

POLITICAL CULTURE
IN THE REIGN OF
ELIZABETH I

Queen and Commonwealth 1558–1585

A. N. McLAREN

University of Liverpool



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK <http://www.cup.cam.ac.uk>
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA <http://www.cup.org>
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

© A. N. McLaren 1999

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1999

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

Typeset in Baskerville 11/12.5pt [vN]

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress cataloguing in publication data

McLaren, Anne.

Political culture in the reign of Elizabeth I: Queen and Commonwealth 1558–1585 / A. N.

McLaren.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 0-521-65144-1 (hb)

1. Great Britain – Politics and government – 1558–1603. 2. Political culture – Great Britain
– History – 16th century.

I. Title.

JN181.N35 1999

306.2'0942'09031 – dc21 99-22403

CIP

ISBN 0 521 65144 1 hardback

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>page</i> ix
Introduction	i
1 'To be Deborah': the political implications of providentialism under a female ruler	12
The debate over headship	12
Restored Protestantism and the English Deborah	23
The queen and the regime	31
The incorporated crown: Privy Councillors and the queen	36
Conclusion	43
2 Announcing the godly common weal: Knox, Aylmer and the parameters of counsel	46
A queen called by God: John Knox's <i>First Blast of the Trumpet</i>	49
Inaugurating the 'mixed monarchy': John Aylmer's reflections on female rule	59
Conclusion: counsel and sovereignty in the godly nation	69
3 Feats of incorporation: the ideological bases of the mixed monarchy	75
Counsel, consent and conscience: the common good	77
Commonwealth ideology	80
Conquest and consent: the Marian legacy	90
Incorporating the queen	99
Conclusion	103
4 Contesting the social order: 'resistance theory' and the mixed monarchy	105
Defining a godly social order: Ponet, Goodman and gendered kingship	108
Redefining the social order: Laurence Humphrey's apologetical works	120
Conclusion: nobility and virility in the country	131

5	Godly men and nobles: the bicephalic body politic	134
	Queen and counsel in the bicephalic body politic	137
	Officers and nobles in the godly nation	143
	Speech acts in the mixed monarchy	150
	Conclusion	157
6	Godly men and parliamentarians: the politics of counsel in the 1570s	161
	John Hooker's <i>Order and Usage</i>	164
	Contesting consent: speech acts in parliament, 1571–1572	171
	‘Le Roigne se avisera’	184
	Coda: Peter Wentworth's speech, 1576	189
	Conclusion: sovereignty and prerogative	194
7	Rewriting the common weal: Sir Thomas Smith and the <i>De Republica Anglorum</i>	198
	Sir Thomas Smith and the <i>De Republica Anglorum</i>	203
	Delineating the commonwealth	207
	Queenship in the commonwealth	214
	<i>De Republica Anglorum</i> and the 1580s	220
	Conclusion	227
	Afterword	235
	<i>Bibliography</i>	244
	<i>Index</i>	266

CHAPTER I

‘To be Deborah’: the political implications of providentialism under a female ruler

Querative: if God should call her majesty leaving issue a daughter . . .
what he thinketh of that Daughter’s Right?

Elizabeth to John Knox (1559)¹

THE DEBATE OVER HEADSHIP

In 1559 Elizabeth’s query to John Knox was a telling one. The Henrician Reformation had problematised the relationship of the imperial king to the ‘church’ (now newly defined as both a universal and a purely English gathered congregation) in ways that also, inevitably, affected the perception and conduct of female rule. What exactly did it mean to be ‘Supreme Head of the Church of England next under Christ’? What powers did it entail? Did it necessarily – as many Protestants believed – derogate from Christ’s authority? For Anthony Gilbey, writing in Geneva in 1558, before his return to England at Elizabeth’s accession, Henry VIII’s claim to be Supreme Head left an antichristian remnant in the Anglican Church that impeded further reformation:

This monstrous boar [Henry VIII] for all this must needs be called the Head of the Church in pain of treason, displacing Christ, our only Head, who ought alone to have this title. Wherefore in this point, O England, ye were no better than the Romish Antichrist, who by the same title maketh himself a God, sitteth on men’s consciences, bannisheth the Word of God, as did your King Henry, whom ye so magnify . . . So made you your King a god, believing nothing but that he allowed.²

¹ Elizabeth’s annotations on a letter from Knox explaining how she should interpret his *First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* (1558), British Library, Additional MSS. 32,091, fols. 167–9. For Knox’s letter see below, chapter 2.

² Anthony Gilbey, *An Admonition to England and Scotland to call them to repentance* (Geneva 1558) in *The Works of John Knox*, ed. David Laing, 6 vols. (Edinburgh, 1846–64), vol. vi, pp. 553–71, p. 564.

Reformation ideology in Europe, centred as it was on a true reading of Scripture, collapsed the traditional division between temporal and spiritual authorities (symbolised before the reformation by the relationship between pope and emperor) and called into question the nature and extent of monarchical authority. It also confounded the well-established division between two distinct kinds of ecclesiastical authority: the magisterial power over the church known as the *potestas jurisdictionis* and the sacerdotal, sacramental power, the *potestas ordinis*. The repudiation of ritual observance as necessary to salvation gave a new centrality to the power to declare and expound Scripture. In a Bible-centred theocracy, whether at Zurich or in England, Christ may rule; but He does so primarily through Scriptural pronouncement. In a monarchy – in what Christopher St German called 'the whole catholic church of England' – whose role would it be to interpret Scripture? Was the task of establishing doctrine (as against that of enforcing it) a matter for the temporal or the spiritual authority? For a council, or for the king? What should be the relationship between the two? In a monarchy, if the king, now imperial, fulfilled the role of exegete, did this make him a priest? A prophet?³ Or, as Gilbey believed, a pope? And did not the concept of an imperial crown, advanced at least in part to repudiate the claims of the supreme pontiff at Rome, logically entail the assimilation of *potestas ordinis* to the crown?⁴ As Cuthbert Tunstall warned in 1531, supreme headship would indeed prove to be a *propositio multiplex*.⁵

The conception of empire advanced by the Henrician Reformation also problematised the issue of the **person** who would exercise absolute temporal and spiritual dominion, at a time when contemporary ideological developments in Europe 'personalised' monarchical power, and gendered it as male.⁶ J. H. Burns has shown how one influential strand of the scholastic debate over monarchy that occurred over the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries was the elevation of the status of the monarch, whether pope or emperor, by reference to his reception of authority from, hence identity with, Christ: 'him by whom kings reign'.

³ One definition of 'prophet' in use in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was one who interpreted or expounded the Scriptures; *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1971), vol. 1, p. 1473.

⁴ This appears to have been Henry VIII's view. See Francis Oakley, 'Christian Obedience and Authority, 1520–1550' in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought 1450–1700*, ed. J. H. Burns (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 159–92, pp. 177–82.

