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“A Cold Pye for the Papistes”: Constructing and Containing the Northern Rising of 1569

K. J. Kesselring

On 14 November 1569, the earls of Northumberland and Westmoreland gathered their immediate followers and stormed Durham Cathedral. With the enthusiastic aid of the congregation, they ripped asunder all Protestant books, overturned the communion table, and celebrated a Catholic mass. They declared themselves ready to remove those “disordered and evil disposed persons” about the queen who subverted the true Catholic faith, the ancient nobility, and the rightful succession.¹ Momentum built from there. Within days, some six thousand armed men flocked to the earls’ standards and began their march through the north. One group successfully besieged Barnard Castle, while another took the port of Hartlepool. Those who remained at home in the parishes set about dismantling the instruments of the new faith and restoring the old. Within a few weeks, however, the earls fled to Scotland, the queen’s forces arrived from the south, and by late December the rebellion had come to an ignominious end.

Historians who have considered this “rebellion of the earls” have largely dismissed its popular component and hence its religious character and seriousness. Their narratives depict it as a decisive moment in Elizabethan politics and religious governance, but suggest that the rising itself posed no dire threat to the crown. Nor have they given the lowlier participants and their motivations much notice. While on the surface religious difference seemed the central issue of the rising, standard

K. J. KESSELRING is assistant professor of history at Dalhousie University. She wishes to thank the participants at the 2001 Sixteenth-Century Studies Conference in Denver for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this article. Thanks are also due to the readers at this journal and to Ethan Shagan for sharing an unpublished paper entitled “The Pilgrimage of Grace and the Public Sphere,” which deals with similar aspects of that earlier rebellion. The research for this article was supported by a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

¹Public Record Office (PRO), State Papers (SP) 15/15/29.i.

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historical accounts focus instead on power struggles within the Tudor elite. Rachael Reid and Wallace MacCaffrey have deemed this, respectively, “the last baronial rising” and “a merely personal enterprise” of the earls. Drawn from a dark, backward corner of the realm, the participants merely answered the call of their feudal lords.² These accounts have too quickly adopted the crown’s own characterization of the revolt, one that sought to minimize potential support by personalizing the conflict and presenting it as the pathetic last gasp of two medieval barons. To understand the rising’s importance and place in Elizabethan history, however, we must recognize the active, conscious involvement of the men who answered the call to arms, of those who deemed themselves sufficiently implicated to require the purchase of a pardon, and of the women and youths who aided in the restoration of Catholic services.

This can be done, in part, by moving beyond a narrative of the revolt itself to retrieve contemporary perceptions of these events and their meanings.³ And contemporaries took the rising seriously indeed. While it was an ill-managed, short-lived affair that in hindsight posed no grave danger to the Elizabethan regime, it seemed far different at the time. Elizabeth had not married and had no recognized successor. Her religious settlement had created domestic tensions and made the country a target for the predations of the Catholic powers of Europe. The Catholic Mary, queen of Scots, had recently been chased from her throne into English protection, where she quickly became a source of hope for her coreligionists both foreign and domestic. The French and the Dutch had already descended into civil war over questions of faith.⁴ In other words, no one was about to take this rebellion lightly. Nor did this revolt constitute simply an aristocratic peccadillo; it engaged the interests, hopes, and fears of many. The ways in which they understood and represented the rising determined its place in the political and cultural history of its time.

² R. R. Reid, “The Rebellion of the Earls, 1569,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 2d series, 20 (1906): 171–203; Wallace MacCaffrey, *The Shaping of the Elizabethan Regime* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 337; M. E. James, *Family, Lineage, and Civil Society* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974), p. 60; Andy Wood, *Riot, Rebellion and Popular Politics in Early Modern England* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 72–73. This should not, however, imply a monolithic historiography. Christopher Haigh, for example, has briefly alluded to the revolt as a notable display of popular religious enthusiasm in his *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 260.

³ On the need to study perceptions of events as well as their mechanics, see Kevin Sharpe, “Representations and Negotiations: Images, Texts, and Authority in Early Modern England,” *Historical Journal* 42 (1999): 853–81.

⁴ For a good overview, see Norman L. Jones, *The Birth of the Elizabethan Age: England in the 1560s* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993).

Social historians and scholars of state formation have recently drawn attention to the “social depth” of early modern political culture. Keith Wrightson, John Walter, M. J. Braddick, and others have shown that the crown relied on the involvement of large segments of the population to enforce its policies. Churchwardens, poor relief guardians, jurors, and constables, for instance, all had their roles to play. While such direct avenues of participation generally involved men of middling status in their local communities, those lower on the social scale also had the ability to exert influence and make demands of their superiors, both in moments of protest and in their day-to-day encounters. Poor relief petitioners, enclosure rioters, and others were often able to hold their betters to their end of the paternalist bargain. Tim Harris and others have rejected the premise that pre-Enlightenment plebs held only “prepolitical” beliefs. They describe a society in which the views and actions of ordinary people impinged upon the political history from which they were ostensibly excluded, if not always in the ways these people might have hoped. These recent portrayals of power as a reciprocal exchange sometimes risk discounting the reality of subordination; nevertheless, they have ably shown that the governors of early modern England recognized the need to appeal to a broader audience. The Tudors carefully crafted their public image and frequently offered “almost dialogic” explanations of their actions. They sought to convince as well as coerce.⁵ Looking at the public conversations about the events of 1569 can add to our understanding of the revolt. The methods of transmitting these conversations, whether through print, pulpit, public performance, or a more diffuse news culture, are themselves windows into the politics of the rising. The form and content of the representations of the rebellion demonstrate that contemporaries recognized the active participation of those outside the halls of power. Thus, this article examines how the rebels themselves, Elizabeth and her agents, and members of the public at large all sought to impose meanings

⁵ For this historiography, see, e.g., Keith Wrightson, “The Politics of the Parish in Early Modern England,” in *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England*, ed. Paul Griffiths et al. (London: Macmillan, 1996), pp. 10–46; M. J. Braddick, *State Formation in Early Modern England, c. 1550–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); J. P. D. Cooper, *Propaganda and the Tudor State: Political Culture in the West Country* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Wood, *Riot, Rebellion and Popular Politics*; and the essays in M. J. Braddick and John Walter, eds., *Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society: Order, Hierarchy and Subordination in Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), particularly Walter, “Public Transcripts, Popular Agency and the Politics of Subsistence in Early Modern England,” and Braddick, “Administrative Performance: The Representation of Political Authority in Early Modern England,” pp. 123–48, 166–87. Steve Hindle has also contributed to this historiography and offers a salutary warning against mistaking participation and negotiation for consent: *The State and Social Change in Early Modern England, c. 1550–1640* (London: Macmillan, 2000), pp. 120, 232.

on the actions in the north. It explores what these battles to shape interpretations tell us of the rebellion itself, and of Elizabethan popular politics and political culture more generally.⁶

I

Rumors dominated the cause and course of the rising, racing throughout the north in the fall of 1569. People reported the duke of Norfolk's arrest for plotting to wed Mary, queen of Scots.⁷ The earls of Northumberland and Westmoreland, who had known of the scheme, promptly locked themselves in with advisors to determine their safest response. Hearing rumors of their own imminent arrest and even of plans to assassinate them, the earls started down the road of conspiracy that led them to rise in November. The earls were not alone in hearing and responding to the stories of Norfolk's arrest. In early October, the earl of Sussex, president of the Council in the North, received numerous reports of "an intended stir of the people" in parts of Yorkshire that had as its aims the duke of Norfolk's freedom and the restoration of the old faith.⁸ The Privy Council heard of planned rebellions in Lincolnshire and elsewhere.⁹ News spread not only of an intended rising but of a rising accomplished. Some reported hearing that the people of Durham had risen and sacked the bishop's palace; that a castle had been seized; that prominent Protestants had been marked for death, and more. Accounts of high political intrigue found a receptive audience and special resonance in a population already resentful of recent assaults on their churches. Sir George Bowes noted that "the assembly and conference of people at fairs" constituted a seedbed of

⁶ Tim Harris has warned of the dangers of using the term "popular politics" as it may imply a polarized rather than participatory model and a political culture distinct from elite politics. He has suggested instead the "politics of the excluded," but as his own work ably shows, the people in question were not, in fact, "excluded." See Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II: Propaganda and Politics from the Restoration until the Exclusion Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 15–17 and his introduction to *The Politics of the Excluded*, ed. Tim Harris (New York: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 1–29. "Popular politics" continues to be used as a convenience nonetheless. Ethan Shagan, for example, defends its use to denote "the presence of ordinary, non-elite subjects as the audience for or interlocutors with a political action." See Shagan, *Popular Politics and the English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 19. For the term "political culture," see the editors' introductions to *Tudor Political Culture*, ed. Dale Hoak (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) and *The Tudor Monarchy*, ed. John Guy (London: Arnold, 1997).

