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## A Looking Glass for England: The Elizabethan Reception of French Political Thought, 1562-1590

Emily Jane Williams

*College of William & Mary - Arts & Sciences*

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A LOOKING GLASS FOR ENGLAND:  
"THE ELIZABETHAN RECEPTION  
OF FRENCH POLITICAL  
THOUGHT,  
1562-1590

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
The Faculty of the Department of History  
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

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by  
Emily Jane Williams  
1975

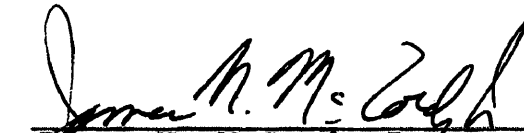
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This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of  
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Emily J. Williams

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James N. McCord, Jr.

  
Anthony J. Esler

  
Thomas F. Sheppard

## ABSTRACT

Fearful of rebellion or invasion encouraged by Catholic nations, Elizabeth I and her government tried, with some success, to limit the dissemination of radical ideas in England. Nearby France, enduring a religious civil war, furnished a model, a looking glass, for a state of affairs Elizabeth did not want duplicated in her own kingdom.

Through a study of some of the STC titles (of both French and English origins) available in England from 1562, at the outbreak of the French Wars of Religion, until 1590, after the defeat of the Armada, the accession of Henri of Navarre, and the withdrawal of the first English expeditionary force to aid Henri as king of France, the differences in contemporary French and English thought become apparent. Faced with a more chaotic political situation than the English, the French set forth more radical theories on the nature of sovereignty and the legitimacy of resistance. Also evident is the similarity of sixteenth-century French thought and seventeenth-century English thought, showing that even though their own political situation did not yet foster their understanding of radical French theories, the English did absorb and later use French ideas.

As in a briefe chronicle, or short compiled  
history (gentle reader) even so in this worke  
shalt thou behold the slipperie kingdome, of  
France, our near neighbour, whose warres,  
strifes, and most troublesome contentions...  
[attest to] thy owne Countries continuall  
blessedness. . . in sorrowing for the one,  
so thou wilt hartily pray for the other, that  
the afflictions of France, may be Englands  
looking glasse. . . .

\*The Mutable and wauering estate of France, from  
the year of our Lord 1460, untill the yeare 1595 (London,  
1597), n.p.

## INTRODUCTION

Sixteenth-century France, torn by warfare between Catholics and Protestants, faced with rebellion against its lawful rulers, and prey to foreign intervention in its affairs, furnished a mirror for Elizabethan England. Although not a faithful image, France reflected England as it could have been at Elizabeth's accession in 1558 and what it could have become at her death. The reaction to this state of affairs, both in France and in England, is the subject of the following study.

Political commentary in Tudor England, it should be noted, was subject to tight restrictions. Many French political commentaries were published in England in the late sixteenth century, but only those judged suitable by the government. The propaganda value of the printing press was well-recognized, and to control thought the government controlled printing. To this end the Stationer's Company was incorporated in 1557 and given a monopoly of the publishing trade. When Elizabeth confirmed the Stationer's charter in 1559, her precarious position between Protestantism and Catholicism dictated even stricter censorship than previously known. Works had to be approved by any two of the following: the queen, any

privy councillor, the archbishop of Canterbury or York, the bishop of London, or the chancellor of one of the universities.<sup>1</sup> Similarly a 1576 French edict, obviously disobeyed, forbade the selling of books unless they had been examined by government authorities.<sup>2</sup> In 1567 Lord Keeper Nicholas Bacon made a speech in the Privy Council "touching the rumors circulated by the bringing in of seditious books, to the derogation and dishonour of Almighty God, and the established religion,"<sup>3</sup> and in 1570 Elizabeth issued a proclamation "against harbouring seditious persons and rebels, and from bringing in traitorous books from abroad."<sup>4</sup> Seditious books remained a problem; a 1585 act of Parliament called for the "punishment of such as shall disperse books and libels to the slander of government."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>For a discussion of Elizabethan censorship, see Cyril Bathurst Judge, Elizabethan Book-Pirates, Harvard Studies in English, VIII (Cambridge, Mass., 1934). Certainly censorship was as tight as it had been in the reigns of Henry VIII and Mary Tudor.

<sup>2</sup>Henri III, The Edict or Proclamation . . . upon the pacifying of the troubles in Fraunce . . . (London, 1576), 9.

<sup>3</sup>Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reigns of Edward VI., Mary, Elizabeth, I (1547-1580), 302.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 396.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., II (1581-1590), 225.

Vocal opposition to this government censorship was infrequent.<sup>6</sup> Censorship was, nevertheless, only partially successful; all undesirable foreign work was not kept out of England nor were all domestic tracts printed by monopolists. Book piracy, inspired by the religious passions of the age, was endemic in the last half of the sixteenth century.<sup>7</sup> As many as one-third of the extant books of the Tudor era were not listed in the official Stationer's Register, and some books listed are presumed lost.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, a study of the literature of the period cannot be exhaustive.

France's civil wars were a looking glass, a model for the English to avoid. By examining one segment of the contact between the two countries--printed works on political theory, first those from France, then those from England--contemporary French and English thought can be compared. To be considered are the events shaping French and English thought, the contents of that thought, the reception given French theories in England, and the differences in thinking in the two countries.

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<sup>6</sup>The printing monopoly did not go uncontested. John Wolfe and Christopher Barker, both publishers of political tracts, had a running feud, with Wolfe leading the rebels and Barker defending the privileged. See Some Forerunners of the Newspaper in England, 1476-1622, 2d ed. (New York, 1966), 284.

<sup>7</sup>Judge, Elizabethan Book-Pirates, 141.

<sup>8</sup>H. S. Bennett, English Books and Readers, 1558 to 1603 (Cambridge, 1965), 74, 223.



## CHAPTER I

It is as impossible for any to know their proper face & feature without an object as it is for any people to bee truly sensible of their own felicity, that have not seene nor tasted others misery.<sup>1</sup>

In any consideration of a foreign land there is a tendency to make a comparison with the homeland . . . . The qualities admired in another country are often qualities that are desired in the country of the observer, or the problems of another people may serve as an example, warning, or solution for problems facing the observer's countrymen.

The Elizabethans were aware of the lessons to be learned from others' examples. Use of the looking glass image was not unique to this era; it had been employed frequently since the twelfth century. Through mirrors, "people of the Middle Ages liked to gaze at themselves and other folk--mirrors of history and doctrine and morals, mirrors of princes and lovers and fools."<sup>3</sup> History was a "glass," "a myrrour for al men," and the prince's conduct a mirror for his subjects; "the goodness or badnes of any

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<sup>1</sup>John Stowe, The Abridgement of the English Chronicle (London, 1611), introduction.

<sup>2</sup>Marvin Arthur Breslow, A Mirror of England: English Puritan Views of Foreign Nations, 1618-1640 (Cambridge, Mass., 1970), 143.

<sup>3</sup>Sister Ritamary Bradley, C.H.M., "Background of the Title Speculum in Medieval Literature," Speculum, XXIX (1954), 100.

realme lyeth in the goodnes or badnes of the rulers," wrote William Baldwin in Mirror for Magistrates.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, Mirror for Magistrates declared that the problems of others should serve as a looking glass for the prince, a sentiment repeated in both French and English works. In A discourse of the Ciuile Warres and late troubles in France, the French story was said to be "a most true looking glasse for the soueraigne to behold continually."<sup>5</sup> Similarly The Supremacie of Christian Princes boasted that Elizabeth's preservation of her estate against those who bore her malice had "giuen a mirror to al christian Princes to folowv . . . ."<sup>6</sup>

History, set down for the "profit of all men,"<sup>7</sup> was important to English readers. No subject was of greater benefit, for it was believed to be a "sovereign teacher of practical lessons and good conduct."<sup>8</sup> An increasing number of histories, both contemporary and classical, were

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<sup>4</sup>/William Baldwin<sup>7</sup>, A Myrrore for Magistrates . . . (London, 1559), n.p.

<sup>5</sup>/Geoffrey Fenton<sup>7</sup>, A discourse of the Ciuile Warres and late troubles in France . . . (London, /1570/), n.p.

<sup>6</sup>John Bridges, The Supremacie of Christian Princes, ouer all persons throughout their dominions . . ., (London, 1573), n.p.

<sup>7</sup>/Jean de Serres<sup>7</sup>, The Three Partes of Commentaries . . ., Thomas Timme, trans. (London, 1574), n.p.

<sup>8</sup>Louis B. Wright, Middle-Class Culture in Elizabethan England (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1935), 100, and Joan Simon, Education and Society in Tudor England (Cambridge, 1966), 385.

published throughout Elizabeth's reign: out of a total of 266 imprints appearing in 1590, 41, or approximately 20 percent, were in this category. By contrast only 5 histories out of 149 publications, or just over 3 percent, were printed in 1560, early in the reign.<sup>9</sup> It was axiomatic that

every good subject . . . should compare the time past with the time present . . . that we maye learne by the doings of our elders howe we may deale in our owne affayres, and so through wisdom by our neyghbours example avoyde al<sup>l</sup> harme that else unwares might happen unto us.<sup>10</sup>

The Elizabethan reading public eagerly sought some word of their neighbor's example.<sup>11</sup> Although an accurate estimate of the number of readers involved is impossible, the reading public grew phenomenally in the century 1550 to 1650, if the growth of book printing and book buying are reliable indicators.<sup>12</sup> From the tone of histories, official documents, and other pamphlets, it seems that printed works were read most often by "respect-

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<sup>9</sup>Edith L. Klotz, "A Subject Analysis of English Imprints for Every Tenth Year from 1480 to 1640," Huntington Library Quarterly, I, 418.

<sup>10</sup>Quoted by H. S. Bennett, English Books and Readers, 1558 to 1603 (Cambridge, 1965), 91.

<sup>11</sup>M. A. Shaaber, Some Forerunners of the Newspaper in England, 1476-1622, 2d ed. (New York, 1966), 320-321.

<sup>12</sup>Bennett, English Books and Readers, 2, 189, and Wright, Middle-Class Culture, 81. Modern recording of such statistics was not an Elizabethan custom.

able, responsible, and sober-minded citizenry."<sup>13</sup> Book prices of at least two pence per pamphlet undoubtedly limited readership somewhat, but for those who could afford to read, printers competed with each other, turned out a greater variety of imprints, and further encouraged book buying.<sup>14</sup>

Available to Elizabethan readers were official proclamations, news of military actions, polemical tracts, histories and propagandistic appeals. The royal proclamations, although posted publicly, were sold over the counter as well. Government printing of proclamations, including translations, made such information readily available. By issuing its own news, the government was "instructing the nation in its duty."<sup>15</sup> In addition, a large number of translated French proclamations were sold, reflecting an interest in French affairs.

