RICE UNIVERSITY STUDIES
JOURNAL OF WILLIAM MARSH RICE UNIVERSITY

Rice University Studies, successor to the Rice Institute Pamphlet, is a quarterly journal of writings in all scholarly disciplines by staff members and other persons associated with Rice University.

EDITOR: Edward Norbeck
ASSOCIATE EDITOR: Katherine F. Drew
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT: Mimi G. Cohen

RICE UNIVERSITY STUDIES COMMITTEE
Edward Norbeck, Chairman, Thomas W. Donnelly, Katherine Drew, S. W. Higginbotham, Richard O'Neil, George G. Williams

INFORMATION FOR AUTHORS
Manuscripts submitted for publication should be addressed to the Editor, Rice University Studies, Rice University, Houston, Texas. When preparing manuscripts contributors in the humanities and social sciences are requested to follow the MLA Style Sheet; contributors in science and mathematics are requested to follow the established procedures of major journals in their special fields. Notes and references will appear at the end of the manuscript.

Second class postage paid at Houston, Texas.
MONOGRAPH IN ENGLISH HISTORY

ROBERT PARSONS
AND THE ENGLISH COUNTER-REFORMATION

JOHN E. PARISH

PUBLISHED BY
WILLIAM MARSH RICE UNIVERSITY
HOUSTON, TEXAS

VOL. 52, NO. 1 WINTER 1966
PREFACE

It has not been my purpose to appraise the character of Robert Parsons, the English Jesuit of Elizabethan and Jacobean days. To do so would require, among other impossibilities, more detailed knowledge than is presently available of his relations with Fathers Mercurian and Aquaviva, Generals of the Society of Jesus, and of the extent to which his conduct violated their wishes and commands. After he joined the Society Parsons devoted his life to the restoration of England to the Catholic Church, employing many of the same means by which his Protestant adversaries labored to prevent that restoration. Because he failed where they succeeded, he has often been portrayed as the arch-traitor. A fairer portrait would show him neither as the *vir dolorum*, the holy man of sorrows that he imagined himself to be, nor as the furtive, contemptible schemer bearing his name who slithers through the unexpurgated edition of Kingsley’s *Westward Ho!,* but as a man much like Burleigh, one who lost in the game which the old Lord Treasurer won.

Nevertheless, though it would be unfair to judge Parsons by the ethical standards of a later age, it would be just as unfair to his contemporaries to infer that the disapproval they expressed of his methods was altogether pharisaical. Like other civil and ecclesiastical leaders of the period, he employed to achieve his ends opportunism of the sort that earlier in the century Machiavelli had observed—without the grace to condemn it—to be characteristic of successful men of the world. But even among Elizabethans his duplicity was at least remarkable.

Parsons was by no means solely responsible for the unfavorable concept of the Jesuits which had formed in the English mind before John Donne published *Ignatius His Conclave* in 1611. The Channel did not separate English thought from European thought. From its beginning the Society of Jesus had encountered opposition from within the Catholic Church as well as from without, an opposition which was based partly on envy of special privileges granted to the Society but which found expression in charges of heresy, sedition, and “Machiavellianism.” Antipathy was especially strong in France, where the Jesuits were regarded as pro-Spanish and where they had furnished the Sainte Ligue with arguments to justify rebellion against Henri III and then against Henri IV. After Henri IV's
reconciliation with the Pope, the Society had been banished from France, though it was soon allowed to return. In Spain the Dominicans and the Inquisition were anti-Jesuit. The publication of De Rege et Regis Institutione by the Spanish Jesuit Mariana in 1599 further supported the accusation that the Society was a threat to kings, and within a few years the writings of Bellarmine and Suarez, as well as those of Parsons, increased this suspicion. Before Donne wrote Ignatius His Conclave the Jesuits had been expelled from the Republic of Venice. All this, of course, was well known in England.

Furthermore, other English Jesuits were almost as responsible as Robert Parsons for the prejudice against the Society. Heywood, Holt, Weston, Garnet and Lister incurred the hostility of secular Catholic priests and the wrath of the Protestant government. Even the truly heroic Robert Southwell, by defending the use of equivocation, contributed something to the ill fame of the Jesuits. The conviction that English members at home and abroad had connived at the Gunpowder Plot added to the notoriety.

The inference often drawn by historians of the Society that Parsons alone—one sinner in a company of saints—provided the basis for the "legendary English Jesuit" is, then, untenable. Parsons contributed a large share to this popular concept; but, whether justified by facts or not, the prejudice would have formed even had Robert Parsons continued to the end of his life an Anglican and a Fellow of Balliol College.

JOHN E. PARISH
Associate Professor of English
RICE UNIVERSITY
CHAPTER I

"REBUS SIC STANTIBUS"

In 1612, apparently unaware that Robert Parsons had died in Rome two years before, one of his countrymen drew his character in the following words:

The general conceit of all that have ever thoroughly conversed with him is this, that he is of a furious, passionate hot, chollerick, exhorbitant, working humour, busie-headed and full of ambition, envie, pride, rancour, malice and revenge, whereunto through his latter Machiavillian practices, may be added that he is a most Diabolicall, unnaturall, and barbarous butcherlie fellow, unworthy the name; nay cursed be the hour wherein hee had the name of a Priest, nay of a Religious person, nay of a Temporall Layman Jesuited, nay of a Catholic, nay of a Christian, nay of a human creature: but of a beast, or a Divel, a violator of humanitie, an impostume of all corruption, a corrupter of all honesty, & a Monopolie of all Mischief. Thus you have briefly the life of Father Robert Parsons, the Jesuit.1

Scurrilous as the portrait is, it represents (when allowances are made for the rhetoric of the day) an opinion of Parsons shared not only by James I, Launcelot Andrewes, John Donne and the united body of Anglican clergymen, but also by a large number of English Catholic priests whose devotion to their religion was indisputable. No full story of his life has ever been produced. As Denis Meadows points out, "A great deal of unpublished material exists, much of it in the archives of the English Jesuits. The Catholics of England, including Persons' own brethren, the fathers of the Society of Jesus, have fought shy of this controversial figure in their history."2 Or, in the words of Evelyn Waugh, one of Edmund Campion's most recent eulogists, "The materials for writing a life of Persons are not yet accessible, and until that day is thought to have arrived, he must remain a shadowy and enigmatic figure."3

But, even if a revivification of the complex personality is impossible, a sketch of Robert Parsons' literary and political career, supplemented with biographical details heretofore available only in scattered sources, should restore an interesting figure to his prominent position in the Elizabethan scene and illuminate the frequent and invariably adverse allusions to the Society of Jesus by better known authors of the sixteenth and seventeenth
centuries. More than any one other English Catholic, Parsons provided the basis for the popular image of the scheming Jesuit. In the central figure of John Donne's *Ignatius His Conclave* there is little of the Spanish saint who founded the Society, but there is a great deal of the English missioner and polemicist. Philip Hughes, writing about the want of a biography of Cardinal Allen, Parsons' close friend, states:

Possibly the hesitation which, time and again, holds back all those who are faced with a task whose achievement can scarcely bring popularity, has had something to do with this, and a related fearfulness may be responsible for the lengthy, the too, too lengthy silence about his [Allen's] fellow-hero, Fr. Persons, an Elizabethan of the Elizabethans.  

Again, speaking of the first two Jesuit missioners in England, Hughes adds:

The miscalculations of the one [Persons] were to be the foundation of the English anti-Jesuit legend—his virtues ignored while the radiance of the other's [Campion's] spiritual genius, the richness which in him grace perfected, was such that later generations of Catholics have hardly seen any other figure in the Elizabethan Church.... The misdeeds—whatever they were—of Fr. Robert Persons, for example, have been often gleefully seized on as evidence that the spirit of the Society is essentially mischievous.

When he restrained his strong emotions and took time to polish his writing, Robert Parsons could produce excellent English prose—eloquent, lucid, and uncontaminated by euphuism. A century after his death Jonathan Swift read the Jesuit's work with approval—at least of its style—and in the *Tatler* for September 27, 1710, stated:

The writings of Hooker, who was a country clergyman, and of Parsons the Jesuit, both in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, are in a style that with very few allowances would not offend any present reader—much more clear and intelligible than those of... others who writ later but being men of the Court and affecting the phrases then in fashion... are often not to be understood, or appear perfectly ridiculous.

Johnson's praise is not fully merited. Parsons wrote too hastily, too angrily, too prolifically to maintain his best style in all his books; but in one of them, the *Christian Directorie*, he showed an imagination which in happier times might have produced a first-rate poet. So much for how he wrote. What he wrote created a sensation in his own day and some of it, reproduced during the eighty years after his death, contributed as much as literature could to two revolutions in England.

Robert Parsons was born in 1546, twelve years after the Act of Supremacy and seven months before the death of Henry VIII. At that time few Englishmen were conscious that any great change had occurred in their Church. The civil and ecclesiastical governments had never been distinct,
and with little more than a murmur both the clergy and the laity had yielded to Henry's demand to be acknowledged sole head under God of the Church in England. Catholics of the next generation denounced the acquiescence of these Christians. History was to prove that they had permitted an irreparable separation from Rome. But in their own eyes they had simply sided with an opinion long acceptable in the Church, a school of thought recognizing a certain supremacy in the Pope but favoring as much national independence as possible.

England was not yet a Protestant country in 1546. The Act of Six Articles, approved by Parliament in 1539, reaffirmed the principal doctrines of the old religion. To hold the opinions of Luther or Calvin was heresy still and punishable by death. The papal bull excommunicating Henry and his principal abettors in the separation was regarded by those who thought about it as a personal matter between Henry and the Pope—or perhaps between Henry and Charles V, nephew of the divorced Queen. Like many past disputes between monarchs and popes, it would eventually be settled by compromise.

Much more remarkable was the dissolution of the monasteries and nunneries in 1538 and 1540, a measure which might have made clear to all that a change was under way as serious as that which Luther had fathered in Germany. But by playing on the ancient rivalry between secular priests and monastic orders, and by bribing the abbots to vote themselves out of existence, Henry accomplished this change with a show of legality which persuaded most Englishmen that it was no attack on the old religion. The abbey lands became government property and were sold at nominal prices or given away to Henry's favorites. Of the families thus enriched, some later became "Papists," and the possession of former Church property was mildly troubling to their consciences; but in 1538-40 the dissolution of the monasteries was not regarded as a Protestant measure. Younger members of the religious orders returned to the world outside the cloister. Older members could retire with government pensions or accept ordination as secular priests. There were no more monks or friars or nuns in England.

While these changes were taking place in England, a new religious order was being formed at Rome by a small band of enthusiastic scholars under the leadership of Ignatius Loyola. In 1540 Pope Paul III issued the bull creating the Society of Jesus, naming Loyola and nine others as its members, and setting forth as its aims the propagation of the faith by public sermons, retreats, works of charity—in particular the instruction of children and unlettered adults in Christian doctrine—and the provision of spiritual comfort to souls by the hearing of confessions. If this bull was even heard of in England in 1540, it can hardly have seemed very significant. But before the end of the century the Society of Jesus was to be
regarded as a formidable threat to the Church of England and the Protestant monarchy.

Soon after the priory of Augustine canons at Taunton in Somersetshire was dissolved, John Haywood, one of the thirteen members, was appointed to the living of Nether Stowey, a village near Taunton. The first child he was called upon to baptize was Robert Parsons—or Persons, as he usually wrote it—who was born on June 24, 1546, and who fifty years later was Prefect of the English Jesuits and the most prominent Englishman in the Catholic Church.

Little is known about Parsons' early life. He was one of eleven children in a family belonging apparently to the well-to-do yeoman class. In the year of his birth the old religion was the only one known in the little Somerset village. The people attended the same church, heard the same services, and received the same sacraments as had their forebears. But the death of Henry VIII early in 1547 ushered in the Reformation. Edward VI, a boy of nine, was titular head of Church and State, and the actual rulers, his uncles, favored radical changes in the religious service. The Act of Six Articles was repealed. A prayer book entirely in English was approved by Parliament, and ordered to be used in all churches in place of the Latin Mass. Crucifixes and images of saints were removed from the churches, as were stained-glass windows and religious pictures. Clergymen were allowed to marry. Bishops who opposed the changes were replaced by others holding the views of Luther or Calvin. At Exeter, about thirty miles from Robert Parsons' home, Miles Coverdale, translator of the Bible, was installed as Bishop of the diocese.

These innovations met with considerable resistance in the west country, where tradition was more binding than in London. The uprising of 1549 known as the Prayer Book Rebellion was centered around Exeter. Though not without its element of class struggle, the rebellion was chiefly religious in nature. The reforms, however, were rigorously imposed and in Somerset, as everywhere else in England, the people were gradually de-catholicized. Even during Mary's reign, when papal authority was restored and a vigorous effort was made to eradicate the new doctrines, the Reformation made progress in the west country because of the unpopularity of the Queen's Spanish marriage; but of the several hundred Protestants burned as heretics in 1553-55 very few were from this region.

It is impossible to know how Robert Parsons, who was a boy of twelve when Mary died, felt at the time about this brief period of Catholic restoration. Forty years later, in outlining his ideal of a perfect Catholic reformation, he looked back upon the measures of the Marian regime as unmercifully lenient:

For that the grace and good Motion to take in hand and to go through with so
great a work as is this desired Reformation, must come from Heaven; therefore the first sure step unto it must be by the true reconciliation of the Realm unto God and to the Church; and as the first of these two proceedeth, so will the second; and for that the first was huddled up in Queen Mary’s Days (I mean the Reconciliation) . . . so was the other shuffled up with like negligence, and only the external part was plastered without remedying the Root, the renewing the Spirit, which should have been the ground of all; many Priests that had fallen and married in King Edward’s Days, were admitted presently to the Altar, without other satisfaction than only to send their Concubines out of Men’s sight, and of some it is thought they did not so much as confess themselves before they said Mass again; Others that had preached against Catholics, were admitted presently to preach for them; and others that had been Visitors and Commissioners against us, were made Commissioners against the Protestants, and in this Queen’s [Elizabeth’s] time were Commissioners again of the other side against ours; so as the matter went as a Stage-Play, where Men do change their Persons and Parts, without changing their Minds or Affections: many or rather all that had Abbey-Lands, the good Queen Mary herself and some very few others excepted, remained with the same, as with a prey well gotten, and he that was most scrupulous would but send for a Bull of Toleration to Rome upon false Information, to the end that he might not be troubled.

After years of devotion to the Catholic Church Parsons was understandably eager to represent himself, not as a convert, but as a Catholic from cradle to grave; but for the first sixteen years of Elizabeth’s reign, until he was twenty-eight, he attended the Anglican Church while more resolute favorers of the old religion went into exile or paid recusancy fines to avoid doing so.

Papal control of the Church of England, restored during Mary’s reign, was renounced again by the Act of Supremacy in 1559. Elizabeth was declared to be “the only supreme governor of this realm, as well in spiritual or ecclesiastical things or causes as temporal,” and every clergyman and officer of the crown was required to take the Oath of Supremacy acknowledging her as such. All but one of the fourteen bishops remaining from the Marian regime resigned rather than take the Oath, but of a total of more than nine thousand parish priests and other clergymen, less than two hundred refused to subscribe. Recusants—that is, persons refusing to attend divine services—were subject to a fine of twelve pence for every absence. The doctrines of the Church of England, fixed by the Thirty-Nine Articles in 1564, were a compromise between those of the Roman Catholic Church and those of Protestant churches on the Continent. Although the “Elizabethan Settlement” was acceptable to the majority of the people and recusants were few during the first twenty years of the Queen’s reign, there were two vaguely defined groups within the Anglican Church who were dissatisfied. Neither objected strongly to the Queen’s having been declared governor of the Church. Those who urged further “purification” of the abuses, the superstitious doctrine, and the elaborate ceremony of medieval days
were styled "Precisians" or "Puritans" by the contented majority. On the other hand, those who disapproved the doctrinal and ceremonial changes since Henry's reign were likely to be called "Papists" or "Romanists" by the complacent Anglicans and the Puritans. Many of these reactionaries remained in the Church of England, early High Churchmen. Others of this leaning were later converted by the missionary priests into staunch Roman Catholics; before 1580, however, most of them attended the established Church to escape the inconveniences of recusancy and to enjoy what religious consolation they could find in the modified services.

During the first decade of Elizabeth's reign the government, treating the so-called Papists with considerable tolerance, was succeeding in its policy of winning them away from the old religion by moderate means—moderate, that is, in the sense of the period. At this time the Papists were not considered a menace to the government. But in 1569, with Mary Stuart's arrival in England and her imprisonment, a change came about in the attitudes of both the religious conservatives and the government. The deposed Queen of Scotland provided the most determined adherents of the old religion with a champion whose right to the English throne they could persuade themselves was more legitimate than Elizabeth's and whose imprisonment they could regard as a martyrdom. In 1569 there was a short-lived rebellion in Mary's favor on the part of some of the nobles, to whom the Pope sent his encouragement. Then in 1570 Pius V issued a bull, announcing the excommunication and deposition of the "pretended queen," Elizabeth, and releasing her subjects from all vows of allegiance to her. The bull excited fears in England that an invasion was imminent, and the government began to regard Papists as potential rebels. Within a few years priests in disguise began to arrive from the English seminary recently established at Douai. After more than a decade of neglect, Englishmen opposed to the Reformation could feel that the Pope was taking an interest in their lot, and a genuine Roman Catholic party began to form.

In 1564, at the age of eighteen, Robert Parsons went to Oxford, where after two years at St. Mary's Hall and another two years at Balliol he proceeded Bachelor of Arts and became a Fellow of his college. In receiving the degree he took the Oath of Supremacy exacted of all candidates. Edmund Campion, then Proctor of the University, presided at this ceremony, an occasion which both he and Parsons later looked back upon as abominable. In his autobiographical notes, written thirty years afterwards, Parsons asserts that he asked Campion before the ceremony to dispense with the Oath, but that no way could be found to avoid it. He claims too that his expulsion from Balliol six years later was largely due to his being considered a Papist. On the other hand, his enemies, both Protestant and Catholic, also writing thirty years after the event, claimed to remember
Parsons as an extreme Calvinist. It is certain, that in 1570, along with all other members of the college, he signed the document expelling Richard Garnet, a Fellow dismissed as a Papist, and though Campion and others left Oxford about the same time and for the same reason, Parsons remained. His attitude toward the religious controversy before leaving Oxford, therefore, cannot be determined.

As a tutor, Parsons appears to have been exceptionally popular, attracting more pupils from the nobility than most of his colleagues, winning the friendship of their influential parents, and perhaps thus furthering the hostility that finally led to his forced resignation. According to his own account, while he was in London on business at Christmas 1573 another tutor frightened a favorite student into leaving Parsons' house and joining his own group of scholars by convincing him that Parsons would punish him severely when he learned of a minor offense committed by the boy. As Dean of Balliol for the academic year Parsons had the authority to require his student to return. Instead, he discussed the matter with the Master and then in February brought it up at a college meeting. A surprise conspiracy was waiting for him. The Master and a majority of the Fellows voted for his expulsion. They gave him the option of two alternatives: voluntary resignation of his fellowship with the privilege of residing in the college as long as he pleased, or forcible ejection, bag and baggage, that very night. Indignant, Parsons protested the injustice of the case, but he was trapped. Making the best of a bad bargain, he signed an equivocal resignation: *Ego Robertus Persons, socius collegii de Balliololo, resigno onnem jum titulum et clameum, quam habeo vel habere potero societatis meae in dicto collegio, quod quidem facio sponte et coactus.*

Undoubtedly this academic scandal had nuances which Parsons, writing thirty years later, does not record. His Catholic foes, whose accounts were also written in the last years of Elizabeth's reign, report the affair to Parsons' discredit, but the reports of these priests are too scurrilous to be credible. Parsons was expelled from Balliol, they state, for purloining money while serving as Bursar, or for his lewd and turbulent behavior, or because it had been learned that he was baseborn.

For a short time after the resignation he continued to live in his quarters at Balliol, and to supervise his students, having been assured that the resignation would be kept secret from them. But the scholars soon knew the state of affairs, and his position became daily more insufferable. The Earl of Leicester, Chancellor of the University, supported the faction against him. Parsons' adversaries became openly hostile. Somebody tolled the funeral bells at the nearby church of St. Mary Magdalene; and when people asked why, the answer was whispered about that Robert Parsons was dead to Oxford University. Under such humiliation he hurried away to London.
Christopher Bagshaw, the tutor whom Parsons accused of stealing his student and whom he suspected of inciting the tolling of the bells, later became a Catholic. He and Parsons carried their hatred for each other with them into their new religion, where it was to have far-reaching effects.

Parsons spent the next several months in London and at home in Somerset, but in May or June 1574 he left his business affairs in the care of a friend and crossed the Channel, intending to study medicine at Padua. He was twenty-eight years old. Except for the fourteen dangerous months in 1580-81 when he was back in England as a Jesuit, in disguise, the remaining thirty-six years of his life were spent abroad.

On the crossing to Calais he made friends with two other Englishmen en route to Louvain for a religious retreat under the direction of Father William Good, one of the few English members of the vigorous new Society of Jesus. They persuaded Parsons to share with them the stirring experience of the spiritual exercises which Loyola had formulated, a period of eight days to a month during which the exercitant under a skillful director concentrated on the state of his soul and sought earnestly for his true vocation. It was probably during his eight-day retreat that Parsons was received into the Catholic Church and began seriously to consider joining the Society of Jesus.

Leaving Louvain, he visited Frankfort at the time of the great vernal fair. Here he received news from his brother John, still at Oxford, that his adversaries were spreading false charges against him, and he wrote an angry letter to the Master of Balliol. He journeyed on to Padua, stopped briefly there, and at the end of 1574 visited Rome, chiefly to marvel at the ruins and monuments of the ancient civilization.

Back at Padua, he and two English students of law rented a comfortable house, and Parsons bought the wardrobe and books needed for his medical studies. But he found no satisfaction in his new pursuit. He rebuked himself with having spent his visit to Rome so frivolously and resolved to return, this time in a more devout spirit. When he set out after only two or three months at Padua, he imposed on himself the penance of travelling by foot. In Rome he offered himself to the Society of Jesus.