⁷ For a good recent reconstruction of the marriage plan, see Stephen Alford, *The Early Elizabethan Polity: William Cecil and the Succession Crisis, 1558–1569* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 200–206.

⁸ PRO, SP 15/14/94; see also 15/15/6, 15/19/75.

⁹ British Library (BL), Salisbury MS 158, 101 (microfilm).

sedition talk and wanton rumormongering.¹⁰ Habits of daily life formed the basis of communication networks, which made them particularly difficult to police. Upon investigating, Sussex complained that “thousands of reporters may be found, but hereto not one author.” The “very hot and common” stories proved false but dangerous nonetheless. Sussex believed they “sprang from such as wished accident to aggravate former matters,” and such in fact occurred.¹¹

Disturbed by the rumors, the queen dispatched letters to justices throughout the realm. She ordered them to gather the leading men of each county and have them swear to abide by the Act of Uniformity and the new Protestant services. She also repeated earlier orders that local justices keep a close eye on fairs and markets and interrogate any who spread seditious tales. She ordered that they seize vagrants, who both contributed to the general sense of disorder and were thought especially prone to spreading dangerous reports far and wide.¹² In response to these repeated injunctions, the councilors of the North gathered inn holders and taverners before them and asked whether they had “heard talk in their houses by any manner of person of any news, tales, reports or rumors between the Queen’s Majesty and her nobles or commons or between the nobles and commons or between any of them.”¹³ Similar enquiries occurred throughout the realm.

Both the content and act of spreading rumors possessed a certain danger, not least in pushing the queen to precipitous action. It is sometimes assumed that “rumor” guided popular political action while “news” remained the preserve of elite actors. In practice, little distinction existed between the two. Convinced that the earls were somehow involved in the troubles, she demanded that they appear at court to answer questions.¹⁴ This summons led the earls to abandon restraint. It seemed proof of their advisors’ warnings that the queen intended their downfall, and after final hurried and heated deliberations, they rallied their closest followers for the march on Durham.

Once the rising began, individuals throughout the country spread the story and often added their own glosses. An unnamed northerner arrived at the Blackborough fair in Norfolk and reported to William Shuckforth, a local husbandman, that “they were up in the north, a hundred thousand men, and more than there be men and bullocks in this fair.” Shuckforth, in turn,

¹⁰ Cuthbert Sharpe, *Memorials of the Rebellion of 1569* (London: J. B. Nichol, 1840), p. 8; PRO, SP 15/96/6.

¹¹ PRO, SP 15/14/94 and 15/14/99.

¹² PRO, SP 12/59/20, 25, 36; BL, Salisbury MS 156, 70.

¹³ A. Raine, ed., *York Civic Records, 1558–69*, Yorkshire Archaeological Records Series, vol. 112 (Wakefield, printed for the Society, 1948), p. 160.

¹⁴ PRO, SP 15/14/100.

relayed the story. He spoke approvingly of the stir, linking it with the duke of Norfolk's arrest, the stranglehold the earl of Leicester held on the country's affairs, and the laxity newly allowed by priests.¹⁵ John Welles, also of Norfolk, recounted news of the rising and urged his hearers to take this as encouragement to rise for their duke: "There are two Earls amongst others in the north who [have] been in great business and trouble, and except they be helped they be but undone, but if all men would do as I would, they should have help."¹⁶ Welles managed to gather a handful of followers, but the conspirators quickly found themselves in the Norwich gaol.¹⁷

Tales about the Northern Rebellion and rumors of other sympathetic uprisings continued to spread. When Harry Shadwell was asked, "What news?" in one London tavern conversation, he responded with claims that some fifteen thousand Scots had joined "the noble men of the north, whom he would not deem as rebels." He, too, thought the earl of Leicester somehow responsible for making revolt necessary. Shadwell added that the duke of Alva had promised aid and asserted that by Candlemas next, the queen would be attending mass at St. Paul's. He had heard this news, he said, from the waterman who rowed him across the Thames earlier that day. When interrogated, the waterman admitted that he had told his passengers that the Scots had fought on the queen's side, with some five thousand now lying dead in the field. He opined that if the earl of Leicester and his brother had been among the fatalities, the rebels "would soon be quiet, for as he thought the whole grudge was more against them . . . then against the Queen's Majesty."¹⁸ Leicester had clearly become to Elizabeth what Cromwell had been to her father—an object of displaced antagonism—and despite the threat of official reprisal, individuals offered independent interpretations of the news they received. In Hereford, several men of suspect religious habits confidently reported that King Philip of Spain had arrived and marched along with the men of Lancashire to aid those of the north.¹⁹ The bishop of Worcester warned the Privy Council that this "storm makes many to shrink. Hard is it to find one faithful." He added that "Wales with the borderers thereof is vehemently to be suspected."²⁰ Rumors reached the Council of various plots, each supposedly inspired by the actions taken in the north.²¹

¹⁵ *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Elizabeth, 1569–72*, V, no. 1817.

¹⁶ *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Elizabeth, 1572–75*, VI, no. 1230.

¹⁷ Neville Williams, "The Risings in Norfolk, 1569 and 1570," *Norfolk Archaeology* 32 (1959): 73–75; *Calendar of State Papers, Spanish, 1568–79*, p. 225.

¹⁸ PRO, SP 12/60/48, 49, 54.

¹⁹ PRO, Star Chamber 5/K11/18.

²⁰ BL, Lansdowne MS 11, fol. 156.

²¹ See, e.g., PRO, SP 15/15/64, and H. Robinson, ed., *Zurich Letters, 1558–1579*, Parker Society, vol. 50 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1842), p. 248.

The stories that spread through taverns, fairs, and other informal communication networks thus helped spark the rebellion, shaped understandings of its intent, and threatened to lead to other risings. There has been a recent spate of historical interest in this plebeian news culture as both an aspect of mass politicization and a potentially subversive force. As Adam Fox noted, many conversations began with the enquiry, “What news?” and progressed to discussions of national and even international concerns. Fox and others have shown that the political culture of early modern England had a broader social base than one might expect in an age predating mass literacy and the proliferation of works from the popular presses.²² Recapturing such popular political speech is difficult. It appears in the archives only when others reported the speaker to the authorities, and accusations sometimes derived as much from private malice as public loyalty.²³ Nevertheless, the records leave no doubt that many busily shared news and views of the rising. Clearly, many people in 1569 had an interest in great affairs of state and felt themselves fully competent to form their own opinions and act upon them, whether in support of or in opposition to the rising. They did not constitute a passively accepting audience but a public capable of independent judgment. All those with interests at stake recognized the need to appeal to this broader audience, to explain the rationale for their actions, and to impose meaning. They knew they had to arm for a battle that occurred not just on the field but also in the more nebulous domain of public interpretation.

II

The earls had hoped for a public excommunication of the queen, as this would (in some eyes at least) render a rising legitimate.²⁴ With their fears of imminent arrest mounting, they did not have time to await the papal

²² See Richard Cust, “News and Politics in Early Seventeenth-Century England,” *Past and Present*, no. 112 (1986): 60–90; Adam Fox, “Rumour, News, and Popular Political Opinion in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England,” *Historical Journal* 40 (1997): 597–620; Simon Walker, “Rumour, Sedition, and Popular Protest in the Reign of Henry IV,” *Past and Present*, no. 166 (2000): 31–65; Ethan Shagan, “Rumours and Popular Politics in the Reign of Henry VIII,” in Harris, ed., *The Politics of the Excluded*, pp. 30–66; Walter, “Public Transcripts, Popular Agency and the Politics of Subsistence,” pp. 123–48; Cooper, *Propaganda and the Tudor State*, pp. 93–107. Much of this work addresses to one degree or another Jürgen Habermas’s influential but problematic notion of the “public sphere,” as presented in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, trans. T. Burger with F. Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989). For an older but still valuable treatment of the subject, see J. Samaha, “Gleanings from Local Criminal-Court Records: Sedition amongst the ‘Inarticulate’ in Elizabethan Essex,” *Journal of Social History* 8 (1975): 61–79.