⁵ Quoted in C. H. McIlwain, *The Political Works of James I* (New York, 1965), p. xlvii.

⁶ Anthony Black, *Monarchy and Community: Political Ideas in the Later Conciliar Controversy 1430–1450* (Cambridge, 1970); Merry E. Weisner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 241.

That political vocabulary – the language of *imperium* and of *plenitudo potestatis*, of secularised equivalents of the perceived relationship between Christ and his Church – subsequently served to legitimate the claims to empire of territorial and national monarchs, like Henry VIII, which proliferated in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.⁷ It was a vocabulary predicated on the assumption that the person who ruled – pope, emperor or king – would be male. In England, where the king's claims to imperial authority were uniquely explicit and far-ranging, the assumption acquired very nearly the status of a categorical imperative, one that helps explain Henry VIII's desperate and constitutionally innovative quest for a male heir.

The rediscovery of classical antiquity too led to and provided authoritative sanction for the perception of monarchical authority as a male capacity, represented by the figure of the 'philosopher-king'. Humanism recovered antique, primarily Aristotelian, gender typologies that classified women as relatively deficient in qualities of reason, judgement and prudence, hence lacking the capacity for political virtue. Even Erasmian humanists depicted women as best able to attain moral virtue through subordination to their husbands, ordained by God to be their 'heads' in the wake of the Fall.⁸ On all sides, St Paul's often-quoted injunction prohibiting women from speaking in the congregation was read as confirming a God-ordained spiritual incapacity which denied them authority in spiritual matters and, as a corollary, the exercise of temporal dominion in a godly realm.

From another direction too gender and the problem of monarchical authority were linked. As the religious reformations took hold, especially in Northern Europe, direct obedience to God through His vice-regent Christ became a powerful political ideal: referring back to Christ, as king, the dignity with which terrestrial monarchy had been invested in the course of earlier conciliar controversies. This occurred in the context of a movement that Donald Kelley has rightly identified as 'intensely masculine' in its leadership, rhetoric and imagery: 'God, Pope, priest, king, magistrate, preacher: all were men; so too were the rebels who

⁷ J. H. Burns, *Lordship, Kingship and Empire: The Idea of Monarchy 1400–1525* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 13–14, 97–100. Dale Hoak, 'The Iconography of the Crown Imperial' in *Tudor Political Culture*, ed. Dale Hoak (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 54–103.

⁸ Ian Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman: A Study in the Fortunes of Scholasticism and Medical Science in European Intellectual Life* (Cambridge, 1980); Margo Todd, *Christian Humanism and the Puritan Social Order* (Cambridge, 1987).

attacked their character and position. All likewise lacked a coequal female partner.⁹

One solution to the problem this ideological shift posed for monarchical authority lay in eliding the figures of Christ and the king. This was an element of the theory of the divine right of kings as it developed in England in the late sixteenth and especially the early seventeenth centuries, the point at which a king, in the person of James VI of Scotland, was once again in prospect.¹⁰ But it was a solution available (albeit, as events were to prove, profoundly problematical) only to lords and kings, not to ladies and queens. For this was the period that witnessed the resurgence of the 'heresy of Postellus': 'that Christ died only for the salvation of *men*; and that there is a *woman* come, which shall redeem the *women*' – a potent indicator of the ambivalent view of women that emerged from the conflation of humanist and reformation ideologies and the intersection of that view with radical politics.¹¹

In England, the role and meaning of 'Supreme Head of the Church of England' was and remained disputable from its inception with the 1534 Act of Supremacy, not least because of the absence of adult male holders of the crown over the period from Henry VIII's death in 1547 until James I's accession in 1603. In this cultural context the role **might** be available to a king, especially one figured as 'king-in-parliament', mystically joined in consultation with the 'whole catholic church of England'

⁹ Donald R. Kelley, *The Beginning of Ideology: Consciousness and Society in the French Reformation* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 75–6. David Freedberg (*The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago, 1989), p. 453) argues more generally that in all periods the use of 'man' for 'humankind' 'reflects quite precisely the male orientation of Judaeo-Christian thinking about the relationship between God and his creations'. This insight is particularly valuable for the early modern period, when the processes that gave rise to the religious reformations led to gendered reconceptualisations of 'God's creations', including bodies politic.

¹⁰ J. P. Sommerville, 'Richard Hooker, Hadrian Saravia, and the Advent of the Divine Right of Kings', *History of Political Thought* 4 (1983), pp. 229–45, pp. 239–41.

¹¹ See, for example, John Strype, *Annals of the Reformation and Establishment of Religion and other various occurrences in the Church of England during Queen Elizabeth's Happy Reign; together with an appendix of original papers of state, records and letters*, 7 vols. (Oxford, 1824), vol. III.ii, p. 348. 'Postellus' was Guillaume Postel (1510–1581), whose insistence that true reformation entailed the marriage of Christ, the new Adam, with the Shekinah, or the new Eve and his identification of her as the holy woman of Venice (and himself as their first-born) led many contemporaries to dismiss him as more mad than dangerous. The misinterpretation of his views, which seem to have been current in England, speaks to anxieties about the future of patriarchy as well as social order in a fully reformed commonwealth. For Postel see William J. Bouwsma, '*Concordia Mundi*': *The Career and Thought of Guillaume Postel (1510–1581)* (Cambridge, Mass., 1957). John Aylmer in effect accused John Knox of leaving the door open for the widespread acceptance of this heresy in his apologetical work *An Harborow for Faithfull and Trewe Subjects, agaynst the late blowne Blaste* (London, 1559), fol. Kiii. For the Knox–Aylmer debate see below, chapter 2.

to propound doctrine.¹² It might extend to a minor king, imagined as a new Josiah attending simultaneously to the wisdom of God and of his godly councillors; hence the image of Edward VI as governed by godly preachers propagated in Elizabeth's reign.¹³ It would not be available to a queen whose gender, according to contemporaries, disqualified her from exercising authority as either priest or prophet.

During her brief tenure of the throne, Mary I side-stepped some of these issues (and raised others) by marrying and by omitting any claim to the title of Supreme Head. She thereby announced herself as subject in both her persons – as woman and as queen – to the authority of male superiors: her husband and king, Philip II of Spain; and the head of the universal church and vicar of Christ, the Pope. Mary's decisions seemed to contemporaries to allow for a non-violent conquest of England by Spain, as Philip exercised his rights as husband and king over his queen and her realm. This, as much as if not more than the coincident reintroduction of Catholicism, provided empirical evidence that confirmed contemporary theories concerning the dangers of female rule.¹⁴ And this was the immediate context that produced John Knox's famous assertion that 'the empire of a woman is an idol', as well as his wider argument that female rule symbolises, and enacts, the ungodly propensities inherent in kingship itself – the argument to which Elizabeth responded in 1559.¹⁵

As we shall see, Knox was not alone, albeit in a minority, in his views on kingship. His views on women rulers and their implication in the definition of monarchical authority were, in contrast, much more widely shared throughout Elizabeth's reign, and shared across the confessional divide.¹⁶ The problem of imperial rule therefore re-emerged in a complicated and intensified form at Elizabeth's accession, as godly men attempted to preserve England's autonomous identity – its spiritual and

¹² Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1978), vol. 2, *The Age of Reformation*, pp. 56–8, 100–8.