In the thirty-four years since Ignatius Loyola had conceived the idea of a new religious order to instruct children and illiterates in the doctrines of the Church, the Society had developed into a world-wide organization with thousands of members, famed as the most militant of all Catholics in their stand against the spread of heresy. At the Council of Trent, held between the years 1545 and 1563, Jesuit theologians had been of great influence in settling once and for all time many points heretofore open to dispute. Governed by a General who resided in Rome and by a Provincial in each of the principal countries of Europe, members of the Soci-
ety took not only the three vows of chastity, poverty and obedience common to all regular orders, but also, when they reached the grade of professed Jesuits at the end of a long period of preparation, a fourth vow of especial obedience to the Pope.

The progress of the Society had not been without serious opposition from some of the leaders of the secular clergy and other religious orders. Because the first three Generals and the greatest number of members were Spaniards, from the beginning the Society had been strongly resisted in France, where the Gallican Church, all but independent of control from Rome and refusing to accept the decrees of the Council of Trent, tended to regard the Papacy as Spanish-dominated. For a time in 1556-57 Pope Pius IV, while he was at war with Philip II, had suspected the Jesuits of siding against him and had determined to abolish the order. Later anti-Spanish popes were to share this attitude, but when Robert Parsons joined the Society in 1575 there was perfect rapport between Pope Gregory XIII and the fourth General of the Jesuits, Father Everard Mercurian, former Jesuit Provincial of Flanders.

By 1578 Parsons had been ordained as a priest. For a time he was supervisor of second-year Jesuit novices, including the future poet-martyr, Robert Southwell, and he was one of the penitentiaries at St. Peter's who heard the confessions of English Catholics living in Rome. It was about this time that he became acquainted with George Gilbert, young, wealthy, and destined to play an interesting role in the English mission. Reared an Anglican, Gilbert had easily obtained Elizabeth's permission to take what later came to be called the "Grand Tour," visiting the French and Italian cities and learning from masters the gentlemanly exercises of riding, fencing, and vaulting. In Paris a Jesuit father had won him to the Catholic Church, and in Rome Father Parsons served as godfather at his confirmation. The zealous convert wished to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem; but Parsons, reminding him that there were priests in England needing alms, persuaded the rich young man to return home.

When Parsons crossed the Channel into the Spanish Netherlands, he had met for the first time in his life a unanimous band of really resolute English Catholics. Of those who had left England at Elizabeth's accession to escape punishment for their part in the Marian persecution or simply to enjoy freedom of religion, all but the most uncompromising had returned in 1571 when, in retaliation against the Bull of Excommunication, Parliament passed an Act against "fugitives over the sea"—inflicting loss of all property on those who persisted in exiling themselves. Acknowledged leader of these English Catholics—the Moses of their Exile, they called him—was Dr. William Allen, who had left Oxford in 1561 and had received a doctorate in theology from the University of Douai. In 1568 Allen
founded an English seminary at Douai for the purpose of training English priests to serve the faithful in the home country. Dr. Allen—later Cardinal Allen—was the most influential Englishman in the Catholic Church until his death in 1594, after which that distinction belonged to Robert Parsons.

How did these Englishmen support themselves on the Continent? Friends and relatives at home managed to smuggle money to many of them. Others found positions in universities or in the courts or armies of Catholic kings and nobles. Many were pensioners of Philip II, whom they expected to restore England by force to the Catholic religion. The seminary at Douai was supported by Philip, by the Pope, and by wealthy Catholics of various nationalities.

Originally Allen's plan was to have a corps of English priests ready to enter England when, at Elizabeth's death or deposition, a Catholic monarch, probably Mary Stuart, should restore the country to the Church. The idea of sending priests in disguise into a Protestant England came later, when Philip's maddening procrastination made the émigrés despair of an early restoration by force and concern themselves with arresting the gradual de-catholicization of the country. The first seminary priests ventured into England in 1574, and the execution of Cuthbert Mayne under the new penal laws in 1577 gave the school its first martyr-alumnus. The hostility of the Belgians toward these refugees, plus diplomatic pressure from England, forced Spain to oust the seminary from Douai in 1578; and Dr. Allen moved it under the protection of the Duc de Guise to Rheims until 1593, when it was returned to its original location.

The Douai-Rheims experiment attracted so many promising young men from England that soon Allen's seminary was unable to accommodate them all, and in 1576 he began to send the overflow to Rome, where it was planned to found a similar establishment. For a while these student-priests studied at the Collegium Romanum and resided in the English hospice, which for many centuries had lodged British pilgrims during their stay at Rome. Then the hospice was converted into an English College, and Dr. Maurice Clenock, a Welshman, former head of the hospice, was named first Rector, with two Italian Jesuits appointed to assist him with the discipline and the program of studies.

Troubles sprang up almost immediately at the new college. The English students, though not Jesuits themselves, petitioned for a Jesuit rector, claiming that Clenock discriminated intolerably against them in favor of the minority of scholars from Wales. In the outcome, their claims were recognized and, like the seminary for German priests, the English College came under Jesuit control in 1579. Robert Parsons took part in settling this dispute, winning the admiration of some of the English scholars and at the same time the enmity of Clenock and his supporters, who formed the
PARSONS AND THE ENGLISH COUNTER-REFORMATION

nucleus of a growing anti-Jesuit movement among British Catholics. Parsons himself took charge of reorganizing the College until the new Jesuit Rector, Father Agazzari, assumed his post.24

From the beginning the English government, which kept well-informed about the activities of the émigrés, regarded both seminaries as training schools for traitors. The English College at Rome was even more hated than the school at Douai. Often before a young priest set out from Rome, London had been informed of his coming and had alerted searchers at the ports to be on the watch for him.

The Jesuits were unsurpassed as teachers. They were the elite of sixteenth-century Catholicism, chosen for their learning, for devotion, for leadership qualities, and often for influential family connections. They were determined to mould the English students under their direction into priests who would dazzle Protestants in disputation and face death unflinchingly. Parsons drew up a compendium of the major controversies between Catholics and Protestants, and every seminarian was schooled to present the Catholic case with unanswerable logic. The supreme aim of the English College was to win England from heresy, a task the difficulty and danger of which the scholars were never allowed to forget. Pictures of the instruments of torture in the Tower of London were later painted on the walls of the College, and during the Ignatian spiritual exercises which climaxed his education every scholar was encouraged to value martyrdom as the greatest blessing God could bestow on a human being. Parsons devised an oath to test the devotion of those applying for admission: “I swear to Almighty God that I am ready and shall always be ready to receive holy orders in His own good time, and I shall return to England for the salvation of souls whenever it shall seem good to the superior of this college to order me to do so.”25 Such intense training would produce either men of heroic determination or men who forever after resented the Jesuit discipline.

Late in 1579 Dr. Allen was summoned from Rheims to discuss plans for coordinating the aims of the two seminaries. For some time he had been in correspondence with Parsons regarding the loss to England of those English Jesuits who were being sent to the Indies or elsewhere, and now he suggested that Jesuits as well as secular priests be assigned to England. If Parsons can be believed,26 Father Mercurian, General of the Society, raised numerous objections, but Pope Gregory XIII favored the plan and the General was won over. Allen returned to Rheims with the understanding that early in 1580 the chosen Jesuits would come to consult with him there, bringing such secular priests from the College as could be readied in the short time remaining.

Robert Parsons and Edmund Campion, who was then serving at Prague, were the two Jesuits selected for the mission, Parsons, though the younger,
to be the Superior. As preparations got under way, the mission began to assume the aspects of a crusade. About one hundred priests from Douai and Rheims had already crossed the Channel in the last five years, but this new group sent out from the Holy City itself and under the direction of the General of the Jesuits, was to previous efforts as a major campaign to preliminary skirmishes. Aged English divines who had not seen their homeland since Queen Mary’s reign were fired by the enthusiasm of the young men going to their martyrdom and begged permission to accompany them, so Parsons claims. Indeed, the excitement was justified. This mission was the beginning of the supreme effort of the Counter-Reformation against the schism which for more than fifty years had split the Church.

When Campion arrived from Prague, he and Parsons requested of the Pope an answer to a question certain to be asked them in England: could Catholics, in the face of Pius V’s bull excommunicating and deposing Elizabeth, still acknowledge her as their lawful Queen? It was a question ten years old and one which, having no orders to the contrary, Catholics in England had answered for themselves in the affirmative. Gregory’s reply was of momentous importance, especially after it fell into the hands of the English government a few years later. Campion and Parsons were to explain to Catholics that “the bull always binds Elizabeth and the heretics, but, while things remain as they are [rebus sic stantibus], in no way binds the Catholics, except when public execution of the Bull shall become possible.”

To Protestant historians this explanation has always been interpreted as advice from the Pope that Catholics profess loyalty to the Queen and gain the benefits of such a profession while planning secretly to rebel whenever opportunity for a successful rebellion came. Given papal authority to expound this suggestion, the Jesuits, say these historians, were obviously sent to prepare Catholics to assist any invasion the Pope or a Catholic monarch might launch against England. Apologists for the mission do not deny this interpretation of Gregory’s explanation but point out that from Father Mercurian, Parsons and Campion received the following written instructions before they left Rome: to regard their mission as purely spiritual; to so explain it to Catholics in England; to mix in no affairs of state and write nothing about political matters to Rome; and, “except perhaps with those whose fidelity has been long and steadfast,” never to speak or hear opinions against the queen.”

Even the qualifying phrase beginning nisi forte apud eos was omitted when the instructions were renewed a year later. Considering the intent of the missionaries themselves, the mission was purely spiritual in its purpose, say the apologists. Whether Parsons and/or Campion had any verbal instructions differing from the pious written ones which they displayed cannot be determined.
To appraise the exact nature of the Jesuit mission would require defining the distinction between purely spiritual and purely political activity, no easy matter. Most of Campion's conduct supports the argument that the mission was for the cure of souls, but the activities of Robert Parsons show that whatever the original purpose, within a few months the mission became highly political. Recalling the mass conversion of the English by St. Augustine, Parsons strove to create conditions favorable to a wholesale return of the nation to the orthodox Church.

Certainly before they left Rome in 1580 Campion and Parsons knew that they would be accused of sedition. The Spanish origin of the Society and the special vow of submission to the Pope had aroused opposition to the Jesuits even in Catholic France; and the English government, which for years had been expecting a Spanish attack, would regard them as pre-invasion spies, sent to prepare Catholics for a coup d'etat. In July of the preceding year James Fitzmaurice, with a commission in the Pope's name, had landed a handful of Italian and Spanish troops in Ireland to head a rebellion there against England. What put the mission of Parsons and Campion under even greater suspicion by the government, however, was the fact that the papal troops had been accompanied to Ireland by an English Catholic priest, Dr. Nicolas Sander, who was appointed papal legate and, bringing with him a banner blessed by Gregory, gave the uprising religious sanction. Moreover, Sander, hated already in England as author of a fiery history of the Anglican schism, had with him an English Jesuit.  

Though Sander and Fitzmaurice had landed in July 1579, Parsons swore to Catholics in England that he first learned of Sander's mission ten months later, when he and Campion were on route to their homeland. If this was true, Parsons was one of the least informed Englishmen in Europe.

The two Jesuit priests, with two lay brothers of the Society and about eight secular priests from the College, left Rome at Easter, 1580. Their spirits were high, and to strengthen their resolution as they traveled they discussed the perils ahead and joined in prayers at every stop. There was gaiety, too, about the journey. According to Parsons' own account, as they passed through rigidly Protestant Geneva, some one suggested a visit to aged Theodore Beza, Calvin's successor. Parsons, Campion and some others introduced themselves to the old man, letting him assume that they were Calvinists themselves and then, by twitting him with questions about points of difference between the various Protestant sects, quite upsetting him.

At Rheims the caravan was hospitably received by Dr. Allen. Now, however, they must separate, for obviously it would be imprudent for so many to try to get into England through the same port. Parsons and Campion, with a lay member of the Society of Jesus named Ralph Emerson,
went first to St. Omer in Flanders, where there was a Jesuit house. They drew comfort, when the Flemish fathers of the Society urged them not to enter England at such a perilous time, from recalling that St. Augustine too had set out from St. Omer a thousand years before to convert the first English to Christianity.  

In choosing disguises, Parsons decided to travel in the gold-laced buff suit and plumed hat of an army officer returning from the Low Countries. If he sped well, Campion and Emerson would follow a few days later as a jewel merchant and his servant. (The “jewels” which Campion had to offer were, of course, spiritual ones.) Parsons was incredibly lucky. He passed inspection at Dover without trouble and took a tilt boat from Dover to Gravesend, voyaging by night and reaching London in the early morning. It was June 17, 1580. Now, at the age of thirty-four, Robert Parsons was home again after six years in Italy.
CHAPTER II

THE SECRET PRESS

Father Parsons in his swashbuckling disguise met his first difficulties in London that June morning. Because he appeared with no horse and little luggage, no innkeeper would take him in. However, he soon hit upon a daring expedient. The prison of Marshalsea, where a number of Catholics were detained, was managed with the capricious discipline of the sixteenth century, now strictly, now with surprising laxity. Parsons approached boldly and asked to see Mr. Thomas Pound, one of the prisoners. While he was talking with Pound another caller arrived—George Gilbert, the wealthy young convert whom Parsons had met at Rome and persuaded to forego the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. After dining with the prisoners, Parsons and Gilbert left the Marshalsea together.¹

Gilbert became the Jesuit’s inseparable companion for the next year. Already he had organized a fraternity of gallants to provide the priests from Rheims and Rome with servants, horses, houses, money, and varied disguises, to escort them through the shires, and to introduce them to important Catholic families.

Campion and Ralph Emerson, after barely escaping arrest at Dover, reached London a few days later. Other English priests from the Continent were slipping in through various ports almost every day. By July five or six had been seized, but enough eluded capture to begin the formation of a strong Catholic party in England.

Because the gentry, with whom they would chiefly deal, summered in the country, it was decided to dispatch the missioners into the provinces. First, however, there must be a convocation near the capital to explain the instructions from Rome. To this “Synod of Southwark” came as many as possible of the newly arrived priests, of the seminarians who had been in England for several years, and of the few aging Marian priests still at liberty and still faithful to the old religion.

Parsons and Campion had been welcomed enthusiastically by Gilbert and his gallants, but at the synod there were older men less ready to recognize the authority of the young Jesuit Superior. For one thing, the historic rivalry between secular priests and religious orders still smoldered. For another, during the twenty-two years since the Catholic episcopacy had been unseated by Elizabeth, each secret priest had been to a great extent

(15)
his own bishop. Some of them lived ostensibly as stewards or tutors with wealthy families. Others did double duty as Anglican ministers in the public churches and Catholic priests in the chapels of private homes. In reply to criticism from the English abroad, they could maintain that in staying at home, if they had compromised more, they had also risked more than those who emigrated. In such men—and in the lay Catholics and seminary priests who sided with them—was the germ of stiff opposition to some of the aims and methods of the Counter-Reformation.

If Parsons' own account of the synod is to be trusted, opposition to Jesuit leadership amounted at this time to no more than a few doubts timidly raised and easily answered. His right to preside at the synod and assign missions to the seminary priests was not questioned. One point of dissension was easily answered. There were those who wanted the Jesuits to leave England at once, lest their presence incite the government to harsher measures against all Catholics. To these, Parsons replied that he was sent by the Holy Father and by his own General; there was no question of turning back now. If he and Campion were to be falsely accused of conspiracy when their mission was purely spiritual, they would find consolation in the example of Jesus, who died as a malefactor, though he was none.

But the really consequential matter discussed by the synod was attendance at Anglican services. The twelve pence fine for each unexcused absence from these services had never been rigorously collected and was of course no hardship on Catholics of the gentry; but now, when English soldiers were battling with papal troops in Ireland and England herself was in constant fear of an armada from Spain, the government was increasingly suspicious. The disadvantages of recusancy were manifest, but on this point Parsons was adamant: all priests must forbid Catholics under their cure to commune with the heretics or even enter their churches. Elizabeth must know, and the whole world must know, how many of her subjects opposed the separation from the Catholic Church.

This business concluded, Parsons sent each of the new missionaries on his way, fitted with a suitable disguise and escorted by one or more of the young gentlemen of George Gilbert's fraternity. He considered three districts to be in especial need of priests—Wales, since none of Allen's seminarians had yet penetrated that region; the northern counties, since sympathizers were in force there and the proximity to Scotland was important; and Cambridge University, a Calvinist stronghold.

Before setting out for the provinces themselves, Parsons and Campion spent a day or two together in a house at Hoxton, then a village near London. Here they were joined by Thomas Pound, the gentleman whom Parsons had visited in the Marshalsea. Somehow Pound had got leave from
prison, and he had an important suggestion to make. If either of the Jesuits was captured, almost certainly the heretics would keep him incommunicado and issue false reports to the public regarding his reasons for coming to England. Would it not be wise for each to leave with Pound a declaration of the purpose of the mission, in the form of an open letter to the heretics, to be published in the event of his capture? The plan seemed excellent, and so each of the Jesuits prepared an address to the government officials, explaining the exclusively spiritual aims of their mission and pleading for a fair hearing. Each kept the original and gave Pound a copy, Parsons, unlike Campion, sealing his.4

Parsons’ letter, the earliest of his formal writings extant today,5 challenges Protestants to an open debate on doctrine. Later one of his principal charges against Campion’s judges was that their disputations with him in the Tower had not been conducted according to rule. To the very end he dreamed of an ideal disputation, to be held when England was again under a Catholic ruler, between the most learned champions of each religion. He envisioned the eager audience, the long tables stacked with authoritative books of reference, the scrupulously impartial judges, and the resultant decision uniting all men in the acceptance of absolute Truth.6

Bidding Campion Godspeed, Parsons traveled throughout the summer with Gilbert and their servants from one Catholic estate to another. In letters to Father Agazzari, Rector of the College at Rome, he describes the manner in which he is received. Though expected, he is greeted at the door as a stranger, since in every mansion there may be servants who cannot be trusted. Then he is ushered into a secret room where an oratory has been set up. If he plans to stay but one night, the family and friends make their confessions that evening. Next morning, in proper priestly habit, he celebrates the Mass and administers the sacrament of the Eucharist. “Hearing mass,” he writes, “the people so sigh and weep that dry as I am, I am moved to tears myself.”7 Then he delivers a sermon, pronounces a benediction, and, resuming his secular clothing, moves on to the next estate. Parsons’ letters to the Rector, one suspects, were designed to be read to the English scholars.

Always there is the fear of discovery, imprisonment and torture. Elizabeth’s officers and spies are increasing their vigilance. Persecution of Catholics is now beyond all precedent, he continues, but no worse than they anticipated before leaving Rome. The public is saying that the Pope has sent the two Jesuits to begin a fight to the finish. The mission must never be abandoned, even if he and Campion perish. The reputation of the Society of Jesus is at stake, as well as the reformation of England. The danger hanging over them is for their own good, since it is the danger of incurring martyrdom, the highest of all divine gifts. Will Father Agazzari
urge the General and the Pope to send at least three or four Jesuits more—men of superior learning?

In November, writing from London, he summarizes various theories bruited about to explain the intensified persecution. It is because of the trouble in Ireland, which Protestants loudly proclaim as the test battle between the Gospel and Popery; because people fear that France, resenting the failure of negotiations for a marriage between Elizabeth and Alençon, may declare war; because Spain, strengthened by the recent acquisition of Portugal, may launch an invasion; because under Jesuit leadership the number of recusants has multiplied beyond the wildest hopes or fears.

In these early months of the mission, persecution of lay Catholics was usually limited to more rigorous collection of the recusancy fines and imprisonment of those caught harboring priests. Catholics discovered attending Mass, especially if they were powerful enough to be thought menaces to security, might be required to take the Oath of Supremacy and, if they refused, confined to their homes or to the homes of friends. Priests from the Continent, however, were technically guilty of treason under an act forbidding any one to bring into England communications from the Pope. When apprehended, they were tried as traitors, the government being anxious to avoid the appearance of religious persecution. Cruel torture was employed to wring from them confessions of conspiracy against the Queen and the nation.

Before the end of 1580 the circulation of “Campion’s Brag” had caused considerable excitement. The unsealed document that Campion had written at Hoxton proved too interesting for the impulsive Thomas Pound to keep entirely to himself. He allowed friends to peep at it. They made copies which friends in turn copied. In a short time Protestants were reading the letter and beginning to wonder, so Parsons writes to Father Agazzari, whether their own ministers were afraid to debate with the Jesuits. On the whole, he says, the results of Pound’s indiscretion have been beneficial to the Catholic cause. The fame of Campion’s “Brag” is spreading. Parsons has sent him word not to return to London, where the search is most diligent. They have met at Uxbridge and Campion has retired to Lancashire, there to prepare a book which Parsons will have published.

In the meantime Mercurian, the Father General who had given strict written orders against meddling in politics, had died. In February 1581 Claude Aquaviva was elected fifth General of the Jesuits. Several months earlier, however, Parsons had conferred in London with the Spanish ambassador, Don Bernardino de Mendoza. It was a step that would meet with the approval of many exiles on the Continent, but one by no means agreeable to all Catholics in England. Later Parsons and the pro-Spanish faction came to be more hated than Protestant persecutors by insular English
Catholics. "A certain gentleman pirate, Drake by name, of English nationality," writes Parsons to Agazzari, "has arrived here lately with a booty of more than two millions of gold, according to what the Spanish ambassador, who is most friendly to us, reported to me; this he had seized from the Spanish in the Indies by violence and guile." Parsons is overworked but happy, he goes on to say. The College must send him only men who are skilled in controversy. One learned priest is worth more than a hundred illiterate ones. Don Bernardino has promised to receive a Spanish Jesuit as a part of his entourage, but only if the man selected is of exceptional virtue and learning. The vast difference between the lukewarm Catholics under Henry VIII and the resolute confessors now is "truly a change brought about by the right hand of God on high." The prisons are crowded, he reports, with men and women of birth who refuse to attend the Anglican services. One woman has been offered freedom if she will merely walk through a church, but has firmly refused to do so. A boy of ten has come to Parsons in tears because he has walked before the bride, as is the custom, in an Anglican church wedding; he swears he'd rather be racked than do so again.