²³ Cooper, *Propaganda and the Tudor State*, pp. 96–101.

²⁴ PRO, SP 15/21/56.i.

document. Thus, the earls knew their rising unlawful and had to find ways other than a papal blessing to present and explain their actions to the public from which they needed support. Unable to justify rebellion on the basis of the queen's excommunication, they instead asserted that they were not rebels but loyal subjects. They reverted to the standard tropes of past rebel declarations and allied themselves to an older tradition that saw loyalty and protest as compatible. Their first proclamation, issued wherever they stopped to gather support, made the restoration of the old faith their rallying cry. The earls professed loyalty to their sovereign and, like many protesters before, directed their complaints against the queen's ministers. They spoke of the need to overthrow "evil disposed councilors who had disordered the commonwealth, subverted the true faith, and now sought the overthrow of the old nobility." Promising the support of other nobles in their plan to restore "all ancient customs and liberties to God's church and this noble realm," they presented themselves as fighting for tradition rather than novelties. They also warned that "if we should not do it ourselves we might be reformed by strangers." The earls appealed for help from all the "Queen's true and faithful subjects . . . of the old Catholic religion." Only in their second proclamation did they hint at any plans for Mary, queen of Scots. They did not name her, but declared their desire "to make known to all manner of persons to whom of right the true succession of this crown appertaineth." They offered this second proclamation to reiterate their "true and sincere meaning" after government attempts to malign their efforts. In both, the earls professed the defensive, conservative, and loyal nature of their acts.²⁵

Contemporary estimates suggested that roughly six thousand men, mostly of "the meaner and baser sort," answered these calls to arms.²⁶

²⁵ PRO, SP 15/15/29.i; and *The Correspondence of Dr. Matthew Hutton*, ed. J. Raine, Surtees Society, vol. 17 (London: J. B. Nichols, 1843), pp. 267–68. Numerous copies of these proclamations survive, some with minor variations. In none is Mary, queen of Scots, referred to explicitly. From other documents, including the earl of Northumberland's confession, it is clear that the earls at least intended to secure her freedom, to use her to secure alterations in the religious settlement, and to have her acknowledged as the rightful heir to the throne. (See PRO, SP 15/21/56.i.) To what degree, if any, the bulk of the rebel host knew of these aims is unclear. Official and semiofficial responses to the rebellion would also remain silent about Mary, queen of Scots, partly because of Elizabeth's quandary in how to deal with a legitimate monarch who had been deposed by rebels. Thus, James Phillips errs in saying that "this rebellion had as its stated aim the liberation of Mary [and] her enthronement in England," but correctly notes that "a contemporary reader whose sole information came from authorized accounts of the Northern Rebellion would probably never have been aware of the Queen of Scots' implication in the plot." See James E. Phillips, *Images of a Queen: Mary Stuart in Sixteenth-Century Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964), pp. 57–59.

²⁶ PRO, SP 12/59/38. Estimates varied widely. Sir Thomas Gargrave, one of the Councilors in the North, later gave an estimate of twenty thousand, but this presumably included those who merely sympathized with the rebels. Sir George Bowes noted that the

Why did they come? We can now discount the assertions of older historical accounts that the people came out of an “instinctive loyalty” to their feudal lords.²⁷ M. E. James suggested that a majority of the men in arms were not, in fact, tenants of the two earls, a fact more recently and conclusively proven by Susan Taylor. Taylor meticulously demonstrated that roughly 80 percent of the known rebels had no tenurial links to the earls and must therefore have found motivation other than feudal duty.²⁸ Some contemporary reports noted that the earls gathered their supporters through offers of money and threats of retribution. Sir George Bowes sought to excuse his inability to raise loyal forces from Richmondshire with a report that the earls had promised to terrorize those who did not join their side. In another letter, however, he admitted that “daily the people flee from these parts to the Earls” with no regard for his own “fair speech and bestowing of money.” Such footmen as he had already mustered threatened to leave unless better paid.²⁹ The earl of Sussex and others of the queen’s agents in the north observed that most who joined the earls did so because they “like so well their cause of religion.”³⁰ Sir Ralph Sadler concurred. When the queen queried the paucity of loyal local recruits, Sadler replied that “if it may please her Majesty to consider of it, it is easy to find the cause thereof, for there be not in all this country ten gentlemen that do favor and allow of her Majesty’s proceedings in the cause of religion.” The common people felt the same. Even those already mustered for the queen had dubious loyalties: “though their persons be here with us, I assure you their hearts, for the most part, be with the rebels.”³¹ Thus, while we can neither be sure of the motivations of each individual nor completely discount the lure of pay and spoil, we can move beyond talk of “instinctive” actions and

most ever assembled at one point was 5,500 but added that others came and went. See Sharpe, *Memorials*, pp. 183–85. Lists of those fined and pardoned after the rebellion include some 4,655 names. (PRO, Exchequer [E] 137/133/1; *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Elizabeth, 1569–72*, V, nos. 585–1019.)

²⁷ The quotation is from Reid, “The Rebellion of the Earls, 1569,” p. 193.

²⁸ M. E. James, “The Concept of Order and the Northern Rising 1569,” *Past and Present*, no. 60 (1973): 70–71; S. E. Taylor, “The Crown and the North of England, 1559–70,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Manchester, 1981), pp. 216–19, 251–57. A more accessible summary of Taylor’s findings can be found in Alison Wall, *Power and Protest in England, 1525–1640* (London: Arnold, 2000), pp. 174–77.

²⁹ Sharp, *Memorials*, pp. 61–3; BL, Caligula B.IX, ii, fol. 425. See C. S. L. Davies, “Popular Religion and the Pilgrimage of Grace,” in *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England*, ed. Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 66–67, for a discussion of the role of pay, spoil, and coercion in recruitment for the Pilgrimage and how its significance had been exaggerated.

³⁰ PRO, SP 15/15/30. See also 15/15/41.

³¹ *The State Papers and Letters of Sir Ralph Sadler*; 2 vols., ed. Arthur Clifford (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable & Co., 1809), 2:54–56.

assume the decisions were conscious and reasoned, and that the members of the rebel host had wills of their own.

Because few rebel texts survive, we must look for meaning in behavior. While we have few words of the rebels and their supporters, we do have accounts of their actions; for contemporaries, these actions seemed proof of their aims and motives. The men in arms declared their common identity and goals through symbolic displays that marked them not as rebels, but as participants in a long tradition of Christian soldiering. In addition to the heraldic ensigns of the earls, the men carried flags with the images of saints. They marched under time-hallowed banners that depicted the Five Wounds of Christ and the customary flag of those who fought to better the commonwealth, with its motto "God Speed the Plough."³² One informant later identified people as participants because they had openly worn "the ensign of the order of these rebels": great crucifixes about the neck. Another reported that "all their force, both of horse and foot, wear red crosses, as well the priests as others."³³

With these banners and badges the participants defined themselves and asserted their legitimacy. The religious ensigns linked their bearers with the potent ideology and rhetoric of the Crusades, a fusion of holy war and pilgrimage that continued to resonate in England as in the rest of Europe well into the late 1500s.³⁴ The red crosses worn in 1569 duplicated those worn by the Crusaders and called to mind the Christians' victories over the infidel. The banner of the Five Wounds of Christ and its inscription, "in this sign, victory," drew from a key story in Christian history: when the Emperor Constantine fought under this banner, revealed

³² Thomas Norton, "A Warning against the dangerous practises of papists, and especially the partners of the late rebellion," reprinted in *All such treatises as have been lately published by Thomas Norton* (London, 1570; Short Title Catalog [STC] # 18677), sig. A5v; John Strype, *Annals of the Reformation*, 4 vols. in 7 (1824; reprint, New York: Burt Franklin, 1968), vol. 1, pt. 2, p. 323; PRO, SP 15/17/72, 15/15/73. They did not, however, march under the traditional banner of St. Cuthbert as Katherine Whittingham, wife of the dean and sister of John Calvin, had recently supervised its public burning. For the use of St. Cuthbert's banner in the Pilgrimage of Grace, see Davies, "Popular Religion and the Pilgrimage of Grace," p. 87. For its destruction, see D. Marcombe, "'A Rude and Heady People': The Local Community and the Rebellion of the Northern Earls," in *The Last Principality: Politics, Religion, and Society in the Bishopric of Durham, 1494–1660*, ed. D. Marcombe (Nottingham: University of Nottingham, 1987), p. 134; and A. Fowler, ed., *The Rites of Durham*, Surtees Society vol. 15 (London: J. B. Nichols, 1842), pp. 26, 95.