¹³ See Margaret Aston, *The King's Bedpost: Reformation and Iconography in a Tudor Group Portrait* (Cambridge, 1993) for the cultivation of Edward VI's image in Elizabeth's reign.

¹⁴ See Jennifer Loach, *Parliament and Crown in the Reign of Mary Tudor* (Oxford, 1986), who touches on but does not systematically explore the constitutional consequences of anxieties concerning female rule in Mary's reign. See her discussion of the 1554 Act for the Queen's Regnal Power, pp. 96–7, 217–18.

¹⁵ John Knox, *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* (1558), in *The Political Writings of John Knox*, ed. Marvin A. Breslow (Washington, D.C., 1985). For the English face of John Knox in this connection see Jane Dawson, 'The Two John Knoxes: England, Scotland and the 1558 Tracts', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 42, no. 4 (1991), 556–76.

¹⁶ John Strype, *Annals*, vol. 1.1, pp. 186–7.

territorial constituents now interpenetrated and powerfully symbolised by the Protestant imperial crown – in the context of female rule.

The resulting tensions are apparent in the debate over the 1559 Act of Supremacy. In that debate a consensus emerged, across confessional lines, that the queen would be Supreme **Governor** of the Church of England, not Supreme **Head**.¹⁷ Geoffrey Elton argued that the new title represented an attempt to satisfy moderate Catholic opinion that Elizabeth had not assumed a title rightly belonging to the pope and also to answer doubts about the 'propriety' of a woman being called Supreme Head of the Church of England.¹⁸ But there is more to the matter than this. By this point in the sixteenth century, again as a consequence of earlier conciliar controversies, the term 'governor' could be used to denote an administrative capacity (read as at least potentially a collective one), and as such contrasted to *imperium*, or the power to command; a distinction that saw four female relations of Philip II enact the role of governor of the Netherlands as a consequence of Philip's fully realised imperial status.¹⁹

Awareness of a politically significant distinction between 'head' and 'governor' in the context of the royal supremacy undoubtedly informed the debate over Elizabeth's change of title from 'Supreme Head' to 'Supreme Governor' at her accession.²⁰ In these debates the major fault-line over the use of 'Supreme Head' appeared within the Protestant ranks, while Catholic speakers exploited this division, and the ambiguities of the concept of 'supreme headship', to promote the advantages of allegiance to the universal church at Rome. On one side of the line stood those, like William Cecil and John Hales, who regarded Elizabeth's adoption of the title as necessary to differentiate her reign from that of her predecessor queen and convincingly to re-establish Eng-

¹⁷ For the debate see John Strype, *Annals*, vol. 1.ii, pp. 400, 405–6, 410–11, 419–20.

¹⁸ G. R. Elton, *The Tudor Constitution: Documents and Commentary*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 338–45.

¹⁹ J. H. Burns, 'Regimen Medium: Executive Power in Early-Modern Political Thought', unpublished paper, pp. 3–4; *The True Law of Kingship: Concepts of Monarchy in Early-Modern Scotland* (Oxford, 1996), p. 222. For instances of this use in Elizabeth's reign see William Camden, *The History of the Most Renowned and Victorious Princess Elizabeth Late Queen of England*, ed. Wallace T. MacCaffrey (Chicago, 1970), p. 62, and *The Bardon Papers: Documents Relating to the Imprisonment and Trial of Mary Queen of Scots*, ed. Conyers Read, Camden Third Series vol. xvii (London, 1909), Appendix I, pp. 118–19.

²⁰ See also F. W. Maitland, who argues the 'etc.' introduced in Elizabeth's style and title represented a deliberate attempt 'in the highest of high quarters' to finesse the problem of 'Supreme Headship'. F. W. Maitland, 'Elizabethan Gleanings', in *Selected Historical Essays of F. W. Maitland*, ed. Helen M. Cam (Cambridge, 1957), pp. 211–46, esp. pp. 211–16. I am grateful to Dr Orest Ranum for this reference.

land's Protestant identity. On the other were ranged those – men like John Knox and Anthony Gilbey – who regarded both the attempt and the title as ungodly. Their influence is demonstrated by the fact that it was Thomas Lever, godly preacher and 'commonwealth-man' in Edward VI's reign, and recently returned Marian exile, who dissuaded Elizabeth from taking the title of 'Supreme Head'.²¹ In the middle stood those who, like the Archbishop of Canterbury, Matthew Parker, sympathised with both positions, but at heart probably inclined more toward the latter. Parker was one of the compilers of the 1559 ecclesiastical injunctions designed to support the Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity, although these were edited and put in final form by Cecil alone. Shortly before his death in 1575 Parker – who, like his successor Edmund Grindal, grew to find service to both God and queen a spiritually incoherent proposition and regretted his decision to accept ecclesiastical office – wrote to Cecil (by then Lord Burghley) that 'Whatsoever the [queen's] ecclesiastical prerogative is, I fear it is not so great as your pen hath given it in the injunctions.'²²

In the end, all but one of the Marian bishops refused to take the oath of supremacy, despite the change in the queen's title. They were deprived of their bishoprics and replaced by Protestants selected by Elizabeth's chief minister, William Cecil. Many had connections with Cecil dating from their participation in the 'Edwardian moment' of Edward VI's reign that proved so momentous for later Tudor political culture; most now returned from godly exile sustained during Mary's reign.²³ This outcome put in place an ecclesiastical establishment whose views on imperial kingship were likely to share common ground with those of men like Gilbey and Knox, even as they recognised the necessity of protecting the royal supremacy; a necessity that became more compelling with a woman, even a Protestant princess, on the throne.

With regard to the headship issue, these ambiguities persisted as the reign proceeded. Elizabeth and her Privy Councillors seem to have wanted to act as though Elizabeth exercised the same theocratic authority as her father had done, whilst holding up the change in title to

²¹ John Strype, *Annals*, vol. 1.1, p. 194.

²² *Ibid.*, vol. 1.1, p. 236. For Parker see Patrick Collinson, 'The Downfall of Archbishop Grindal and Its Place in Elizabethan Political and Ecclesiastical History', in *Godly People: Essays on English Protestantism and Puritanism*, ed. Patrick Collinson (London, 1983), pp. 371–97, p. 373.

²³ See William Haller, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs and the Elect Nation* (London, 1963), introduction and pp. 83–6. For the 'Edwardian moment' and its relationship to Scottish political culture see Arthur H. Williamson, *Scottish National Consciousness in the Age of James VI: The Apocalypse, the Union and the Shaping of Scotland's Public Culture* (Edinburgh, 1979), ch. 1 and p. 155. I am grateful to Dr Roger Mason for this reference.