Another type of information, military news, also showed English concerns. Pamphlets coming from continental sources often portrayed the English forces only as a small band of auxiliaries to be mentioned in passing. For example,

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<sup>13</sup>Shaaber, Forerunners of the Newspaper, 137.

<sup>14</sup>Francis R. Johnson, "Notes on English Retail Book-prices, 1550-1640," The Library, 5th Ser., V (1960), 89, 90, 93. These figures are for the period 1561 to 1600.

<sup>15</sup>Shaaber, Forerunners of the Newspaper, 62-63.

a French work of 1590, A Recitall of that which hath happened in the Kings Armie, since the taking of the Suburbes of Paris, in its French edition apparently made no reference to the English forces fighting with Henri IV, but knowing that this was what the public wanted, the London publisher inserted two marginal references to English assistance. Military information was not unbiased and appeared in abundance with Protestant victories on the continent. However, when the Protestants were defeated, English publishers printed were-wolf or demoniac stories.<sup>16</sup> Perhaps the lack of contemporary material on the Willoughby expedition of 1589 to 1590, the first English military aid to Henri IV after his accession, can be explained by the fact that it was both dangerous and unprofitable to print bad news. English interest in France certainly did not end with the withdrawel of Willoughby's forces early in 1590. Forty pamphlets on Henri IV appeared in England in 1590, the year of his first successes against the Catholic League, helping to make it the most prolific year in English publishing to that time.<sup>17</sup> Henri, the Protestant king fighting for his throne against the forces of Catholicism, was for some a folk hero, as

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<sup>16</sup>Shaaber, Forerunners of the Newspaper, 176.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 169.

idolized as Elizabeth.<sup>18</sup>

Conversely Spain and Catholicism were depicted in pamphlet literature as personifications of everything base and cruel. France, and particularly the Protestants, or Huguenots, had been wronged by the Guise family, the dastardly agents of Spain and the papacy. Such portrayals in both English and translated French works appealed to the Elizabethan audience. The Mutable and wauering estate of France condemned "the seditious and treacherous practices of that viperous brood of Hispaniolized Leaguers,"<sup>19</sup> and The Discoverer of France warned:

the Spaniard is proud, covetous, cruel, envious suspicious, insolent, a great boaster and bragger, and therefore incompatible. If once he meddle among you, farewell your wives chastitie: farewell all public honestie: farewell your libertie, and farewell all your joy.<sup>20</sup>

Undoubtedly sixteenth-century tracts contained a good bit of exaggeration, but this, too, showed the emotionally charged attitudes of the times.

The tracts published in England came from a variety of sources. Sometimes they were composed by English authors or by publishers and their employees. Also,

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<sup>18</sup>Breslow, Mirror of England, 108.

<sup>19</sup>The Mutable and wauering estate of France, from the year of our Lord 1460, untill the yeare 1595 (London, 1597), Ernest Varamund / trans.?, François Hotman?/, n.p.

<sup>20</sup>The Discoverer of France to the Parisiens, and all the other French nation (n.p., 1590), 9.

printers received foreign works and had them translated, or occasionally free lance translators themselves smuggled books from the continent and sold them to London publishers. About 20 percent of the total number of tracts printed between 1558 and 1603 were translations.<sup>21</sup> From encampments in France and the Low Countries came much of the Elizabethans' military news. Embassies may have been additional sources of word from abroad. The French ambassador in London was suspected of being the purveyor of some works from France, and on at least one occasion, the English ambassador in France apparently was involved in pamphlet distribution.<sup>22</sup> Approximately three-fourths of all foreign news concerned France and the Low Countries.<sup>23</sup> Not only were these areas close to England geographically, but also ideologically, for there the battles against the hated Spanish Catholics raged. Popular desire for word from the continent was a boon to English booksellers, and printers rushed the word to their receptive audience as soon as possible. With the many treatises from continental sources, sixteenth-century English

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<sup>21</sup>Bennett, English Books and Readers, xvi.

<sup>22</sup>Shaaber, Forerunners of the Newspaper, 264, and Calendar of State Papers, Foreign Series, of the Reign of Elizabeth (hereafter cited as CSP-Foreign), XVIII (July 1583-July 1584), 522. The pamphlet was Burghley's Execution of Justice in England.

<sup>23</sup>Shaaber, Forerunners of the Newspaper, 169.

readers may have known more about foreign affairs than they did about domestic.<sup>24</sup>

Elizabeth did not intend for her subjects to apply at home the methods of rebellion recounted in some French works. She knew well the dangers of a disputed succession, the horror of rebellion by subjects against their lawful ruler, and the excesses of religious zeal; she feared them in England and could observe them in France. In 1562 when the French Wars of Religion erupted, she suspected that "unless some remedy be provided, the fire that is kindled in France is intended to be conveyed over to inflame her crown."<sup>25</sup> As early as August 1562, she demanded of the French ambassador "how, seeing her neighbours house was on fire, it were convenient and prudent to provide in time, lest it should take hold on hers."<sup>26</sup> Elizabeth's hold on her crown was threatened by Spain, backed by the papacy. When she came to the throne in 1558, her right was not uncontested; by both canon law and parliamentary statute, she was illegitimate, and her cousin, Mary Queen of Scots, soon to be queen of France, was the rightful heir. This

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<sup>24</sup>Shsaber, Forerunners of the Newspaper, 168.

<sup>25</sup>See "Why the Queen puts her Subjects in Arms," CSP-Foreign, V (1562), 313.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 215.



claim was made on Mary's behalf by her Guise uncles, the very men who promoted rebellion against the French crown from 1562 until 1598. After the Valois, the Guise would be next in line for the throne if the Protestant Bourbon succession were denied, and with Mary Stuart queen of England, Spanish-Catholic influence would reign supreme in western Europe.

Treason and rebellion, then, were major concerns for Elizabeth throughout her reign. Her position in Catholic eyes as a bastard gave subjects of that faith cause to oppose her. Catholics were implicated in the Ridolfi, Throckmorton, and Babington conspiracies, all plotting the murder of Elizabeth and the placing of the imprisoned Mary Queen of Scots on the English throne, and in the Northern Rebellion, in which the northern earls called for the restoration of Catholicism, the removal of Cecil from office, the release of the duke of Norfolk from the Tower, and the recognition of Mary as queen of England. For their roles in these conspiracies, the traitors were put to death, the reaction being particularly violent in the case of the Northern Rebellion, where five hundred men and women were executed.<sup>27</sup> Treasonous plots such as these, the pope's call for Catholic rebellion, the appearance of the Jesuits, and

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<sup>27</sup>J. B. Black, The Reign of Elizabeth, 1558-1603 (Oxford, 1945 /orig. publ. 1936/), 111-112.

fears of a Spanish invasion provoked most Englishmen to equate Catholicism with treason.

Religious differences in this age were serious matters, and "une foi, une loi, un roi" was not an uncommon belief when the prince was regarded as God's anointed. Much more than England, France reflected the havoc unleashed by an excess of religious passion.<sup>28</sup> Throughout the French religious wars the Huguenots appealed to the Valois kings for free exercise of their religion, a desire that seemed more remote after the slaughter of thousands of Huguenots in the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre of 1572. In the aftermath Charles IX ordered that those of the "Réligion Prétendu Réformé" be dispossessed of their estates and offices and that only the Catholic religion be practiced.<sup>29</sup> Despite the association of Catholicism with treason in England, events there did not come to such an impasse.

Because of their position in France, the Huguenots sought the support of the Swiss, the Germans, and most importantly, the English. In 1568 Jeanne d'Albret, queen of Navarre and mother of the future Henri IV, wrote Eliza-

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<sup>28</sup>Grievances in France, however, were not solely religious. For a discussion of the causes of the Wars of Religion, see E. Armstrong, The French Wars of Religion: Their Political Aspect, 2d ed. (New York, 1971), ch. 1.

<sup>29</sup>See Ernest Varemund, A true and plaine report of the furious outrages of Fraunce, François Hotman 1573, trans. (Striveling, 1573).

beth that she "accompted it shame /for Elizabeth<sup>7</sup> to be numbered amongst the faithfull" if she did not support the Protestant cause.<sup>30</sup> Elizabeth's policy, however, was not based on religious considerations alone, but on defense of her realm. "The one thing which mattered to her was the peace and security of England, and she was far from identifying those objectives with the Protestant cause."<sup>31</sup> That peace and security was threatened by the French religious wars, another facet of the global struggle against Spain. Elizabeth did not want France to be so weak that Spain could overrun it, nor so strong that it would endanger England. By the 1570s she was secretly aiding the Huguenots, although the secret was ill-kept, and it was rumored on the continent that "by feeding the factions in other realms she was the real cause of all the troubles" in Europe.<sup>32</sup>

Troubles in France were aggravated by foreign intervention, intervention that was not, however, solely Protestant. Spanish and papal influence was felt through the Catholic League, formed by the duke of Guise in the 1570s.

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<sup>30</sup>Jeanne d'Albret to Elizabeth, quoted by Geoffrey Fenton in A discourse of the Ciuile warres and late troubles in France . . . (London, 1570), 38.

<sup>31</sup>Conyers Read, Lord Burghley and Queen Elizabeth (New York, 1960), 309.

<sup>32</sup>J. E. Neale, Queen Elizabeth I: A Biography (New York, 1957 [orig. publ. 1934/]), 235.

Described by a contemporary as

that powerful faction which for twenty years together tormented France, which thought to introduce the Spanish domination, and which would have reversed the order of the succession of the royal family, under the fairest pretext in the world, to wit, the maintenance of the religion of our ancestors,

the League organized secret underground cells, gathered weapons, and prepared to overthrow the monarchy, an activity given new importance after Henri of Navarre became heir apparent.<sup>33</sup> At the prospect of a Protestant succession, Philip II of Spain intervened with the support of the League "to the end that the holy church of GOD may be restored to his former dignitie. . . ." <sup>34</sup> Such meddling strengthened rather than dispersed the Protestant opposition, the Huguenots declared in 1587.<sup>35</sup> The Huguenots and the League, sharing the goal of occupying the French throne, "declared themselves to be under royal power, and agitated as if there

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<sup>33</sup>Nancy Lyman Roelker, trans. and ed., The Paris of Henry of Navarre as seen by Pierre de l'Estoile (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), 54, 7.

<sup>34</sup>Henri III, A Declaration set forth by the French kinge, shewing his pleasure concerning the new troubles in his Realme (London, 1585), 7.

<sup>35</sup>In Henri III, A Declaration Exhibited to the French King by his Court of Parlement concerning the Holy League . . . (n.p., 1587).

were none."<sup>36</sup> Prospects of similar uprisings in England frightened Elizabeth.