Early in January 1581 a royal proclamation was issued in which Elizabeth, pointing out that the English seminaries abroad had been erected by the Pope to seduce Englishmen to betray their country, commanded parents and guardians of children being educated on the Continent to recall them at once and forbade sending money to them. Parliament, convened a week later, passed an act declaring that all persons claiming authority to absolve subjects from their allegiance or practicing to withdraw them to the See of Rome should be held guilty of high treason and that the saying of Mass in private houses, which had been winked at for twenty years, should be permitted no longer. Furthermore, any one saying or singing a Mass should be fined five hundred marks and imprisoned for a year, and those who refused to attend the Established Church should pay twenty pounds a month for their exemption.

The worry of the Irish rebellion and the rising number of recusants at home, suspected of readiness to support any plot to depose the Queen, combined to produce tighter security measures and consequent severity against the Catholics. Although some of the informants and magistrates who put the laws into effect may have been sadists or fanatics, it is difficult to believe that Elizabeth and her councilors, who required Parliament to pass the Treason Act, had any set purpose beyond strengthening the country against invasion or rebellion. But pressed by the government on the one hand to declare openly their loyalty to the Queen and by the Jesuits on the other hand to make public their fidelity to their religion, the English Catholics were between the upper and nether millstones. The stand re-
quired by the government implied denial of papal supremacy over the 
Church, and that urged by the Jesuits implied denial of Elizabeth's right to 
the throne. For a while, *rebus sic stantibus*, the Catholic might convince 
himself that he could take a middle position, but in the event of a papal-
sanctioned invasion he must renounce either fidelity to the Pope or loyalty 
to the Queen—must choose between apostasy and treason.

Father Parsons saw that the two claims were irreconcilable so long as 
a heretic sat on the throne. In common with other zealots of the Counter-
Reformation, he underestimated the nationalism everywhere gaining 
strength and believed it still possible to restore the agreement, ideal in his 
opinion, of medieval Church and State. To accomplish this restoration 
England must have a Catholic ruler. To enthrone such a ruler by peaceful 
means would, of course, be preferable; but force and even the temporary 
aid of foreign armies would be better than letting heresy spread any 
farther. Parsons consistently overestimated the number who shared his 
viewpoint on the use of foreign armies. Slowly his definition of "Catholic" 
came to exclude all who would not refuse to attend Anglican services and 
then all who would not refuse the Oath of Allegiance, though he continued 
to distinguish between such weaklings and the outright heretics by calling 
the former "schismatics."

It was his unpleasant fate, then, devoted as he was to the Catholic 
religion, to direct a great part of his remarkable energy and learning against 
some of his coreligionists. Ironically, his first printed work, *Reasons Why 
Catholics Refuse to Go to Church*, was directed against a Catholic oppo-
nent. An anonymous tract, by some one convinced that the Jesuits were 
provoking the government to persecution, was being circulated in manu-
script copies. It advised Catholics to conform outwardly with the Estab-
lished Church. Parsons' reply, introduced with a dedicatory epistle to Eliz-
abeth and signed "John Howlet," purports to be a letter from an English 
Catholic on the Continent to a coreligionist at home and so bears a Douai 
imprint, though it was really printed secretly in England early in 1581.12 
The flattering proem to the Queen is neither honest nor hypocritical; the 
fictitious author merely takes poetic license. Catholics cannot attend the 
Protestant service, contends "John Howlet," because the service is hereti-
ical and deprives them of the benefits of the true religion. But Her Majesty 
should realize that if her Catholic subjects

... doe sticke so firmly unto theyr conscience and fayth sworn unto God in 
theyr othe of baptism, then wil they as firmly for the same conscience stik unto 
her Maiestie, if occasion should serve, in keepinge theyre secondary faythe and 
allegeance, sworne unto her Highnes as to the substitute of God.13

Parsons' tract provoked replies from Anglicans like Dr. William Fulke, 
who punned on "John Howlet, or some other Birde of the night under that
Printing and distributing the books which Parsons and Campion wrote was risky business. In this work Parsons was fortunate to have the assistance of Stephen Brinkley, a gentleman resourceful at finding places to set up a press, purchasing type and paper, and hiring printers. The Reasons was printed at East Ham, in Essex. Later the press was moved to Stonor Park at Henley, near London, where a secluded mansion in a wood was put at the disposal of the Jesuit. Even to purchase paper was likely to arouse suspicion. To deliver it secretly to homes already suspected of being Catholic was no easy matter. And always there was the fear that the mechanics hired to operate the press might become informers. Writing to the Rector of the English College, Parsons describes the precautions taken to avoid detection. Once printed, the books are divided into lots of fifty or a hundred, brought into London gradually, and then, at a time agreed on, distributed at night throughout the city by young men of Gilbert's sort. They deliver copies surreptitiously to Catholic and Protestant homes alike, so that a Catholic found with one in his possession may honestly aver that he does not know how it got into his house.

The second of Parsons' secretly-printed books was A Briefe Censure uppon two bookes written in answer to M. Edmonde Campions offer of disputacion, bearing the deceptive imprint “Douay, John Lyon, 1581.” After reading “Campion's Brag,” William Charke and Meredith Hamner, Anglican ministers, had published abusive replies. Parsons' Censure answers both at once. Hamner, he writes, has unintentionally aided Catholics, since by quoting so many of Campion's words he has saved them the labor of making copies by hand. But Charke, the more “rayling” of the two, has defamed the Society of Jesus. Furthermore, he has misrepresented the Catholic explanation of venial sin and the Catholic assertion that Scripture alone is inadequate for settling matters of faith. The Censure contains Parsons' version of Jesuit history and explains the Catholic attitude toward Scripture and toward venial sin. Both Charke and Hamner replied to the Censure. A year later, after learning of Charke's part in the examination of Campion in the Tower, Parsons issued from his press in Rouen A Defence of the Censure.

The third and last of Parsons' own works to be printed secretly in England was A Discoverie of I. Nichols, misreported a Jesuite. Here he was in a book-battle having none of the thrill of disputation with heretics. His opponent was one of the first of the seminarians from the College at Rome to turn apostate. John Nichols, who had spent several years at Oxford and served briefly as an Anglican minister, was a Welshman with some little claim to learning. Around 1578, after wandering from one English settlement on the Continent to another, he turned up in Rome, was examined
by the Inquisition, and, having announced his conversion, was sent to the English College. At the end of 1580 he returned to England as a priest, was arrested within a week, and recanted after little persuasion from the Lieutenant of the Tower and some Anglican divines. The government gave extensive publicity to this re-conversion, proclaimed that Nichols had preached before the Pope, and ordered him to deliver a sermon in the Tower so that other priests, forced to hear him, might be persuaded to imitate his recantation.

Nichols' Declaration of Recantation was printed in February 1581. His preface anticipates the Catholic view of his behavior:

So soone as these letters shall come to viewe, they will name one Father Parsons leseute a Prophet, or Southsayer, for that he at Rome in the English Seminarie in a certain exhortation made to the schollers, prophesied that one or other of that company (my selfe being then present amongst them) shoulde degenerate from their faith, and be the overthowe of that colledge: he confirmed also the profe thereof by example. beginning with Christ and his Apostles, & pyking out Judas one of the collegde of Christ that forsooke his master.16

Parsons had his reply before the public in a short time. Nichols, he affirms, was taken into the College out of pity for his destitute condition. The other scholars regarded him as a joke. Before his beggarly trek to Rheims—where Dr. Allen had fed him—and to Rome, he had served as a soldier and spy for the rebels in Flanders against the King of Spain. A gross flatterer and a fool, as anybody can see, Nichols will turn his coat any time for advancement. His claim to have preached before the Pope is a ridiculous lie.

The government published two other works by Nichols before the end of the year. The first contains a rejoinder to Parsons' Discoverie, as well as an English translation of Nichols' sermon which in its written form had been presented, not preached, to the Pope. The last work, Pilgrimage, is a catalog of those customs which shocked British visitors in Latin cities, with an added mixture of truth and slander about the English College. Extolled for several months as a prize convert from Popery, Nichols was later rejected by the Anglicans. He crossed the Channel and became Catholic again—bitterly accusing himself for his apostasy. A True Report of the late Apprehension and Imprisonment of John Nichols, Minister, and his Confession and Answere, printed at Rheims in 1583, was probably written by Father Parsons.17

The most sensational work printed by the secret press in England was Campion's Decem Rationes, explaining his plea for a chance to dispute with Protestants on religion. Composed in Lancashire, the manuscript was sent to Parsons around March 1581. He summoned Campion to Stonor Park, where Brinkley had moved his equipment, to see the book
through the press. A secular priest placed copies in the pews of St. Mary's Church, Oxford, on June 26, the evening before Commencement exercises. He stayed long enough next day to witness the excitement which disturbed the ceremony when the books were found.\textsuperscript{18}

In the meantime Parsons was extending the scope of his mission. Early in June, Morton, the Protestant Regent of Scotland, was executed, and King James fell under the influence of his charming cousin D'Aubigny, whom he created Earl of Lennox. Though Lennox posed as a Presbyterian, Catholics believed with some reason that he was a Catholic at heart and hoped consequently that James might be won to their religion. After conferring with the Spanish ambassador, Parsons—whether acting on his own or on orders from the General of the Jesuits is not certain—dispatched William Watts, a secular priest, into Scotland. He instructed him to confer if possible with James himself and, if not, with Lennox or Lord Seton. He was to seek assurance that English Catholics, should they flee to Scotland, would be granted asylum. He was to make it clear that James's chances of succeeding to the throne of England depended on the backing of the Catholics. He was to pledge James such Catholic support if James would become reconciled to the religion of his unfortunate mother.\textsuperscript{19}

Apparently the briefing of the envoy took place in the Spanish embassy in London, and Don Bernardino authorized Watts to promise that, once James was Catholic, the Pope and King Philip would support a plan to release Mary Stuart from prison and declare James heir to the English throne; if not, Catholics would oppose James's claim more stiffly than would the Protestants.\textsuperscript{20}

If Mary was to be rescued and James was to continue King of Scotland but recognized heir to the English throne, apparently the plan was to get rid of Elizabeth and declare Mary Queen of England. In sending such messages to Scotland Parsons was indeed construing loosely the instructions given by the General of the Jesuits not to meddle in affairs of state—that is, unless he had received instructions beyond the written ones he displayed at the Synod of Southwark. In a letter dated July 4, 1581, when it appeared that Mendoza would soon be ordered to leave England, Parsons urges Dr. Allen to press for Mendoza's appointment as ambassador to France. “He knows me and the other members of our Order more intimately than does anyone else.” His presence in Paris will be of great help, and with his aid “in a short time (with the help of God) we should do great things in the cause.”\textsuperscript{21}

In midsummer two other Jesuits arrived in England: Fathers Jasper Heywood (uncle of John Donne) and William Holt.

There is a ring of exultation in the long letter Parsons wrote about this time to Agazzari, probably to be read aloud to the seminarians at
“Our business goes well,” he says; “not a few buy our goods and many more admire them.” The country is afire with conflicting stories about the monstrous Jesuits, and they are the subject of countless Protestant sermons and books. Campion, who travels the provinces, is described in Parliament as “an ubiquitous Jesuit,” and Parsons, who stays around London, as “a lurking wolf.” George Gilbert is so hunted that Parsons has persuaded him to take shelter in France. Heretical books are answered almost immediately. Parsons himself has escaped arrest several times by the skin of his teeth, he reports, but others have had less luck. Thomas Pound, transferred to a stricter prison than the Marshalsea, has joked about it, but the priest sent to administer the sacraments to him has been arrested. A priest who set out from Rome with Campion and Parsons has been caught preaching in a London house and is being cruelly tortured. From prison he has written to Parsons: “I have now some little bells on my feet and legs to remind me who I am and whose I am; I have never experienced such sweet harmony.” Some priests have turned traitors and are helping the magistrates capture others. One such turncoat seized a priest who, had the apostate shadowed him a few minutes longer, would have led him to Campion and Gilbert and Parsons. The letter is radiant throughout with enthusiasm.

Then—suddenly—disaster!

Evelyn Waugh, in his life of Campion, has given the heroic story of this first Jesuit mission in England: the anxious landing at Dover and the encounter with inspectors, the joyous welcome by Catholics in London, the missionary excursions through the provinces, the “priest holes” built behind sliding panels in Catholic mansions, the arrest of Campion and his alleged encounter with Elizabeth, the disputations with Anglican ministers, the long, sickening trial with its foregone conclusion, the brutal hanging and drawing and quartering. Campion was arrested on July 17, 1581. The news reached Parsons in London, and he sent a servant to see and report the procession which brought Campion to the Tower. Then he withdrew to Stonor Park. In two weeks the mansion there was raided, the press was seized, and Brinckley and his printers were captured. Luckily Parsons was absent from the house at the time. He hurried into Sussex and took refuge in the home of William Shelley at Michelgrove. Word came that a group of lay Catholics and priests had arranged for passage into France and could take him with them. When they reached the coast, they were unable to embark because the wind had changed. To return to Michelgrove, now that it was daylight, was out of the question, and for two or three days they waited anxiously in a barn near the coast until a favorable wind came. Parsons left England sometime in August 1581. He never returned.
CHAPTER III
THE ENTERPRISE

Whether fear for his life caused Parsons to leave England immediately after the arrest of Campion is debatable. Traditionally his departure has been described by English historians as a "flight," a view held by his enemies among the secular priests and supported by the fact that for a full year, in letters to Catholics in England and to Father Agazzari in Rome, he deliberately encouraged the illusion that he was writing from London or from the northern shires. But another explanation of his departure could be that he knew his value as leader, organizer, writer. Campion and the other priests who achieved martyrdom were men of a special kind. About them Parsons wrote to the Protestant minister Charke:

Yf they had lyved they might (no dowl) have done much service in gods Churche, and hurt to your cause: yet could they never have done it so strongly as they have, and doe, and will doe by theyr deatthes: the crye wherof worketh more forcible both with God & man, than any bookes or sermons that ever they could have made.1

Jesuit historians report that after Campion's execution Parsons secured the rope with which he had been hanged and cherished it as a sacred relic the rest of his life. Parsons may have reasoned that his own duty lay in another direction. Plans were under way—and required his labors—for the complete overthrow of heresy in Britain. Perhaps he felt that to risk his life at this time would be to jeopardize the Catholic cause. Prudence, no less than daring, is a virtue, though one with little appeal to biographers. Parsons must have known that his retiring into France might be interpreted as cowardice, and his secrecy about it may have been a precaution against such an interpretation.

It is not likely that many of the priests and laymen with whom he crossed the Channel realized that he was the notorious Father Parsons. After reaching Normandy, he spent the next six or eight months as secret guest of the Archdeacon of Rouen. In letters written in October to Aqua-viva, the new General of the Jesuits,2 he explains that only his host and a few others knew about his leaving England. He gives four reasons for being in France: to consult with Dr. Allen about matters not safely put in
writing; to set up a press free from the dangers besetting one in England; to confer with the Archbishop of Glasgow, Mary Stuart's ambassador at Paris, about sending priests to Scotland; and to see if the French king will intercede with Elizabeth for the English Catholics.

This fourth endeavor was a failure. Henri III and his mother were more concerned with strengthening the French throne against Spain and the powerful Guise family than with combating heresy. The interminable negotiations for marriage between Elizabeth and Alençon were still in progress; and the French court was unwilling to imperil them by interfering between Elizabeth and her own subjects.

But the conferences with Allen and with Mary's ambassador were encouraging. Watts, the priest dispatched by Parsons to Scotland, had sent back a letter that was forwarded to Parsons in Rouen. Watts had been received by King James. He had arranged for Parsons himself to meet the Catholic Lord Seton on September 26. Receiving this letter too late to attend the rendezvous, Parsons had written to Seton, to Watts, and to Catholics in London, suggesting that they open negotiations at once with Mary. Now, in the long letter to his General, he asks approval of his activities and begs for a learned Jesuit to send into Scotland. He has already arranged with a merchant to smuggle Catholic books into that kingdom. "It is indeed the lack of books of this sort that has caused Scotland to be affected by heresy to a much greater extent than England."

Throughout the winter of 1581-82 he worked on books, which were printed at his private press in Rouen and carried across the Channel. The first, De Persecutione Anglicana Epistolae, reproduces letters from priests in the Tower, describing the instruments of torture and the constancy of the prisoners. Reprinted at Rome in 1582, with six plates illustrating the racking and hanging of the martyrs, this treatise was distributed over Europe at Gregory's command to stimulate contributions to Allen's seminary at Rheims.3

Of all Parsons' writing, the one work most nearly free from political and polemical purposes is his Christian Directorie. Written at Rouen and published early in 1582, it was recognized by Protestants and Catholics alike as a moving plea for a devout attitude toward religion. Though he has engaged in the literature of controversy, Father Parsons is repelled, he states in his preface, by such verbal warfare between men who call themselves Christians. Books of controversy are deplorably necessary, but for the most part they hinder devotion. The purpose of the Directorie is to provide Englishmen of whatever faith with a sufficient direction for matters of a spiritual and virtuous life.

The book is not strictly devotional literature. Parsons felt that there was need for an introductory work persuading men not yet resolved on
the Christian life. Hence the title under which it first appeared, *The First Booke of Christian Exercise, appertayning to resolution*. The projected second and third books never appeared. Designed, then, to prove the consolation of Christianity to men of uncertain faith, the *Directorie* appeals to the mind more than to the emotions. But often, as in the passage below, there is proof that Robert Parsons was capable of poetic eloquence.

*If we cast our eyes upon the heavens; we remaine astonished, with the miracles that we behold: but who made them? we see the skyes of exceeding huge highe-

...ness; distinguished with colours and bewtie most admirable; adorned with starres and planetes innumerable, and thes so qualified with theyr divers and
different and unequal motions, as albeit they never move or goe together; yet
doe they never gyve lett or hinderance th'one to th'other, nor change there
course out of order or season....

Who is able to declare the reason of thes heavens, or who can make cease or
sleepe the uniforme course of theyr motion, saith God to Job? As who would
say, that because no man or mortal creature can doe this; therefore may we
imagine of what power and perfection their maker is. Which king David had
donne when he pronounced, ... The heavens declare the glorie of God, and the
firmament doth preache the worltes of his handes unto us.

*If we pull downe our eyes from heaven, to earth; we behold the same of an
infinite bignesse, distinguished with hills and dales, woods & pastures, covered
with all varieties of grasse, herbes, flowers and leaves; moistened with rivers,
inhabited by creatures of innumerable kindes and qualities; incrusted with in-
estimable and endless treasures: and yet it self standing, or hanging rather with
all this weighte and poise, in the midst of the ayer, as a little balle without
prope or pillar. At whiche devise and most wonderful miracle, God hym self,
as it were, glorying, said unto Job. Where were thou, when I layed the founda-
tions of th'earth. Tell me if thou have understanding, who measured it out, or
drew his lyne upon the same? Wherupon are fastened the pillars of his foun-
dation, or who layed the first corner stone therof?*

In his third book published at Rouen, *A Defence of the Censure*, Parsons resumed his battle with Hanmer and Charke, who had badgered Campion in the Tower and even at the scaffold.

Writing, however, did not prevent his directing, *in absentia*, the mis-
sion in England. He had appointed Father Jasper Heywood to act as Superior until his return, and from Heywood he received regular reports of the seminary priests who continued to pour into England. Frequently Parsons complained that the Rector in Rome was sending many inade-
quate or unworthy priests. Indeed, Father Agazzari had a way of solving
disciplinary problems at the College by hastily ordaining the fractious scholars and dispatching them as missionaries to England. Such malcon-
tents, if caught, were easily persuaded to apostatize. Others were faithful
enough but lacked the shrewdness to evade arrest. Though he admired
their courage, Parsons had no patience with simplemindedness. One must
deal cunningly with wolves, he said.
In a letter to Agazzari dated "London, 1 March 1582" (but actually written in France) there is a note of irritation in Parsons' report of the arrest of a priest named Bishop. The man had been unable to say anything evasive when asked if he was a priest. "Bishop was warned about this at the time when he was about to go on board; but he seemed so absorbed in meditating on heavenly things as to be quite oblivious of human affairs." Parsons could not foresee that in the guileless devotion of such priests, not in political cunning, lay the enduring strength of English Catholicism. He was destined to meet William Bishop in Rome sixteen years later and to underestimate him a second time, to his own sorrow.

If he had ever felt that the restoration of the Church in England could be accomplished by purely spiritual means, he was now convinced that only revolution and armies from abroad could effect it. He was now engaged in the first of a series of invasion projects to which he consecrated himself for the next ten years. In England the Spanish ambassador, Mendoza, and the Catholic party continued to receive and dispatch to Parsons encouraging reports from Watts in Scotland. Before the end of 1581 Father William Holt, one of the only two Jesuits in England, was also sent to Scotland. He returned in January to London and gave Mendoza the details of the new plot. Lennox, Seton and others were ready for action. With two thousand foreign troops they could subdue the heretics in Scotland and stave off any force England might send across the border. They wanted Mary Stuart, whose liberation was part of the plan, to write to Gregory XIII and Philip II asking for assistance.

Mendoza sent word of the plan to Philip and Mary; and Father Holt, before returning to Scotland, wrote to Dr. Allen about it. Parsons, busy with his press at Rouen, received letters from both Allen and Mendoza, urging him to hurry to Scotland. The ambassador complained that "it was no time to be writing books when it was a question of the salvation of kingdoms." About this time, however, the Scottish Jesuit Creighton joined Parsons at Rouen; and after the two of them had consulted with the Duc de Guise, Mary Stuart's cousin, who was involved in the plot, it was decided that Creighton, rather than Parsons, should go to confer with Lennox and Seton. The French king, friendly to Elizabeth and suspicious of both Philip II and the Guise family, was not aware of the enterprise.

Several conferences were held in Paris in April and May by Guise, the Archbishop of Glasgow, the papal Nuncio, the Spanish ambassador, the Jesuit Provincial, Dr. Allen, Father Parsons, and Father Creighton, who had by then returned from Scotland. Parsons drew up a memorandum to Gregory XIII and Philip II, outlining the planned invasion and stressing the need for haste. It was decided that Parsons should go to Spain and Creighton to Rome to argue the case as forcibly as possible. The two
envoy set out at the end of May, Parsons travelling under the pseudonym of Ricardo Melino.