'Supreme Governor' as evidence of their, and her, reforming commitment. Moreover, they seem to have proposed commitment to this expedient position as indicative of loyalty to the regime, at least among the elite.²⁴ There was, however, one important difference on this issue between the queen and her Privy Councillors. She wanted to exercise imperial authority in her own right, as her father had done. They wanted that authority to be an attribute of the crown, or of the collective capacity of 'her majesty's supreme government', as Thomas Wilson phrased it in 1578.²⁵ In the parliamentary debates in particular there is evidence that Elizabeth's disclaimer of the title of Supreme Head was partial and occasional. She seemingly adopted a rhetorical strategy of claiming headship of the church in her own person when it appeared she could carry the point, falling back on the well-established trope of the prince as head of the body politic when she could not. The Commons' proceedings were 'not convenient', she responded to one of their numerous petitions urging revision of the prayer book, in 1571. 'Concerning rites and ceremonies she, being supreme head of the Church, would consider thereof as the case should require.'²⁶ Very often it was a strategy her Privy Councillors were prepared to support, in the interest of managing reforming pressure in the House of Commons. '[S]ince we have acknowledged her to be supreme head, we are not in these petty matters to run before the rule', Mr Controller reminded MPs on the occasion of this debate. To do so, commendable zeal notwithstanding, 'were folly', 'both in the doing and in the probability of offending her Majesty'.²⁷

But in 1578 Thomas Wilson, Privy Councillor and the queen's principal secretary, explained his understanding of Elizabeth's position in terms that implied that jurisdictional authority over the affairs of the church lay in the collective capacity of 'her majesty's supreme government' (and avoided the issue of who, within that collective, determined

²⁴ See, for example, Theodore Beza's 1565 letter to Heinrich Bullinger in John Strype, *Annals*, vol. i.ii, pp. 171–3. For 'regime' see Wallace MacCaffrey, *The Shaping of the Elizabethan Regime* (Princeton, N.J., 1969), esp. pp. 22, 39, 310, 313. Like MacCaffrey, I use 'regime' to refer primarily to the Privy Council and, at points, other of the queen's counsellors. I use 'government' specifically to refer to the queen and her councillors. This distinction needs to be highlighted given the tendency especially of modern-day revisionist historians to use 'the government' as synonymous with the Privy Council – more or less systematically excluding the queen. 'Protestant ascendancy' is Patrick Collinson's useful phrase, indicating the centrality if not the numerical weight of this ideological cohort in Elizabethan affairs. See 'Puritans, Men of Business and Elizabethan Parliaments', *Parliamentary History* 7, no. 2 (1988), pp. 187–211, p. 190.

²⁵ John Strype, *Annals*, vol. ii.ii, p. 626.

²⁶ *Proceedings in the Parliaments of Elizabeth I*, vol. 1: 1558–1581, ed. T. E. Hartley (Leicester, 1981), p. 220. ²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 250.

doctrine).²⁸ He made this statement in the course of an episode that is revealing for two reasons. First, it suggests how difficult it would be to promote the sleight of hand proposed by the queen and her councillors – Elizabeth as ‘head’ or ‘governor’ of the church depending on political circumstances – to a reformed audience among whom the concept of Christ as king had steadily gained ground in parallel with the progress of the English reformation. It also indicates the sense of engagement in affairs of the realm engendered among godly men by the conflation of these processes.

In 1578 John Wilsford, a devout man ‘of some learning’, recounted how he had come to harbour doubts about the character of Elizabeth’s authority over the church. Engaged in Bible study at home, he had become perplexed upon reading St Paul’s Epistle to the Hebrews, which recounted the priesthood of Aaron and Christ.

I perceived that Aaron’s pontification and priesthood was earthly, and continued by succession here on earth. But Christ’s pontification is celestial, without succession in this world; and not passable ever to any other person in earth . . . And by that means [Christ is the] only mediator between God and man; and *caput ecclesiae*. And thus being in captivity, as Joseph was; who, for his delivery out of the same, took upon him to expound dreams; so I devised with myself to open to the queen’s majesty, that it was not lawful for any person to take upon him to be *caput ecclesiae*, except the same person will be Christ’s adversary and antichrist, as the pope is.

He therefore took himself off to court to expound this matter to the queen. He got no further than her Privy Councillor, Thomas Wilson, who was able to allay his anxieties (and seemingly warn him against similar prophetic forays in future):

But since being better advised and admonished by Master Secretary Wilson of my rash enterprise therein. For that the queen’s majesty assumeth not unto herself, neither to be *summus pontifex*, neither yet to be *caput ecclesiae*, as it is Christ’s mystical body: . . . (which the pope doth, hence is antichrist). But her majesty’s supreme government is concerning the civil and political government of the clergy and laity of Christ’s church and mystical body. Which authority and supremacy, her majesty, with all other princes and potentates, have in their realms and dominions, justly and dutifully, both by Christ’s gospel, and all the apostolical doctrine.²⁹

In 1583, however, William Cecil, now Lord Burghley, publicly used the

²⁸ For Thomas Wilson as an advocate of militant Protestantism and a prominent member of Philip Sidney’s ‘party’ see Blair Worden, *The Sound of Virtue: Philip Sidney’s ‘Arcadia’ and Elizabethan Politics* (New Haven, Conn., 1996), *passim* and p. 282, n. 10.

²⁹ John Strype, *Annals*, vol. II, pp. 625–6.

government's collective disclaimer of the title of 'Supreme Head' on behalf of the queen to shore up loyalty to the crown among the ranks of disaffected Protestants.³⁰ In *The Execution of Justice in England* he argued what had become a highly disputable and polemically charged case: that Elizabeth's reign inaugurated a new species of reformation, purer and more thorough-going than that which had occurred under Henry VIII and Edward VI, and meaningfully demonstrated by the repudiation of the role and title of Supreme Head.³¹ This, he claimed, is the very reason why 'the adversaries' (ambiguously now papists and sectaries) insist that her queenship has become imperial: they 'do most falsely write and affirm, that the Queen's Majesty doth now use [the title of Supreme Head of the Church of England next under Christ]: a manifest lie and untruth, to be seen by the very acts of parliament; and, at the beginning of her reign, omitted in her style'.³² (At the same time, in a characteristic move, he urged loyalty to Elizabeth on the basis of her descent from the imperial king and the fact that she was not subject to any man: 'King Henry the Eighth's daughter and heir, Queen Elizabeth, a sovereign and a maiden queen'.³³)

Tensions inherent in the position advanced by Wilson, which gave Elizabeth a role as a component element of a Protestant 'supreme government', are also apparent in an episode which began in 1582 with an interchange of graffiti around the Royal Arms in the parish church at Bury St Edmunds. The graffiti exchange itself is revealing. Initially one Thomas Gibson had caused the following Biblical verse to be painted next to the Royal Arms:

I know thy works, that thou are neither cold nor hot. I would thou wert cold or hot. Therefore because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, it will come to pass, I will spew thee out of my mouth.