³³ H. Robinson, ed., *Zurich Letters*, pp. 215, 218; PRO, SP 15/17/72, 15/15/73.

³⁴ See Christopher Tyerman, *England and the Crusades, 1095–1588* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp. 3, 343–67. Michael Bush and J. C. D. Cooper have explored the imagery and theatrics of earlier protests: Cooper, *Propaganda and the Tudor State*, pp. 118–19; Bush, "The Pilgrimage of Grace and the Pilgrim Tradition of Holy War," in *Pilgrimage: The English Experience from Becket to Bunyan*, ed. Colin Morris and Peter Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 178–98.

to him in a dream, he won the promised victory over his foes and then in gratitude allowed Christian worship throughout his empire. In the more immediate past, the Prayer Book rebels of 1549 had marched under this banner, as had the participants in the largest of all Tudor rebellions, the Pilgrimage of Grace. Thus, Constantine’s banner of the Five Wounds had a history that linked it with Christian soldiering and with earlier moments of righteous protest against the faithless.³⁵ Such displays drew on shared cultural symbols. They served to unify the rebels behind common legitimizing claims, however disparate individual motivations may have been. Descriptions of these symbols also traveled far, as shown in their appearance within weeks in letters, broadsides, and chronicles, and thus advertised these declarations to the public at large.

Many who did not participate in the armed rebellion itself nevertheless took advantage of the situation to make their own religious acts of resistance. Their actions also affected perceptions of the rising and its aims. People throughout the north flocked to the masses newly restored in at least six churches in Yorkshire and nineteen in Durham.³⁶ They heard priests deliver sermons on the schismatic state of the English church and knelt to receive absolution in the name of the pope. Indeed, the press of people at the Durham Cathedral was such that some were unable to hear the words of the service and others had to turn away. Elizabeth Watson, for instance, later noted that she “came up to the Cathedral to see the mass but the throng of people was so much that she could not.”³⁷ Parishioners arrived at their churches not only for mass but also to have bread consecrated, babies christened, and marriages blessed by the old rites.³⁸

Communities gathered to erect altars and holy water vats, with many participating in the restoration of these emblems and tools of the old faith. When forced to remove the old altars, images, and Psalters, some parishioners had carefully hidden them. Some now found the consecrated

³⁵ As Tyerman notes, the story of Constantine had remained readily available, at least until midcentury, in traditional and popular works such as James of Voragine’s *Golden Legend (England and the Crusades*, p. 364). The story and banner may also have had a newer resonance: several Protestant writers had depicted Elizabeth as the new Constantine and compared the conversion of the English to that of the great emperor. See Michael S. Pucci, “Reforming Roman Emperors: John Foxe’s Characterization of Constantine in the *Acts and Monuments*,” in *John Foxe: An Historical Perspective*, ed. D. M. Loades (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999).

³⁶ Borthwick Institute of Historical Research (BIHR), HC.AB 5; Durham University Library (DUL), DDR/EJ/CCD/1/2, fols. 170–200d; Durham Dean and Chapter Library (DDCL), Raine MS. 124, fols. 109d–111. Most of the relevant Durham material is included in J. Raine, ed., *Depositions and other Ecclesiastical Proceedings from the Courts of Durham*, Surtees Society, vol. 21 (London: J. B. Nichols, 1845).

³⁷ DUL, DDR/EJ/CCD/1/2, fol. 200d, 176–77.

³⁸ DUL, DDR/EJ/CCD/1/2, fol. 170, 190d; DDCL, Raine MS. 124, fols. 193b–95.

stones buried in slag heaps or back fields. Others found the stones closer at hand: at St. Oswald's, the holy water vat rested in a corner of the church, covered in earth; at St. Margaret's, the holy water stone was merely overturned in the belfry.³⁹ The Sedgefield parishioners had only lost their altar in late 1567, when the bishop's ordinary arrived to supervise its dismantling after the churchwardens had failed to comply willingly with his missives. Within two months, a group of the churchwardens "forcibly and contemptuously" removed the offensive communion table and re-erected the altar. Once again, the bishop's officials reappeared to ensure compliance with the new religious order.⁴⁰ During the rebellion, at least thirty-four Sedgefield men rode off to join the rebels.⁴¹ Those who stayed behind restored their altar once more. Churchwarden Roland Hixson later noted that "one holy day after service the parish met together and consulted to set up the altar stone and the holy water stone." At least thirty of the locals, young and old, gathered to winch the stones out of their hiding places and into the church. Women and youths helped carry the lime and sand, participating in the recovery and restoration. Richard Hartbourn preached from the Sedgefield pulpit that just as they had freed the holy stones from the earth, so now had they extricated themselves from the queen's erroneous faith, and like a horse once stuck in the mire, no more would they go there again.⁴²

Communal acts of destruction accompanied these acts of restoration. Just as many men, women, and youths resurrected the signs of the old faith, so too did they attack those of the new. They smashed communion tables and built bonfires with Protestant service books. During the rising, rebels and their sympathizers destroyed Protestant books in seventy-three Yorkshire churches and in at least twelve parishes of county Durham.⁴³ William Cook, a forty-year-old laborer of Auckland St. Helen parish, shredded the new service books with his hands and teeth. John Lilborn, a gentleman some nine years younger, tore up the Bible and stomped it underfoot. Crowds gathered at the town gates and crosses to feed fires with the Protestant books. In Sedgefield, Agnes Sklayter, Widow White, and other women helped stoke the fires. As Roland Hixson stirred the flames with his staff, he pointed to the rising smoke, and cried, "Lo, see how the homilies flee to the devil!"⁴⁴ Recent years had witnessed public burnings of traditional images and books and humiliating public penances for their

³⁹ DUL, DDR/EJ/CCD/1/2, fols. 173d, 179.

⁴⁰ DDCL, Raine MS. 124, fol. 52b.

⁴¹ PRO, E 137/133/1.

⁴² DUL, DDR/EJ/CCD/1/2, fol. 195; DDCL, Raine MS. 124, fols. 180–82d.

⁴³ BIHR, HC.AB 5; DUL DDR/EJ/CCD/1/2 fols. 170–200d; DDCL, Raine MS. 124.

⁴⁴ DUL, DDR/EJ/CCD/1/2, fols. 183, 193d, 195v-d.

recalcitrant guardians.⁴⁵ Now, many northerners enthusiastically participated in the utter destruction of the tools of the new religious settlement.

Such scenes occurred throughout Yorkshire and Durham in these few weeks of late November and early December, as people emulated the acts by which the authorities had destroyed the symbols of the old faith. Of course, some may not have participated willingly. When brought before the courts after the rising, some people maintained that they had attended masses and joined in the rites of burning only at the commandment of the rebels.⁴⁶ It is entirely possible that some acted against their wills, just as others had previously been forced to purge their churches of Catholic images against their wishes. Some who received pay for their efforts may have had no deeper motive. Yet, allegations of coercion were to be expected from those facing punishment, and some freely claimed their actions as their own.⁴⁷ Nor is Sedgefield the only parish for which we have evidence of a communal meeting preceding the destruction. In Long Newton, several parishioners had been mustered to help Sir George Bowes defend Barnard Castle for the queen, but the others met after church one day and agreed to pay the keep of four men sent to join the rebels. Twenty men and six women contributed funds, and these Long Newton rebels later convinced their fellows at Barnard Castle to leap over the walls to join them. As in the rebellions of 1536 and 1549, even those not fighting offered direct support by financing the men selected to bear arms. Those still home in the parish had their own communal book burning, and a group of young women rebuilt the altar after others destroyed the communion table.⁴⁸ Thus, it seems safe to conclude that the violence offered to the symbols and instruments of the new faith reflected genuine popular grievances that predated the rebellion. The focus of the violence, and the willing participation of many in it, means that we can treat the events of 1569 as being, at least in part, a popular religious rising. Regardless of the earls' motivations and plans, this rising offered many individuals the chance to repudiate the religious changes forced upon them. Certainly, these actions constituted potent messages. Along with the banners and badges borne by the men in arms, they publicly branded this as a religious revolt against the faithless advisors of a misguided queen.

