cluster of themes. The suggestion that the ecclesiastical trends of the 1630s may have won positive approbation from some sectors of the populace – consciously Catholic, as well as actively non- or anti-Puritan – is likely to be both controversial and unpopular. This is partly because it has proved so difficult, to date, to disentangle the ongoing argument about the origins of Caroline religious ideology from exploration of its provincial impact and palpable effects. If assumptions about resistance to novelty and blind adherence to tradition are set aside, it becomes much easier to appraise evidence of approval and disapproval in a more objective light. A preliminary survey suggests support for Laudianism was not as insubstantial as some historians would imply, though it was very selective: few parishioners endorsed the full package of policies which evolved in the course of the Personal Rule.

In evaluating the existence of a link between these ‘Laudian’ laypeople and individuals who still yearned for what Eamon Duffy calls ‘traditional religion’, we must ask searching questions about the size of this potential constituency and also its age. Were these old women and men too weary

¹⁰⁹ Questier, *Conversion, politics and religion*, conclusion and passim.

of change to worry about the latest phase of alterations, and how much influence had they exerted in shaping the outlook of the next generation? Even so, some kind of convergence between anti-Calvinist strands within the Church and the current of religious conservatism which ran through most rural parishes cannot be discounted. As the origins of Laudianism are pushed back further into the sixteenth century and the concept of a 'Long Reformation' extending well into the seventeenth entrenches itself in our thinking, it becomes ever more probable that there is indeed a connection.

The third of my themes presents similar challenges. Little progress will be made until we cease to treat the early Stuart Catholic community as if it were hermetically sealed and segregated from the ecclesiastical history of 'Protestant England'. Recusants and church papists must be rescued from the margins and re-situated in the context of mainstream developments. Likewise analysis of popery and anti-popery must be more tightly interwoven.¹¹⁰ Much of the material relevant to the question of Romanist sympathy for Laudian priorities discovered so far is either of a negative character or involves reading sources with a degree of imagination, between the lines and even rather against the grain. But we cannot yet safely conclude that this line of enquiry is a blind alley and red herring. Nor can the theological and liturgical developments of the early seventeenth century continue to be discussed solely with reference to the tiny minority of English society privileged with a university education. While the religious outlook of the unlearned laity does not readily lend itself to detailed analysis, it would be a mistake to assume that it necessarily fell into the same patterns and categories as that of ordained clergymen trained in divinity and embroiled in scholarly disputes. In short, it is, I think, worth reconsidering the possibility that the Laudian Church had parochial, if not 'popish', foundations and roots.

¹¹⁰ Cf. Caroline Hibbard's similar and generally unheeded remarks in 'Early Stuart Catholicism: revisions and re-revisions', *Journal of Modern History* lii (1980), 1-34.