'By advice' the critical words were painted over, substituting after 'I know thy works' the more anodyne '*and thy love, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and that they are more at the last than at the first*'.

³⁰ Cecil was ennobled in 1571. In the interest of clarity I refer to him as 'Burghley' in most cases in the remainder of the book.

³¹ The case itself was not new. It was made by Laurence Humphrey in his 1559 *apologia* for Elizabeth's accession, the *De Religionis Conservatione et Reformatione Vera*. What is striking is Burghley's use of it to identify as 'adversaries' forward Protestants (now 'Puritans') unable to accept the sleight of hand of Elizabeth as head/governor discussed above. See William Cecil, Lord Burghley [presumed author], *The Execution of Justice in England* (1583), in *The Harleian Miscellany; or A Collection of Scarce, Curious, and Entertaining Pamphlets and Tracts, as well in manuscript as in print, Found in the late Earl of Oxford's Library*, ed. T. Park and W. Oldys, 12 vols. (London, 1808–11), vol. 1, pp. 490–513, pp. 495–6. For Humphrey see below, chapter 4.

³² William Cecil, *The Execution of Justice*, pp. 495–6. ³³ *Ibid.*, p. 503.

Gibson, in consultation with others, then raised the stakes and simultaneously changed the focus from queen to councillor(s) by having the following added:

*Notwithstanding, I have a few things against thee, that thou sufferest the woman Jezebel, which maketh herself a prophetess, to teach and to deceive my servants; to make them commit fornication, and to eat meat sacrificed unto idols.*³⁴

Nor was this the end of the matter. Elizabeth herself seems to have believed that these men expressed sentiments with which her innermost councillors sympathised, and to some extent spoke as their conscience concerning religious reformation. In the next year she alluded to this episode on an occasion when, in company with her principal councillors (including William Cecil, now Lord Burghley), she met with Archbishop Whitgift and representatives of the Lower House of Convocation to accept the clerical subsidy. She used it to imply that her Privy Councillors jeopardised her tenure of the imperial crown, and hence England's Protestant identity, through their lukewarm commitment to her prerogative – defined in terms that only Archbishop John Whitgift, among the Privy Councillors, was prepared to accept without qualification. She first accepted the subsidy 'thankfully, and the rather that it came voluntarily and frankly, whereas the laity must be entreated and moved thereunto'. At this point Burghley interjected, 'Madam these men come with mites, but we will come with pounds.' Ignoring him, she turned to the bishops, saying:

'We understand that some of the Nether House have used diverse reproachful speeches against you, tending greatly to your dishonour, which we will not suffer; and that they meddle with matters above their capacity, not appertaining unto them, for the which we will call some of them to an account. And we understand they be countenanced by some of our Council which we will redress or else uncouncil some of them.'

Then, according to the anonymous recorder of this incident,

[She] told how she had received a letter from beyond the sea, written by one that bore her no good will who wrote that the Papists were of hope to prevail again in England, for that her Protestants themselves misliked her. 'And indeed, so they do', quoth she, 'for I have heard that some of them of late have said that I was of no religion – neither hot nor cold, but such a one as one day would give God the vomit. I pray you, look unto such men . . . Both these [Papists and Protestants] join together in one opinion against me, for neither of them would have me to be Queen of England.'³⁵

³⁴ John Strype, *Annals*, vol. III, i, p. 269.

³⁵ Recounted in J. E. Neale, *Elizabeth I and Her Parliaments*, 2 vols. (London, 1957), vol. 2, pp. 69, 71.

RESTORED PROTESTANTISM AND THE ENGLISH DEBORAH

Elizabeth's equivocal status as Supreme Head of the church, signalled by her investiture as 'Supreme Governor', resulted from contemporary anxieties concerning female rule. Her gender therefore informed, as it shaped, public debate over issues pertaining to the common weal, at that time defined pre-eminently as the maintenance, continuance and extension of Protestant reformation in England and from thence abroad.³⁶ These anxieties simultaneously promoted her depiction as the 'English Deborah' as a legitimating strategy, one that forwarded the identification of England with Israel that proved so momentous a feature of English history through the mid-seventeenth century. 'Deborah' was an ambiguous monarchical identity, in place from the early days of the reign, and one over which Elizabeth seems to have had little direct control.³⁷ In the Old Testament, Deborah's role, her 'rule', was providential, ordained directly by God guiding his Israelites. The story was read by many sixteenth-century Englishmen as potentially, if not actually, analogous to Elizabeth's reign. Through Deborah, His instrument, God had intervened directly in Israel's history to protect a godly nation from its enemies; through Elizabeth He had intervened in English history to nullify the Marian apostasy and secure the Protestant nation.³⁸ 'Deborah' therefore became a powerful emblem of restored Protestantism; at one level, given the taint associated with female rule, in association with and in the service of the crown.

Paradoxically, the analogy with Deborah challenged Elizabeth's personal monarchical autonomy while strengthening her hold on the crown.³⁹ It did so by allowing the 'Protestant ascendancy' to articulate

³⁶ G. J. R. Parry, *A Protestant Vision: William Harrison and the Reformation of Elizabethan England* (Cambridge, 1987).

³⁷ J. N. King, *Tudor Royal Iconography: Literature and Art in an Age of Religious Crisis* (Princeton, N.J., 1989), pp. 183, 227. John Hales described Elizabeth as Deborah in his *Oration . . . to the Queenes Majestie* (in John Foxe *Acts and Monuments of Matters . . . happening in the Church*, 3 vols. (London, 1641), vol. 3, pp. 976–9)), as did John Knox in his 1559 Letter to Elizabeth (see below, chapter 2). Modern historians and literary critics who have recognised the significance of the identification include William Haller in *Foxe's Book of Martyrs and the Elect Nation*, J. N. King in 'The Godly Woman in Elizabethan Iconography' (*Renaissance Quarterly* 38 (1985), pp. 41–84) and John Guy, *Tudor England* (Oxford, 1988).

³⁸ See the account of the pageant series conducted at Elizabeth's coronation, in which she was explicitly hailed as Deborah, written by Richard Mulcaster as *The Queenes Maiesties Passage through the Cite of London to Westminster the Day before her Coronation* (London, 1559), ed. James M. Osborn (New Haven, Conn., 1960) and modern commentators Sydney Anglo, *Spectacle, Pageantry and Early Tudor Policy* (Oxford, 1969) and David Bergeron, *English Civic Pageantry 1558–1642* (London, 1971).