Our only aim in this scheme [begins Parsons’ memorandum] is the restoration of the Catholic faith in the two kingdoms of England and Scotland, the liberation of the Queen of Scotland from prison, the preservation of the young King in body and soul from the snares of the heretics and from being confirmed in heresy, the liberation of the Catholics who are distressed and persecuted for their faith in England and elsewhere, and, finally, the restoration of God’s Church in those regions, and quietude in the other neighboring countries which have been troubled now for so many years by the malice of those heretics. It seems that God our Lord has now given us a suitable opportunity to attain this purpose...\(^9\)

There follow persuasive reasons for believing that immediate action will bring an easy victory. They will subdue Scotland first and then march on England, where the Catholics and many others will rise to support them. In Scotland Lennox and Seton have promised that James will obey any command issued by his mother. There will be practically no resistance, since most of the Scots, disgusted with their heretical pseudo-priests, will welcome their suppression. In England two-thirds of the people are Catholics and more disaffected than ever before. There has never been a ruler so universally hated as Elizabeth, and even many of the heretics will welcome her overthrow. Approximately a month should suffice to complete the conquest.

Specifically the needs are these: six or eight thousand infantry troops, arms to equip an additional three thousand in England, and pay for the army for six months. The troops should muster in Spain, as if designed for the wars in the Low Countries, and then land on the west coast of Scotland in late September, after the crops have been harvested. The Pope and the Spanish king must appoint papal legates and a Council of State for the new governments of England and Scotland. The Pope should appoint a Bishop of Durham, who will slip into Scotland and wait in a private house until the invasion forces arrive. (Parsons had previously handed the nuncio at Paris a memorandum recommending Dr. Allen’s appointment to this see.) A proclamation should be prepared explaining to the Scots that the purpose of the landing is to support James’s title to the English throne. A second proclamation, to be published only when the army is ready to enter England, should announce that it has come to put into effect the Bull of Excommunication. The Pope should issue a new bull granting plenary indulgence to all who rise in the Catholic cause and excommunicating all who try to defend Elizabeth. Finally, there must be books explaining the excommunication and condemning Elizabeth. Some of these are already written, and others will be prepared at once.

The memorial is typical of Robert Parsons. The sanguine overrating of
advantages and underrating of obstacles, the assertion that his own views are those of all English Catholics, and especially the decision to employ subterfuge and for a while use the help of the heretics are all characteristic.

Philip, however, was not one to be swept off his feet by zealous optimism. Parsons arrived in Lisbon, where the King was holding court, on June 15, 1582. Philip wanted facts and figures rather than opinions and wishful conjectures. Mendoza’s letters gave him a very different estimate of Catholic strength in England from that in Parsons’ memorial. In the meantime communications from Rome indicated that Gregory, while heartily endorsing “the Enterprise,” expected Spain to furnish all the troops and bear most of the expense. When Parsons assured the King and his advisors that the Pope would provide more assistance than he first promised, they tartly questioned his authority to say so. The zealot was facing practical statesmen. His few letters written from Spain show that Parsons was in alternate moods of hope and despair.10 Finally word came of the Raid of Ruthven. On August 22 a party of Protestant nobles had seized King James while he was out hunting, and Lennox had fled to Dumbarton. The magnificent plot was nipped in the bud.

Parsons set out on his return to France, stopping in Madrid in October to discuss with the papal nuncio there his conference in Lisbon. By the time he reached Bilbao he was seriously ill, and it was the end of May 1583 before he got back to Paris. The year in Spain had not been a complete failure. Philip had assigned a pension of two thousand crowns to Allen’s seminary, had promised to recommend Allen’s promotion to the cardinalate, and had shown interest in a second invasion project.

Though the death of Lennox in May 1583 eliminated a valuable ally, both Mary Stuart from England and Lord Seton from Scotland sent messages urging Guise to go forward with the Enterprise. In July the seventeen-year-old King James escaped from his Protestant captors, and in August he wrote Guise that when the latter landed his forces in England he would himself lead an army to help them establish his mother as Queen of England. The new plan was for Guise and his brother, the Duc de Mayenne, to land simultaneously at different points on the English coast. They would need papal sanction and a fleet from Spain to convey them. Another memorial was addressed to the Pope and to Philip, and Father Parsons was chosen to take it to Rome. Two gentlemen, Thomas Morgan and Charles Paget, brother to Lord Paget, were now included in the conspiracy, and Paget returned to England to gather information about suitable landing places.

For Parsons to appear in Rome meant ending a two year pretense. The Pope and General Aquaviva, of course, knew about his recent activities, but Father Agazzari and his scholars at the English College had been kept
in the dark and, because Parsons continued to date his letters from London, naturally believed that he was still there. The truth—or part of it—must be explained before Parsons appeared in Rome. On August 24, 1583, therefore, he writes from Paris to Agazzari. The Rector has probably heard, he begins, that for some months Parsons has been in France. "Yet I am planning and dealing with English matters every day; and I ask and anticipate nothing more than, as soon as may be, to be allowed to return to England by the indulgence of those whose wishes and judgment or whose orders keep me here." There are now twice as many Catholics in England as there were a year ago. The government is altering its policy. Priests are locked up when caught, but no longer tortured or executed. In fact, the heretics are not eager for more prisoners and are embarrassed when a priest frankly admits his profession and must be arrested.11

Naturally the long letter says nothing about Parsons' journey into Spain. Such matters were not the business of the Rector or of the young Englishmen under his tutelage. Ostensibly, then, Parsons came to discuss the spiritual mission in England. In fact, the matter of the Enterprise was much more urgent. Here he was successful: Gregory gave him two breves considered necessary for the invasion. One renewed the excommunication and deposition of Elizabeth. The other appointed Allen as Bishop of Durham. Neither was ever published. The new scheme, like that of the previous year, was abandoned because the King of Spain delayed to act.

George Gilbert, now residing at the College, was seriously ill during Parsons' brief sojourn there. Months earlier, the Jesuit had sent him to Rome with letters of recommendation to the Pope. At Gilbert's expense the walls of the College had been decorated with scenes of the martyrdom of priests in the home country. Now Parsons and Gilbert, who regarded each other as father and son, said their last farewells. Soon after his return to Paris, Parsons learned of Gilbert's death.12

Parsons was back in Paris on October 19, 1583. In November the magistrates in London arrested young Francis Throgmorton, whose frequent visits to the Spanish embassy had put him under suspicion. In his rooms were found lists of the Catholics in the plot, plans of harbors sketched by Charles Paget as suitable for landing foreign forces, treatises defending Mary's title to the throne, and libels against Elizabeth. After cruel torture, Throgmorton confessed. Though his confession was not immediately made public, his arrest alone caused a panic among Catholics. Suspected persons everywhere were either arrested or placed under surveillance. Lord Paget escaped to France, but the Earls of Arundel and Northumberland, who had arranged the landing places for Guise, were sent to the Tower.13 In January 1584 Mendoza was summoned before the Privy Council, harshly rated for his part in the conspiracy, and
ordered to leave England. In the same year Alençon died, leaving the Huguenot king, Henri of Navarre, heir presumptive to the French throne, whereupon the Duc de Guise, leader of the Sainte Ligue, became more interested in the French succession than in Anglo-Scottish matters. James, despairing of help from the Continent and probably suspicious of his mother's motives, then began negotiations with Elizabeth which eventually terminated in an alliance between their countries. Plans for the Spanish invasion continued, but would henceforth have to be on the grand scale of open war between Spain and England.

Before the end of 1583 Parsons had made a brief trip to Flanders to advise the Prince of Parma about forming a separate regiment of English Catholics in his army. Philip had instructed Parma to treat only with Allen or Parsons. Throughout 1584 the Jesuit continued to correspond with Mary Stuart and Parma about the Enterprise, but he spent most of his time combating the prejudice rising everywhere against the Society of Jesus.

Since Parsons' hasty retreat across the Channel, Jasper Heywood (uncle of John Donne) had been acting Superior of the Jesuit mission. Except for two or three laymen who had been received into the Society, now that Father Holt was back in Scotland, Heywood was the only Jesuit in England. His exact authority over the many secular priests had never been determined, but to him it was equivalent to that of a bishop. During the last two years Heywood's arrogance had turned many priests against the Society. In Rome, Parsons had conferred with the General about Heywood's unpopularity and had been advised to summon the troublemaker to Rouen, presumably for a conference, but really to remove him permanently from the mission. This was one of the first steps he took after his return to France. Heywood tried to obey his summons, but the ship on which he embarked was forced back to England by contrary winds, and he was taken prisoner around Christmas 1583. To make matters worse, Parsons learned that Mendoza had revealed details of the Enterprise to Heywood. It was feared that the Jesuit might be racked. If one of the Society of Jesus should break down under torture, the harm would be considerable. But Heywood's age and his influential family connections in England saved him from the rack.14 Two years later, the government practicing a new policy with priests, Heywood and about seventy secular priests were removed from their prisons, dumped upon the coast of Normandy, and sternly admonished never to return to England.

Besides the Catholics in England alienated from the Society, a stronger faction was forming among the exiles in Flanders and France. Charles Paget and Thomas Morgan, devoted to Mary Stuart, suspected their Spanish confederates of having little interest in Mary's welfare and objected to the
major roles which Allen and Parsons were playing in the plans. It was absurd, they contended, for gentlemen to take orders from priests. Catholics like Lord Paget, Charles’s brother who fled to the Continent after Throckmorton’s arrest, soon allied themselves with the anti-Jesuits. All Catholics had to work together against Elizabeth, but mutual suspicions were mounting.

Still a third anti-Jesuit faction had sprung up in the College at Rome, where some of the seminarians resented discipline imposed by Father Agazzari. Many who left England to become Catholic priests were past their first youth and had held posts of responsibility at home. Bent on teaching them complete submission to superiors, the Jesuits subjected these men of middle age to a rigorous training designed for youths. Humiliating punishments were inflicted when a rule was broken. Furthermore, the scholars of unusual ability were pressed to join the Society, which was represented as a higher vocation than the secular priesthood, and such students were treated as favorites. Individuals refusing to submit to the discipline were dismissed from the College or hurriedly ordained and packed off to England. If they disobeyed orders and remained in Italy, they allied themselves with Dr. Clenock, former Rector of the College, and the anti-Jesuit Welsh. If they went to France or Flanders, they joined the faction headed by the Pagets and Morgan. If they returned to England, as most of them did, they strengthened the ranks of the secular priests there already opposed to the Jesuits.

By strange coincidence, one of the most troublesome was Christopher Bagshaw, who had been instrumental in Parsons’ expulsion from Balliol ten years before. In 1582 Bagshaw had become a Catholic and joined the seminary at Rheims, being ordained a priest the next year. After his transfer to Rome, Agazzari found him difficult to manage. Much of Parsons’ correspondence with Agazzari in 1584 deals with troubles at the College and with Bagshaw’s part in them. By May 1585 the learned malcontent was back in England and a prisoner in the Tower. En route to the home country he had received a doctorate in theology from the University of Padua.

Recognition of this mounting opposition induced the Pope and the General to decide early in 1584 to send no more Jesuits to England. But before this change of plans Aquaviva had ordered William Weston to report to Parsons in France. Weston arrived in Paris in June, and Parsons, impressed with the man, wrote to Rome for permission to send him to England and to delay the recall of Father Holt from Scotland, which Aquaviva had suggested, at least until other Jesuits could be sent there. In England the tempest has calmed down, he explains, and it is rumored that no more priests will be put to death. In four years only two Jesuits
RICE UNIVERSITY STUDIES

(Campion and Heywood) have been captured, and Weston is eager to go. As for Scotland,

... let your Paternity be assured of this, that if we were able to win this young King to God it would be the greatest disaster for heresy that ever happened, because he is zealous in all that he undertakes, diligent, courageous, and resolute, and therefore we ought not to shrink from offering many lives to God in order to purchase such a treasure for the Church.15

Aquaviva yielded to both requests. In September William Weston set out, accompanied by the same brave Ralph Emerson who had been companion to Campion. Ralph was captured, along with a batch of contraband books, a few days after reaching London. He remained in prison until the accession of James in 1603. Weston, more successful, eluded capture for two years and won notoriety as an exorcisor of evil spirits. Later, during his imprisonment at Wisbeach castle, he precipitated the violent conflict between Jesuits and secular priests which clouded the last years of Robert Parsons' life.

Of the many letters which Parsons is known to have written to the Queen of Scots, only two are extant and these not in his own hand. The Jesuit wrote in private code. These two letters were intercepted by Sir Francis Walsingham and deciphered by his agent, Phelipps. They survive among the State Papers in the handwriting of Phelipps. In the first, written at Rouen on October 10. 1554, Parsons informs Mary that he and Dr. Allen had come almost to despair of temporal help when unexpectedly instructions came from Spain to discuss with the Prince of Parma in the Netherlands plans for the Enterprise. Parma is now their only hope. If he urges the invasion, Philip may be persuaded to act. But "every man nowadays whatsoever he pretend seeketh his own interest," and the surest way of winning Parma's support will be for Mary to hint that she might marry him. Parsons has talked cautiously with Parma about the matter, he adds, and can assure the Queen that the marriage interests him very much. It may be advisable, he adds, for Mary to escape prison and come to France, since her life will be in danger during the first hours of the invasion. If she likes this suggestion, in her reply she is to designate the time she considers most suitable for the escape. Her friends can then have trusty fellows waiting nearby and a vessel at the coast. The second letter was written several months later and informs Mary that Parsons still has hopes that good news is about to break.16

In August 1585, after another sojourn of several months with Parma, Parsons joined Dr. Allen at Rheims and traveled with him to Rome, where the Jesuit remained until after the defeat of the Armada in 1588 and Allen until his death in 1594. Ostensibly Allen went to discuss the financial difficulties of the seminary at Rheims and Parsons to devote himself
the prolonged spiritual exercises which led in 1587 to his taking the final vows in the Society and becoming a *professed* Jesuit.

From Rome Parsons continued to direct the mission of Jesuits to England. In May 1586 he sent out two more fathers and accompanied them on the first stage of their journey from Rome. One of these men, reminiscent of Campion in many ways, was Robert Southwell, the poet whose “Burning Babe” ranks high in English devotional verse. The other, a shrewd and prudent administrator like Parsons, was Henry Garnet, who eluded capture for twenty years, but was seized and executed in 1606 for his implication in the Gunpowder Plot.

Unquestionably the main interest of Dr. Allen and Father Parsons between 1585 and 1589 was in advancing plans for the Enterprise. Gregory XIII died in 1585 and Sixtus V, his successor, was jealous of Spanish power and suspicious of the motives inducing Philip to invade England. Allen and Parsons, on the contrary, now became, in the eyes of their enemies, completely “hispianiolated.” Convinced that only Spanish power could save England from heresy, they gradually abandoned their efforts to convert James of Scotland to Catholicism, lost interest in Mary Stuart even before her execution, and gave full support to Philip II’s nebulous claim to the throne of England.

By early 1587, just before making his final vows in the Society of Jesus, Robert Parsons, now forty years old, had embarked upon a course of action apparently violating one of the chief professions of his Order. In March, before the news of Mary’s execution had reached Rome, he handed Olivarez, the Spanish ambassador, a memorandum in which he lists several reasons why King Philip should *not* discuss with Sixtus V his interest in the English crown until after the success of the Armada: the Pope and the Cardinals are incapable of secrecy and the success of the Enterprise will be jeopardized if he does. The Pope, if advised of Philip’s temporal interests in the invasion, will be less generous with financial support. The King of France, the Duc de Guise, the Queen of Scots, the Doge of Venice, and the English and Scottish Catholics will be less ready to cooperate. The heretics will use His Majesty’s claim to the throne as an argument denying the spiritual aims of the expedition. On the other hand, Parsons suggests, if it is announced that the sole purpose of the invasion is to restore the true faith and avenge the martyrs, no Catholic will dare oppose it. The Pope will urge the French king to support it. Allen and others can conscientiously persuade the English Catholics that the only thing aimed at is the reformation of religion. And since the Queen of Scots will probably be killed by the heretics before she can be liberated, nobody will oppose Philip’s claim.

Another memorial to Philip, written a few days later, after Mary’s death has been reported, announces that in considering his claim to the English
throne Parsons and Allen have met with no difficulties "which gave us scruples of conscience or which ought to give them to His Majesty." They have studied all English histories and genealogies available in Rome. The King of Scotland's claim is dismissed as invalid. The Portuguese royal family had a claim derived from a daughter of John of Gaunt, and now that Philip rules Portugal, he inherits this title. Furthermore, both Mary Tudor and Mary Stuart left wills naming Philip as heir to their claims. Despite all this, however, Allen and Parsons advise the King not to publish his intentions until after the invasion.

These memoranda indicate that their ambition for the conversion of England had carried Allen and Parsons to the extreme position of being willing to wink at deceiving the Pope. Sixtus was personally jealous of Philip's power and for a time even entertained the wild hope that Elizabeth herself might yet be converted. To connive at the further deception of a man—even a pope—already so self-deceived must have been justified in the minds of Dr. Allen and Father Parsons by their conviction that the restoration of England to the Church outweighed every other consideration. Yet to the Jesuit, whose Society boasted especial obedience to the Pope, the decision cannot have been an easy one.

Certainly Father Creighton, the Scottish Jesuit, knew nothing about these conferences with Olivarez. He and others still hoped to convert James VI and took it for granted that the invasion had as one of its purposes securing James's title to the English succession. Parsons and Allen, according to a letter from Olivarez to Philip written on July 10, 1587, ...

... have thought it better for the present not to undeceive them with regard to this fancy... but they go on temporizing with them; and at the same time, knowing how much better his Majesty's rule will suit the English and also the inconveniences of being ruled by the Scotch, they employ themselves of their own movement in writing books in proof of this to be scattered through England when God shall cause the moment to arrive.¹⁹

In later years Robert Parsons regarded his part in the elevation of Dr. Allen to the cardinalate as one of his most gratifying accomplishments. The King of Spain had his own reasons for putting Allen under obligation to him. An English cardinal sympathetic to Spain would be useful in supporting his claim to the English throne. For several years Olivarez importuned with the reluctant Pope for Allen's election. After Mary Stuart's death he pointed out that an English cardinal could fill the place Mary had held for twenty years as the champion of the English Catholics. Olivarez finally forced the promotion through on August 7, 1587, by informing the Pope that the Armada was ready to sail and showing him faked instructions which he said Philip, believing the promotion had already been effected, had sent to the new Cardinal.²⁰ But there was still
some truth in Allen’s own statement: “Next under Heaven Father Parsons made me Cardinal.”

Parma’s army in the Netherlands was ready in 1587 to coordinate with the Armada, but the damage inflicted by Drake’s raids on the Spanish harbors delayed the expedition another year. In February 1588 Parsons dispatched two Jesuits, William Holt (who had been so active in Scotland) and Joseph Cresswell, to join Parma. All Europe was expecting daily to hear that the Spanish fleet had put to sea, and Parsons believed that probably the two missionaries would arrive in Flanders after the invasion of England had already been accomplished. “May God our Lord grant that they find you in England,” he writes in a letter recommending Holt and Cresswell to Parma; “our Cardinal and I shall hope to follow them soon.” The written instructions given the two Jesuits were to behave themselves modestly in the new Catholic England and devote themselves strictly to spiritual affairs. What verbal instructions they had will never be known.

To give religious sanction to the Armada, Sixtus—despite his distrust of Philip—authorized the publication of an English broadside threatening the excommunication of all who opposed the Spanish forces. At the same time a pastoral Admonition from Cardinal Allen to the people of England was printed in Flanders to be distributed at the landing of Parma’s troops. Tierney summarizes this Admonition:

This publication, the most offensive, perhaps, of the many offensive libels sent forth by the party to which Allen had attached himself, ... in a tone of the most scurrilous invective, denounced the character and conduct of the queen; portrayed her as the offspring of adultery and incest, a heretic and the maintainer of heretics, a persecutor of God's church, a lascivious tyrant, and an unholy perjurer; and concluded by calling upon all persons ... to rise against a woman odious alike to God and man, to join the liberating army upon its landing, and thus to free themselves from the disgrace of having “suffered such a creature, almost thirtie yeares together, to reign both over their bodies and soules, to the extinguishing not only of religion, but of all chaste livinge and honesty.”

When Holt departed for Flanders in 1588, Robert Parsons succeeded him as Rector pro tem of the College in Rome, though naturally he expected to set out soon to help in the reconstruction of a Catholic England.

The Armada sailed from Spain in May. For long anxious months Rome awaited an authentic report of the outcome, receiving in the meantime alternate rumors of glorious victory and heartbreaking defeat. When finally the truth was known, Sixtus V, according to letters from the Spanish ambassador, hinted that he had never expected the Spaniards to succeed and began to treat Cardinal Allen with the greatest scorn.
CHAPTER IV

THE DOCTRINE OF POPULAR SOVEREIGNTY

In November 1588, less than a month after learning of the Armada's defeat, Robert Parsons was on his way back to Spain, where he remained for the next eight years.

The Spanish Dominicans were envious of the growing power of the Jesuits. The Inquisition, dominated by Dominicans, was also hostile. After certain Jesuits accused of heresy and immorality had been hastily sent out of Spain by their superiors to escape examination by the Inquisition, four others, including the Provincial of Castile, had been imprisoned for two years and a law was passed forbidding any Jesuit to leave the country without consent of the Inquisition. There were troubles also within the Society of Jesus. Spanish members resenting the orders that came from their Italian Father General were urging a quasi-independence for the Spanish provinces and submitting to Philip and the Inquisition complaints against the control from Rome. All records of the Society were seized for examination; and Philip obtained papal approval for an episcopal visitation of all Jesuit houses in Spain. General Aquaviva was able to delay this visitation by exposing the Bishop of Cartegena, the appointed Visitor, as the father of three illegitimate children. But both the King and the Pope were still resolved on an investigation, which Aquaviva felt would discredit the Society in the eyes of the world.