⁴⁵ See, e.g., BIHR, HC.AB 3, fols. 104, 189–90, HC.AB 4, fols. 24, 59d.

⁴⁶ See, e.g., DUL, DDR/EJ/CCD/1/2, fols. 172d–173.

⁴⁷ DUL, DDR/EJ/CCD/1/2, fol. 192b.

⁴⁸ BL, Add Ms. 40746, fol. 21; DUL, DDR/EJ/CCD/1/2, fols. 179d–180d; Strathmore Estates (Glamis Castle), Bowes MS, vol. 14, no. 36. For earlier examples of parochial financing of rebels, see Eamon Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 134–41, and Michael Bush, *The Pilgrimage of Grace: A Study of the Rebel Armies of October 1536* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), pp. 407–8.

News of the masses, book burnings, and reerected altars quickly spread along with news of the rising, coloring interpretations and shaping responses.

III

While some historians have doubted the importance of popular involvement in this rising in particular and in sixteenth-century politics in general, the governors of Elizabethan England did not. Elizabeth and her councilors recognized the dangers rumormongers and talebearers posed. The queen continued to order justices throughout the realm to watch the activity at fairs and markets and to arrest any who spread stories that threatened to promote disorder.⁴⁹ Councilors again asked inn holders and alehouse keepers to report any who shared news of the events in the north.⁵⁰ Those rumor spreaders we know by name are known because of arrests. Elizabeth and her councilors recognized, however, that repressive measures on their own did not suffice. The crown enjoyed formal powers, but had no guarantee of winning the contest for public meaning. As her predecessors had done when faced with armed protest, Elizabeth now mobilized print, pulpit, and proclamation to dissuade the rebels and their potential supporters. To contain the rising, the queen and her agents had to depict it in ways sure to weaken rebel resolve and to strengthen the loyal or uncommitted.

The first step, as usual, was to proclaim the leaders of the revolt rebels and thus dismiss their claims to loyalty. She sought to disabuse those who saw no contradiction between their aims and faithfulness to their sovereign. Following standard precedents, the queen then offered pardon to all those of the poorer sort who returned to their homes immediately, promising her princely clemency for those who resumed their due obedience upon sober second thought.⁵¹ Heralds gathered at Windsor to proclaim the earls rebels with all appropriate fanfare. Attentive to the various modes of communication, the queen resorted to public ceremony as well as proclamations and had the earl of Northumberland publicly divested of his membership in the prestigious Order of the Garter. She took the time in the hectic first days of the rising to gather a group of her lords to

⁴⁹ See, e.g., PRO, SP 12/60/27. As Adam Fox and others note, surely the best evidence of the importance of plebeian politics and communications networks is the amount of official attention paid to policing them. See Fox, "Rumour, New, and Popular Political Opinion," p. 599. See also Roger B. Manning, "The Origins of the Doctrine of Sedition," *Albion* 12 (1980): 99–121.

⁵⁰ Raine, ed., *York Civic Records*, p. 160.

⁵¹ PRO, SP 15/15/30.I, 15/39.I; Raine, ed., *York Civic Records*, p. 170.

witness the heralds “hurl down with violence the Earl’s banner of arms to the ground and then his sword and after his crest and lastly his helm and mantel.” The heralds then “spurned” these objects from the Garter chapel and finally from the castle gates in a manner that deliberately recalled the official ceremony of dishonor under the law of arms.⁵² Election to the Garter denoted perhaps the highest honor available to an Englishman, and marked “an elevation beyond ordinary nobility to a privileged role of trust and intimacy” with the monarch.⁵³ Degradation from the historic order thus constituted a devastating public shaming and repudiation of one’s noble status, especially significant for a lord who appealed to the sanctity of nobility to help justify his revolt.

Countering claims to loyalty represented the first step, but how then to respond to the religious element of the revolt? Here, the official response is revealing of the progress of religious reform and conversion after a decade of Elizabethan Protestantism. The queen and her agents knew (or believed) that they had too many favorers of the old faith on their hands to make religious truth the focus of their arguments against the rising. Instead, they personalized the conflict. They attacked not the integrity of the old religious establishment versus the new, but the integrity of the earls. They questioned not the rebels’ faith, but their faith in their leaders. The real choice people had to make was not between the Catholic Church and the Protestant, as the earls’ proclamation put it, but between two dim-witted, disolute, and dishonest leaders and a queen known for her kindness, care, and love of peace. The queen’s first proclamation provided a remarkable, lengthy detailing of the events preceding the rising. It declared the earls rebels, but also offered a narrative of the queen’s patient responses to their refusals to attend upon her at court, their persistent perfidy, and even their inability to manage their own estates. It noted that “as for reformation of any great matter, it is evident they be as evil chosen two persons (if their qualities be well considered) to have credit as can be in the whole Realm.” Despite its length, the proclamation had one glaring omission: it made no reference to the earls’ reasons for rebellion other than their personal desperation and poverty. It assiduously ignored the religious question.⁵⁴

Even when William Cecil decided to mobilize the resources of the church to oppose the rebels, he knew he had to proceed carefully. He wrote

⁵² PRO, SP 12/59/40. See Maurice Keen, *The Laws of War in the Late Middle Ages* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), pp. 54–55, 173–74.

⁵³ Raymond B. Waddington, “Elizabeth I and the Order of the Garter,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 24 (1993): 106. On the importance of the Order in Elizabethan politics, see Roy Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1977), pp. 164–85.

⁵⁴STC # 12779; P. L. Hughes and J. F. Larkin, eds., *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, 3 vols. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1964–69), vol. 2, no. 567.

to Sussex in the north and noted that just as the rebels drew strength and identity from attending masses, so too ought the queen's forces attend to their own "spiritual arming." He suggested that Sussex impose mandatory public prayers on the loyal forces but asked him to find "discrete" preachers who would talk only of "matter proper for the common people . . . and not to entreat of hard matters in question, being not so mete for the multitude nor for the time." Instead, the preachers must speak only of the queen's care for her people and the sinfulness of rebellion.⁵⁵

In the north, however, the earl of Sussex could not completely ignore the religious question. In a missive to Sussex, the queen noted that "these rebels do make religion to be the show of their enterprise," and urged him to use any means he could devise to convince the northerners of the falsity of this pretence and that the earls consciously intended to bring the country under the yoke of a foreign prince.⁵⁶ Sussex accordingly issued a proclamation that detailed the "falsehoods and vain delusions" offered by the earls. It went through the rebel proclamation point by point, criticizing and refuting each. Sussex talked of the goodness of the queen and the unnaturalness of rebellion. He emphasized that the earls used religion only as a cloak for baser motives: they were "pretending for conscience sake to seek to reform religion, where in deed it is manifestly known many of them never had care of conscience nor ever respected any religion, but continued a dissolute life until at this present day they were driven to pretend a popish holiness to put some false color upon their manifest treasons."⁵⁷ This talk of religious concerns as a "cloak" or "false color" became the standard line in official pronouncements on the revolt. Thus, during the rising, the official attempts to shape interpretation focused on power struggles within the elite and either ignored or discounted the religious motivation of the bulk of the rebel force.

Only with the rebellion suppressed did this begin to change, as seen in two further official efforts to impose meaning and elicit obedience. In the immediate aftermath of the revolt, Elizabeth and Cecil drafted an elaborate defense of the queen's proceedings since the beginning of her reign. The document began with a reference to the recent "unnatural commotion of certain of our subjects" that a small few seditious persons had instigated for their private benefit. In order that all might "beware hereafter of such blind inveiglings, crafty abusings, and perilous enticements . . . we will that it shall be briefly understood both what our former intentions have been in

⁵⁵ Samuel Haynes, ed., *Collection of State Papers . . . from the year 1540 to 1570 . . . left by William Cecil, Lord Burghley* (London: Bowyer, 1740), pp. 558–59.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 556.