³⁹ A. N. McLaren, 'Prophecy and Providentialism in the Reign of Elizabeth I', in *Prophecy: The Power of Inspired Language in History 1300–2000*, ed. Bertrand Taithe and Tim Thornton, Themes in History (Stroud, 1997), pp. 31–50, pp. 39–41.

new kinds of political identity: they used the story of one powerful woman to consider themselves in relation to the rule of another, in ways that delegated authority from king to godly men.⁴⁰ According to the Old Testament account Deborah was a judge in Israel before the declension into kingship, when the Israelites, in contrast to the heathen tribes, still recognised God as immediately their king. The story therefore depicted the state of spiritual and political integrity attainable in a truly reformed commonwealth; an ideal that remained a potent political programme through the Interregnum.⁴¹ Moreover, although a 'prophetess' (hence receiving God's command immediately) and a judge, the Biblical Deborah enacted His will through the military commander, Barak. This was a telling feature of the story that achieved political significance during the Essex rebellion, if not earlier, when the Earl of Essex was explicitly identified as Barak in public sermons.⁴² (Deborah's pairing with Jael, who finalised the victory by hammering a tent peg through the forehead of the sleeping Canaanite captain Sisera, must also have given contemporaries pause.⁴³) It is therefore revealing that the pageant series presented by the City of London to Elizabeth on the day before her coronation climaxed with a tableau in which a figure representing simultaneously Deborah and Elizabeth attended to 'good counsel' proffered to her by her estates. More significant still is the fact that the Deborah/Elizabeth figure presented by the city to their future sovereign wore an open, spiked headpiece, not the closed headpiece of the imperial crown.⁴⁴

In important ways, then, the identification of Elizabeth with Deborah posited a conception of monarchical authority as God's will devolved to queen and godly nation, and 'spoken' by prophetic utterance – in a culture in which interpreting God's will, except in exceptional circum-

⁴⁰ For the identification of this phenomenon see Pauline Stafford, 'More than a Man, Or Less than a Woman? Women Rulers in Early Modern Europe', *Gender and History* 7, no. 3 (1995), pp. 486–90, p. 487.

⁴¹ See, for example, one MP's contribution to the 1572 parliamentary debate over the bill for the reformation of rites and ceremonies: 'He believeth those to be nearer Judaism that striveth for ceremony than those which yield to it . . . Few ceremonies in the Apostles' time, and so may also few be suffered in the Dutch or French Church because they were not under any monarchy; but after that Christianity grew to kingdoms, then ceremonies necessary'; *Proceedings*, p. 369.

⁴² J. E. Neale, *Queen Elizabeth I* (London, 1934; repr. 1952), pp. 365, 377. *The Geneva Bible* (1560), facsimile edition, ed. Lloyd E. Berry (Madison, Wis., 1969), pp. 110–11.

⁴³ *Geneva Bible*, pp. 110–11.

⁴⁴ Richard Mulcaster, *The Queenes Maiesties Passage*, p. 55. J. N. King argues, I think rightly, that this qualified assertion of Elizabeth's monarchical authority may be the key to interpreting the Deborah tableau (*Tudor Royal Iconography*, p. 227). See also Dale Hoak, 'The Iconography of the Crown Imperial'. For London's political self-identity in this period see Lawrence Manley, *Literature and Culture in Early Modern London* (Cambridge, 1995).

stances, remained a male preserve. Nor were Elizabeth and her councillors likely to welcome any intimation that exceptional circumstances were at hand, given the destabilising potential of the contemporary view of women's rule as 'prodigious' – dangerous, if not entirely unnatural. In this cultural context, therefore, Elizabeth and her ministers were unlikely to assert her immediate prophetic capacity as an element of her queenship. Yet, at least in the years from her accession in 1558 to the mid-1580s, her providential identity constituted by far the most powerful means of justifying subjects in their obedience to the queen; Thomas Norton spoke for many when he declared that 'I have no dealing with the queen but as with the image of God.'⁴⁵ Instead, her least contentious claim to a godly monarchical identity – certainly in the early years of her reign – would be that God **informed** her will because she was chosen, the choosing ambiguously providential (as English Protestant queen: a 'Deborah') and historical (because she was a Tudor king). For these reasons a consensual image of Deborah attained currency that identified her, and Elizabeth, as 'handmaids of the Lord' and 'mothers in Israel'.⁴⁶ (It is worth bearing in mind too that, as we saw at Bury St Edmunds, perceived declension from the role of Deborah left Elizabeth vulnerable to identification as an alternative Old Testament queen figure, the tyrant queen Jezebel.)

This consensual reading, and the relationship it posited between the queen and her people, underlies one striking feature of the reign: the unprecedented variety and range of unsolicited advice from across the ranks of the (male) political nation that justified Elizabeth's rule by telling her, with varying degrees of explicitness and insistence, how to conduct it in accordance with God's will. In this critique what is most striking is the assumption, expressed over and over in different ways and across a spectrum of opinion right up through the 1580s, that Elizabeth is most godly when she eschews her own will, acting instead as the instrument of God's will as identified by her male subjects.⁴⁷ Bishop Pilkington of Durham set the tone when he prayed in 1559 for God to 'Save and preserve our gracious queen as thine own signet', to exercise

⁴⁵ BL Add. MS 48023, fol. 33r.

⁴⁶ Elizabeth did not stake a claim to an overtly prophetic identity even when the political dynamics of the reign shifted in ways that enhanced her monarchical authority. Instead, the latter years of her reign witnessed the maturation of a 'cult' of queenship that cast Elizabeth in pagan and Christian roles symbolic of perpetual virginity, a fusion allowing for an intimated (and politically dangerous) correspondence between the queen and the Virgin Mary. See Helen Hackett, *Virgin Mother, Maiden Queen: Elizabeth I and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London, 1995), esp. pp. 198–234.

⁴⁷ Margaret Christian, 'Elizabeth's Preachers and the Government of Women: Defining and Correcting a Queen', *Sixteenth Century Journal* 24, no. 3 (1993), pp. 561–76.

government as His representative.⁴⁸ She must be at God's work 'in the church but not above', Christopher Foster (alias Colman) told her in a letter of 1569, if she hoped to maintain her worldly position.⁴⁹ John Foxe, in 1578, saw England threatened by papists on all sides, with only God's providence, 'somewhat' enacted through his servant Elizabeth, to thank for their miraculous preservation thus far. The qualifier gives force to his prayer, delivered to a public which included Elizabeth, that God would first see to Elizabeth, in the interest of protecting his chosen people. In a speech act that plays on the paradox of associating omnipotence with governorship, and God with the queen, he prayed that God would deign to take queen and country in hand – the first a precondition for the second: 'In this her government be her governor, we beseech thee; so shall her majesty well govern us, if first she be governed by thee'.⁵⁰

Particularly at points when the integrity of the Protestant imperial crown appeared to be under threat, the contingent quality of subjects' allegiance to their 'dear mother' appeared. On these occasions it is notable that Elizabeth was depicted as in danger of departing from her role as Deborah when she was interpreted as threatening to enact her own will – as woman and, more dangerously, in the latter years of the reign, as monarch. In the 1572 parliamentary debates urging the necessity of executing Mary Stuart, Thomas Digges intimated that her 'true and faithful subjects' would be forced to fall out of allegiance if she ignored the 'lamentable cry of her whole realm', in this instance 'pronounced by the mouth of the Parliament':

The preachers have plentifully poured out vehement reasons, urgent examples and horrible menaces out of the sacred scriptures concerning the execution of justice and shunning of that sugared poison bearing in outward show the countenance of mild pity. The contemning of these yieldeth under God's adversaries great causes of triumph in advaunting our religion to be wicked and our preachers false prophets.⁵¹

In the next parliamentary session, in 1576, the godly MP Peter Wentworth argued that Elizabeth's refusal to be guided by prophetic address in the 1572 session had drawn down God's wrath on queen and country alike. God had punished His people by taking 'Deborah' from them, leaving a tyrannical female ruler in her place:

⁴⁸ John Strype, *Annals*, vol. II.ii, p. 598.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. I.ii, p. 352.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. II.ii, p. 639.