When Henri of Navarre came to the throne in 1589, he, like Elizabeth, inherited a crown disputed by the Catholic line, and also like her, he had been excommunicated, declared by the pope to be ineligible for the throne, "as though it should belong unto him to take it away, or to give it."<sup>37</sup> The succession was not just a political issue, but a religious one as well. Both Elizabeth and Henri had to take immediate action on religious matters; in December 1558 Elizabeth, playing for time to get popular support, issued a proclamation prohibiting religious changes.<sup>38</sup> Similarly Henri proclaimed on 4 August 1589 in his Declaration of St. Cloud that he would not interfere with the practice of the Catholic faith. Both approached religious problems in the spirit of compromise; England reached a via media between extreme Protestantism and extreme Catholicism, and Henri in 1598 granted freedom of worship to

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<sup>36</sup>Georges Weill, Les Théories Sur le Pouvoir Royal en France pendant les Guerres de Religion (Paris, 1891), 140. All translations from the French are mine.

<sup>37</sup>Michel Hurault, A Discourse Upon the Present State of France (n.p., 1588), 54.

<sup>38</sup>"Prohibiting Unlicensed Preaching; Regulating Ceremonies," 27 Dec. 1558, in Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, Tudor Royal Proclamations: The Later Tudors (1553-1587), II (New Haven, 1969), 102-103.

the Huguenots in the Edict of Nantes. Henri and Elizabeth had as their aims "to live, to reigne, and to be obeyed" by their subjects, Protestant as well as Catholic.<sup>39</sup>

To keep the "fire kindled in France" from reaching her kingdom, Elizabeth aided the Huguenots periodically from 1562 until 1595. In 1562 she sent money and soldiers in return for Havre as a surety town, and in the mid-1580s, at the urging of her Privy Council, she supported Henri of Navarre with money for German mercenaries.<sup>40</sup> In 1589 her aid to the unlikely alliance of Henri III and Henri of Navarre moved her principal secretary, Lord Burghley, to write:

the state of the world is marvellously changed when we true Englishmen have cause, for our own quietness, to wish good success to a French king and a King of Scots. . . . But seeing both are enemies to our enemies we have cause to join with them in their actions against our enemies.<sup>41</sup>

When a young monk murdered Henri III in July 1589 and Henri of Navarre came to the throne, Elizabeth was asked to "continue her benefits to a prince who is devoted to her and who will ever be grateful. Anything may happen, if he is not supported now;" France might well become a "highway

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<sup>39</sup>Hurault, Present State of France, 37.

<sup>40</sup>CSP-Foreign, V (1562), 306, and Read, Lord Burghley, 382-384.

<sup>41</sup>Read, Lord Burghley, 456.

for Spain to tyrannise the whole world," warned Henri's emissary.<sup>42</sup> Her £20,000 loan in September 1589 and 4,000 men commanded by Lord Willoughby prepared the way for the new king's first victories over the League in 1590.

The problems France faced could have become those of England, yet French and English ideas on subjects such as sovereignty and rebellion often were very different because their experiences were, in fact, different. Not until the English faced their own civil war would they fully understand the French civil wars and the theories coming from these conflicts.<sup>43</sup> "There was little in secular Elizabethan politics to which the radical opinions expressed in contemporary France appeared relevant. Nevertheless, the English interest in French events induced the unconscious assimilation of French political ideas."<sup>44</sup> The content of these ideas will be considered next.

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<sup>42</sup>CSP-Foreign, XXIII (Jan.-July 1589), 404, and List and Analysis of State Papers, Foreign Series, Eliz. 71/ (1 Aug. 1589-30 June 1590), 290.

<sup>43</sup>See J. H. M. Salmon, The French Religious Wars in English Political Thought (Oxford, 1959).

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 20.

## CHAPTER II

That ideas are not formed in a vacuum but are influenced by events was true in sixteenth-century France and England. England feared religious strife and Spanish invasion; France endured them both. With the differing actual experiences of France and England, political theories in the two countries were not the same, although there was a fundamental similarity. Both the French and the English were concerned with the need for order in society. With the chaos unleashed by the Wars of Religion, much theory previously taken for granted was now questioned, a frightening prospect for nearby kingdoms. The question the French were asking was what was the nature of political authority? To answer this they looked to the past. Against the background of the Protestant-Catholic battles--fought with both the sword and the pen--Huguenots, Catholics, and moderates appealed to biblical, Greek, Roman, and Frankish laws for support. The French, with more freedom of expression than the English, arrived at differing courses of action. Generally these included: 1) Huguenot justifications of resistance up to 1584, when the Huguenot Henri of Navarre became next in line for the throne and the Cath-



olic League appropriated Huguenot ideas, 2) Catholic defenses of the monarchy to 1584, then adopted by the Huguenots, and 3) politique, or moderate, theories, advocating absolute rule to restore order.<sup>1</sup>

According to the Huguenots of the 1570s, sovereignty was divided between the king and the people. Officials, including the king, were to act in behalf of the people; as one writer said of the Huguenots, "They declare themselves most humble servants of the king, as long as he does what they want."<sup>2</sup> Of the Huguenot works appearing between the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre in 1572 and the death of the duke of Alençon in 1584 (making Navarre heir apparent), it has been said that one reads like all the others.<sup>3</sup> All were not available in England, even in the form of smuggled copies, which tells something about English attitudes toward their contents. Four of the better known will be discussed here: Le Réveille-Matin des François et de leur voisin (published in 1574 in Edinburgh), François Hotman's Francogallia (1573 in France, not printed in England, although it was known there and may have been

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<sup>1</sup>J. H. M. Salmon, The French Religious Wars in English Political Thought (Oxford, 1959), 6.

<sup>2</sup>Georges Weill, Les Théories sur le Pouvoir Royal en France pendant les Guerres de Religion (Paris, 1891), 78.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 82.

read by some Englishmen<sup>4</sup>), Theodore Beza's Du Droit des magistrats sur leurs sujets (1574 in France, not published in England<sup>5</sup>), and Vindiciæ contra Tyrannos (printed in parts, the first part in Basle and Edinburgh in 1579).

Le Réveille-Matin, dedicated to the "tres-excellente et Tres-illustre Princesse Elizabeth,"<sup>6</sup> was an appeal for English aid to the Huguenots, but like many works, it, too, expressed philosophical views. Calling upon Christian rulers to band together against the antichrist, the pope, the author declared that God did not crown rulers, but that they were made kings to serve His glory and help their neighbors.<sup>7</sup> How could the queen of England be good if she tolerated the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre and the subsequent ruin of the state of France?<sup>8</sup> He went on to praise a "good Englishman" who was trying to reform the ceremonies of the Church of England (regarded by Elizabeth as fixed) and warned that without changes in ceremonies, the queen

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<sup>4</sup>Salmon, French Religious Wars, 19.

<sup>5</sup>Also known and perhaps read in England. Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Nicholas Barneud, Le Réveille-Matin des François et de leur voisin, pt. 1 (Edinburgh, 1574), n.p.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 140-141.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pt. ii, 13.

would witness the subversion of her estate and its religion.<sup>9</sup> Also dangerous as far as English officials were concerned was the concept of sovereignty from Le Réveille-Matin, best described by its colossus image (repeated in Vindiciae contra Tyrannos): "The monarch is a colossus; if the people cease to hold him up, the colossus falls."<sup>10</sup>

Without the support of the people, then, the monarch was powerless, according to these early Huguenot works. François Hotman's Francogallia probed for the source of monarchical power and suggested return to ancient custom as a solution for France's problems.<sup>11</sup> Since the people of the ancient Frankish state "had supreme power not only to confer the kingdom but withdraw it," the same still held true, Hotman reasoned.<sup>12</sup> This original Frankish monarchy had been limited, elected by the people; therefore, absolute power was a usurpation of popular sovereignty. "It has been sufficiently demonstrated, we believe, that the kings of France have not been granted unmeasured and unlimited power by their countrymen and cannot be considered absolute,

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<sup>9</sup>Barnaud, Le Réveille-Matin, pt. ii, 8, 12.

<sup>10</sup>Quoted in Weill, Théories sur le Pouvoir Royal, 113.

<sup>11</sup>Julian H. Franklin, Jean Bodin and the Rise of Absolutist Theory (Cambridge, 1973), 44.

<sup>12</sup>François Hotman, Francogallia, in Franklin, ed., Constitutionalism and Resistance in the Sixteenth Century (New York, 1969), 59.

he asserted.<sup>13</sup> Subjects could exist without a king, but a king could not exist without his subjects.<sup>14</sup> In another Huguenot tract, Du Droit des magistrats, Theodore Beza also argued that legitimate kingship could be established only with the free consent of the people. The king, he insisted, did not hold all authority in the state, but rather highest authority, derived from the people. God "alone we are obliged to obey without exception."<sup>15</sup> Like other writers Beza found proof in the Bible and in history that originally kings were elected by the people and thus were their agents. Unlike Jean Bodin later in the decade, he attributed the stability of England to the "moderation of royal power," for in England "authority to rule is founded mostly on the consent of Parliament. . . ."<sup>16</sup> The kings of France should learn by England's example, according to Beza.

One Huguenot who had an opportunity to observe

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<sup>13</sup>Hotman, Francogallia, in Franklin, ed., Constitutionalism and Resistance, 90-91.

<sup>14</sup>Curiously enough Hotman was at one time offered a position at Oxford by Queen Elizabeth. Despite his being a staunch Protestant and a correspondent of Lord Burghley's, Francogallia was not even published in England. See Salmon, French Religious Wars, 184.

<sup>15</sup>Theodore Beza, Du Droit des magistrats sur leurs sujets, in Franklin, ed., Constitutionalism and Resistance, 101.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 118.

England's stability was Philippe du Plessis-Mornay, advisor to Henri of Navarre. In this capacity Mornay communicated with Elizabethan privy councillor Sir Francis Walsingham and on at least two occasions travelled to England to request aid.<sup>17</sup> Mornay may well have been the author of the famous Vindiciae contra Tyrannos, written between 1574 and 1575 and published in four parts from 1579 to 1588.<sup>18</sup> One of the later Huguenot treatises, it was something of a summary of earlier pamphlets, appealing for English assistance and supporting the concept of popular sovereignty. When the last section of the Vindiciae asked the question, "Are neighboring princes permitted or obliged to aid the subjects of another prince who are persecuted for the exercise of true religion or are oppressed by manifest tyranny," Mornay's answer, predictably, was in the affirmative. On the subject of sovereignty, Mornay, like Hotman and Beza, believed that "no one is born a king," for "the people made the king, not the king the people."<sup>19</sup> He justified his theory of divided sovereignty by the existence of two covenants: one between God and the king, the other between the

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<sup>17</sup>Salmon, French Religious Wars, 183.