⁵⁷ Raine, ed., *York Civic Records*, p. 175–77, quote on p. 176.

our government . . . and what course we intend in God’s grace to hold.”⁵⁸ The document spoke not of the specifics of religious doctrine and practice, but instead offered proof that the queen had a legitimate, God-given right to see that all live in obedience to the Lord. It sought to convince its audience that the queen had long provided “mild, merciful, and reasonable government.” It warned, that as lenity had led some to disobedience, the queen now felt compelled to wield the Sword of Justice as well. Recognizing the need for oral as well as written distribution, it ended with a note that as the bulk of her good subjects were unable to read, the text was to be read aloud in all parish churches. The document is striking in its open attempt to explain, defend, and convince. Yet for reasons unknown, the queen may not have issued it. W. E. Collins noted that no printed copies of it survive, and while churchwardens’ accounts throughout the country record payments for official prayers and ballads against the rebels, no such records have been found for this defense.⁵⁹

The *Homily Against Disobedience and Wilful Rebellion*, however, most certainly reached a wide audience from the pulpits. Two collections of official homilies already circulated in England, one devised in 1547 and the other in 1563. These set, compulsory sermons served both to aid weak preachers and to regulate the pulpit in the interests of conformity. In early 1570, a new homily joined these prepackaged sermons, to be delivered at regular times throughout the year. The *Homily Against Rebellion* extended to nearly four times the length of the other homilies; as Ronald Bond notes, “its sheer length and its range of documentation and argument betray an unabashedly polemical purpose.”⁶⁰ It had as its primary message the insistence that disobedience to one’s prince equaled disobedience to God, full stop. It endeavored to show that “obedience is the principal virtue of all virtues” and warned that subjects must not resist even an evil leader, as “a rebel is worse than the worst prince.”⁶¹ Just as David refrained from

⁵⁸ W. E. Collins, ed., *Queen Elizabeth’s Defence of Her Proceedings in Church and State* (1899; reprint, London: SPCK, 1958), pp. 37, 39–40. Drafts survive with emendations in the hands of both Elizabeth and Cecil. See PRO, SP 12/66/54 and Haynes, ed., *Collection of State Papers*, pp. 589–93. A copy is also in the National Library of Scotland, Adv. MS. 34.1.11, fols. 77–80d, a volume of papers collected by Walsingham later in the century to help defend the queen against foreign libels.

⁵⁹ Collins, ed., *Queen Elizabeth’s Defence*, p. 34. For churchwardens’ accounts, see, e.g., John Foster Williams, ed., *The Early Churchwardens’ Accounts of Hampshire* (Winchester: Warren & Sons, 1913), pp. 126, 214; London Guildhall Library MS. 5090, fols. 6–6d; MS 645, fols. 87–87d.

⁶⁰ Ronald B. Bond, ed., *Certain Sermons or Homilies (1547) and A Homily Against Disobedience and Wilful Rebellion (1570): A Critical Edition* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), p. 11. Cooper provides an extended discussion of the use of the earlier Homily on Obedience and the new 1570 homily as propaganda to inculcate the Tudor doctrine of absolute nonresistance; Cooper, *Propaganda and the Tudor State*, pp. 221–31.

⁶¹ Cooper, pp. 209, 214.

smiting Saul, so too must subjects leave the correction of misguided lords to God. Examples drawn from both sacred and secular history demonstrated that God never bestowed his blessing on the rebellious. Disobedience left fields untilled and wives unprotected. Revolt entailed all seven of the deadly sins. It led to famine and plague, not just for the rebels themselves, but also for their fellow countrymen. The homily even described how the congregation of large groups inevitably caused the “corruption of the air and place when they do lie with ordure and much filth in hot weather.” It showed the futility of those who rebelled with the aim of bettering the commonwealth and asked, “Surely, that which they falsely call reformation is in deed not only a defacing or a deformation, but also an utter destruction of all common wealth?” Moreover, history demonstrated that rebels were unfailingly “rewarded with shameful deaths, their heads and carcasses set upon poles, or hanged in chains, eaten with kites and crows, judged unworthy the honor of burial.”⁶²

The bulk of the homily relied on Scripture and history to make its case for the evils of rebellion in general. Now that the Northern Rising had safely reached its end, however, the time had come to acknowledge the rebels’ motives and actions and to condemn them appropriately. The text noted that some “make rebellion for the maintenance of their images and idols . . . and in despite of God, cut and tear in sunder his Holy Word, and tread it under their feet, as of late ye know was done.” It explained both the sinfulness and futility of such revolt, and now used the rebellion itself as proof that the old religion came of Satan rather than the Lord. It exclaimed “what a religion it is that such men and by such means would restore may easily be judged: even as good a religion, surely, as rebels be good men and obedient subjects.” Only a “frantic religion” needed such assistance.⁶³ Satan generally used both ambition and ignorance to stoke troubles, and had done so throughout history with the assistance of the bishop of Rome. In recent years, the text asserted, the pope had provoked the Pilgrimage of Grace and the 1549 Prayer Book rebellion. So, too, had he clearly instigated the rebellion of the previous year. It addressed those legitimizing symbols advanced by rebels and warned, “Let no good and discrete subjects, therefore, follow the flag or banner displayed to rebellion and born by rebels, though it have the image of the plough painted therein.” Beware, too, those who “bear the picture of the five wounds of Christ against those who put their only hope of salvation in the wounds of Christ, not those wounds which are painted in a cloth by some lewd painter, but in those wounds which Christ himself bare in his precious body.” Those who

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 227, 229, 234.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 225, 233.

“bear the image of the cross painted in a rag against those that have the cross of Christ painted in their hearts” would find only ruin and destruction.⁶⁴ With the rebels safely disarmed, the crown could denounce papistry itself and abandon the attempt to convince them and their coreligionists that the earls simply used religion as a mask for private motives.

The contrast between the messages crafted during and after the rising is instructive, but so too are their forms. Elizabeth and her agents recognized the need to address an audience broader than just the nobility and gentry from whom the conspiracies had first sprung. Rumors had helped spark the rebellion and might easily allow it to spread unless countered. The queen addressed audiences both elite and plebeian, literate and illiterate, and drew liberally on print, pulpit, and public performance. The political culture of Elizabethan England involved both high and low, and order relied on both policing and persuasion.

Of course, the executions that followed the rising offered the clearest possible message that such disobedience had no place in the Tudor polity. The rebels had directed their hostility towards property rather than persons, but in early 1570, an angry and offended queen felt no need to restrain her own violence. Cecil ordered that rebels with lands or significant income be reserved for common law trials to ensure that the queen receive their forfeitures. In contrast, he urged immediate judgment at martial law for the poorer rebels and suggested that some be hanged in every village that had sent men or aid to the rebels.⁶⁵ Hundreds of the “meaner and baser sort” suffered death. Sir George Bowes, the marshal appointed to supervise the proceedings, listed twenty-three sites of execution in his records, but also noted of other rebels simply that he had dispatched them in the villages from whence they came.⁶⁶ He did not execute as many as his first orders had stipulated; he professed to kill only those who marched willingly and in the final stages of the revolt, but still noted in late January that some “600 and odd” had died. This constituted a far harsher reprisal than that after any previous rebellion of the century, save perhaps for the carnage in 1549.⁶⁷ In its own way, the bloody aftermath confirmed the degree of

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 234–35.

⁶⁵ PRO, SP 15/15/139.

⁶⁶ DUL, MS 534 (Bowes Papers), nos. 2, 6, 7, 18.

⁶⁷ Sharp, *Memorials*, pp. 140–42, 151–52, 163, 188. See also H. B. McCall, “The Rising in the North: A New Light upon One Aspect of It,” *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 18 (1905): 74–87, which argues that far fewer men were executed than had been appointed to die. Nevertheless, McCall’s final tallies do not accord with Bowes’s own recollections. More of the 1549 rebels died for their actions than those of 1569, but the bulk of these deaths occurred in battle rather than on the gallows.

willing popular participation in the rising and the limits of such participation in Tudor political culture more broadly. The remainder of the rebels received pardon upon first prostrating themselves before the queen's agents. During the revolt they had acted the part of the religious crusader. Now the time had come to play the roles of the humble penitent and deferential subject. They admitted that they had been deceived and acknowledged themselves "as persons that have received their lives and beings from her highness as the minister of Almighty God."⁶⁸

IV

While royal agents either ignored the religious motivation of the rebels or dismissed it merely as a "false cloak" during the course of the rising, there were others who felt less compunction about offering a frontal assault on the religious rhetoric coming out of the north. An impressive stream of vituperative polemic poured off the presses. Dismayed southern Protestants printed ballads, sermon texts, pamphlets, and lengthier tracts in condemnation of the rising. Some of these may have had quiet sponsorship from the government, or at least from Cecil: two of the authors later had overt ties to Cecilian propaganda initiatives. They must have had tacit official approval in order to make their way past the censors, but neither they nor their words received open official endorsement.⁶⁹