⁵¹ *Proceedings*, pp. 294–5. See Gerald Bowler, "'An Axe or an Acte': The Parliament of 1572 and Resistance Theory in Early Elizabethan England", *Canadian Journal of History* 19, no. 3 (1984), pp. 349–59.

Well . . . God . . . was the last session shut out of the doors. But what fell out of it? Forsooth his great indignation was therefore poured upon this House. How so? For he did put into the Queen Majesty's heart to refuse good and wholesome laws for her own preservation . . . Since then that her Majesty hath committed great faults, yea dangerous faults to her self and the state love, even perfect love void of dissimulation, will not suffer me to hide them to her Majesty's peril but to utter them to her Majesty's safety.

He proceeded to list these 'faults' in what must have been, for Elizabeth, galling detail, before closing with a characteristic prayer: that she would once more assume the role of an emblem of grace in the body politic; a role that would secure her own authority and the well-being of her subjects:

And I beseech the same God to endue her Majesty with his wisdom whereby she may discern faithful advice from traitorous sugared speeches, and to send her Majesty a melting yielding heart unto sound counsel, that will may not stand for a reason. And then her Majesty [will] stand when her enemies are fallen.⁵²

The prospect of marriage to the Catholic François de Valois (duc d'Anjou since his brother Henry's accession to the French throne in 1574) prompted a similar response in the late 1570s. In his incendiary pamphlet *The Discoverie of a Gaping Gulf*, the forward Protestant John Stubbs adjured the queen to set commitment to Protestantism and the godly nation over her own lustful will, bearing in mind specifically that 'relations between men and women' – in which men exercise headship – 'are not countermanded by law or privilege'. Like Wentworth, he stated the regrettable necessity of chastising the monarch, in danger of forfeiting her divinely ordained position as governess of a godly realm (or, in Stubbs's words, she 'in whose hands the Lord hath put and holden a sovereign sceptre'):

We do not love her, whatsoever we say, when flattering her, perhaps, in other vanities, we do not fall down before her with tears, bewailing the wrath of God kindled against her, if by her advised permission, and by means of her marriage, God should be so highly dishonoured in this kingdom wherewith he hath honoured her.⁵³

⁵² *Proceedings*, pp. 430–2. For the political impact and significance of Wentworth's speech see below, chapter 6.

⁵³ John Stubbs, *The Discoverie of a Gaping Gulf Whereinto England is like to be Swallowed by an other French marriage, if the Lord forbid not the banes* . . . (1579), in *John Stubbs's 'Gaping Gulf' with Letters and Other Relevant Documents*, ed. Lloyd Berry (Charlottesville, Va., 1968), pp. 17, 19–20.

Like Wentworth, Stubbs prayed that God would grant Elizabeth the wisdom to follow godly counsel, 'stop[ping] your Majesty's ears against these sorcerers and their enchanting counsels, which seek to [promote the marriage and hence] provoke God's anger'. At the same time, he reassured her that she was not alone in her struggle to restrain her will. '[P]ray against these dangerous tempters and temptations,' he urged her, ' . . . and know assuredly, to your comfort, that all the faithful of God pray for you, and when you are in your secret, most separate closet of prayer they join with you in spirit'.⁵⁴ How consoling such assurance must have been!

To rule as Deborah, then, meant relying entirely on God's grace, serving as His instrument in an ongoing politics ratified and supervised by the men who were committed to her government in two senses: as partisans of Protestantism and, more generally, as men made in God's image and charged to her care in their earthly abode. The latter sense requires emphasis. The reformation context, which celebrated God's promise of redemption to mankind, read man, not woman, as made in God's image, with the promise of their relationship being symbolised through Adam and Christ. This reading extended across the confessional divide and thus problematised female rule for Protestant and Catholic men alike.⁵⁵ Moreover, and as a consequence, these values and beliefs extended across the ranks of the political nation, into the court and the Privy Council. Peter Wentworth, for example, was examined in Star Chamber in 1576, after his speech in the House of Commons quoted above. True he was committed to the Tower, but this was a small penalty for implying that Elizabeth ruled as an ungodly tyrant. His release after only one month gives some credence to his account of his examination by Privy Councillors in the wake of his speech. Wentworth implies that the councillors took issue with his decision to identify her Majesty's 'great faults' in the semi-public venue of parliament, not with his identification of those faults or his assessment of their political consequence. According to Wentworth, the Committee told him he might have addressed the queen 'in better terms', and meekly accepted his response that he would not do 'as you of her Majesty's Privy Council do', and express himself 'in such terms as she should not have understood to have made a fault'.⁵⁶ Clearly, in

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 30.

⁵⁵ See Louis Montrose's delineation of Tudor somatic symbolism in 'The Elizabethan Subject and the Spenserian Text' in *Literary Theory/Renaissance Texts*, ed. Patricia Parker and David Quint (Baltimore, Md., 1986), pp. 303–40, pp. 307–8. ⁵⁶ *Proceedings*, pp. 437–9.

the new Israel the line between 'sugared speeches' and *politique* address was a fine one.