<sup>18</sup>Franklin, ed., Constitutionalism and Resistance, 39, 40.

<sup>19</sup>Philippe du Plessis-Mornay, Vindiciae contra Tyrannos, ibid., 160, 180-181.

king and the people, giving power to kings first from God, then from the people. For Mornay the king was an administrator, the father of the family (a Bodin image), and the pilot, but not the owner of the vessel of state.

After Henri of Navarre became heir apparent, Huguenot writers, led by Mornay, changed the emphasis of their polemics, upholding the rights of hereditary monarchs and railing against papal sovereignty after Sixtus V excommunicated and barred Henri from the throne in 1585. Now dealing with a more acceptable subject than royal sovereignty, these tracts usually were available in England. Even before 1585 Innocent Gentillet had claimed that because Protestants did not acknowledge an ecclesiastical sovereign, they alone gave undivided allegiance to God's representative on earth, the king. In An Apology or defense for the Christians of Fraunce, he denounced papal sovereignty, asserting that Christ, not the pope, was the head of the Church and that Christ needed no vicar-general on earth. Before Henri's excommunication Gentillet denied the pope's jurisdiction in such matters. "The princes of France had never been subject to papal justice," agreed Pierre de l'Estoile, a contemporary French diarist,<sup>20</sup> but the most famous answer to the excommunication was Hotman's The

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<sup>20</sup>Nancy Lyman Roelker, trans. and ed., The Paris of Henry of Navarre as seen by Pierre de l'Estoile (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), 114.

Brutish Thunderbolt: or rather Feeble Fier-Flash of Pope Sixtus the fift against Henrie the most excellent King of Navarre and the most noble Henrie Borbon, Prince of Condie. In his lengthy repudiation of papal authority, Hotman summoned up a wealth of scriptural and historical references to prove that the pontiff lacked the power to dispose of Navarre's kingdom. Furthermore, the bull of excommunication was invalid because the pope was an incompetent judge, had "arrogated to himselfe the Godhead," had introduced innovations such as monasticism, had been a tyrant over the Church, was guilty of simony, had trampled upon the "majesty of kings and emperors," was guilty of inciting rebellion, and had excommunicated Navarre and Condé without allowing them a hearing.<sup>21</sup> He called on "al monarchs of Christendome . . . /to/ helpe these most roiall princes to suppresse the furie of this fierce tyrant . . . ," an appeal certain to stir English Protestants.<sup>22</sup> Similarly another antipapal tract, A Declaration and Catholick exhortation to all Christian Princes to succor the Church of God and Realme of France, charged that what was masquer-

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<sup>21</sup>Hotman, The Brutish Thunderbolt: or rather Feeble Fier-Flash of Pope Sixtus the fift against Henrie the most excellent King of Navarre and the most noble Henrie Borbon, Prince of Condie (London, 1586).

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 311.

ading in France as a defense of religion actually was a "desire to usurpe" on the part of the Guise and begged all Christian princes to spare France this fate.<sup>23</sup> Those who observed the evils perpetrated in France and did not act were evil, too, the author concluded. The last section of Mornay's Vindiciae warned that

if a prince should protect that part of the Church, say the German or the English, which is within his territory, but does not help another persecuted part; if he abandons and deserts it when he could send help, he must be judged to have abandoned the Church.<sup>24</sup>

With Henri next in line for the throne, the Huguenots began defending monarchical rights. In 1589 Contre-Guyse protested that "the Guisans meane to pluck away the crowne from those whom nature hath made kings . . . it lyeth not in the meaner magistrate to cômâd the greater."<sup>25</sup> Contre-League of the same year referred to the king as God's lieutenant on earth. "Contrarie to Gods word," the authority of Henri III had been usurped by the League and the Guise, and as first prince of the blood and legal heir

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<sup>23</sup>Peter Erondelle, A Declaration and Catholick Exhortation to all Christian Princes to succor the Church of God and Realme of France (London, 1586), 11.

<sup>24</sup>Mornay, Vindiciae, in Franklin, ed., Constitutionalism and Resistance, 198.

<sup>25</sup>The Contre-Guyse . . . (London, 1589), n.p.



to the crown, Henri of Navarre could not be deprived of "that which God and nature have given him."<sup>26</sup> Obviously Huguenot thought had shifted since the 1570s.

The immediate result of Huguenot writings on sovereignty was a flood of Catholic replies, replies which were not published in England. After Navarre became heir apparent, the Catholic League no longer defended hereditary right. One of its leaders, the duke of Mayenne, claimed that heredity did not determine the succession but rather consecration by the "true Church."<sup>27</sup> Other Catholic works affirmed this; Elizabeth did not.

The politiques, reacting to the numerous Huguenot tracts issued in the panic following the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre, looked to absolute monarchy as the only alternative to chaos. Most distinguished among the politiques was Jean Bodin. In his best-known work, De la République, published in France in 1576 and known in England from that time,<sup>28</sup> Bodin did not associate sovereignty with the will of God, although he did declare that the prince was account-

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<sup>26</sup>The Contre-League . . . (London, 1589), 11, 38.

<sup>27</sup>Quoted in Salmon, French Religious Wars, 347.

<sup>28</sup>République, or Six Bookes of a Commonweale, was not published in full in England until 1606.

able to God alone. Supporting his statements with a multitude of Greek, Roman, biblical, and European precedents, he disputed the legitimacy of popular sovereignty: since the people was not sovereign, it could not transfer authority it did not have to the monarch. Instead, he believed that sovereignty was a "fact of nature," and the prince's authority absolute.<sup>29</sup> "Majestie or Soueraigntie is the most high, absolute, and perpetuall power ouer the citizens and subiects in a commonweale . . . that is to say, The greatest power to commaund."<sup>30</sup>

Rather than defining this power to command, Bodin described its characteristics, comparing the sovereign's role to that of a father at the head of a family. God as Heavenly Father had delegated power to fathers over their children; likewise did princes have power over their subjects.<sup>31</sup> The author of République identified three characteristics of sovereignty: the power to make law (the most important quality), the power to make war or peace, and the power to appoint officials (magistrates) whose job it was to interpret and apply the law. Although absolute, the prince was not an arbitrary ruler; he was

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<sup>29</sup>William Farr Church, Constitutional Thought in Sixteenth-Century France: A Study in the Evolution of Ideas, 2d ed. (New York, 1969), 227.

<sup>30</sup>Jean Bodin, The Six Bookes of a Commonweale, ed. Kenneth Douglas McRae (Cambridge, Mass., 1962), 84.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 20.

subject to natural and divine laws. Thus for Bodin the royal prerogative was based on natural law. The king's power was not "altered or diminished" by the Estates, he maintained, but made "much the greater" because there the people acknowledged the ruler as sovereign.<sup>32</sup> Classifying France, England, Spain, and Scotland as absolute monarchies, Bodin found that, like the Estates-General, the English Parliament had no power to command, for it had to be summoned by the monarch.<sup>33</sup>

The origin of royal authority, on which the Huguenots based their theories of popular sovereignty, was no problem for Bodin. He wrote in République that originally, the people had given authority to the prince, and this transfer was irreversible. "The people hath voluntarily disleised and dispoyled it selfe of the soueraigne power."<sup>34</sup> Furthermore,

they which haue written of the dutie of magistrats, & other such like books, haue deceiued themselves, in maintaining that the power of the people is greater than the prince; a thing

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<sup>32</sup>Bodin, Six Bookes, ed. McRae, 98.

<sup>33</sup>Bodin's perception of England came from conversations with one of the English ambassadors to France, Dr. Valentine Dale, he wrote in République (*ibid.*, 96). In 1581 Bodin came to England with the duke of Alençon and later corresponded with Sir Francis Walsingham.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 88.

which oft times causeth the true subiects to reuolt from the obedience which they owe vnto their soueraigne prince, & ministreth matter of great troubles in Commonweals. . . . For otherwise if the king should be subiect vnto the assemblies and decrees of the people, hee should neither bee king nor soueraigne; and the Commonwealth but a meere Aristocratie of many lords in power equal. . . . 35

Absolute monarchy, then, was the best form of government because in it, sovereignty was indivisible. To Bodin one-man rule was natural: "If then a commonweale be but one body, how is it possible it should haue many heads?"<sup>36</sup> An absolute ruler need not be an arbitrary one; Bodin recognized that there were limits even on absolute rulers. His conception of an absolute sovereign included having "no human superior," holding unconditional authority, and being above the law, which he himself could make.<sup>37</sup> If sovereignty were not absolute, then resistance would be legitimate, and this Bodin would never admit.

This legitimacy of resistance was an important issue in France because of the continual fighting against the monarchy from 1562 to 1598, but it was no less important in England because of the fear of Catholic rebellion in the

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<sup>35</sup>Bodin, Six Boockes, ed. McRae, 95.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 717.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., A15.

name of Mary Queen of Scots. Early reformers such as Martin Luther and John Calvin were conservatives on the subject of obedience and resistance. Resistance by an individual, even to a tyrant, was against the laws of God, they said, and a subject could only flee or become a martyr. Huguenot Jacques Hurault affirmed the Calvinist belief that God sent wicked kings as a punishment for the sins of the people.<sup>38</sup> Calvin, however, distinguished between resistance by the individual and resistance by magistrates acting in behalf of the people. If magistrates allowed tyranny, then they betrayed the liberty they were supposed to safeguard. Thus even though Calvin favored obedience, his stand gave support to a developing defense of resistance set forth by Hotman in Franco-gallia, Beza in Du Droit des Magistrats, and Mornay in Vindiciae contra Tyrannos.

Franco-gallia claimed that because a public council elected the monarch in ancient times, the heirs of the council, the Estates, still possessed the power to depose a tyrant. The people owed him nothing and needed to obey only those laws to which it consented. Even so, resistance was justified only if initiated by the Estates, according to Beza.<sup>39</sup> "It is illicit for any private subject to use

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<sup>38</sup>See Politike, Moral, and Martial Discourses (London, 1595).

<sup>39</sup>Beza, Du Droit des Magistrats, in Franklin, ed., Constitutionalism and Resistance, 194.

force against a tyrant whose dominion was freely ratified beforehand by the people."<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, justifiable resistance was a duty. "If your magistrate /i.e., the king<sup>7</sup> commands you to do what God forbids . . . it is your duty to refuse to act . . . ." <sup>41</sup>

Sovereign governance is granted to kings or other sovereign magistrates with the proviso that if they depart from the good laws and conditions they have sworn to uphold and become notorious tyrants who are unwilling to take good advice, it is the right of lesser magistrates /the Estates<sup>7</sup> to provide for themselves and those within their care by resisting flagrant tyranny.<sup>42</sup>

Both Beza and Mornay considered the people to be a corporate body. Therefore, resistance could be undertaken only by the community, not by the individual. The individual had not created the king; the covenant was between the people as a whole and the king. "Private persons have no power . . . or right of punishment," Mornay declared in Vindiciae.<sup>43</sup> By contract the king pledged to be just, and the people promised to obey him if he were just. Thus the people were "obligated to the prince conditionally, he to

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<sup>40</sup>Beze, Du Droit des Magistrats, in Franklin, ed., Constitutionalism and Resistance, 110.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 102.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 123.