To appease the King, the Inquisition, and the rebellious Spanish Jesuits, the General sent as his envoy Father José de Acosta, a Spaniard recently returned to Europe after seventeen years in Peru. Father Parsons, who was going to Spain on other business, traveled with De Acosta. Contrary to their plans, Philip gave the first audience to Parsons, who after a while tactfully directed discussion to the troubles of the Spanish Jesuits. In England, France, Belgium and Italy, he explained, he had observed envy of Spanish power. Only the Jesuits rose above such national rivalries and proclaimed Philip as the world's foremost defender of the Catholic faith. If Philip should now remove the Spanish provinces of the Society from Aquaviva's control, His Majesty's credit with Jesuits of other nationalities—who were very influential with the lay Catholics—would probably suffer.
Philip listened courteously and then received Father De Acosta, who presented Aquaviva's request that Jesuits, rather than outsiders, conduct the proposed visitation. A few days later this request was granted, and the Society was spared the humiliation of an episcopal visitation. It is not improbable, then, that Robert Parsons the Englishman contributed to this victory for the Society in Spain.

But these matters were dwarfed, in his mind, by his deep concern for the restoration of England to the Catholic Church. Apprehensive that the defeat of 1588 might permanently discourage the King, he set about promoting interest in a second invasion attempt. Philip's procrastination was not the only handicap against which Parsons worked. Among English Catholics themselves opposition to a Spanish invasion was outspoken. As the loyalty of her Catholic subjects to Elizabeth had shown in 1588, there had always been many who, despite the persecution, utterly rejected the idea of rebellion supported by foreign troops. Others, including many of the émigrés, who might have risen to support Mary Stuart, were against an invasion now that Philip's personal ambition for the English crown was suspected. Both in England and on the Continent many Catholics favored the King of Scotland because his title seemed indisputable and because to them the prospect of a Scottish monarch, though a Protestant, was preferable to that of a Catholic who was Spanish. They hoped that James might yet be converted and, if not, that he would at least grant them a freedom of worship when he ascended the English throne.

To Parsons, such Catholics must have seemed contemptibly lukewarm in religion. As he saw it, the restoration must be complete. Catholicism must be recognized in England as the one true faith and other creeds must be stamped out entirely. If Philip was the only Catholic pretender strong enough to enforce his claim, then English Catholics owed it to their religion to support him.

Yet for a while Parsons must proceed with caution. Since the hispanophobia was infesting the seminaries in Rheims and Rome, one way of combating it would be to establish seminaries in Spain, where English priests could be trained in loyalty to a Spanish king. Throughout 1589 Parsons was busy seeking patrons to endow such a seminary, renting buildings, receiving scholars transferred from Rheims, drawing up rules, and appointing a Spanish Jesuit as Rector. This first and most successful of the Spanish seminaries for English priests was established at Valladolid before the end of the year. Among the benefactors who made it possible were the Duchess of Feria, born Jane Dormer, an Englishwoman; old Sir Francis Englefield, a member of Mary Tudor's Privy Council who had fled from England at Elizabeth's accession; and many Spanish noblemen.

Within three years Parsons had founded similar colleges at Seville and
Madrid. Then, in 1592 or 1593 he established at St. Omer, in the Spanish Netherlands, a school of another sort—not for priests, but for sons of English Catholic families. The school at St. Omer continued until the French Revolution brought it to an end and its Jesuit teachers moved to Lancashire to establish the boys' school of Stonyhurst, which still flourishes.

On the seas English and Spanish ships continued the war, and in the Low Countries English armies were still aiding the Dutch in their struggle for independence from Spain. In the early summer of 1589 an expedition under Drake and Norris captured and burned Corunna and then landed in force near Lisbon, dealing a serious blow to Spanish pride. In August, after the assassination of Henri III, the Huguenot king, Henri of Navarre, declared himself King of France. Guise had been assassinated a year before, but his brother, the Duc de Mayenne, now headed the Sainte Ligue. Before the end of the year Elizabeth had sent troops to Dieppe and by 1591 both England and Spain had forces in Brittany, Elizabeth supporting Navarre and Philip aiding the Ligue against him.

Much of the information available about Robert Parsons during his eight years in Spain is of dubious reliability, coming from the reports of English government informers and from the testimony of seminary priests who were anti-Jesuit and anti-Spanish. Time and again during these years the names of Father Parsons, Father Holt, and Sir William Stanley appear in the State Papers as the men most active in inciting Philip to send another armada. Stanley, who had gone to Flanders with Leicester in 1586 and had held the Dutch city of Deventer, had voluntarily surrendered the fortress to Parma in 1587 and entered the service of the King of Spain. He now commanded a regiment of English and Irish fighting in Parma's army. He and Holt, the Jesuit whom Parsons had sent from Rome in 1588, headed what came to be known as the "Jesuit" or "Spanish" party of English exiles. Opposed to this party was a much larger number of refugees, with Morgan, Paget, and the Earl of Westmoreland as their chief spokesmen, who favored James of Scotland as heir to the English throne. This "Scottish" or "French" party gained strength in Rome when Navarre (now Henri IV) was reconciled with the Pope and could crush the Sainte Ligue. From Spain Father Parsons and Sir Francis Englefield watched with alarm the increase of the "Scottish" party and directed every effort to suppress it. Since spies kept Elizabeth's Privy Council promptly informed of every family quarrel among the Papists, the State Papers of the 1590's form an indispensable chapter in the story of Robert Parsons.

In a memorandum dated February 1591 an informer advises the Council that Cardinal Allen sent Parsons to Spain to spur Philip to form a second armada and that Parsons has founded a seminary there from which
priests, claiming to be escaped prisoners of war and galley slaves, come into England. The same report states that the new Pope, Gregory XIV, being Milanese, is more likely than his anti-Spanish predecessor, Sixtus, to favor the invasion of England.  

The government was eager for any information about Parsons. Two priests from Valladolid, John Cecil, and John Fixer, apprehended in May and repeatedly cross-examined by Lord Treasurer Burleigh and his son, Sir Robert Cecil, report that they and six others had left Spain about the same time, Parsons having secured permission from Philip “to send over some priests as first-fruits of the new seminary.” He had instructed them to tell English Catholics that the Spanish invasion would be solely to rescue them from persecution. Furthermore, they were to recruit pilots familiar with English harbors and send them to Spain. The prisoners estimate that there are about three hundred secular priests at liberty in England now, but only four Jesuits: Southwell, Garnet, Curry and one other. Father Weston is imprisoned at Wisbeach castle. Cecil and Fixer have been instructed, they say, to confer with Jesuits but with no others about winning the Earl of Derby and Lord Strange to the cause.

If the records of their examination can be trusted, these priests are resolute Catholics, determined not to apostatize. True Catholics, they argue, will never give up their religion. Persecution only strengthens them, and the government will only please Father Parsons if it executes any more priests, for “Parsons gapes after some windfall to give credit to his new seminary.” They propose, if Burleigh will enable them to travel about England, to visit their coreligionists and encourage them to oppose Cardinal Allen and Father Parsons and to demand the dissolution of the seminaries in Spain.

Among the State Papers for June and July 1591 are ten or twelve letters from John Cecil, under his alias of “Snowden,” to the Lord Treasurer and Sir Robert. The priest promises to report those who favor a Spanish invasion but demands assurance that loyal Catholics will not be molested for giving him hospitality. He offers to go back and forth across the Channel promoting anti-Spanish sentiment among the émigrés and suggests how the English government might let Philip know that Parsons is deceiving him about the number of Catholics who favor an invasion—“making Philip believe that chalk is cheese.” John Cecil returned to Spain several times and for a while retained Parsons’ trust. A few years later he was a leader of the secular priests in England who published scurrilous libels against Parsons during the Archpriest controversy.

Information that another fleet was assembling at Corunna convinced the Privy Council that a second armada was imminent. In November, then, a proclamation was published “for the remedy of the treasons which,
under pretext of religion, have been plotted by seminaries and Jesuits, who have been sent secretly into the kingdom.” In this edict Elizabeth accuses Philip of having seated one of his subjects (Gregory XIV) on the papal throne, of encouraging him to war against Henri IV of France, and of having designs against her own dominions. She declares that Philip has been persuaded by “Parsons, his confessor” and the Pope by Allen that if they invade England thousands of her subjects will rise to assist their armies. Captured spies have reported that Philip intends to invade in 1592, she states. Then, mentioning the disguises used by the priests, the Queen admonishes all true subjects to be thorough in examining the loyalty of persons about them.12

It was in reply to this edict that in 1592 Robert Parsons published at Madrid, under the pen name “Andreas Philopater,” his Elizabethae Angliae Regnae Haeresim, a fervent defense of the English seminaries and the mission priests. Both Julius Caesar and Henry VII failed in their first attempts on England, he says, God often delaying the victory of the faithful; but they later mastered the country. The children of Israel, in the war God ordered them to fight against the tribe of Benjamin, were twice beaten before they gained a victory:

Then the devouring flames made desolate all the towns and villages of Benjamin—men and cattle were slain by the edge of the sword.... Therefore, let the English ponder on these things and not be too much elated because their chastisement is delayed.13

Dismissing Elizabeth’s assertion that Parsons is Philip’s confessor, the fictitious “Philopater” (Pope-lover?) defends the maligned English priests as heroic youths whose zeal has led them to sacrifice fame, fortune, and often life itself for the salvation of souls. In the seminaries at Rheims, Rome and Valladolid, he asserts, are more flowers of noble families than in all the clergy of the Anglican Church. Parsons’ tone is still confident: “Learn this, Elizabeth, that God is, and that He is the same who has chastised other kings, queens, monarchs, and emperors before thee and far more powerful than thou art.”14 A brilliant if desperate expression of Parsons’ firm convictions, the Elizabethae Angliae Regnae Haeresim only added to the miseries of the English Catholics; and when a new law against recusants was passed in 1593, many attributed it to the impassioned book of the English Jesuit. Never again during Elizabeth’s lifetime did Father Parsons allow himself to indulge in such candor. In his future books, his attitude toward the Queen was one of feigned respect.

At Porto Santa Maria, near Cadiz, during the winter of 1590-91 Parsons succeeded in converting to the Catholic faith ninety-three English prisoners of war. Philip had agreed that any soldiers thus converted might be freed from the galleys and returned to England upon the arrival of
their ransom money. Parsons, on the other hand, felt that they should be used in the Spanish army against England. In a letter to Idiaquez, Philip's Secretary of State, on March 3, 1591, he attributes the failure of the Armada in '88 to God's anger at the little faith which the Spanish had in their English coreligionists. Philip's ministers were in the habit of voicing doubt that there were any Catholics in England. As for these new converts, great attention will be paid to Philip's treatment of them. If he appears skeptical of their conversion and uncertain of their allegiance, English Catholics will feel the slight, and the anti-Spanish faction will gain strength.15

One of these converts, Gilbert Laton, or Laughton, arrested in England in 1593, testified "voluntarily"—the word is always suspect in the depositions of prisoners in the Tower—that after his liberation from the galleys Father Parsons assured him that it was lawful and meritorious to kill an heretical ruler and persuaded him to undertake the assassination of Elizabeth.16 On the other hand, Henry Walpole, a Jesuit arrested in 1594, denies in his deposition that Parsons has ever approved of regicide. Parsons spends all his time working with the seminaries, declares Walpole; it was simply to treat with Catholics about matters of conscience and to recruit scholars for the seminaries that Parsons sent him to England.17 Walpole's testimony is, of course, no more reliable than Laton's, but that Parsons ever gave his explicit approval to an assassination plot is doubtful.

But the members of the Privy Council, the Protestants of England, and many of the Catholics preferred to believe the most damaging rumors about Fathers Parsons and Holt. The concept of the typical Jesuit which was forming in the English mind was derived largely from the known and the rumored activities of these two men. In 1595 Walpole and Robert Southwell, the poet, were executed under the treason laws. The Society of Jesus could now point out three English martyrs.18 Prejudice against the Society was intensified, however, when Southwell, at his trial, defended a treatise on equivocation which had been found at his lodging.19

Of all Parsons' books, his Conference About the Next Succession to the Crown of England was most sensational and did most to discredit him with Protestants and Catholics alike. Written in Spain, it was approved by Cardinal Allen and Sir Francis Englefield and was published at St. Omer in 1594. The Spanish claim to the English throne, which Parsons and Allen had discussed with Philip's ambassador six years before, is here cautiously but publicly announced. In the meantime Philip, realizing that opposition to his own rule of England was insuperable, had conceived the idea of placing his daughter, the Infanta Isabella, on the English throne. The Conference About the Succession is a subtle attempt to prove first, that propinquity of kin is a minor consideration in deter-
mining the English succession and second, that the Infanta’s title is at least as clear as any other. The book is an attack on Elizabeth, on James of Scotland, and indirectly on Henri IV of France.

The Conference is remarkable as the foremost example of a republican theory of government being used by an English Catholic to justify either deposing a king or preventing the accession of a legitimate heir. The concept of monarchy as a contract between an elected ruler and the people of a nation, who can depose the king if he violates the contract, was generally detested in the sixteenth century and rarely advanced except by extremists. George Buchanan in Scotland advanced the theory in his De Jure Regni apud Scotos (1579) to justify the deposition of Mary Queen of Scots. Most Catholics, then, associated the contractual theory with Calvinists rebelling against Catholic monarchs. After the furor caused by his Conference, Parsons dropped the theory of popular sovereignty like a hot potato and tried to foist its authorship on Cardinal Allen and Sir Francis Englefield, both dead by then.²⁰ Thereafter, even when in the thick of the book-battle against the divine right of kings, he studiously avoided making a second time the mistake of advocating republicanism.

The work was dedicated to the Earl of Essex, to the considerable discomfort of that young nobleman, as Miss Lily B. Campbell has pointed out.²¹ It is signed “R. Doleman” because, Parsons later explained, he thought of himself as a vir dolorum, a man of sorrows. The preface explains how “there chanced not long ago to meet in Amsterdam in Holland certain gentlemen of divers Nations, qualities and affections, as well in Religion as otherwise.” The question of the English succession arises, and two lawyers—one a “civilian” and the other a temporal lawyer—begin to dispute the manner by which the succession will be determined. “The company began to smile, to see the two lawyers grow into some heat and comparison of their professions. But yet for that both did tend to prove one thing, to wit, that the next successor of England must needs be very doubtful: they requested that each one would be content to prove his assertion apart.”

The civil lawyer speaks first. Stating that man’s gregariousness is “of Nature and from God that created Nature,” he shows that it is natural for man to submit to authority when it is lawfully laid upon him. The particular form of government, however, is not determined by God or Nature. That monarchy, though a human institution, is superior to democracy has been the opinion of pagan philosophers and Christian doctors alike: it resembles the government of the sun over inferior heavenly planets and of the soul over the bodily members, and it is the form chosen by the bees. Because a king is subject to affections, he is given the assistance
of law, which is more impartial than individual judgment. The principle of succession by kinship, however, has never been firmly established and in all nations has been disregarded when other considerations justified displacing a legitimate heir or even deposing him after his installation. In England Edward II, Richard II, Henry VI and Richard III were all lawfully deposed for the good of the commonwealth. Though succession by kin is eminently desirable, it is in fact less important than the contract made between king and people at the coronation.

After an intermission for dinner the civilian points out that in addition to the promises exacted from pagan rulers, Christian kings since Constantine have promised at their coronation to change nothing in matters pertaining to the doctrine of the Church.

Asked when the people should oppose the coronation of the heir apparent, the lawyer says, “Nothing in the world can so justly exclude an heir apparent from his succession as want of religion,” and nothing can excuse the commonwealth which accepts a ruler faulty in this point. It is a sin for any man to assist a claimant to the crown whom he regards as erroneous in religion. Besides, subjects of different religion from the claimant whom they advance are sure to find that the latter will, of necessity, break his promises to them and be unable to award them honors and preferments. The second and longer part of the Conference is devoted to the claims of the various pretenders awaiting Elizabeth’s death, which the temporal lawyer, at the request of the company, now discusses at length. This speaker says about recent books setting forth each of the many claims, “One great trouble find I in them all, that every man seeketh to draw the whole water unto his own mill and make that title always most clear whom he most favoreth.” No one claim seems better or worse than the other.

The temporal lawyer speaks with great restraint and yet subtly manages to convey the impression that the claim of the Spanish Infanta is, in the opinion of most genealogists, more valid than that of any other pretender. Since the Infanta’s claim stems from a sister of Henry IV, the deposition of Richard II, which he discusses at length, must be represented as indisputably legal. Richard, he says, was deposed at the agreement of all the best nobles of the land and with the consent of Parliament.

Reminded that the English are strongly prejudiced against foreign rulers, the lawyer exposes the foolishness of this objection. History has many examples of nations far better governed by foreigners than by native kings. “It is the common opinion of learned men that the world was never more happily governed than under the Romans, and yet were they strangers to most of their subjects.” England has ruled Ireland and Spain has ruled
Flanders more wisely than those countries were ever governed by their own kings. One type of foreign ruler only is to be feared, the type peculiar in the present instance to the King of Scots—a stranger who would rule in England and yet maintain just across the border an army of Scots which he could bring in at any time to use against his English subjects.

At Elizabeth's death, says the speaker, there is almost certain to be armed dispute before any claimant is established on the throne. No great war, however, is to be expected. The religion of the various pretenders will be a deciding factor. Since the easy accession of Elizabeth, “men are come to be of more resolution and determination in matters of religion.” There are three principal religious groups in England: Protestants, Puritans, and Papists, “though the latter two do not acknowledge these names, and I use them only for clearness and brevity’s sake.” The Catholic group consists of both open recusants and secret sympathizers. Though least in show by reason of the laws against them, this party is undoubtedly the greatest of the three. The many seminary priests who have been put to death for their religion have fired the zeal of the Catholics and won thousands of converts from the other religions.

And so, without further comment, the conference ends. No one of the assembly has expressed zeal for any of the three religions mentioned or decided preference for any of the known pretenders to the crown. Nothing has been said about popes or excommunications. The discussion has been conducted by dispassionate men of the world calmly examining the facts before them. But the Conference About the Succession is packed with gunpowder. As Professor McIlwain has stated,

The book was a double blow at James, against whom it was mainly aimed; it denied his favorite principle of legitimism, and it attempted to disprove his own particular claim. James was right in regarding it as the most dangerous book of the time. The first part of the book, which deals with the abstract question of hereditary right and the basis of royal tenure has an even greater importance for political thought. It is hardly too much to say that this book was the chief storehouse of facts and arguments drawn upon by nearly all opponents of the royal claim for a century, Protestant as well as Catholic; and its importance is attested not only by the many attacks made upon it down to the Revolution of 1688 and after, but by the frequent surreptitious use of it in this period by the men and parties who did not dare to disclose the source of their arguments and illustrations.24

Replies to Parsons' Conference, by Protestants and Catholics alike, flowed from the press for many years. One of the most notable was James VI's Trew Law of Free Monarchies (1598), ostensibly addressed to the people of Scotland but really of greater interest at the moment to his future subjects in England.

Parsons' own defense of the inopportune book, in a letter written at
Seville in 1596, is at the same time a moving *apologia pro vita sua*. He is replying to Father Creighton, the Scottish Jesuit, who has written him in fury over the *Conference*.

I could wish that we were more engaged with a heavenly than an earthly kingdom; but since the evil of the times, and the extreme calamity of our country cause us to labour in order to secure its salvation, which depends upon the restoration of the Catholic religion, we are not able to do so without also considering the question of a Catholic successor.

From the year 1580 when, by our superior’s orders, I first went to England, I began to study the welfare of the King of Scotland in every possible way, and at once sent at my own expense a certain priest, William Watts, into Scotland. I afterwards sent in Father Holt. . . . I undertook with great peril of my life a hard and difficult journey into Spain, and on to Lisbon, and then one as difficult into Flanders, and a third to Rome itself. And all this, for the sake, after God, of the King of Scotland and his mother.

But when upon the death of the Queen we found that your King persevered in his heresy, I confess that both Allen, not yet made a cardinal, and I, showed ourselves to be slow to promote the interests of an heretical King. . . . You affirmed, both elsewhere and in Spain, that there was no use in hoping for the King’s conversion. . . . How weak the claim of the King of Scotland is, and how other claims are just as good, can be seen by what I have said in the book lately published. . . . We should be fools and miserable men, after such troubles escaped, and so many martyrdoms, if we were to commit once more all our and God’s affairs, and the happiness of our country into the hands of an heretical, or at least doubtful, King. This is my judgment, this is my feeling, and before God and His angels I only seek the divine glory in all this business, and I care nought who enjoys the kingdoms of this world, provided we seek and procure for others the heavenly kingdom.

At Cardinal Allen’s death in 1594 there was an effort made by the Spanish party of English Catholics to have Father Parsons elevated to the cardinalate, but the French-Scottish party raised a storm of protest and the Pope, Clement VIII, resolved to advance no one to the position of Cardinal of England.

The last of Parsons’ books written in Spain was his *Memorial for the Intended Reformation of England*. It was never printed in his lifetime, but manuscript copies were numerous. Before the end of 1596 the Privy Council in England knew of the *Memorial* and had a Latin summary of it. The *Memorial*, which shows the influence of Sir Thomas More, deserves a place in the history of utopian literature. In the seclusion of the seminary at Valladolid the fifty-year-old Parsons, who last saw his native land fifteen years ago, is dreaming of a new Catholic England. Though he professes to be chiefly concerned with ecclesiastical organization and the extermination of heresy, his recommendations for social reform are the suggestions of a man who has studied at first hand the economic and social problems of several nations. He advocates modifica-
tion of the laws of primogeniture to better the lot of younger sons and a change in the laws regulating dowries and jointures to protect the property rights of wives and widows. A “poor man’s Bank or Treasury” might be set up to lend money without usury to men in need. The nobility must not only shoulder responsibility for the Christian education of their servants, but should also be compelled by law to provide for them in their old age. The English practice of hanging men for petty thefts should be abandoned, and every man on trial for his life must be given a better chance to defend himself than heretofore. On the other hand, to encourage respect for law, proven criminals might receive rigorous whippings before their execution and their dead bodies might be left unburied at the place of execution. More and better grammar schools on the continental plan must be provided for children of the poor, and deserving scholars must be assured of an opportunity for higher education.

England under her next Catholic king can start from the very foundation, Parsons states, and surpass the work of the Council of Trent, which had to temper its reforms to the capacity of “the decayed state of Christendom which then they found.” Inspired by a greater number of martyrs than any other nation can boast, England should be able to effect a “perfect reformation.” When the churches have been emptied of the Protestant ministers and reconsecrated to God, it will be better to leave most of them empty for a few years than to staff them with unsuitable priests. While seminaries established in every shire are training devout priests, ecclesiastical affairs should be supervised by a Council of Reformation. The name “Inquisition” should be avoided, since Englishmen are prejudiced against it.