John Stubbs was undoubtedly a zealous, even a 'froward' Protestant with radical connections – his sister married Thomas Cartwright in 1577.⁵⁷ But he was also part of Burghley's axis, close to his secretary Michael Hicks (a friendship dating back to their time at Lincoln's Inn), as well as to Sir Francis Walsingham and the Earl of Leicester. His 'offence' in writing the *Gaping Gulf* in 1579 led, as is well known, to a sentence condemning him to lose his right hand in 1581. Less well known but more noteworthy in this context is the fact that he continued to enjoy close and cordial relations with these great men until his death, a relationship predicated upon their shared ideological convictions. Burghley later commissioned him to reply to Cardinal Allen's attack on the government's treatment of Catholics, *A True, Sincere, and Modest Defence of English Catholics* . . . of 1584, though there is no evidence the work was actually published, and Leicester conferred the stewardship of Great Yarmouth on him in 1585.⁵⁸ At least some contemporaries, including the French ambassador Mauvissière, assumed that Stubbs wrote the inflammatory *Gaping Gulf* with the consent of, if not at the behest of, 'quelques ungs de ce conseil'; an opinion seemingly shared by Elizabeth herself, who banished Walsingham from court in October 1579 for his part in the affair.⁵⁹

Again on the subject of the proposed French marriage, we have the case of Philip Sidney, the Earl of Leicester's nephew, Sir Francis Walsingham's son-in-law, and model of chivalrous Protestantism. His *Letter to Queen Elizabeth*, written at roughly the same time as Stubbs's *Gaping Gulf*, gives a similar reading of the basis of Elizabeth's monarchical authority.⁶⁰ Seemingly Sidney too wrote with the knowledge,

⁵⁷ Patrick Collinson explores the dynamic between 'forward' and 'froward' Protestants in Elizabeth's reign in 'Puritans, Men of Business and Elizabethan Parliaments', pp. 191–5. He denominates as 'froward' men willing to cross the line between ideological commitment and impolitic action, often at the behest of Privy Councillors who believed their calling did not allow them the same freedom of action.

⁵⁸ Lloyd Berry, *John Stubbs's 'Gaping Gulf' with Letters and Other Relevant Documents*, introduction; Simon Adams, 'The Protestant Cause: Religious Alliance with the European Calvinist Communities as a Political Issue in England, 1585–1630', D.Phil. Dissertation, Balliol College, Oxford (1972–3), p. 30.

⁵⁹ See Susan Doran's account, in *Monarchy and Matrimony: The Courtships of Elizabeth I* (London, 1996), p. 167.

⁶⁰ *A Letter Written by Sir Philip Sidney to Queen Elizabeth, Touching her Marriage with Monsieur*, in *Miscellaneous Prose of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones and Jan Van Dorsten (Oxford, 1973), pp. 46–57. For Sidney, the Sidney circle, and his and their relations with the queen, see Blair Worden, *The Sound of Virtue*.

even at the command, of members of the Privy Council. His Protestant mentor Hubert Languet congratulated him on the widespread circulation of the *Letter*: 'Since you were ordered to write as you did by those whom you were bound to obey, no fair-judging man can blame you for putting forward freely what you thought good for your country.' Perhaps Languet referred to familial obligation – that Sidney was 'bound to obey' those to whom he was joined by blood; perhaps he referred to an equally powerful ideological allegiance to a more extensive coalition amongst the Privy Council. In either case, what comes across powerfully is the sense of ideological solidarity, as Languet adds that Sidney was entirely justified in 'exaggerating some circumstances' in order to put the case against the queen.⁶¹

What was Sidney ordered to write that he thought good for his country? Very much what Elizabeth had already learned from Stubbs, advanced by a man claiming the status of an aristocratic courtier rather than (or in addition to) that of a prophet. The duc d'Anjou, being a man, 'must needs have that man-like disposition to desire that all men be of his mind' which she, in the context of a marriage, will not be able to resist. More signally there is no reason, 'worldly' or godly, which can support the proposed marriage; to desire it is to endanger her status as Deborah:

[F]or your standing alone, you must take it as a singular honour God hath done unto you, to be indeed the only protector of his church. And yet in worldly respects your kingdom is very sufficient so to do, if you make that religion upon which you stand to carry the only strength, and have abroad those who still maintain the same cause: who as long as they may be kept from utter falling, your Majesty is sure enough from your mightiest enemies.⁶²

The hybrid to which Sidney's letter points – providentialism expressed through chivalric discourse – became a feature of the political culture of the latter part of the reign, as did an ensuing contest over the definition and limits of 'expediency', or 'policy'. It was particularly apparent in debates concerned in whole or in part with the fate of Protestantism in the Netherlands. They too, like debates over the fate of Mary Queen of Scots, like debate over godly reformation, revealed the contingent quality of support for the queen, a loyalty dependent upon her enact-

⁶¹ Languet to Sidney, 1580, *Miscellaneous Prose of Sir Philip Sidney*, p. 33. It is striking that Languet refers to Sidney's audience for the *Letter* as 'fair minded men', despite its character as a letter specifically addressed to Elizabeth. As so often during the period, once political pressures lead to a recourse to print, the contest being waged has less to do with persuading the queen to reconsider any particular decision than with mobilising public opinion to constrain her in the exercise of her monarchical will. For the role of 'public opinion' in Elizabeth's reign see Patrick Collinson, *'De Republica Anglorum': Or, History with the Politics Put Back*, Inaugural Lecture, November 1989 (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 26–8.

⁶² *A Letter to Queen Elizabeth*, p. 56.

ment of her godly role. Or, as Sidney put it in a letter to Sir Francis Walsingham otherwise concerned with household matters relating to the Netherlands campaign:

If her Majesty were the fountain I would fear considering what I daily find that we should wax dry, but she is but a means whom God useth and I know not whether I am deceived but I am faithfully persuaded that if she should withdraw her self other springs would rise to help this action. For methinks I see the great work indeed in hand, against the abusers of the world, wherein it is no greater fault to have confidence in man's power, then it is too hastily to despair of God's work.⁶³

THE QUEEN AND THE REGIME

What, then, of the queen? How did she negotiate the role of 'Deborah'? It is impossible to penetrate very far into the personal beliefs of this most private queen. The difficulty is compounded by the intimate, and contested, relationship between Elizabeth and what Wallace MacCaffrey has usefully termed 'the regime': councillors who were partisans of the new queen but even more immediately of common political purposes to which her Protestant identity was central.⁶⁴ It seems unexceptionable to conclude that she was like her father in her reading of the relationship between theological conviction and monarchical authority, and that her earlier life prepared her to be 'Deborah' (that is, a Protestant princess) – with an eye always to expediency, or *realpolitik*. For, as John Knox reassured her in a letter at her accession in 1559, it was 'for fear of her life, that [she] declined from religion, and bowed to idolatry' during her sister's reign.⁶⁵ That she had 'bowed' was indisputable – but then, too, in one view of the matter, so had everyone who had not fled into exile at Mary's accession, including prominent members of the Privy Council. Whether she had 'bowed' voluntarily was anybody's guess; on this occasion Knox was ostentatiously giving her the benefit of the doubt. At points, as is well known, she claimed that she acknowledged Christ's real presence in the sacrament, and prayed to the Virgin Mary from time to time.

Of necessity, I think, Elizabeth accepted the 'prodigious' or providential character of her reign, and therefore presented herself as an instrument of His will, as in her speech to the House of Lords at her accession:

⁶³ Sidney to Sir Francis Walsingham in *The Complete Works of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. Albert Feuillerat (Cambridge, 1968), vol. III, p. 167.

⁶⁴ Wallace MacCaffrey, *The Shaping of the Elizabethan Regime*, p. 39.

⁶⁵ John Strype, *Annals*, vol. 1.1, pp. 2–3.