<sup>43</sup>Mornay, Vindiciae contra Tyrannos, ibid., 152.

the people absolutely."<sup>44</sup> If in theory the king never died, then neither did the people who created him, and therefore, the people retained its right to depose him. To the idea of the duty of magistrates to resist a tyrant, Mornay added an interesting metaphor: "If the pilot of a ship is drunk, the subordinate officers must assume command. Where the state is in the hands of a raging tyrant, the magistrates must do the same."<sup>45</sup> Mornay agreed with Calvin that if an individual could not in conscience obey a king he considered unjust, he should leave the country.

The Huguenots, then, with their Calvinist covenant theory, found rebellion possible within limits, whereas Bodin believed that "the subject is never justified in any circumstances in attempting anything against his sovereign prince."<sup>46</sup> Since the sovereign was responsible only to God, subjects clearly had no right of resistance. "O how many Tirants should there be; if it should be lawfull for subjects to kill Tirants?"<sup>47</sup> A tyrannical monarch "violates the laws of nature, abuses free people as slaves, and the

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<sup>44</sup>Mornay, Vindiciae contra Tyrannos, in Franklin, ed., Constitutionalism and Resistance, 191.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 194.

<sup>46</sup>Bodin, Six Books of the Commonwealth, trans. M. J. Tooley (Oxford, n.d.), 68.

<sup>47</sup>Bodin, Six Bookes, ed., McBae, 225.

goods of his subjects as his own," but "resistance of a king to the will of the governed does not make him a tyrant," wrote Bodin.<sup>48</sup> Subjects need not obey the ruler when he violated natural or divine law (the limits Bodin placed on sovereignty), but even this did not justify rebellion. A subject might refuse to obey an unjust order, but he could not rebel, Bodin concluded.

As a function of their changing ideas about sovereignty, the Huguenots also changed their thinking about the legitimacy of resistance. Huguenot justification of resistance was infrequent after 1584, emphasizing its being lawful only when undertaken by magistrates. Most Huguenot tracts condoning resistance appeared between the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre in 1572 and Alençon's death in 1584, and these were not welcomed in England. Of Francogallia, Du Droit des Magistrats, and Vindiciae, only Vindiciae was published in the British Isles (Edinburgh and London), although smuggling was rampant, and the English were familiar with the content of French thought. After Navarre's excommunication the Huguenots berated the Catholics, particularly the pope, for encouraging rebellion: "The ages past haue seene many that unnaturally haue rebelled against their country . . . but none yet that ever approved or com-

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<sup>48</sup>Bodin, Six Bookes, ed. McRae, 225, and Henri Baudrillart, J. Bodin et Son Temps, reprint ed. (New York, 1969), 292.



mended the facts."<sup>49</sup> Sentiments such as this reflected Elizabeth's and were readily published in England.

France, with its open and extended discussion of sovereignty and the right of resistance, contributed much to western thought on the subjects. In their long-term effects, the most influential French works, proved to be République and Vindiciae contra Tyrannos. Bodin's ideas in République were modified by his followers, who used them selectively and adapted them to the causes of Henri III and Henri IV. By the time of Henri IV's victory, Huguenot ideas were moving to a defense of divine right monarchy. In its fullest form divine right referred to monarchy ordained by God, hereditary succession, accountability only to God, and divinely ordained obedience on the part of subjects.<sup>50</sup> Bodin could be used to support any of these. The English, although they did not understand the full significance of Bodin's writings until their own constitutional struggles in the seventeenth century, thought they did.<sup>51</sup> The nineteenth-century scholar John Neville Figgis was the first to realize the influence of sixteenth-century French polit-

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<sup>49</sup>Michel Hurault, Antisixtus . . . (London, 1590), 11.

<sup>50</sup>John Neville Figgis, The Divine Right of Kings (New York, 19147), 5-6.

<sup>51</sup>Bodin, Six Bookes, ed. McRae, A62, and Salmon, French Religious Wars, ch. II.

ical thought in England, but he was unsure about its later effect.<sup>52</sup> Seventeenth-century English divine right theory "assuredly" did not come from the French, he wrote, although French writers did influence Thomas Hobbes, Robert Filmer, and Charles Leslie.<sup>53</sup>

Besides divine right theory, another French concept destined for future prominence was the contract theory described in Vindiciae contra Tyrannos. The work had little immediate impact in France, where it was outdated by the time all its sections were published; already Navarre was next in line for the throne, and the tone of Huguenot works had changed accordingly. Significantly Mornay's theory of two contracts, one between God and the king and the other between the people and the king, was the first argument for utilitarian kingship, that men had a king because he was useful, and Vindiciae was the

first work in modern history that . . . /constructed/ a political philosophy on the basis of certain inalienable rights of man. For this reason its relevance was not confined to France. It was utilised by, even if not specially composed for, the United Provinces, was quoted to justify the trial and execution of Charles I., and reprinted to justify the

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<sup>52</sup>G. R. Elton's preface to Figgis, Divine Right of Kings, xv.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 129.

Revolution of 1688.<sup>54</sup>

"It is hard to overestimate the resemblance between the ideas of Locke and the author of the Vindiciae. . . ." <sup>55</sup>

In France itself succeeding kings wanted no questioning of their authority, so Bodin's theory of nonresistance was convenient. As for the Huguenots, they demanded that the people's right to rebel have a proper channel. This particular idea was popular in England long after it had been abandoned in France. During the later half of the sixteenth century, religious warfare inflamed the popular imagination to the point that the Elizabethans did not see the implications of French thought. <sup>56</sup>

It is one of the capital differences between the political philosophy of France in the sixteenth and of England in the seventeenth century, that though starting from the same premises, the English alone pressed on to their logical outcome. <sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>G. P. Gooch, The History of English Democratic Ideas in the Seventeenth Century, 2d ed. (New York, 1912), 16.

<sup>55</sup>Figgis, Divine Right of Kings, 114.

<sup>56</sup>Salmon, French Religious Wars, 37.

<sup>57</sup>Gooch, English Democratic Ideas, 18.

### CHAPTER III

the wellfare of England toucheth us so nigh,  
and ours them, that if the one or both these  
nations bee beaten downe by the stranger,<sup>1</sup> the  
other may well make her reckoning . . . .

However similar their positions because of the Catholic menace, sixteenth-century France and England inspired somewhat differing political theories precisely because events in France were not yet faithfully reflected in England. To maintain this state of affairs, Elizabeth's government sought to control publication of political philosophy.<sup>2</sup> Approved works that did support the Tudors' ideas on sovereignty and nonresistance taught above all the necessity of obedience to the sovereign ruler. Before examining specific treatises, the ideas and events in England shaping their contents should be considered.

For the thinking Tudor Englishman, order was a major concern, particularly with the recent examples of the Wars of the Roses, the sporadic rebellions against the

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<sup>1</sup>A Politike Discourse most excellent for this time present: Composed by a French Gentleman, against those of the League . . . (London, 1589), 17.

<sup>2</sup>Since this study deals with officially sanctioned English responses to French ideas, English counterparts of radical French works will not be discussed here.

Tudors, and the German and French religious wars. Aware of these precedents, he adopted "an almost hysterical attitude towards rebellion."<sup>3</sup> Obedience to the sovereign was assumed, but the English showed little concern with the definition or location of sovereign power until late in the century.<sup>4</sup> "In one sense sixteenth-century Englishmen had no political theory whatsoever, for they had no theory of what we call the State. The theories they had were theories of Society" and of places persons were to occupy in that society.<sup>5</sup> Before the Elizabethan era the king's place was "under God and the law, for it is the law which makes the king," according to Sir John Fortescue.<sup>6</sup> Although an aura of sanctity had appeared in Anglo-Saxon kingship, the exaltation of the monarchy reached new heights under Henry VIII after the break with Rome.<sup>7</sup> This break caused an intellec-

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<sup>3</sup>Christopher Morris, Political Thought in England: Tyndale to Hooker (London, 1953), 72.

<sup>4</sup>J. W. Allen, A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century (London, 1964), 247.

<sup>5</sup>Morris, Political Thought in England, n.p.

<sup>6</sup>Quoted by Franklin Le Van Baumer, The Early Tudor Theory of Kingship (New Haven, 1940), 11.

<sup>7</sup>John Neville Figgis, The Divine Right of Kings (New York, 1914), xx.

tual crisis within the subject: did his loyalty belong to the king or to the pope? The Henrician Reformation also spawned a new concept of power: spiritual governance now belonged directly to God (no longer being exercised through priests) and temporal governance to the prince.<sup>8</sup> England was the only European country without a theoretical defense of sovereignty by the time of the Reformation, and afterwards there was no need to define the location of sovereign power as long as Crown and Parliament were working in relative harmony.<sup>9</sup> When definition was attempted in the early Stuart era, it failed.

From Reformation preachings came the idea of the duty of the subject to obey Christian princes.<sup>10</sup> Even though kingship was "God's own office,"<sup>11</sup> it was agreed that the king was not above the law,<sup>12</sup> nor was he an absolute sovereign, whom Jean Bodin said had the power to make law. The works of Bodin caused the English to attempt definition of the prerogative, but to define it

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<sup>8</sup>Morris, Political Thought in England, 34.

<sup>9</sup>Baumer, Early Tudor Theory of Kingship, 124-126.

<sup>10</sup>G. R. Elton, England under the Tudors, (London, /orig. publ. 1955), 404.

<sup>11</sup>From Mirror for Magistrates, quoted by Baumer, Early Tudor Theory of Kingship, 192.

<sup>12</sup>Morris, Political Thought in England, 83.

was to limit it, and Elizabeth did not want to be limited.<sup>13</sup> Like the other Tudors, she "stressed the semi-divine as well as the representative character of kingship,"<sup>14</sup> maintaining the dignity of the Crown while currying popular support, and she cultivated the image of herself, the sovereign, as the symbol of the nation. During her reign English theorists either found the prince or Parliament to be absolute authorities, or they tried to define the absolutist qualities of the prerogative. They did not grasp the concept of mixed sovereignty.