Abbey lands must be restored to the Church: if such property is presently owned by Catholics, perhaps only a small rent need be paid, but with heretical owners no compromise should be considered. Of the several religious orders to which this property once belonged, few have surviving English members, and rather than bestow the land on foreigners of those orders, the Council of Reformation should use it for seminaries or give it to other orders which have distinguished themselves in recent years by their zeal in the Catholic cause. Only orders which have been reformed should be permitted to return to England.

To avoid the charge that the Church persecutes first and then instructs, Parsons advises a brief period of toleration for docile heretics:

By experience it hath been seen, that this kind of suffering and bearing for a time hath eased many difficulties... in the Low Countries.... Yet do I give notice that my meaning is not any way to persuade hereby that Liberty of Religion to live how a Man will should be permitted. I think no one thing to be so dangerous, dishonourable, or more offensive to Almighty God in the World.
than that any Prince should permit the Ark of Israel and Dagon, God and the Devil, to stand and be honoured together within his realm.\textsuperscript{30}

Step by step the Council must eradicate every vestige of heresy. Schismatics—weak Catholics, that is, who have temporized with the Protestant magistrates—should be treated with compassion. Reasonable Protestants should be converted by instruction, but

\ldots as for wilful Apostates, or malicious Persecutors, or obstinate Perverters of others, \ldots it belongeth not to a Man of my Vocation to suggest \[ how they should be treated, but to remind the Prince to rule in imitation of God himself, who \] as he hath a sweet hand to cherish the well-affected, so hath he a strong arm to bind the Roysterous, Stubborn and Rebellious.\textsuperscript{31}

The Society of Jesus is not mentioned in the long \textit{Memorial}. But the recommendation that seats in Parliament be awarded to members of religious orders that have distinguished themselves in the Catholic cause and the suggestion that reclaimed abbey lands be transferred to orders skilled in administering schools and seminaries, Parsons clearly envisions the Society's playing a major role in the "perfect reformation."\textsuperscript{32}

Throughout the last decade of the century the Privy Council continued to receive reports of fleets forming in the Spanish harbors and destined for England. According to rumor, Father Parsons planned to accompany the Spanish armies, and England was already swarming with soldiers in disguise sent from Spain by Parsons or from Flanders by Holt and Stanley to assassinate the Queen. But if Parsons still had any hope of a Spanish conquest, the triple alliance formed by England, France and the States General in May 1596 should have ended it. Two months later Lord Howard and the Earl of Essex led an expedition which captured Cadiz, burned Faro in Portugal, and was back home in early August.\textsuperscript{33} In retaliation Philip hastily assembled an armada of 150 vessels which sailed from Lisbon in October to wrest Ireland once and for all from English control. Again, as in 1588, the fleet was scattered by a furious gale and returned to Spain in tatters. A similar effort in 1598 met with the same fate. Even had there been no storms, these fleets could have done little more than harass the increasingly powerful English nation. What should have been obvious at the defeat of the Invincible Armada was finally becoming clear even to die-hards like Robert Parsons—that there was no chance of restoring England to the Catholic Church by the force of Spanish arms.

Early in 1597 Parsons had left Spain, never to return.
 CHAPTER V

“DOMESTICALL DIFFICULTIES”

Parsons continued to represent his Catholic opponents as a factious minority but found it ever more difficult to bring others to his way of thinking. Though the fact was humiliating to admit, the majority of Catholics were now ready to compromise with the heretical government. The King of Scotland undoubtedly deceived some of them into believing that he would turn Catholic once he was safely enthroned in England, but others skeptical about such a conversion were still sufficiently anti-Spanish to support James in the mere hope that under his rule Catholics would be tolerated. When Parsons and other English Jesuits, still hoping for a “perfect reformation,” continued to support Philip’s political aims, their temporizing coreligionists began to protest as vehemently as Elizabeth herself.

It was the reaction of other Catholics against the Jesuits that took Parsons back to Rome in 1597. In Flanders the “Scottish” party was demanding the removal of Father Holt from the court of the Spanish governor. In England secular priests were attributing the persecution to Jesuit intrigues. In Rome the English scholars at the College were demonstrating for the removal of the Jesuit administrators. And from all quarters poured protests against the Conference About the Succession, generally known, despite the pseudonym “Doleman,” to be the work of Father Parsons. So strong was the feeling against Parsons that some of his friends feared for his safety in Rome. In September 1596 Sir Francis Englefield, writing from his deathbed to Philip II, suggests that the King instruct his ambassador in Rome to protect Parsons from arrest and to “have assistance at hand, in case of any emergency.”

To some extent the demonstrations at the English College had nationalistic causes. Father Agazzari wrote to Parsons late in 1596 of the factious scholars:

They speak often and spitefully against the Book of Succession and against its author—Parsons, as they suppose—whose name they cannot endure. They delight in the failure of the Spaniards, as lately at Cadiz; and they grieve over their successes as at Calais.
Before the end of the year all but ten of the forty-seven seminarians were in revolt against their Rector. They submitted their grievances to the Pope and demanded an end of Jesuit control. They complained too that those few Jesuits in England were given a faculty not granted secular priests: the authority to absolve present owners of former abbey lands on the condition that the penitents pay money in compensation; and consequently they collected large sums from wealthy Catholics, which they applied to their own uses instead of sharing with the secular priests.

On the other hand, the ten scholars loyal to the Jesuit Rector accused the rebels of dissolute behavior and called for their expulsion. Cardinal Sega, who conducted a visitation of the College, concluded entirely in favor of the Jesuit administration. He believed—or said he believed—that the disturbances had been stirred up by agents of Elizabeth's Council who had infiltrated the seminary. Many Catholics in the homeland, however, were in sympathy with the rebellious scholars and added the troubles at Rome to their other complaints against the Society of Jesus.

That Father Parsons, author of the hated Conference, could walk into this acrimonious atmosphere and arbitrate a peace is proof of remarkable ability. Writing to Holt about the dispute, Parsons attributes it largely to the natural misunderstanding between English scholars and Italian teachers. In this letter, dated May 5, 1597, he voices the hope that Holt can effect a similar reconciliation with the anti-Jesuit Englishmen in Flanders.  

To insure continued peace, Parsons dispatched some of the leaders of the revolt as missionaries to England and others to Douai, where the seminary founded by Dr. Allen was now re-situated after a fifteen-year exile in Rheims.

In 1598 Parsons was appointed Rector of the College, a position which he held until the end of his life. At the same time he was named Prefect of the Jesuit mission to England, with supervision over all the English seminaries except that at Douai, which remained under secular control. About this time he began his autobiography, possibly to answer his compatriots in Flanders, who were condemning practically every step of his career. He apparently finished only a few pages, which were not published until 1906.

Hostility to the Jesuits in England was not so easily suppressed as the student riots in Rome, partly because Father Garnet lacked Parsons' diplomatic skill. But to clarify the downfall of Jesuit leadership it will be necessary to explain the famous "Wisbeach Stirs" of 1595.

In 1580, when the activities of Parsons and Campion led to fear of a Catholic uprising, the government had arrested certain venerable Marian divines heretofore living in quiet seclusion. The ancient castle of Wisbeach on the Isle of Ely, belonging to the bishop of the diocese, was designated
as a prison for these potential leaders of a revolt. If these gentle men were
strictly guarded for a while, their mild conduct soon won them better
consideration. In the next fifteen years, to visit Wisbeach Castle became a
holy pilgrimage for lay Catholics and disguised priests who had avoided
arrest themselves. Of the younger priests from abroad apprehended after
1580, only those “learned and politic and of great persuasion” were sent
to Wisbeach. The inmates managed to improvise altars, and ladies and
gentlemen arrived frequently to make their confessions and hear Mass.
Generous contributions were delivered regularly to the prisoners, who be-
came popular with the Protestant townsfolk because of their liberal alms
to the poor. They were able to set up their own dining room and kitchen
and to hire servants. In addition, a number of teen-aged boys, some of
them sons of the gentry probably sent to receive a Catholic education,
lived in the prison as pages of the older priests.

Most of the men who had been ordained before Elizabeth’s accession
had died by the winter of 1594-95, when the notorious “Stirs” began, but
to fill their places of influence were seminary priests who had grown old
in prison, and the castle remained the center of Catholic ecclesiastical
affairs, a strange imperium in imperio, a Catholic stronghold in a Protes-
tant prison. One of its leaders was Dr. Christopher Bagshaw, Parsons’
enemy in their Oxford days and more recently a trouble-maker at the
College in Rome. Another was Thomas Bluet, one of the first missionaries
whom Dr. Allen had sent to England.6

In 1588 William Weston, the first Jesuit prisoner, arrived at Wisbeach.
After the capture of Jasper Heywood, Weston had been for a while the
only Jesuit at liberty in England. Zealous and yet unusually superstitious
even for the sixteenth century, before his arrest Weston had won renown
as an exorcisor of devils.7 Though it was six years before an open rupture
occurred, Weston apparently objected at once to the lack of discipline
among the Wisbeach prisoners. At Christmas 1594, when a “hobby-horse”
one of a troupe of morris dancers) was brought into the castle hall for
the amusement of the priests, nineteen of the inmates sided with Weston
in withdrawing from the fourteen others and devising a set of rules for a
more sober life. They wrote to Garnet, Weston’s Superior, asking him to
allow the Jesuit to serve as their director or “agent.” Later they left the
common dining hall, set up their own refectory, and hired their own brewer.

Since the rules drawn up by Weston’s adherents implied that the other
priests were practicing or tolerating “whoredom, drunkenness and dicing,”
the scandalous schism at Wisbeach was soon the talk of all Catholics in
England. Both parties wrote at length explaining their positions, and most
laymen apparently felt at the time that Weston was justified in calling for
reform.8 Indeed, neither Bagshaw nor Bluet, chief spokesmen for Weston’s
opponents, could deny the need for stricter discipline. They objected mainly to secular priests' submitting willingly to a Jesuit, to Garnet's assigning Weston a position over seculars, and to the implication that priests who held aloof from the new association were condoning licentiousness. Despite the frequent visits of priests from outside, who came to establish a concord, the embarrassing separation lasted throughout most of 1595. Even after Weston resigned his disputed "agenage" in November, it was known over England, as well as in Flanders and at Rome, that the inmates of Wisbeach were still divided into pro-Jesuit and anti-Jesuit factions.

Among the influential secular priests who visited the prison in disguise to arbitrate in the troubles were two who, like Bluet and Bagshaw, were soon loudly denouncing Robert Parsons. Elderly Alban Dolman, tacitly accepted as head of the seculars in the south of England, believed that the pseudonym "Doleman" used by Parsons in his *Conference* put him under suspicion as the author and thus in especial danger of his life. John Mush, similarly recognized as leader of the northern priests, was later one of the Appellants who warred with Parsons in the Archpriest controversy of 1598-1602.

In the forty years since Elizabeth's accession, no pope had been willing to appoint new bishops for the English Catholics, probably because it would have been impossible for men in hiding to maintain any episcopal dignity. By 1598 all the Marian bishops had died, and there was no ecclesiastical administration for the hundreds of priests living secretly in the kingdom. Because the Society had helped train these priests abroad, the few Jesuits in England had automatically come to regard themselves as unofficial heads of the Counter-Reformation there. As long as persecution was severe there was little dispute over authority, but after 1594, with the government relaxing its vigilance somewhat and beginning to distinguish between "loyal" and "seditious" Papists, some of the secular priests began to assert their independence.

In 1596, while Parsons was still in Spain and the "Stirs" were raging at Wisbeach, some of the clergy planned a voluntary association which they hoped might lead to the Pope's granting them bishops. This association would assign priests to the various chaplaincies in Catholic mansions, administer funds collected for the needy, and in general organize a secular clergy completely independent of the Jesuits. Advocates of the plan later asserted that Garnet advised Father Parsons about it and that the main purpose of Parsons' return to Rome from Spain was to frustrate it and substitute the creation of an Archpriest subservient to the Society. They charged that the Jesuits were bent on converting England into a Spanish possession, realized that an organization of patriotic priests would
thwart this scheme, and designed the unheard-of institution of an Arch-priest to keep devout and loyal seculars in submission until they had perpetrated their "machivilian" plot.

Clement VIII, aware of the dissensions but still unwilling to appoint bishops, delegated to Cajetan, Cardinal Protector for England, the authority to work out a compromise. Consequently on March 7, 1598, Cajetan wrote to George Blackwell, a secular priest who had been back in England for many years, giving him "the title and authority of an archpriest over all the seminary priests, with faculties to direct, admonish, reprehend, and also chastise those priests, to remove them from one residence to another, [and] to determine controversies and repress schisms." The Archpriest was to have twelve assistants, six nominated by the Cardinal and six to be chosen by Blackwell. The letter explains that the Pope has created the new arrangement to terminate the dissensions which the devil has sewn among the English Catholics. Accompanying this document was another letter, directing the Archpriest to consult with Father Garnet, the Jesuit Superior, in all grave matters.10

It was impossible for Clement VIII or Cardinal Cajetan or Robert Parsons himself to anticipate the fury which this appointment excited in England. The letters reached Blackwell (in London?) on May 9, 1598. Immediately he began to show them to other priests. Within a few weeks the anti-Jesuits at Wisbeach Castle and outside had organized to resist their newly appointed head. Desiring to end the quarrels between the seculars and regulars (Jesuits), Cajetan and Parsons had chosen a secular known to admire Garnet and the other English Jesuits. The six assistants nominated in the document were also sympathetic to the Society. But most objectionable to the anti-Jesuits was the direction that the Archpriest consult with Father Garnet about matters of importance. Schooled in canon law, the dissentients attacked the legality of Blackwell's appointment and refused to accept his authority until it should be authenticated by a breve from the Pope. Meanwhile they would send to Rome two envoys, William Bishop and Robert Charnock, to protest that the new hierarchy was not at all suitable for the English clergy. Bishop, incidentally, was the priest about whose arrest Parsons had written impatiently seventeen years before that he had been "so absorbed in meditating on heavenly things as to be quite oblivious of human affairs."11 Since 1581 he had been twice banished from England and had twice returned.

Bishop and Charnock arrived in Rome on December 11, 1598. They hoped to persuade Clement to cancel the institution of the Archpriest and appoint bishops instead. But long before their arrival Parsons had learned from Garnet of their plan and had convinced the Pope that they represented a handful of malcontents. In this case Parsons, usually so astute,
misjudged the potentialities of Bishop and Charnock and in belittling them made a costly mistake.

At first the two priests were permitted to reside at the English College, though their reception by Parsons was not hospitable. Five days later they were ejected on the grounds that they were giving the seminarians false reports about affairs in England. Then, according to their own account, on the evening of December 29 Father Parsons rushed into their lodgings saying that the papal officers had been ordered to imprison them but that to avoid a scandal he had obtained permission to take them into custody at the College. Here they were locked in separate rooms. They were not permitted to communicate with one another, to say or hear Mass, or to possess any writing materials. Their papers were taken away from them and their baggage ransacked.

The examinations of Bishop and Charnock, previous to their actual trial, were held at the College in January and conducted separately, over a period of several weeks. An English Jesuit was appointed as their notary, Parsons and the papal Fiscal were the examiners, and two English priests served as proctors of the Archpriest. Because the mission of Bishop and Charnock had been naively planned, it was not difficult for the examiners to submit to the Pope a report technically factual and yet unfairly derisive of the envoys. Clement then commissioned the Cardinals Cajetan and Borghese to have the depositions read in the presence of the prisoners and hear whatever else they had to say. At this hearing, on February 17, the two priests saw each other for the first time in nearly eight weeks.

The proceedings ended with their being returned to confinement for another six weeks before sentence was passed on April 21. In the meantime the Pope issued a breve confirming Blackwell’s appointment to the Archpresbyterate. Finally Bishop and Charnock were banished, the former to Paris and the latter to Lorraine. They were not to travel together and were forbidden under severe penalties to return to England. Despite these injunctions, the two men soon met in Paris, won many friends among the anti-Jesuit exiles, received doctor’s degrees in theology from the University of Paris, and were soon back in England, implacably hostile to Father Parsons.

It was about this time that Parsons began his “Storie of Domestical Difficulties,” another of his apparently incomplete manuscripts that remained unpublished until the twentieth century.

In England, before the breve confirming Blackwell’s authority was received, disputes between supporters and opponents of the Archpriest were waxing hotter. In October 1598 Dr. Bagshaw was transferred to the Gatehouse in London, presumably for questioning about an alleged plot
to assassinate the Queen. Almost certainly before his return to Wisbeach he gave information to the Council and to the Bishop of London, Richard Bancroft, about the quarrels of Jesuits and seculars, and he and the Anglican bishop began to discuss the possibility of a religious toleration for patriotic priests. Their mutual animosity for the Society of Jesus was drawing some of the secular priests into a secret, wary and uncomfortable alliance with the Protestant authorities. At Wisbeach, Bluet was beginning to point out certain of his adversaries to the keeper of the prison as dangerous traitors. William Watson, a notoriously erratic priest later involved in a plot to kidnap James I, was offering to write a reply to Father Parsons' *Conference About the Succession*. John Cecil and John Fixer, the priests from Valladolid who had offered to spy on Parsons and his party, were submitting regular reports to the Privy Council, as were also Charles Paget and other Catholic laymen in Flanders.

Nevertheless, when the breve arrived in May 1599, confirming the creation of the Archpriest, all the malcontents—even the formidable Bagshaw and Bluet at Wisbeach—dutifully admitted Blackwell as their superior. Had Blackwell been content with this, the troubles might have ended; but when he declared that the dissentients had been *schismatics* and refused to grant them their faculties again until they asked him for absolution, the quarrel flared up again to rage for four years longer. From the theologians of the Sorbonne the suspended priests obtained a decision that they had *not* been guilty of schism. When Blackwell refused to accept this decision, an appeal to Rome was drawn up at Wisbeach in November 1600 and signed by thirty-three priests; but months dragged by without bringing an answer. Consequently the “Appellants,” as they were called, further antagonized by decrees from Blackwell forbidding Catholics to recognize them as priests or to send alms to those in prison, began to treat with the English government.

Early in 1601 the aged Bluet secured leave from Wisbeach to collect alms in London. There Elizabeth had him placed in the free custody of the Bishop of London. According to Bluet's later account, Bishop Bancroft showed him at this time letters and books by Parsons, Holt and other Jesuits inviting the King of Spain to invade England and urging individuals to assassinate Elizabeth. Bluet protested that the majority of Catholics repudiated these Jesuit schemes and submitted to the Queen a plea that such patriots be granted a liberty of conscience. Though no toleration was granted, Elizabeth encouraged the hope of one and spoke with admiration of the present Pope, saying—if Bluet's narration can be credited—"He is Clement in deed as well as in name." When Bluet requested that several secular priests be allowed to go to Rome to renew the appeal against the “bejesuited” Archpriest, the Council welcomed the
The Queen was old, and undoubtedly the Council, to pave the way for James Stuart’s accession, were eager to increase papal distrust of the Spanish and Jesuit aims.

Despite Blackwell’s command against works on the subject, the seculars had begun to print books against the Jesuits and the Archpriest, who was called “a puppy to dance after the jesuit’s pipe.” A Latin treatise by John Mush addressed to the Pope and one by Bagshaw to the Inquisition appeared early in 1601, stating the case against Blackwell. Now for the first time English Catholics were using the press to fling insults at Father Parsons exceeding in acrimony anything that his Protestant enemies had had to say in the twenty years of his active political life. Later in the same year three books in English were published by Dr. Bishop, Dr. Bagshaw, and John Bennet respectively. In his pseudonymous *A True Relation of the Faction Begun at Wisbich*, Bagshaw attributed both the troubles at Wisbeach and the appointment of Blackwell to “machivilian” Jesuit efforts to dominate the secular clergy.

Most of these books must have been published before Bluet and his friends, secretly abetted by the Privy Council, set out for Rome. As a matter of fact, the Pope had already answered their written appeal in a breve which the Archpriest, for reasons of his own, delayed to circulate. In this breve, dated August 17, 1601, Clement rebuked the rebels for not submitting to the Archpriest, but also cleared them of the charge of schism. He exhorted Blackwell to mingle gentleness with severity, and forbade under pain of excommunication any further tracts about the discords. But before publishing this papal reply, Blackwell was determined to circulate answers to his adversaries’ books. Father Parsons in Rome had received copies of their works and was preparing his own account of the quarrels. His *Briefe Apologie of the Catholic Subordination in England, Written and set forth by Priests in due Subordination to the Right Reverend Archpriest*, appeared early in January 1602. Then finally on January 26 Blackwell released the papal breve.

Such, at least, was the Appellants’ explanation of the belated publication of the breve, and consequently they ignored the injunction against further tracts. While the anti-Jesuit envoys were in Rome, their colleagues at home continued to issue works belaboring the Society of Jesus, the Archpriest, and especially Father Robert Parsons. And the Jesuits, also disobeying Clement’s orders, continued to publish replies. Two more works by Parsons appeared in 1602, an *Appendix* to his *Briefe Apologie* and *A Manifestation of the great folly of certain calling themselves Secular Priests*, which appeared in England in April and is described by Gillow as “the least creditable of the great Jesuit’s brochures.” Though the writers on both sides published their tracts pseudonymously, in almost
every case the identity of the author was soon common knowledge.

Lest Catholics learn that the Appellants were in conference with the government, the Privy Council had ostensibly "banished" Bluet and three other prisoner-priests from England. But Blackwell and Garnet had learned of the ruse before the envoys left the country and had warned Parsons of their purpose.

The four priests who arrived in Rome in February 1602 were Thomas Bluet, John Mush, Anthony Champney and John Cecil. Profiting by the unhappy mission of Bishop and Charnock three years earlier, they avoided the English College and refused to speak to Parsons. Furthermore, in France they had obtained assurance that Henri IV would instruct his ambassador at Rome to befriend them. Bagshaw, who set out with them, remained in Paris to guard their interests there. Thus protected, the Appellants were received with respect wherever they called, despite Parsons' efforts to discredit them. On February 20, they visited the Inquisition and on March 5 had an audience with Clement VIII.