One of these pamphleteers, Thomas Norton, wrote disparagingly of the papists who thronged St. Paul's Cathedral seeking and reporting news, and according to him, making it up to suit their needs. He maintained the spurious nature of supposedly ancient prophecies that warned of hardships for the common people should the earls not be victorious, saying that they were composed during the events, not prior. He accused the papist rumormongers of writing letters to themselves and brandishing them about with ink not yet dried as proof of the news they imparted. He warned of the danger of such unbridled rumor mongering and observed that tales of rebel strength were "no more but to discourage the queen's true subjects and

⁶⁸ Hughes and Larkin, eds., *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, vol. 2, no. 568. See also the draft in BL, Lansdowne 12, 20, fols. 45d–50, which shows the later insertion of the striking phrase "as the minister of Almighty God." On the significance of the pardons after this and other risings in constructing authority and restoring obedience, see K. J. Kesselring, *Mercy and Authority in the Tudor State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁶⁹ On this literature, see J. K. Lowers, *Mirrors for Rebels: A Study of Polemical Literature Relating to the Northern Rebellion, 1569* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1953). On Cecil's efforts and ties, see Conyers Read, "William Cecil and Elizabethan Public Relations," in *Elizabethan Government and Society*, ed. S. T. Bindoff et al. (London: University of London, Athlone Press, 1961), pp. 21–55.

soldiers, and to rail up in doubtful men inclined to papistry a daring to join themselves to such a supposed strong side.”⁷⁰ Similarly, John Phillips penned his *Friendly Larum . . . to the True Hearted Subjects of England* to comfort those disquieted by the “papistes which mutter there and here, as opportunity serveth their turns, strange lies and news far distant from the truth.” He warned these papist tale-bearers that:

Your golden day may chance to cause
 Your necks to stand a crook.
 And therefore leave your whispering you,
 That daily gape for news:
 Take heed all ye that do Paul’s Church,
 In order much abuse.⁷¹

As Norton and Phillips explained, loyal subjects needed to counter such false tales and to set the true meaning straight. The sinful needed to be confounded, and those who wavered to be strengthened. These polemicists, at least, had no doubt that even those formally excluded from politics might sometimes play a role. They knew that news and rumor spread well beyond the literate elite and had to be directed and controlled.

The three works that appeared during the rising acknowledged the religious motives of the rebels and linked them firmly with the pope, that stalking-horse of the Antichrist if not the Antichrist himself. All three demonstrated a very real perception of the danger the revolt posed to the security of the state and its religious settlement. For them, ignorant dupes may have filled the rebel ranks, but they were dupes of the Roman bishop rather than feudal instinct. William Seres’s *An Answer to the Proclamation of the Rebels in the North* offered a versified, point-by-point refutation of the rebels’ claims while John Awdely penned a short *Godly Ditty or Prayer to be sung unto God for the Preservation of his Church, our Queen and Realm, against all Traitors, Rebels, and Papistical Enemies*.⁷² The longest and most elaborate response published during the rebellion was Thomas Norton’s missive *To the Queen’s Majesty’s Poor Deceived Subjects of the North Country, Drawn into Rebellion by the Earls of Northumberland and Westmoreland*. Norton acknowledged the sincerity of

⁷⁰ Thomas Norton, “A Warning against the dangerous practises of papists,” sigs. G1r-v, G2r, H3r.

⁷¹ John Phillips, *A Friendly Larum, or faithful warning to the true hearted subjects of England* (London, 1570; STC # 19870), sigs. A4r, C8v.

⁷² STC # 22234; STC # 995.

the religious sentiments of the bulk of the rebel host but sought to convince these good, if misguided, people that their leaders did not share these views. He insisted that, no matter how noble the men might think their goals to be, the earls used them merely to their own malicious ends. Even if the rebels only wanted a return to the old faith, they were participating in a plot designed to overthrow the queen, bring in foreign enemies, and enrich the earls. Echoing the official line, Norton talked repeatedly of deception, seduction, “erroneous shows,” and “false colors.” He accused the earls of “an apish counterfeiting of feigned popish devotion”: if these be good Catholic men, he suggested, make them demonstrate the good works upon which they so insist. Norton went even further in his warnings of deceit: he argued that the wives who spurred the men to rise for the old faith only wanted the return of unmarried, lascivious priests to satisfy their own carnal lusts. He hoped to convince both the rebel ranks and their favorers elsewhere that they had, quite simply, been had. They must open their eyes, return to their homes, and trust in the clemency of their queen.⁷³

These and some of the later works about the rebellion mobilized all the traditional arguments used to deter and condemn revolt. Several reminded the men of their husbandly duties and warned of the perils to which they exposed their families. While the rebels appealed to the symbols and messages of history, so too did these polemicists. Many reminded their readers or hearers to resort to the chronicles to see that rebels never prevailed. Edmund Elvidian sought to persuade by descriptions of “perils past . . . of the discommodities of rebellion.”⁷⁴ William Elderton and others warned of the punishments rebels faced for their acts, deliberately contrasting the images used by the rebel host with those of Tyburn and the rituals of death. Just as the rebels’ priests had hung up crosses, so too would they be hanged; they would soon lose their elaborate robes for a “Tyburn tippet, a cope, or a halter.”⁷⁵ Others resorted to mockery, such as Thomas Preston’s ballad account of the Pope’s lamentation upon hearing of the rebels’ defeat, told from the perspective of a fly in the pontiff’s nose.⁷⁶

Some of the works, however, especially those that celebrated the end of the rising, took a new tone. They confronted the question of identity, but

⁷³ Norton, “To the Queen’s Majesty’s Poor Deceived Subjects of the North Country,” reprinted in *All such treatises*, sigs. A3v, B1r, B6v, C8r.

⁷⁴ Edmund Elvidian, *A New Years Gift to the Rebellious Persons in the North Parts of England* (London, 1570; STC # 7625), sig. A3r, C1r.

⁷⁵ William Elderton, *A Ballad Entitled Northumberland News, Wherein you may see what rebels do use* (London, 1570; STC # 7554).

⁷⁶ Thomas Preston, *A Lamentation from Rome, how the Pope doth bewail that the Rebels in England can not prevail* (London, 1570; STC # 1570)

went further than just calling the men of the north unlawful rebels and poor, deceived fools: rather, they were also enemies of God. They recognized the conscious, willing participation of the individuals who “so well liked the Earls’ cause of religion” and attacked that cause directly. The writers appealed not just to the standard historical examples of the futility of revolt, but also to a newly emerging view of history that saw the true and false churches engaged in an enduring apocalyptic struggle. Some authors referred explicitly to John Foxe’s recently published *Book of Martyrs* to offer context for recent events.⁷⁷ The rebels’ religion did not represent a cloak or false cover; it constituted the fundamental issue. These polemicists sharpened a rhetoric that had its tentative beginnings in the denunciations of the earlier Pilgrims of Grace and Prayer Book rebels of 1549. They used the terms “papist” and “traitor” as synonyms, and deployed an anti-Catholic vocabulary that came to shape the history of subsequent decades.

Thomas Norton soon threw off the moderation and restraint of his first publication on the rising. In his *Warning Against the Dangerous Practices of the Papists and Specially the Partners of the Late Rebellion*, he set out to prove “that every papist, that is to say everyone that believeth all the pope’s doctrine to be true, is an enemy and a traitor.” According to Norton, “no clemency, gentleness, . . . or loving dealing can win a papist while he continueth a papist, to love her Majesty.”⁷⁸ They must therefore be rooted out of the commonwealth and destroyed. The rebellion itself had offered proof of the equation between papistry and treason, whether the rebels had been deceived or not. If the banners, actions, and proclamations of the rebels truly reflected their aims, then no more needed to be said. Yet even if these were “false and vain colors, abused by these rebels to deceive and draw more subjects to take their parts, then see what followeth, then must it needs consequently be evident that they themselves yet supposed and knew papistry to be the very likely and apt color and mean to allure men to rebellion and treason against the queen.”⁷⁹ He did briefly acknowledge some distinctions among favorers of the old faith: “Many men, otherwise good and honest subjects, are not yet purged of all errors wherewith

⁷⁷ See, e.g., Norton, “A Warning Against the dangerous practices of papists,” sig. L1v. Norton was a lawyer, an M.P., a son-in-law of Thomas Cranmer, and a friend of John Foxe. Perhaps best known now for *Gordobuc* and his translation of Calvin’s *Institutes*, he attained sixteenth-century notoriety as a “rackmaster” of Catholics. For his own providential history of England, see Anthony Marten, “The End of History: Thomas Norton’s ‘v periodes’ and the Pattern of English Protestant Historiography,” in *John Foxe and His World*, ed. Christopher Highley and John N. King (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), pp. 37–53.