Elizabethan notions of sovereignty did not go unchallenged, although challenges did not come from the vocal and even revolutionary teachings of the Puritans, who felt that they had a "potentially godly princess"<sup>15</sup> and that, like their Huguenot brethren in 1589, they stood to gain more from obedience than from resistance. Elizabethan Puritans, unlike the Calvinists in Scotland and the Low Countries, strictly obeyed Calvin's repudiation of the right of rebellion.<sup>16</sup> Instead, events beyond the queen's

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<sup>13</sup>Elton, England under the Tudors, 402-403.

<sup>14</sup>Elton, The Tudor Constitution: Documents and Commentary (Cambridge, 1960), 12.

<sup>15</sup>Morris, Political Thought in England, 156.

<sup>16</sup>Allen, History of Political Thought, 223.

control tested her personal preference for obedience to sovereign rulers.

It is generally assumed that Elizabeth had no policy, but that she changed her course with every shift of the wind . . . .What Elizabeth preferred is clear enough . . . she wanted peace rather than war. She did not want to support rebels against their lawful monarch, particularly Protestant rebels with radical ideas about the relations of Church and State.<sup>17</sup>

However, she did so when English interests were threatened-- in Scotland, in the Low Countries, and in France. Her problem in each instance was "how to give support, without incriminating herself, to rebels against lawful authority."<sup>18</sup> Aiding the Scottish rebels against the French in 1559 was dangerous, since she did not want France helping English rebels; neither did she want a French victory in Scotland, for then the French would be able to cross the border into England. In English dealings with the Scots, William Cecil, Elizabeth's principal secretary, wrote all dispatches and deciphered them himself so the queen could not be implicated.<sup>19</sup> By the end of 1559, however, the revolt against the Guise-influenced monarchy was floundering. Elizabeth, willing to

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<sup>17</sup>Conyers Read, Lord Burghley and Queen Elizabeth (New York, 1960), 187.

<sup>18</sup>A. L. Rowse, The Expansion of Elizabethan England (London, 1955), 334.

<sup>19</sup>J. E. Neale, Queen Elizabeth I: A Biography (New York, 1957), 88-90.



undertake any action short of war, sent a fleet to Berwick to keep French aid from reaching Scotland, but she gave the commander orders to deny that this expedition had her blessings. Changing her position in 1560, she pledged support for the Scots if they would aid England in case of French invasion. In 1562 she sent troops to aid the Protestant prince of Condé, but the Huguenot foe at this time was the Guise faction, not the monarchy. Later she gave financial assistance to Henri of Navarre (even before he became Henri IV) and both men and money to the Dutch Protestants fighting the Spanish. Realizing the possible consequences of the aid to the Low Countries, she wrote:

We have in all our former actions, in theis their late troubles, sought by all meanes to bringe the provinces of the Lowe-Countrie that weare at discord and divided, to an unitye. Yf nowe, after such a coorse taken, we should, without further offence geven, seeke to dismember the body and plucke th'one parte thereof from th'other, by withdrawing the subject from the Sovereigne, we should enter a matter which should much towche us in honnour and might be an evill precedent for us even in our owne case. <sup>20</sup>

Like the rebellion against the crown in France, the rebellions in the Netherlands against Philip and in Scotland against Mary threatened Elizabeth's concept of obedience to sovereign rulers, but the dilemma was circumvented by propagandistic defenses of Elizabeth as "godly" and justi-

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<sup>20</sup> Kervyn de Lettenhove, Relations politique de Pays-Bas et de L'Angleterre, 357, quoted in James M. Osborn, Young Philip Sidney, 1572-1577 (New Haven, 1972), 496.

fication of revolts against Mary and Philip because they were "ungodly."<sup>21</sup> "At no time did the Elizabethans allow theory to get out of their control. It had always to be the handmaid of their practical requirements."<sup>22</sup>

One of the best discourses on obedience to England's godly queen was The True Difference Between Christian Subjection and Unchristian Rebellion, by Thomas Bilson, bishop of Winchester. Written at Elizabeth's request, it maintained that the ruler was superior to all inhabitants of the state and, although not superior to the Church, above all members of it, including the pope.<sup>23</sup> Like the French antipapal tracts, The True Difference declared that the pope could not deprive princes of their powers and furthermore, that papal power had been resisted by most kings of England since the Conquest. "Princes have the sword with lawful authoritie from GOD . . . pastours have flockes and Bishoppes have Diocesses," but only princes have realms.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Morris, Political Thought in England, 88.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Thomas Bilson, The True Difference Between Christian Subjection and Unchristian Rebellion (Oxford, 1585), 241, 171.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 238.

The law had long depended upon princes, for they had been upholders of God's law since Old Testament times.<sup>25</sup> Kings held their power from God alone, not from priests or popes, Bilson concluded.

Another bishop, Dr. John Bridges of Oxford, later dean of Salisbury, also defended royal supremacy in The Supremacie of Christian Princes, ouer all persons throughout their dominions . . . His purpose in writing it was "that the truth may appeare, that the falshode may be deterred, that thou mayst be edified, that the Prince may be obeyed, that the Gospel may be prospered. . . ." <sup>26</sup> Further emphasizing the importance of the supremacy of Christian princes, he asserted that "there is no controuersie at this day betwixt us and the enemies of the gospel more impugned, thā this one of the Supremacie. . . ." <sup>27</sup> For him the origin of the prince's authority was unquestioned: "God hath beautified your Highnesse, and established youre authoritie," he wrote to the queen. After reprinting and answering what he called a "beadroll of untruths" on papal authority, Bridges devoted an unusually long 1114-page

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<sup>25</sup>Bilson, True Difference, 133, 129.

<sup>26</sup>John Bridges, The Supremacie of Christian Princes, ouer all persons throughout their dominions . . . (London, 1573), n.p.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

pamphlet to the obviously important subject of royal ecclesiastical sovereignty.

Because of the numerous conspiracies against Elizabeth in the name of papal supremacy, Richard Crompton, a lawyer, composed another "instruction in obedience,"<sup>28</sup> A short declaration of the ende of Traytors and false Conspirators . . . . Written in the month of the execution of Mary Queen of Scots, it stated that even other rulers could not be spared for opposing God's anointed. Like Bodin, Crompton declared:

"Subjects must submit themselves to every ordinance of the prince, yea though against the word of God they be made," for the "Prince /is/ sworne to maintayne lawe. . . ." <sup>29</sup>

Reflecting contemporary thought in England, Crompton linked obedience to order. The short declaration recounted the story of "the miserable condition of people that live where no lawes be" and "the happy state of people that live under good lawes," an obvious lesson for the Elizabethans.<sup>30</sup>

These works by Bilson, Bridges, and Crompton still equated sovereign power with obedience. The first English

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<sup>28</sup> Richard Crompton, A short declaration of the ende of Traytors and false Conspirators (London, 1587), n.p.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

work showing the influence of Bodin's study of sovereignty<sup>31</sup> was A Briefe Discourse of Royall Monarchie . . ., written by Charles Merbury, an English diplomat recently returned from France. Copying Bodin's definition of sovereignty-- "power full and perpetuall ouer all . . . subiectes in generall, and ouer euery one in particular"--<sup>32</sup> he explained that a commonwealth referred to government by a magistrate and that in a monarchy, the principal magistrate, from whom power was derived, was the prince.<sup>33</sup> The sovereign, he said, was accountable to no man, for his power came from God, "to be as it were his LIEFTENANTES to gouerne us here uppon Earth . . . ." <sup>34</sup> Merbury, like most sixteenth-century Englishmen, thought of the community as an organic whole; if things were wrong at the top, they were wrong all through society.

. . . if the Princes Power be in any pointe impaired, or the brightnesse of his Royall Maiestie any whitte eclipsed: the subject straight doth feelee the smarte. . . .<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Allen, History of Political Thought, 250.

<sup>32</sup> Charles Merbury, A Briefe Discourse of Royall Monarchie . . . (London, 1581), 41.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 7. This definition of a commonwealth also was like Bodin's.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 2.

Tyranny he defined as government where

one onely ruleth at his own luste, and  
pleasure, and all for his own aduantage:  
without having any regarde unto<sup>36</sup> the good,  
or ill estate of his subiectes.

A good king was one who took advice, punished offenses and  
pardoned those done to him, "deliteth to be seene," loved  
his people, and did not overburden his subjects with taxes.<sup>37</sup>

A tyrant had opposite characteristics. Although Merbury  
concluded that monarchy was the best form of government, he  
never gave his reasons for this conclusion. He did not  
claim that the prince could make the law (the principal  
attribute of sovereignty, Bodin had said); instead, he  
"copied from Bodin and left out the main point."<sup>38</sup>

Bodin also may have had some influence on what has  
been called the best example of Elizabethan constitutional  
thought, even though that thought was somewhat embryonic.<sup>39</sup>  
Sir Thomas Smith, then ambassador to France, began the  
popular De Republica Anglorum in 1565, adding to it, but  
not publishing it until 1583.<sup>40</sup> During this time Smith

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<sup>36</sup>Merbury, Briefe Discourse, 40.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 13-14.

<sup>38</sup>Allen, History of Political Thought, 251.

<sup>39</sup>G. P. Gooch, The History of English Democratic  
Ideas in the Seventeenth Century, 2d ed. (New York, 1912),  
32.

<sup>40</sup>Smith served in France from 1562 to 1566.

may well have met Hotman and Bodin,<sup>41</sup> and his definition of sovereignty--"to rule is . . . to have the highest and supreme authoritie of commaundement"--was similar to Bodin's.<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, Smith's statements about parliamentary sovereignty directly contradicted Bodin's perception of English political institutions. "The most high and absolute power of the realme of Englande, consisteth in the Parliament," Smith wrote; Parliament makes the law, settles the religion, and levies taxes, for "the consent of the Parliament is taken to be everie mans consent."<sup>43</sup> He seemed unclear on the subject of absolute power, describing the declaration of martial law, the minting of coin, dispensing with laws, appointing officials, and sending out of writs and commands as characteristics of that power.<sup>44</sup> "To be short the prince is the life, the head, and the authoritie of all thinges that be doone in the realme of England," he concluded, apparently moderating his earlier affirmation of parliamentary sovereignty.<sup>45</sup> Smith probably had no

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<sup>41</sup>Thomas Smith, De Republica Anglorum: A Discourse on the Commonwealth of England, ed. L. Alston (Cambridge, 1906), xli.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 9.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 48, 49.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 59-61.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 62.



notion of the modern belief in parliamentary sovereignty, but instead he understood that the king was most powerful when working in harmony with Parliament.<sup>46</sup> A constitutional conflict of the calamitous proportions of the seventeenth century was not yet envisioned.