Clement appointed two cardinals to examine the case. The professed reason for the embassage was to clear the Appellants of Blackwell's charge of schism. Actually they hoped to secure bishops to replace the Archpriest and to have all Jesuits recalled from England. Since they were already cleared of schism, the case was narrowed now to complaints by the Appellants against Blackwell's arbitrary government and charges by Parsons and two newly-arrived proctors from the Archpriest that the Appellants were plotting with an heretical government. Each side handed to the cardinals memorials against their adversaries. Parsons drew up several of these. In one he attacks the character of the four envoys and other members of their party. Tierney summarizes Parsons' description of old Thomas Bluet:

A drunkard, a brawler, he has at one time hurled a priest down stairs, and at another fallen intoxicated into the Thames; in one instance he has been prevented from murdering a fellow-prisoner [at Wisbeach] only by the interference of his companions, and in another has attempted, but in vain, to administer the sacraments whilst reeking and staggering from the effects of a drunken debauch.

John Cecil and Christopher Bagshaw are similarly described, and other priests are said to be motivated by resentment at not having been admitted to the Society of Jesus.

Invective must have been taken by men of the Renaissance era cum grano salis. Parsons at his most virulent exercised restraint compared with some of the men who were writing against him. Law quotes a passage from the brochure by Anthony Copley:

This Catholic gentleman describes Parsons as 'a man who being the misbegot-
ten of a ploughman... hath accordingly demeaned himself first in begetting two bastards... upon the body of his own sister... which was the cause he ran away... and so became a jesuit; secondly or rather formerly and continually, by being a common ale-house squire, and the drunkennest sponge in all the parish where he lived.17

In the course of this exchange of insults, the story of Parsons' expulsion from Oxford appeared in so many contradictory forms that the true facts of the incident are still indeterminable.

The examination of the Appellants' case dragged on until October 1602, when Clement finally issued another breve, giving the party of Blackwell and the Jesuits a limited victory: the institution of the Archpriest was reconfirmed and the communication of priests with the English government was expressly forbidden. On the other hand the Appellants had achieved some concessions. They were cleared of schism. While their books were condemned, so too were those of Father Parsons. The Archpriest was instructed to choose three of his assistants, when vacancies should occur, from the party of the Appellants. And—most important of all—he was now forbidden to discuss the affairs of his office with the Jesuits either in England or in Rome.

Although Parsons tried frequently to effect a reconciliation with the envoys and urgently invited them to visit the College, they steadily ignored his advances.

All the while his anti-Jesuit coreligionists were abusing Parsons and he was abusing them, his pen was busy against Protestant adversaries as well. In 1598, when reports of another fleet assembling in Spain raised again the fear of invasion, Sir Francis Hastings, brother of the Earl of Huntingdon, issued his Watch-Word to all True-Hearted Englishmen, vilifying King Philip, the Pope, the Jesuits and Father Parsons, and urging harsher treatment of the Catholics. Soon a copy of the Watch-Word was in Robert Parsons' hands and he was busy with his reply, A Temperate Ward-Word to the Turbulent and Seditious Watch-Word of Sir Francis Hastings.18

Labeling Sir Francis' tract as the "belkings of a burthened stomake with the surfeit of heresie" and the author himself as "a hastie hoatespur" and "a barking beagle among the hownds of Huntingdon," Parsons, under the pen name of "N. D.," first attacks Hastings' statement that Elizabeth has rescued England from superstition and covered the country with blessings. "This is not a contention about Terra Virgenea, where only we must believe Sir Walter Rawleighes Relations, or Sir Humphrey Gilbertes about Terra Florida," says Parsons;19 any Englishman can see for himself that the change of religion has split the people into numerous sects and brought the country into disrepute with foreign nations.
Hastings has called it a divine miracle that Elizabeth could ascend the
throne despite the Catholic plots against her in her sister Mary’s reign. On
the contrary, Parsons declares, Elizabeth was then a Catholic herself,
Catholics made possible her easy accession, and the vast majority of them
have always been loyal to her. Even after the bull of 1570, few ever
raised their voices against Elizabeth. English Catholics have been like
a family whose mother, Elizabeth, and father, the Pope, are quarreling;
though occasionally an elder brother, such as Cardinal Allen, has pointed
out the wisdom of the mother’s submitting to the father, most of the
children have suffered in dutiful silence.

Writing anonymously, Parsons proposes to speak also of the Jesuits
in general and “father Persons in particular, though moderately of them
both, in regard to the friendship that for many years I have held with
them.” As for the charge made by their enemies, Protestants and “false-
hearted Catholiques,” that the Jesuites are seditious perturbers of com-
monwealths,

One kind of sedition I do easily discover in very truth to be in Jesuites, which
is that of which holy sedition Christ himself professeth to be the author: do not
think (sayth he) that I come to bring peace unto the world, for I come not to
plant peace but the sward, and to divide a man against his own father...20

Not one of the many persons executed for attempts on Elizabeth’s life
has ever accused Parsons of inciting him to the deed, writes the anony-
mous pamphleteer.

Father Persons protesteth (as I am creditably informed) that he was never con-
senting... nor privie to any such personal attempt against her Maiestie in his
life... [and] that he hath dissuaded, hindered, and diverted some that might
perhaps have had such inclination.21

Every change of pseudonym provided Parsons with a new personality.
Now, as “N.D.,” he is describing himself and his fellow Jesuits as he
feels they should be viewed by any intelligent Christian.

Not only Hastings, but also Matthew Sutcliffe, Dean of Exeter, wrote
replies to Parsons’ Temperate Ward-Word, Sutcliffe punning on the
initials with which Parsons had signed his book and referring to him as
a “Noddy” and “a man of few letters.” Though here and later Sutcliffe
and Parsons continued to employ pseudonyms, it is evident that each
knew who his adversary was. In his next tract, entitled A Warn-Word
to Sir Francis Hastings Wast-Word (1601), Parsons answers both the
zealous knight and the Anglican dean. He ridicules the churchman’s
allying himself with a Puritan and, since Sutcliffe’s book was signed
“O.E.,” addresses him throughout as “Owles-Eye” or “Oedipus.” Like
the Temperate Ward-Word, the Warn-Word takes a tone of respect toward
Elizabeth and her Council but stresses the evils that have befallen England
since the change of religion and the benefits that would result from reconciliation with Rome. In writing this second work the Jesuit has discovered that Hastings has consulted John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* for material to prove that the Protestant religion is the true Church of Christ which, invisible, has persisted throughout centuries of papal usurpation. The *Warn-Word* closes with a promise that its author has prepared for publication an exposé of the *Acts and Monuments*.

Longest of all Parsons' writings, the exposé of the work that Foxe had composed forty years earlier runs into several thousand pages and was published in 1603 and 1604 in three tomes with the over-all title of *A Treatise of Three Conversions of England from Paganisme to Christian Religion: the First under the Apostles, the Second under Pope Eleutherius, the Third under Pope Gregory the Great*. Here Parsons attacks the Protestant revision of medieval history. Stung by the taunts that their religion was "new-fangled," the Magdeburgians in Germany and Foxe in England had advanced the claim that the purest Christianity was in the tradition of the Eastern Church and had always been maintained in the West by a minority of the enlightened. Though driven underground during the Middle Ages—the reign of Antichrist—by the corrupt and ambitious See of Rome, this minority—the Invisible Church—had survived to emerge triumphant at the Reformation. Many condemned as heretics by the Roman Church, including the hundreds burned at the stake in Mary Tudor's reign, were now exalted to martyrdom. Parsons' *Treatise of Three Conversions* protests such a perversion of facts. The first and second parts are devoted to histories of orthodoxy and heresy from the time of Christ's ascension, with particular stress on the story of Christianity in England. The third part, filling two separate volumes, compares the calendar of martyrs in Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* with the orthodox Catholic calendar of saints. After demonstrating that Foxe's "martyrs" held few opinions in common, Parsons sums up his condemnation thus:

"Yf I should goe about to draw all these martyrs and confessors of his Church into any one form of faith and beliefs, good or badd (which is most necessary, yow know, to make a Church) it would prove a farre harder enterprise then to coouple all the catts of any great Citty by the heads togetheer, & to make them stand so for an houre of their owne will, lookinge one upon the other, without turning their heads aside."

In 1606 Sutcliffe published two works against Parsons, *The Subversion of Robert Parsons* and *A Threefold Answer unto the Third Part of a certayne Triobolar Treatise*. Parsons, busy now with more august adversaries, did not compose specific answers to these books, but he continued in his other works to ridicule the Anglican Dean of Exeter. The curious and ill-fated Chelsea College for training Anglican controversialists, which
Sutcliffe endowed lavishly in 1609,\textsuperscript{23} may be regarded then as resulting in part from Robert Parsons' caustic pen.

In a sense the papal breve of October 1602, forbidding Blackwell to consult with the Jesuits in matters of administration, terminated Catholic efforts to recover England by force of arms. The idea was no longer tenable that English Catholics could be formed into a body willing to dethrone Elizabeth or even to demand that her successor be reconciled to their Church. Though the Papacy still claimed the right to depose heretical rulers, no Pope ever issued another bull asserting that right.

Elizabeth's death—the event to which Parsons had looked forward with such great hopes—occurred on March 24, 1603. But neither the Jesuits nor the secular priests nor the Catholic laity raised a hand to oppose the accession of James Stuart. A few weeks earlier, on January 31, thirteen priests, disregarding Clement's injunction against treating with the government, had signed a protestation of allegiance to the Queen in which they swore to disobey the Pope if he ever commanded them to forsake Elizabeth or aid her enemies. Their conduct was never censured by the Pope. They remained Catholic priests. The man who drew up the proclamation of allegiance was eventually, in 1623, elevated to the episcopacy by a later pope and became the first Catholic bishop appointed for England since the reign of Mary Tudor. He was William Bishop, one of the two Appellant priests whom Father Parsons had incarcerated at the English College in 1598-99.
CHAPTER VI

"THE MANES OF ELIZABETH"

After the death of Philip II in 1598, both Philip III and Pope Clement VIII took it for granted that James of Scotland would inherit the English crown. Various suggestions were discussed, but the only use of force seriously contemplated was to make a show of Catholic strength which would convince James that only by reconciling himself with Rome could he hope to possess his inheritance peacefully. In 1602 Parsons forwarded to Garnet two papal breves to be published at Elizabeth's death, directing Catholics to prevent, if possible, the accession of any non-Catholic monarch. The breves were never published, though unfortunately James learned about them later.

Father Parsons saw the inevitability of events and began, reluctantly, to retreat from his uncompromising position. He could not alter the policy of Clement; and so he, who had heretofore rejected the idea of a mere toleration for Catholics as worse than persecution, was reduced to pleading for toleration. In 1598 he closes his Temperate Ward-Word to the Turbulent and Seditious Watch-Word of Sir Francis Hustings with a respectful address to the Privy Council, suggesting that they advise Elizabeth to follow Henri IV's example and become Catholic. Catholics, he says, pray devoutly for this restoration.

But if for our sinnes this cannot be, or not so soone as is desired, then their humble petition will be that at least they may have the same liberty and favour in England for their consciences, as Protestants have in France and other states... under Catholique kings and Emperoures.1

Such a mitigation now will avert war at Elizabeth's death, when every foreign ruler "wilbe desirous to have an oare in the guyding of this barke."

And further I appeale to your Lordships wise consideration what a comfort it might be to her Maiestie, now in her elder age, and later part of her government, and to your Lordships also to see once all sortes of people merry, contented, loving, and confident within the realm; al to laugh and sing togeather; all to pray to God most hartely for her Maiesties health, wealth and prosperous long continuance; al to be united in defence of the realme; all made friends and familiar together.2

It would be a mistake to read into these words evidence that years
have mellowed the Jesuit’s hatred of Queen Elizabeth. It is not Father Parsons who is speaking, but the fictitious “N.D.” of the title page. His pretense of admiration was immediately abandoned when tidings reached him of Elizabeth’s death. To the first volume (1603) of his Treatise of Three Conversions, printed before the Queen’s decease, there was annexed, before the book left the binder, an “Addition” to Catholic readers, hastily penned after the long awaited news reached Rome.

Advertisement is come that Almighty God in his infinite mercy hath delivered yow at length (deare Catholiques) from your old persecutor, and as we hope will also shortly from your persecution. This “Addition,” intended for the new King’s perusal, voices a joy that cannot be heartfelt. The applause with which the news of James’s accession has been received at Rome is like that which greeted Constantine at the death of Diocletian, he reports, an apt comparison since in heaven the new King’s sainted mother must be praying for his reconciliation with the Church as St. Helena prayed for the conversion of her son Constantine. Parsons adds that he has read James’s Basilikon Doron and admires the learning and piety of it. “But I will goe no further in this matter least I may seem to flatter, which I hate with my harte, and his Maiestie detesteth.” Since all Catholics have helped advance James to his new title, surely they will soon feel the effects of his clemency.

Though he is still writing under a pseudonym, Parsons tries here to mollify the prejudice James may hold against him as author of the Conference About the Succession, issued in 1594.

As for the person now advanced, I know most certainly that there was never any doubt or difference among you, but that ever you desired his advancement above all others [though all Catholics have wished] that he might first be a Catholike and then our King... and to this end and no other I assure my selfe hath byn directed whatsoever may have been said, written, or done by any Catholike. The statement is almost candid. Despite years of professed devotion to Philip II, Father Parsons was never so “hispaniolated” that he would have preferred a Spaniard as ruler of England before James Stuart, had James been Catholic. His Spanish policy had been expedient, and Philip, who could play the game as well as the Jesuit, had probably never for a moment regarded it as anything else.

Parsons’ real feelings about James’s accession appear in the letter he wrote in July 1603 to Father Rivers, the secretary of Garnet. With great disgust he reports that “such applause was here [among the English scholars at the College?] generally at this new kings entrance, as if he had byn the greatest Catholike in the world” and that Catholic kings seem determined to send ambassadors with congratulations. He suggests that
the only course open to the Jesuits now is to urge Philip III to sign no treaty with England which does not include some guarantee of toleration for the Catholics. The Pope, determined to try gentle persuasion, has commanded the English Catholics to abstain from any rash attempts to better their lot. Parsons has forwarded these instructions to the Jesuits in England.6

This, then, was the policy forced on the Jesuits by the commands of Clement VIII and the fait accompli of James's accession: to discourage insurrection and to entreat through French and Spanish ambassadors for a mitigation of the laws against Catholics. At the very least the penal laws and recusancy fines passed during Elizabeth's reign might be suspended.

Had James been able to follow his own inclinations, the persecution would surely have been alleviated. But Puritanism, relatively quiescent during Elizabeth's last years, was now a surging force. The Established Church, to protect its own episcopacy against growing demands for presbyters, had to demonstrate its stern opposition to Rome. Sir Robert Cecil, now Lord Treasurer, and Richard Bancroft, who became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1604, stood as firmly as the predominantly Puritan House of Commons against mitigating the laws against Catholics. Within a month after James arrived in London it was known that the recusancy fines were still to be collected. In February 1604, frightened by the sudden increase of recusants, James ordered all priests to leave the kingdom. In July he signed a bill renewing all statutes against Jesuits, seminary priests and recusants. A priest was executed at Salisbury, and a layman suffered the same fate for helping him exercise his functions. The treaty with Spain signed in August ignored the question of a toleration for Catholics. In September all priests under arrest were shipped into banishment. And in February 1605 James instructed the Council and the bishops to enforce the existing laws against Catholics.7 Parsons' coreligionists soon had reason to fear that persecution might be more severe now than it had been under Elizabeth.

During the latter part of Clement's pontificate Parsons was exiled from Rome at the instigation of the French ambassador. Clement was never friendly to the Society and was now pursuing a policy of appeasement with the new English sovereign. It was felt that James might be pleased to hear that the author of the Conference About the Succession had been reprimanded. In September 1604 Parsons, who had gone to Naples for his health, was ordered to stay there. But soon after the election of Paul V in May 1605 he returned to Rome, was reconfirmed as Prefect of the English Jesuit, and resumed his duties as Rector of the College. The new Pope, formerly vice-protector of the College, was an old friend; and they
held the same views regarding papal rights. Paul was to beatify Ignatius Loyola in 1609.

After James’s accession Father Garnet faithfully delivered the instructions from Clement that Catholics abstain from insurrection. Shortly after the King arrived in England a secular priest and a lay Catholic who had supported the Scottish claim and felt now that James had broken promises to them, organized the insane “Bye Plot” to kidnap him. They were William Watson and Anthony Copley, authors of the most violent books published against Parsons during the Archpriest controversy of the preceding year. Hearing about the plot, both Blackwell the Archpriest and Garnet the Jesuit Superior sent warnings to the government. The conspirators were soon arrested and executed.

There were now about forty Jesuits in England, an increase of almost tenfold since 1595. When the awe-inspiring Gunpowder Plot was discovered in November 1605, the known intimacy between the Jesuits and the Catholic gentlemen who had conceived it led to suspicion of Jesuit implication. To contemporary Englishmen the Gunpowder Plot seemed the most cold-blooded treason of modern history, and it was immediately labeled a “Jesuit” scheme. In fact, Father Garnet and one or two other members of the Society had learned of the plan four or five months in advance and had notified neither the government nor the papacy about it. Garnet’s defense was difficult to refute. He had received the information under the inviolable seal of confession, he said, and no priest, without the permission of the penitent, could betray such confidences.

The Jacobean government was not eager to question the sanctity of a Catholic’s confession to his priest. In Garnet’s trial, however, Sir Edward Coke, the Attorney General, cited Jesuit pamphlets on equivocation to prove that nothing the defendant said could be trusted. There was some justice in this charge. Holding the view that a temporal court of heretics had no jurisdiction over an ecclesiastical subject of the Pope, Garnet felt privileged to employ amphibology. If the extorted confessions of the lay Catholics can be credited, he and several other Jesuits were more deeply involved in the Plot than he ever admitted. But it was not relevant to the trial of Garnet for Coke to represent the Plot as the culminating event in a long history of Jesuit intrigues, beginning with the arrival of Parsons and Campion in 1580. Coke’s view of the Powder Plot, however, was accepted and proclaimed by the Anglican clergy and persisted for centuries.

Several years before, Coke had published the Fifth Part of his famous Reports, in which he attempts to read into the history of English law proof that the monarch has always been the supreme governor of ecclesiastical affairs. Furthermore, he explains the Elizabethan laws against Catholics
as gentle and necessary consequences of the papal bull of 1570. Father Parsons learned that at Father Garnet's trial Coke had quoted from his own book and had added that the Protestant religion, even if it were conceded to be no older than the sixteenth century, was still more ancient than the Jesuit concept of papal supremacy. Garnet was executed in May 1606. Before the end of the year Parsons had dictated from his sickbed and published, again under a pseudonym, his *Answe re to the Fifth Part of Reportes set forth by Sir Edward Cooke*, a point-by-point examination of the Attorney General's book and a defense of the papal prerogative: temporal power, as all Christian kings since Constantine have recognized, is subordinate to spiritual power. God has given his Church not only the office of saving souls but also the power to carry out that office—if need be, by the excommunication and deposition of tyrants who imperil the salvation of their subjects.

Of more personal interest is the magnificent fifty-page address to Sir Edward Coke which introduces Parsons' book. It is the condemnation of one important Englishman by another. The great Jesuit accuses the great lawyer of a deliberate perversion of justice. Garnet's trial was a farce, declares Parsons. Nothing was proved against him but that he had learned of the Gunpowder Plot under the seal of confession. The position of a priest in such a case is like that of the angels, who have foresight but may not reveal the future to human beings without the permission of God himself. Garnet has died for his faith, is a true martyr and no traitor. Parsons reminds Sir Edward that judges, though their profession is an honorable one, are in especial danger of damnation and that on Judgment Day he and Father Henry Garnet will meet face to face before the throne of God.

In sharp contrast to his urbane and scholarly reply to Coke was the trio of scolding books which Parsons, under the pen name of "B.C.," was writing about the same time against Thomas Bell. First an Anglican, then a seminary priest, Bell had won Father Parsons' praise in 1586 by his constancy under torture in an English prison. Since then he had returned to the Anglican ministry and had written a series of treatises abusing the Papacy, calumniating Parsons and the Society of Jesus, and challenging any Catholic to a disputation. Parsons replied in 1606 with *The Forerunner of Bels Downefal, wherein is briefly answered his bragging of disputation*. Bell countered with a tract entitled *The Pope's Funerall*, and in 1607 Parsons published his *Doleful Knell of Thomas Bell*. The Anglican responded with a book called *The Triall of the New Religion*, which Parsons answered in 1608 with his *Bells Triall Examined*. Like his exchanges with Matthew Sutcliffe, the books against Bell are unpalatable mixtures of learning, bickering, and vituperation.
In 1607 Parsons published his *Treatise tending to the Mitigation toward Catholike Subjectes in England*, signed "P.R." and containing a preface "to all true-hearted Englishmen." This work was an answer to Thomas Morton, later Bishop of Durham, who (probably aided by John Donne) had written that Catholics who believed in the papal right to depose kings could never be loyal subjects. Parsons points out that both James and his mother have learned from experience that the real threat to British monarchs lies in the Presbyterians and the Puritans. Morton has cited Parsons’ *Conference About the Succession* as anti-monarchical, and Parsons, still referring to the author of the book as "Doleman," attempts now to answer the charge. Doleman, he states, never contended that the people have a right to change an established government, but that the commonwealth, before it is formally organized, may choose the type of government best suited to its temperament. Evidently Parsons hopes that most of his readers know the *Conference* only by hearsay.

But the *Treatise* is chiefly interesting because it contains Parsons’ defense of equivocation, a doctrine which Thomas Morton has passionately assailed. According to Parsons, equivocation is not something invented by the Jesuits. Entirely different from lying or perjury, equivocation was used by Jesus himself. Modern statesmen use it to protect state secrets. Witnesses and defendants may rightly equivocate to protect themselves and others when on trial in an unlawfully constituted court. A priest, questioned about facts learned from a penitent at confession, may justly say that the man has not confessed such information to him, keeping the mental reservation that the information was not given to him as a man but to him as a representative of God. Parsons himself, and every Englishman who read this long defense of equivocation, had the recent trial of Father Garnet foremost in his mind. It may be dull reading today, but to a contemporary reader each sentence was packed with interest. Bishop Morton, of course, wrote a reply and Parsons, of course, answered the reply. His *Quiet and Sober Reckoning with M. Thomas Morton somewhat set in choler by his adversary P.R.* (1609) is more than seven hundred pages long. On the title page the Jesuit quotes from Scripture: "You have byn weighed in the ballance & are found to want weight."