⁷⁸ Norton, “A Warning Against the dangerous practices of papists,” sigs. A4v, B4r.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, sig. H2v.

Rome hath infected them and must have their time to be better instructed." Not all could be considered "perfect papists" and hence "perfect traitors" worthy of death. Yet, as the late rebellion had shown, even these "imperfect papists" posed a danger: "late experience hath taught how very many that pretend themselves to be but unsatisfied in some Popish opinions, and yet do renounce the Pope's usurped jurisdiction, have a certain aptness to receive also his traitorous articles and supremacy, when opportunity serveth."⁸⁰

Norton and his fellow polemicists urged unmitigated severity for these rebels, and harsher penalties for all such papists, for the rising had proven the treason that lay within every adherent of Rome. They argued for stern justice rather than the usual displays of mercy that followed a rising. Normally, rulers used mercy to prompt contrition and amendment in essentially good but misguided subjects. These rebels, being papists, were different; with them, mercy had no chance. They might repent of their rebellion, but would not give up their inherently traitorous faith. In a sermon preached at court and later published, Thomas Drant counseled that "as it is true that two and two make four, that when the sun is in the midst of heaven it is noontime, . . . so it is infallibly true that no perfect papist can be to any Christian prince a good subject." He urged that it "is both good policy and good divinity to punish God's enemies and [the queen's] enemies . . . let them in God's name feel the punishment of a club, an hatchet, or an halter, and in so doing, I dare say God shall be highly pleased."⁸¹ The author of the ballad *A Cold Pye for the Papistes* similarly adduced the rising as proof that all favorers of Rome were traitors, and that all such papists deserved retribution. He insisted that nothing differentiated those who had taken up arms from their fellows in faith. He prayed,

Unto our Queen, Lord grant thy grace
That she the sword from sheath may draw
To vanquish such as hate thy law
Then shall we be from danger free
. . . God grant our Queen may look about
From hence to weed such Papists stout
Then shall we be from danger free.⁸²

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, sigs. B5r-v; see also sig. M4r.

⁸¹ Thomas Drant, "A Sermon reached at the Court at Windsor, 8 January 1569," *Three Godly Learned Sermons* (London, 1584; STC # 7170), sig. G4v.

⁸² *Ballads And Broad-sides Chiefly of the Elizabethan Period*, ed. Herbert L. Collman (1912; reprint, New York: B. Franklin, 1971), pp. 209–11.

This depiction of the rising, which saw it as one of a series of confrontations between the true and false churches, won the field. It became the standard perspective in later narratives of the rebellion. The pope's excommunication of the queen in early 1570 further endorsed its validity; both papal words and rebel actions proved the treason inherent in the Roman faith. The stain applied primarily to the Romanists, but also bled onto all Catholics and favorers of the old ways more generally. This characterization of the rebels' identity and place in history guided the deliberations of the men who, in the next meeting of parliament, ended the earlier entente with Catholics and passed harsher measures to eliminate the Catholic threat.⁸³ In assigning cultural significance to the rising, these Protestant writers noted the participation and aims of the rank and file and turned them into something extremely sinister. It was precisely the broad, popular attachment to the old ways demonstrated by the rebels that allowed reformers to look back and depict the rising as yet one more link in the “chain of treasons” tied to Rome, and its resolution as yet one more sign of God's blessings for their efforts. In so doing, they helped forge a virulent anti-Catholic Protestant identity for the English that was to endure and shape responses to future events.⁸⁴

V

The attempts to direct public sentiment and manipulate meaning outlined here support recent arguments about the existence and dynamism of sixteenth-century popular politics. The print, proclamations, performances, and plebeian speech that accompanied this rising suggest the opinions and actions of the masses had a role long before the rise of a “public sphere” or the beginnings of mass literacy.⁸⁵ The crown might try to channel popular political expression in ways that suited its authority, but it had to engage in dialogues with its subjects. The crown's voice in these conversations was always privileged by the force at its command. While the broad participatory base of the Tudor polity relied on the negotiation of

⁸³ For details on these measures, see J. E. Neale, *Elizabeth I and Her Parliaments*, 2 vols. (London: Cape, 1953–57), 1:177–240.

⁸⁴ For this anti-Catholic rhetoric and its uses, see Peter Lake, “Anti-Popery: The Structure of a Prejudice,” in *Conflict in Early Stuart England*, ed. Richard Cust and Ann Hughes (London: Longman, 1989), pp. 72–106; Carol Weiner, “The Beleaguered Isle: A Study of Elizabethan and Early Jacobean Anti-Catholicism,” *Past and Present*, no. 51 (1971): 27–62; Robin Clifton, “The Popular Fear of Catholics during the English Revolution,” *Past and Present*, no. 52 (1972): 23–55; John Walter, *Understanding Popular Violence in the English Revolution: The Colchester Plunderers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

⁸⁵ See the works cited in nn. 5 and 21 above.

power, those negotiations were generally on grossly uneven terms and sometimes overshadowed by the gallows. Nevertheless, when the discussions broke down and dissent became more forcefully expressed than the crown could tolerate, it still had to persuade and convince other members of the public. It had to ensure the participation of some to allow the coercion of others.

More specifically, attending to the forms and content of political communication shows the insufficiencies of historical accounts that embrace the official depiction of events offered during the revolt. While the crown sought to contain the rising by minimizing the religious motivations of the mass of participants and characterizing it as merely a political coup attempted by two earls, its own efforts to shape interpretations prove it was something more. Just as we cannot take the official portrayal of events at face value, neither can we accept the views of the Protestant polemicists who came to depict these rebels as papists, firmly tied to the doctrines of papal supremacy and newly militant continental Catholicism. The earl of Northumberland and a handful of the leading conspirators apparently felt so inclined, but the actions of the rebels and their supporters need not imply a vibrant, committed Romanism or deep, doctrinal opposition to the creeds of reformers. The evidence cannot bear that weight, but it does demonstrate a widespread dissatisfaction with Elizabethan reforms. For the Protestant precisians at Court and Convocation, Elizabeth had created a church “but halfly reformed.” The people of Sedgfield, Long Newton, and other northern parishes, however, clearly held a different opinion and thought the reforms too much. For them, this did not constitute a laudable middle way. Their Catholicism may well have been “habitual and uninformed,” but surely it deserves a place in the history of Elizabethan religious and political culture.⁸⁶

None of this is intended to deny the role of court conspiracy, regional misgovernment, the debt and property disputes of the northern gentry, or any of the other elite grievances that historians have previously adduced as causes of the revolt. This rising did find its roots in elite power struggles and its leadership from nobles and gentry.⁸⁷ Yet, a focus on these aspects has obscured a fact fully recognized by contemporaries: there existed broad public engagement with the rebellion. Nor did the northerners’

⁸⁶ Anthony Fletcher and Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions*, 4th ed. (London: Longman, 1997), p. 109.

⁸⁷ For an examination of these elite grievances in their local context, see David Marcombe, “A Rude and Heady People: The Local Community and the Rebellion of the Northern Earls,” in *The Last Principality: Politics, Religion and Society in the Bishopric of Durham, 1494–1660*, ed. D. Marcombe (Nottingham: University of Nottingham, 1987), pp. 117–45.

discontent with the new religious settlement act merely as “context”: it enabled and fed the rebellion. Ongoing research into local records will hopefully help identify faces in the rebel host, individual motivations, and community responses. These general aims are not new, of course. For the past few decades, historians have gone back to the events of the early modern period to rescue the nameless from the “condescension of posterity.” The rebels of 1569, however, have suffered from a further degree of condescension. With no evidence as yet of calls for tenant rights, complaints about taxation, demands for social leveling, or other such “independent social grievances”—the proper preserve of peasant protest—they have been dismissed as unthinking or unwilling participants. Yet, the many attempts to manipulate public reactions to the rising demonstrate that contemporaries, at least, recognized the importance of the conscious, active engagement of individuals who followed their own inclinations as much as the earls’ banners.