Sovereignty may have been ill-defined, but in Elizabethan England, unlike contemporary France, resistance to the sovereign was almost unthinkable. No fully developed theory on resistance existed until Catholic challenges forced serious consideration, and then Tudor theorists merely stressed the importance of obedience to authority. Before Elizabeth's time obedience was not always emphasized. The Tudor dynasty, however, had been founded in a period of civil war, and few desired a return to that. Beginning with a flood of propaganda issued after the Henrician Reformation, nonresistance was considered essential for the well-being of the state.<sup>47</sup> Emphasis on nonresistance came not from religious or divine right beliefs, but from a need for order.<sup>48</sup> Carried to the extreme this idea could encourage a cult of authority, especially in a time of

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<sup>46</sup> Smith, De Republica Anglorum, ed. Alston, xxxiii.

<sup>47</sup> See, for example, Homily on Obedience (1547), in Elton, Tudor Constitution, 15-16.

<sup>48</sup> Allen, History of Political Thought, 132.



political tension, as in sixteenth-century France or seventeenth-century England.

One such work preaching nonresistance was Mirror for Magistrates, edited by William Baldwin. Making points also found elsewhere,<sup>49</sup> the popular tract maintained that magistrates and princes were God's lieutenants on earth and accountable only to Him, that wicked rulers were punishments for the sins of the people, and that disobedience wreaked havoc in society and merited terrible punishment in Hell.<sup>50</sup> Tyrannicide was "agaynst all lawes;"<sup>51</sup> God himself would strike down tyrannical rulers. Instead of an index, the Mirror for Magistrates listed the stories of traitors and murderers of kings as "Tragedies beginning . . . ." Intended not only as a mirror for magistrates, but also for subjects, tales of the likes of Owen Glendower, Henry Percy, and Jack Cade taught

Full litell knowe we wretches what we do,  
When we presume our princes to resist.  
We war with God, against his glory to,  
That placeth in his office whom he list. . . .  
God hath ordayned the power, all princes be  
His lieutenantes or debities in realmes. . . .

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<sup>49</sup>See especially An Homilie agaynst disobedience and wylful rebellion (London, 1570).

<sup>50</sup>/William Baldwin<sup>7</sup>, A Myrrore For Magistrates . . . (London, 1559), n.p.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

No subject aught for any kind of cause, <sup>52</sup>  
To force the lord, but yeeld him to the lawes.

The lesson of Mirror for Magistrates was that for traitors,  
"a troublous ende doth eber folowe. . . ." <sup>53</sup>

Elizabeth agreed. She told the French ambassador that "those who touch the sceptres of princes deserve no pity," <sup>54</sup> and she rebuked Henri III of France for not being strong enough to resist his rebels. <sup>55</sup> As a warning to her subjects she permitted publication of twenty-seven broadsides, ballads, and pamphlets on the bloody Northern Rebellion, such as "A godly ditty or prayer to be song unto God for the preservation of his Church, our Queene and Realme, against all Traytours, Rebels, and papistical enemies" and "Rebelles not fearynge Gode oughte therfore to fele the Rodde." <sup>56</sup> Apparently the government recognized its valuable ally in the printing press.

Works on nonresistance were composed in a society concerned about the presence of Mary Queen of Scots, who furnished a center for disaffection, and the issuance of

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<sup>52</sup>/Baldwin<sup>7</sup>, Myrrore For Magistrates, n.p.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>Quoted by Neale, Queen Elizabeth, 404.

<sup>55</sup>See Elizabeth's letter to Henri III in Calendar of State Papers, Foreign Series, of the Peign of Elizabeth, XIX (Aug. 1584-Aug. 1585), 514.

<sup>56</sup>Shaaber, Forerunners of the Newspaper, 114-116.

the papal bull, Regnans in excelsis, which called upon English Catholics to rebel and foreign Catholic nations to support that rebellion. With royal sanction both Lord Burghley and Bishop Bilson drafted tracts on nonresistance, Burghley's Execution of Justice in England being translated and published in Latin, French, and Spanish for maximum distribution. In it he wrote that it was "Gods goodness by whome Kinges doe rule, and by whose blast traitors are commonly wasted and confounded."<sup>57</sup> He referred to rebellious subjects in England and Ireland as "seduced by wicked spirits" and put down by Elizabeth with the power God had given her.<sup>58</sup> Using an idea later found in Bilson's book--that men were put to death in England for treason, not because of religious beliefs--he defined treason simply as rebellion against the queen.<sup>59</sup> Bilson charged some Englishmen with "hatching rebellion under a shewe of Religion;" "princes are placed by God, and so not to be displaced by men: and subjectes threaten damnation by Gods own mouth if they resist. . . ."<sup>60</sup> The difference between

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<sup>57</sup>The Execution of Justice in England . . . (London, 1583), n.p.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., and Bilson, True Difference, 527.

<sup>60</sup>Bilson, True Difference, n.p.

Christian subjection and unchristian rebellion was that princes were to use their swords for Christian subjection, but rebellion against princes was unjust because private persons, no matter how just their cause, did not possess authority from God.<sup>61</sup>

Smith in De Republica Anglorum described a tyrant by the illegal way he came to power (force), his method of administration (breaking laws or making them without the people's consent), or his goals (self-advancement).<sup>62</sup> Although he cited examples of ancient Greek and Roman republics that had overthrown their governments, "for the nature of man is never to stand still in one maner of estate . . . ,"<sup>63</sup> he urged caution:

When the common wealthe is evill governed by an evill ruler . . . the question remaineth whether the obedience of them be just, and the disobedience wrong. . . . Certaine it is that it is alwayes a doubtfull and hasardous matter to meddle with the chaunging of the lawes and government, or to disobey the orders of the rule or government, which a man doth finde alreadie established.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>Bilson, True Difference, 381, 335. Compare with Philippe du Plessis-Mornay in Vindiciae contra Tyrannos.

<sup>62</sup>Smith, De Republica Anglorum, ed. Alston, 15.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 12.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 13.

For the churchgoing Englishman who might be illiterate, sermons served as political lessons. Also, over one thousand Anglican sermons were printed during Elizabeth's reign, and perhaps as many foreign ones were translated and published as well.<sup>65</sup> Huguenot teachings, however, did not serve as a mirror for English Protestants, who were expected to be obedient subjects. Obviously propaganda, Anglican sermons stated extreme positions but did not delve into the mystery of the sanctity of kings, an integral feature of divine right theory. Perhaps this was avoided because the Tudor claim to the throne was "not quite unchallengeable."<sup>66</sup> In Tudor sermons kings were not depicted as absolute in the sense of being above the law; indeed, a tyrant was defined by his attempts to rule outside the law.<sup>67</sup> To rebel, however, was to risk upsetting God's plan. "An Exhortation to Obedience" asserted that the rule of kings was ordained by God and "necessary for the ordning of gods people . . . . Some are in hyghe degree, some in lowe, some kynges and princes, some inferiours and subiects. . . ."<sup>68</sup> Using a theme echoed by

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<sup>65</sup>Bennett, English Books and Readers, 148.

<sup>66</sup>Morris, Political Thought in England, 76.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 77.

<sup>68</sup>In Certayne Sermons appointed by the Queenes Maiestie . . . (n.p., 1562), n.p.

William Shakespeare,<sup>69</sup> the sermon warned:

Take away kinges, princes, rulers, magistrates,  
judges, and suche estates of gods ordre, noo  
men shall ride or go by the high way unrobbed,  
no manne shal stepe in his owne house or bed  
unkilled . . . there must nedes folow all mis-  
chiefe and utter destruction, both of soules,  
bodyes, goods and common wealthes.<sup>70</sup>

As for obedience to an unjust ruler, the "Exhortation"  
declared that

all subiectes are bounden to obeye them  
/kings/ as Goddes ministers: yea although  
they be euyl . . . . It is not laweful  
for inferiours and subiectes, in anye  
case to resist or stand agaynst the super-  
ior powers . . . .<sup>71</sup>

The example of David in the Old Testament proved that obe-  
dience was expected. Just as David would not strike down  
King Saul, God's anointed, neither should any subject  
resist his sovereign. He could only "pactently suffer all  
wronges and unjuries, referrynge the iudgement of our cause  
onely to god."<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, a terrible death, like that

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<sup>69</sup>"Take but degree away, untune that string,  
And hark! what discord follows; each thing meets  
In mere oppugnancy: the bounded waters  
Should lift their bosoms higher than the shores,  
And make a sop of all this solid globe . . . ."  
Troilus and Cressida, I, iii, in The Complete Works of Wil-  
liam Shakespeare (n.p., /1973/), 656.

<sup>70</sup>Certain Sermons, n.p.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

of Absalom when he rebelled against his father, David, awaited rebels, for they committed a crime "ageynst God, the common weale, and the whole realme. . . ." <sup>73</sup>

Another popular sermon with the same lessons was An Homilie ageynst disobedience and wyful rebellion, the most complete exposition of the duty of subjects. <sup>74</sup> Obedience, said the minister, was the "very roote of all vertues and the cause of all felicitie," as seen in the story of Adam and Eve. <sup>75</sup> As long as they had obeyed the Heavenly King, earth had been a paradise. Conversely disobedience was the "roote of all vices, and mother of all mischeefs. . .," and Lucifer's rebellion against God, which caused his fall into Hell, was the beginning of all evil. <sup>76</sup> If God ordained obedience, then Satan must have inspired rebellion. Rebellion ultimately resulted in a host of evils: plague, theft, rape, death--a total subversion of the established order. "Such subiectes as are disobedient or rebellious ageynst theyr princes, disobey God, and procure theyr owne damnation . . . ." <sup>77</sup> On the subject of Christian action against

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<sup>73</sup>Certayne Sermons, n.p. Contrast with early Huguenot teachings.

<sup>74</sup>Allen, History of Political Thought, 131.

<sup>75</sup>An Homilie ageynst disobedience and wyful rebellion (London, 1570), n.p.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid.

an unjust ruler, the minister cautioned that the cure (i.e., deposing the tyrant) was worse than the sickness.

What shall subiectes do then? Shall they obey valiaunt, stout, wyse, and good Princes, and contemne, disobey, and rebell agaynst undiscrete and evyll gouvernours: God forbyd. For first what a perilous thing were it to commit unto subiectes the iudgement whiche prince is wyse and godly, and his gouernment good, & which is otherwyse: as though the foote must iudge of the head: an enterprise verry haynous, and must needes breede rebellion.<sup>78</sup>

Even God's Son had obeyed secular authorities while He was on earth. The sermon repeated the idea found in earlier English thought that "God placeth as well euyl princes as good . . . ," according to what the people deserved; therefore, they had to be good subjects to merit good rulers. No rebellion in all of history had succeeded, the minister erroneously charged, and he condemned "certayne persons which falsely chalenge to themselves to be only counted and called spirituall," undoubtedly meaning Catholics, and the "unnaturell styryng up of the subiectes unto rebellion agaynst theyr princes" by the pope.