More important, however, than these light skirmishes with Morton was the major battle Parsons was fighting simultaneously against a more formidable opponent. To understand this controversy it will be necessary to go back four years. The Parliament which the conspirators had planned to blow up on November 5, 1605, met as scheduled on that date, despite the uproar resulting from the discovery of Guy Fawkes and the kegs of powder on the preceding night. In January 1606 a bill was passed establishing November 5 as an annual day of thanksgiving. The laws against
Catholics enacted by this Parliament threatened to render the reign of James even more intolerable than that of Elizabeth. Already excluded from state and ecclesiastical offices, they were now disqualified from acting as attorneys or physicians or executors of wills or guardians of children. To avoid penalties for recusancy it was no longer enough that they appear at the Anglican services; they must now consent to receive the sacraments from Protestant ministers. No recusant was to travel more than five miles from his home or to appear at Court or to remain within ten miles of London unless he was engaged in a recognized business.14

Most galling, however, was the new Oath of Allegiance imposed by the same Parliament. This long oath, which could be tendered to any sentenced or indicted recusant over the age of eighteen unless he was a nobleman, contained a clause by which he must swear that he abhorred as “impious and heretical this damnable doctrine and position that princes which be excommunicated by the Pope may be deposed or murdered by subjects or any other whatsoever.” Refusal to take the oath made him liable to loss of liberty and property under the penalty of praemunire. James proclaimed to the world that the oath was strictly civil in nature, since it left unquestioned the Pope’s right to excommunicate. Many Catholics, including some of the secular priests in English prisons, took it, firmly convinced that the Papacy had no right to depose kings. But the Jesuits and their adherents pointed out that no oath was merely civil if it required the swearer to pronounce a doctrinal opinion as “impious, heretical and damnable.”

Even before the oath was adopted by Parliament, Parsons in Rome had a copy of it and had sent Cardinal Bellarmine a memorial urging him to procure a papal decree that it was heresy to deny the Pope’s temporal power.15 Paul V did not specify that the denial of his temporal power was heretical, but he issued a breve in September 1606 informing English Catholics that swearing the oath would imperil their salvation.

In 1607 the Archpriest Blackwell was captured. To the consternation of many, he not only subscribed to the despised oath but also wrote to the priests under his charge recommending that they follow his example. Released from his close association with the Jesuits, Blackwell now justified his action by arguing that the recent breve was not the product of the Pope’s own mind. In August, Paul repeated his condemnation of the oath. Blackwell still refused to recant and was consequently deposed in February 1608, the Pope appointing George Birkhead to the Archpresbyterate in his stead.16

The paper warfare over the Oath of Allegiance lasted until the oath was altered after the Revolution of 1688. Robert Parsons’ death in 1610 cut short his part in the controversy; but for three years he was one of
the major figures and, since his books were written in the vernacular, they were more widely read in England than those of the illustrious Cardinal Bellarmine.

In February 1608 James I, having read the two breves of Paul V and a letter of Bellarmine's to Blackwell on the subject of the oath, reproduced the three documents and answered them in a brief tract entitled *Triplici Nodo, Tripux Cuneus, or An Apologie for the Oath of Allegiance*, which was published in both English and Latin. The King, to use his own words, first "sacrificed to the Manes of Elizabeth," defending "that blessed de-funct Ladie" from the charge that she had ever persecuted Papists for their religion. Most of the treatise is a refutation of "Master Bellarmine's" letter to Blackwell. James defends the new oath as strictly civil, designed to enable loyal Catholics to dissociate themselves from traitors. Since Bellarmine has urged the Archpriest to renounce the oath, imitating such martyrs as Sir Thomas More and the Bishop of Rochester in Henry VIII's reign, James attacks the notion that dying for disobedience to English laws is martyrdom. His main point is that the doctrine of a pope's right to depose kings and authorize rebellion is an innovation of the Jesuits.

Before the end of the year 1605 two able replies had reached the royal polemicist: one in Latin by Cardinal Bellarmine and one in English by Robert Parsons, entitled *The Judgment of a Catholike English-Man, Living in Banishment for his Religion, Concerning A late Booke entituled Triplici nodo, Tripux cuneus*. Although the King's book was unsigned, it had been printed by the royal printer and bore the royal arms. James had presented copies to foreign ambassadors, and the authorship was an open secret. In their replies, however, both Bellarmine and Parsons take advantage of the "anonymity" of the book, pretending to believe it to be by Thomas Montague, the King's chaplain. His Majesty would never have permitted the publication of the *Apoloie* if he had read it, says Parsons in his *Judgment*. He ridicules James's pagan "sacrifice to the Manes of Elizabeth" and, assailing the character and career of the late Queen with fury, concludes that if the spirit of Elizabeth could return from hell, she would advise Protestant kings not to follow her example in their treatment of Catholics. Like Bellarmine's *Responsio*, Parsons' *Judgment* is principally an attack on the assertion that the new oath is merely civil. As for the claim that Sir Thomas More and others died for treason and had no right to be considered martyrs,

No suffering is so honourable as that which commeth with a dishonourable title: so as English Catholickes must not be dismaied when they suffer for the false imputation of Civill Disloyalty to their temporall Prince, being witting to themselves, that it is indeed for their Religion, and loyalty to God their eternall Prince, and supreme King.
In 1609 both James I and Bishop Andrewes brought out replies to Parsons and Bellarmine, the King’s being a new issue of his *Apologie* with the anonymity removed and with an added “Premonition to all Most Mightie Monarches, Kings, Free Princes, and States of Christendome,” warning them that the doctrine of the Pope’s power is a threat to them all. Parsons’ *Judgment* was also answered by William Barlow, Bishop of Lincoln. Incidentally, it was at this point that John Donne, bidding for preferment, ingratiated himself with James by writing his *Pseudo-Martyr*, restating the King’s own arguments, and by publishing a year later his satirical *Ignatius His Conclave*.

Meanwhile, as if his controversies with Protestants were not enough, Father Parsons was under continual attack from coreligionists. Before his deposition the Archpriest Blackwell, forbidden since 1602 to consult with Parsons and Garnet, had developed a self-reliance alarming to the Jesuits. One of his chief complaints was that some of the priests sent to him from the seminaries abroad were so nearly illiterate, so easily proselytized, and so dissolute that Catholic families did not want them in their homes. Discipline at Douai had become lax, he contended. To the plausible charge that Father Parsons wanted to transfer the Douai seminary to Jesuit management was added an implausible accusation that he was encouraging the decay of discipline there as a pretext for the transfer.

While this estrangement was developing between Blackwell and the Jesuits, the seculars who regarded the Archpriest as a Jesuit appointee were active again. Early in 1606—while Garnet was on trial for his life—two of the former Appellant envoys, John Cecil and Anthony Champney, returned to Rome with a plea from seventy priests that the new Pope substitute an episcopacy for the Archpresbyterate. Parsons contributed to the easy defeat of this mission by writing a series of memorials assailing the characters of the two petitioners. In justice to him it should be remembered that since 1591 John Cecil had been submitting secret reports to the Privy Council.

Correspondence between Blackwell and the Papacy was still delivered, like Garnet’s letters to General Aquaviva, through Father Parsons. After Paul V replaced Blackwell with George Birkhead, the practice continued of channeling all correspondence from England through the hands of Parsons, supposedly the best-informed Englishman in Rome. Birkhead, a friend of the Jesuits, wrote to Parsons immediately after his appointment asking whether the restriction imposed on his predecessor applied to himself. Parsons replied that he would ask the Pope, but that in the meantime Birkhead need not hesitate to consult with Father Holtby, who had succeeded Garnet as Jesuit Superior.19

Birkhead was more admired by his subordinates than Blackwell had
been, but his corresponding with Parsons—which was practically his only sure way of reaching the ear of the Pope—was offensive to some of the seculars. In their antipathy for Parsons these priests had the support of Lord Montague, a Catholic nobleman indignant that a letter of his to the Pope had been read only by Parsons and merely reported to the Pontiff. Parsons wrote that he was trying to persuade Paul to appoint bishops for England, but the anti-Jesuits were convinced that he was really arguing against such appointments and solely responsible for the fact that the Pope did not personally read each of the many documents sent to him from England.

Birkhead began to realize that if he hoped to unite the hundreds of priests in England he must detach himself from the Jesuits. Furthermore, he must have an agent at Rome who could approach the Pope directly and not through Robert Parsons. Still aware of Parsons’ great influence, Birkhead tried to achieve independence without offending him. Early in 1609 he dispatched an envoy, Dr. Richard Smith, to discuss with the Pope the condition of Catholics in England. He instructed Smith to work as amiably as possible with Father Parsons on this business.

Dr. Smith arrived in May and was lodged for the usual eight days allowed English visitors in the English College. This man was destined to one of the highest honors the Church can bestow on a priest; but he stood firmly for the independence of the secular clergy and was convinced that a belief in the papal right to depose kings was no article of faith. With such views, he was unlikely to accomplish much with Paul V, who relied on the advice of Cardinal Bellarmine and Father Parsons. Though for a while Smith and Parsons tried to work together, there soon developed a personality clash that lasted until Parsons’ death a year later.

To begin with, the envoy explained that the Archpriest wished to be prohibited, like his predecessor, from consulting the Jesuits in the affairs of his office. Parsons refused to believe that Birkhead had asked for such a restriction; but to his chagrin, when Smith was received by the Pope, Paul renewed Clement’s prohibition. Convinced that Birkhead was yielding to pressures, Parsons began to dispatch pairs of letters to him, one in each case for his private perusal, filled with complaints against Smith, and another for the Archpriest to show to his subordinates—a letter stressing the help that Parsons was furnishing Smith. Birkhead, trying to sever relations with Parsons tactfully, wrote begging him to send no more secret letters. He reminded Parsons that he was forbidden to discuss such matters with him and suggested that the Jesuit direct to the Inquisition his complaints against Smith.

Defeated in these clashes, Parsons could still frustrate Smith on other grounds. Certain items on the list of requests that Smith brought pertained
to the Douai seminary, where the President, Dr. Worthington, was completely independent of control from England. Like Blackwell before him, Birkhead felt that he should have some authority over the seminary where priests for England were trained and a voice in deciding whether a scholar were qualified for ordination. He felt that it would be better for a while to have no more priests sent to England than to receive the sort presently coming from Douai.

But to Parsons the request was an insult to Dr. Worthington and his Jesuit assistants. When the Pope commanded the Inquisition to examine the matter, Father Parsons resorted as usual to submitting memorials, these against the changes Birkhead was recommending for Douai. Parsons strongly disapproved any reduction in the number of priests being sent to England, claiming that Smith was misrepresenting the Archpriest's wishes. Consequently, the Inquisition recommended that no innovations be made at Douai.

At the same time that he was secretly maligning Smith in letters to Birkhead and memorials to the cardinals, Parsons was inviting him to the College and trying to create the impression in Rome that all misunderstanding between English Jesuits and seculars had ended. Dr. Smith, however, warned from England about the letters Parsons was writing against him, began to avoid the Jesuit. In March 1610, a few weeks before his death, Father Parsons wrote again to the embarrassed Archpriest, who had tried in vain to end all correspondence with him.

It was both our and your evil hap, when you lighted upon such a mediator, who sheweth himself so passionate and captivous, as, even in private talk, he will often mistake a man's words... and much more, afterwards, will misreport or misconstrue them... I hope you persuade yourself that I know, in part at least, what a great sin it is to misreport any man, or hurt his fame wrongfully. I could feel deeply that you write, that, if I seek to oppress your agent by false informations, you must bend yourself to defend him... Do you think that, after so many years of religion, I have learned to have no more care of my soul, than to seek to oppress a man by false informations? You must needs have great credit in him, and very little in me, that can believe this.21

During these last months the indefatigable Parsons wrote his second major contribution to the paper warfare about the Oath of Allegiance. He died before finishing his Discussion of the Answere of M. William Barlow to the Booke intituled The Judgment of a Catholike English-Man, but the fragment published after his death ran to 543 pages. Barlow, Bishop of Lincoln, had scolded the Jesuit for his disrespectful remarks about the author of the Apologie for the Oath of Allegiance, saying that all Europe had known that the book was by King James. Parsons now admits that he had suspected as much. But, he asks, if the King wanted to conceal his authorship, was it not the duty of a loyal subject to respect
that wish and had not the boldness of his answer—a boldness no subject
would use against his King—contributed toward preserving the secret.22

Both James, in the second edition of his Apologie, and Barlow, in his
Answere to Parsons' book, had stated that the Pope's command that
English Catholics not take the oath was a threat to all the sovereigns of
Europe. For a subject to dispute with his king, now that James was
admitted author of the Apologie, would be of no service to the Catholic
cause. But Parsons can still dispute with William Barlow, a fellow-subject.
Again he emphasizes the loyalty of the Catholics to their kings and the
real threat to the English monarchy lying in the Puritans. Again he argues
that the oath is not merely civil.

None of the repeated references of the Catholic polemicists to James's
"sainted" mother had elicited a single response from the King or his
supporters, who preferred to remain silent about Mary Stuart. James and
all England, however, had gasped in horror at Parsons' assertion that
Elizabeth's soul was now in hell. Barlow had rebuked the Jesuit for daring
to pass such a judgment. Parsons' last word on the subject fills seventy
pages.23 In most cases, he admits, it would be unpardonable to judge a
fellow-mortal, but in the case of an excommunicated woman whose sins
were as manifest as Elizabeth's, any theologian is privileged to surmise
that her soul is now among the damned.

During the Lenten season of 1610 Father Parsons, after a severe attack
of fever, realized that he was dying. On the Saturday before Easter he
wrote two letters of farewell to England, one to the Jesuits and one to the
Archpriest. In the letter to Birkhead he declares that the Society of Jesus
has never aspired to superiority over the secular clergy. He and all other
Jesuits have sought only an accord to the profit and increase of the
Catholic Church:

This agreement, I hope, will be preserved in the love of Christ by you and our
fathers at all time to the honour and glory of God, the Most High, to whose
charge, with the same love and the same affection with which I commend my
soul, I also commend you and all my most dear brothers, who are in your
charge.24

Parsons died on April 10, 1610. He was buried in the chapel of the
English College. When Rome fell into the hands of the French in 1798,
the lead coffin was melted down for bullets and the bones were scattered,
but the monument with its Latin epitaph is still there.25

James I, addressing the monarchs of Europe in 1609, had paused in
his diatribe against Bellarmine and the Pope long enough to pronounce
a royal curse on Robert Parsons—a runaway English subject who had
dared ridicule the literary style of his own King and had presumed to
assert that the ghost of his own former Queen was suffering now in hell:
As for the English Answere, my unnatural and fugitive Subject, I will neither
defile my pen, nor your sacred eyes or cares with the describing of him, who
ashames, nay, abhorres not to raile, nay to rage and spew foorth blasphemies
against the late Queene of famous memory. A Subject to raile against has
natural Soueraigne by birth; A man to raile against a Lady by sexe; A holy
man (in outward profession) to insult upon the dead; nay to take Radamanthus
office over his head, and to sit downe and play the judge in hell; and all his
quarrell is, that either her Successour, or any of her servants should speak
honourably of her. Cursed be he that curseth the Anointed of God: and de-
stroyed mought he be with the destruction of Korah. Without mought such
dogs and swine be cast forth, I say, out of the Spiritual Jerusalem.

These blistering words of the King must have been among the many
others against Parsons which Edward Coffin, another English Jesuit, had
in mind when he wrote in 1612,

For had not his fervour and forwardness toward the Catholick Religion been
very singular, the professed enemies thereof had never shown such extreme
spite, malice and rancour against him as they did, whose injury done in this
behalfe is no more disparagement unto him in the sight of God, his Angels,
Saints, and all sober men, then it was to the Apostles to be whipped by the
Iewes. S. Fulgentius by the Arians, or S. Paul to fly from Damesco in a basket
by the wall....Wherefore to F. Persons we may apply that sentence of S.
Hierome, where speaking of his zeal against hereticks he saith: I will answer
them, that I never spared hereticks but have laboured by all means I could,
that the enemies of the Church, might also be my enemies. So S. Hierome and
so F. Persons: and consequently if his zeal against them secured their enmitie,
and their enmitie brake forth into this hereticall insolency, I nothing doubt, but
that now as well his painful endeavors in his works and writings against them,
as his patient endurance of the wrongs and injurys he received by them, are
both crowned in heaven with their due reward of immortal glory.

The real Robert Parsons lay somewhere between the contemptuous char-
acter drawn by the King and the saintly portrait by his fellow Jesuit. But
no one felt mildly enough about Father Parsons to consign his ghost to
so impermanent an abode as purgatory.
RICE UNIVERSITY STUDIES
NOTES
CHAPTER I

5. Ibid., pp. 181 and 275.
9. Ibid., pp. 291-319. Rowse has found that the diocese of Exeter, for instance, produced only one Protestant martyr.
17. Gee, pp. i-xiv. Gee summarizes the various hostile accounts written c. 1600.
23. Ibid., p. 252.
29. Ibid., p. 142.
32. "The First Entrance of the Fathers," pp. 197-199. I have found no further substantiation of this visit with Beza and believe that Parsons fabricated the episode.
33. Ibid., p. 200.

(76)
Chapter II

1. Ibid., pp. 200-201.
4. Ibid., Introduction by Father Hicks, pp. xx-xxx.
5. Ibid., pp. 28-41. This is a sixteenth-century Latin version called Parsons' "Confesio Fidei," with a modern English translation. The original English document has not survived.
8. Ibid., pp. 56-62.
9. Ibid., pp. 57-58.
10. Ibid., p. 60.
11. Froude, XI, 80-82.
16. John Nichols, A Declaration of the recaniation of John Nichols for the space almost of two yeares the Popes Scholer in the English Seminarie or College at Rome (London, 1581), unpaginated.
17. Gillow, V, 278.
23. Waugh, op. cit.

Chapter III

1. A Defence of the Censure (Rouen, 1582), p. 4.
3. Gillow, V, 278.
6. Pollen, pp. 31-34.
7. "Letters of Father Persons," Introduction by Hicks, pp. xlvii ff. See also Conyers Read, Mr. Secretary Walsingham (Cambridge, Mass., 1925), II, 159-177.
10. Ibid., pp. 160-170.
CHAPTER IV

1. Astrain, III, 250-432.
2. Ibid., pp. 480-482. Father Astrain gives no details of the English affairs discussed by Philip and Parsons.
3. Ibid., p. 483.
4. Parsons' letter to Creighton, quoted later in this chapter, explains his position eloquently.
5. At Rheims Dr. Barrett, a secular priest, became President of the seminary when Allen was made Cardinal. In Rome Father Cresswell, recalled from Flanders, succeeded Parsons as Rector of the College.
8. Curry was not yet a priest. Fathers John Gerard and Edward Oldcorne, Jesuits, had been in England since the winter of 1588-89. See Knox, p. cixi.
10. Ibid., pp. 38-44 passim.
11. Ibid., pp. 50-71 passim.
12. Ibid., pp. 112-114.
17. Ibid., pp. 517-553 passim.
18. Campion, the first, had been hanged in 1582.
19. Parsons' defense of equivocation will be summarized in Chapter VI.
22. So far Parsons' argument has served to prepare for either rebellion against Elizabeth if an armada arrives during her lifetime, or opposition to the accession of James after her death. Here it is directed against James alone.

23. A Conference About the Next Succession (1681 reprint), Part II, pp. 47-54. See Lily B. Campbell, pp. 168-212. Miss Campbell stresses the frequency with which Elizabeth was paralleled in "mirror" literature with Richard II; quotes the Queen's exclamation: "I am Richard II, know ye not that?"; and suggests a connection between Parsons' Conference and Shakespeare's Richard II.


25. Quoted by Taunton, pp. 183-186.


29. Here, perhaps, Parsons had in mind the conflicts he had observed between Jesuits and Dominicans in Spain.


31. Ibid., p. 44.

32. Ninety years later the Jesuit confessor of James II presented a copy of Parsons' Memorial to the King. It was first printed after it was found among James's papers following the Revolution of 1688. Published as an exposé in 1690, with an indignant introduction by Edward Gee, Chaplain to William and Mary, it was used as additional justification for the revolution and as propaganda against Catholics in general and Jesuits in particular.

33. John Donne was a gentleman volunteer on this expedition.

Chapter V

1. The domestic disputes of the English Catholics between 1595 and 1602 have been treated at length by Thomas Graves Law in his Historical Sketch of the Conflicts between Jesuits and Seculars (London, 1889). I am indebted to Law for many details in the present chapter, but I have tried to avoid his tendency always to interpret the facts to the discredit of the Jesuits.

2. Translated by Tierney, III, xlviii-lvii.

3. Ibid., III, 75.

4. Ibid., III, lxxxviii-lxxx. Holt was transferred to Spain and died there in 1598.


7. Some of Weston's achievements as an exorcisor are reported in Samuel Harsnett's A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures (1604), from which Shakespeare borrowed the names of the devils mentioned in King Lear, II, iv, and IV, i.

8. Bagshaw tacitly admitted that most of the laity sided with the Jesuits. See Law, p. 46.


10. Law, pp. lxxiii-lxxiv. Law treats the second letter as a secret one. The fact that the Archpriest showed it at once to anti-Jesuit priests seems to disprove such a view.

CHAPTER VI

2. Ibid., pp. 122-123.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
9. The term *penitent* was hardly applicable, as Coke pointed out, since the conspirators were confessing, not a deed already committed and regretted, but one intended for the future.
10. Father Parsons’ own explanation of equivocation will be summarized later in this chapter.
15. Tierney, IV, 70.
20. Ibid., V, Appendix, lxii ff.
21. Ibid., V, Appendix, xcvi ff.
23. Ibid., pp. 159-228.
25. Ibid., pp. 398-399.
27. *A Discussion of the Answere*, unpaginated preface by Father Edward Coffin then confessor at the English College. See Gillow, I, 523.