Such was the dominant tone of Tudor sermons. Archbishop of Canterbury John Whitgift virtually repeated the Homilie agaynst disobedience in 1583:

The magistrate is God's "Vicar and Vice-

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<sup>78</sup>Homilie agaynst disobedience, n.p.



gerent," and "whether the man be good or bad, he must be obeyed. . . ." Bad rulers are a punishment "for the sin of the people." <sup>79</sup>

Rebellion was viewed as terrible in Tudor England because it broke the links of the Great Chain of Being,<sup>80</sup> and Anglican ministers, like other English pamphleteers, warned their audiences of its evils. In this great era of the pamphlet,<sup>81</sup> both political theorists and ministers based their writings on the ideal of a cooperative, well-ordered society headed by the sovereign.<sup>82</sup> Even though political thought was moving from the idea of the commonwealth to the "more characteristically modern notion of sovereignty,"<sup>83</sup> Elizabethan political theorists were more concerned with explaining the mechanisms of their society than with analyzing their theoretical bases. Perhaps the propensity for mere explanation, rather than analysis, of the present accounted for their attention to the past and the lessons it could teach. They tried to understand themselves by understanding

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<sup>79</sup>Quoted in Morris, Political Thought in England, 122.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., 74.

<sup>81</sup>Arthur B. Ferguson, The Articulate Citizen and the English Renaissance (Durham, N. C., 1965), xiv.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., 370. See also E. M. W. Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture (New York, 1944), 88.

<sup>83</sup>Ferguson, Articulate Citizen, 386.

the past. If the English had any doubts about the anarchy unloosed when the order of society was upset by disobedience and even rebellion against the sovereign, they need only have reflected on the present state of France.

## CHAPTER IV

England in 1589 was fortunate. The Catholic threat had abated somewhat: the Armada had been defeated, Mary Queen of Scots executed, and with them had faded the prospects of religious civil war, foreign intervention, and domestic rebellion. With her throne and her church more secure, Elizabeth could look across the Channel at war-torn France and see what England might have become. The French and English experiences had been different, although the troubles of France were the potential problems of England. So, too, in most instances, had the political theory of each country differed. "The amount and the seriousness of the thought devoted to the nature of the State seems to . . . vary inversely with the sense of security;" "political theory really comes into its own only in a crisis, when the conventional beliefs and unargued assumptions of men are suddenly called in question."<sup>1</sup> Sixteenth-century France, ravaged by rebellion, struggled to define the nature of sovereign power, as would England in the seventeenth century.

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<sup>1</sup>J. W. Allen, A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century (London, /1964/), 273, and John Neville Figgis, The Divine Right of Kings (New York, /1914/), xxxv.

This paper has examined one segment of Elizabethan contact with France--printed works on political theory, particularly those allowed into England. Although contemporary political and religious problems influenced both French and English authors, the contents of their works differed. Before 1584 Huguenot ideas of popular sovereignty and contractual kingship, with the people pledged to the king conditionally and he to the people absolutely, were not meant to be models for the Elizabethan English.<sup>2</sup> There was no talk in England, at least in approved pamphlets, about popular sovereignty as there had been in early Huguenot tracts. More similarities, however, existed between English and Huguenot theories after 1584, when both advocated obedience to the legitimate sovereign. The Guise were accused of having a "desire to usurpe," to "pluck away the crowne from those whom nature hath made kings. . . ." <sup>3</sup> At any time both Huguenots and English could agree that the pope held no power over them.<sup>4</sup> The

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<sup>2</sup>These ideas were found in Philippe du Plessis-Mornay, Vindiciae contra Tyrannos, in Julian H. Franklin, ed., Constitutionalism and Resistance in the Sixteenth Century (New York, 1969), 191.

<sup>3</sup>Peter Erondelle, A Declaration and Catholick Exhortation to all Christian Princes to succor the Church of God and Realme of France (London, 1586), 11, and The Contre-Guyse . . . (London, 1589), n.p.

<sup>4</sup>See Hotman's Brutish Thunderbolt and Bilson's True Difference.

English, not yet forced through the crucible of civil war, had no clear theory of royal sovereignty, the great issue in France. Sixteenth-century English ideas of kingship emphasized

not so much the will of God in making the king, or the king's duty to govern his people on God's behalf . . . as the subject's duty towards his king. The theory of the divine right of kings resolved itself into a discussion of obedience and resistance.<sup>5</sup>

English political theory was nebulous, for the English never had needed to define their political beliefs beyond acknowledging the monarch's supreme position on the Great Chain of Being. Looking at the French experiences and at French thought, the English began searching in their own country for the source of this "power to command." Greek, Roman, and biblical references abounded in both French and English works, for the past was seen as a guide. The English, however, did not probe for the origin of monarchical power, as the French did in works such as Franco-gallia.

Unwavering obedience on the part of subjects and full (but not arbitrary) power vested in the monarch, as prescribed by Bodin, fit closely with Elizabeth's own ideas, expressed by Lord Burghley in The Execution of

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<sup>5</sup>Figgis, Divine Right of Kings, xxi.

Justice in England and Bishop Bilson in The True Difference.

"Princes are placed by God, and so not to be displaced by men . . . ," Bilson wrote.<sup>6</sup> "Subjects must submit themselves to every ordinance of the prince . . . ," agreed Richard Crompton.<sup>7</sup> Bodin's description of sovereignty-- "power full and perpetuall ouer all . . . subiectes in generall, and ouer eury one in particular"--was used by Charles Merbury in A Briefe Discourse of Royall Monarchie; similarly Sir Thomas Smith described sovereignty as "the highest and supreme authoritie of commaundement."<sup>8</sup> Bodin and his English contemporaries agreed that the monarch was not above the law, but by this, Bodin meant natural and divine law, for he felt that an absolute sovereign's most important power was the power to make law. Both Bodin and the English theorists cited here used descriptive methods rather than analytical ones; Bodin spoke of the king as the father of his people, a description the Elizabethans could not use.<sup>9</sup> Instead, they wrote of good princes

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<sup>6</sup>Thomas Bilson, The True Difference Between Christian Subjection and Unchristian Rebellion (Oxford, 1585), n.p.

<sup>7</sup>Richard Crompton, A short declaration of the ende of Traytors and false Conspirators (London, 1587), n.p.

<sup>8</sup>Thomas Smith, De Republica Anglorum: A Discourse on the Commonwealthe of England, ed. L. Alston (Cambridge, 1906), 9.

<sup>9</sup>See especially Charles Merbury, A Briefe Discourse of Royall Monarchie . . . (London, 1581), 13-14.

who loved their subjects. "It would seem, indeed, that the publication of Bodin's Republic in 1576 must be seriously regarded as one cause of the new directions taken by thought in England towards the end of Elizabeth's reign."<sup>10</sup> Perhaps by that time the thinking Tudor Englishman was beginning to question the nature and origin of the authority that Elizabethan political theorists and ministers had taught him could not be resisted.<sup>11</sup> To say that the king was God's lieutenant on earth, as Burghley, Bilson, Bridges, Crompton, and Merbury did, simply meant that obedience ultimately belonged to God. Claims for the unlimited power of the monarchy had to wait until the future James I published The Trew Law of Free Monarchies in 1598. Divine right theory was forming but was not yet fully developed in France or in England.<sup>12</sup>

Also different were French and English conceptions of tyranny and the solutions for it. The early Huguenot thinkers defined a tyrant as one who did not rule in accord with the wishes of the people; the English said a tyrant was one who ruled with only his own advancement as a goal. Before 1584 the Huguenots, then in opposition to the mon-

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<sup>10</sup> Allen, History of Political Thought, 250.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 269.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 268.

archy, had argued that resistance to a tyrant by magistrates was legitimate, even a duty. However, as Beza declared in Du Droit des Magistrats, "It is illicit for any private subject to use force against a tyrant."<sup>13</sup> The individual had not created the king; therefore, he could not rebel, Mornay wrote in Vindiciae contra Tyrannos. After 1584, when Henri of Navarre became next in line for the French throne, resistance was no longer a theme of Huguenot writings. In England Elizabeth's position did not change as Henri's had, and neither did English thought on resistance. God punished tyrants; by His "blast traitors are commonly wasted and confounded," Burghley warned.<sup>14</sup> Under no circumstances could subjects rebel, a lesson also taught by many sermons.

Despite the common threat of Spain and Catholicism, the English and French troubles differed in degree. Royal authority, battered in France by these forces, was not yet questioned so widely in England. "It was difficult for Englishmen to appreciate the relevance of French ideas . . . until an open breach between king and parliament, an overt contest for the sovereign law-making power, forced them to do so."<sup>15</sup> In their conscious attempt to explain the polit-

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<sup>13</sup>Theodore Beza, Du Droit des Magistrats, in Franklin, ed., Constitutionalism and Resistance, 194.

<sup>14</sup>The Execution of Justice in England (London, 1583),

<sup>15</sup>J. H. M. Salmon, The French Religious Wars in English Political Thought (Oxford, 1959), 12.



ical quarrels of the early Stuart era, the English looked back to the recent past in France, and though the French experience was not the only one used, it was an important one.<sup>16</sup> Parliament's supporters would justify resistance to Charles I as resistance to a tyrant, but significantly, when the English did rebel against their sovereign, they did not do so as individuals, but through Parliament.

Later in the seventeenth century the Exclusion Crisis formed another parallel with French history. The French Catholic League had opposed the succession of the Protestant Henri as the Whigs now opposed the duke of York, and like the Catholic League, the Whigs had a ready successor. Even the Popish Plot fitted in this scenario-- it had been an abortive St. Bartholomew's.<sup>17</sup>

Not until the seventeenth century, then, did French thought apply to the English situation. The English portrayals of the French Wars of Religion, intended to be a mirror of the chaos England must abjure, became something of a model.<sup>18</sup> "The Elizabethan reception ensured that the French conflicts would not be forgotten in later periods of English political dissension."<sup>19</sup> The "fires of France"-- civil warfare--finally did inflame Elizabeth's kingdom,

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<sup>16</sup>Salmon, French Religious Wars, 3.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 132.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 38.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

but only after she had safely passed the throne to the Stuarts. During her reign the problems of France had been a looking glass, a lesson for the English, rather than the reflector they later became.

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 /Jean de Serres7, The Three Partes of Commentaries, contain-  
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## VITA

Emily Jane Williams

Born December 9, 1951, in Greensboro, North Carolina. Graduated from Grimsley High School, Greensboro, June 1969. B. A. (history), magna cum laude, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, May 1973. Served as editorial apprentice with the Institute of Early American History and Culture while graduate student at William and Mary. Currently director of Oral History Program, College of William and Mary.