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Orthodox Puritans and Dissenting Bishops: the Reformation of the English Episcopate, c.1580-1610¹

Marcus Harmes
School of History, Philosophy, Religion and Classics
University of Queensland
Brisbane

Abstract

The reformed English Church retained its bishops and its episcopal hierarchy. Yet contemporary evidence reveals perceptions of English bishops as being withholders of Protestant reform and punishers and persecutors of those churchmen who actively advocated further reform of the Church of England. In a challenge to these impressions, this paper surveys the writings of Sir John Harington and Josias Nichols, the first a layman and the second a deprived minister and both interpreters of the reformed English episcopate. An interrogation of their texts that both writers identified dissent which emanated from within the reformed episcopate of the Church of England; Nichols in particular asserted his loyalty to the Church of England at the same time that he had dissented from it, using the names and precedents of reformed bishops to argue away accusations of dissent. In examining the responses of Harington and Nichols to the episcopate, this article accounts for the exercise of episcopal authority which was explicitly reformed and Protestant, a point revealed by Harington's emphasis on the episcopal responsibility for enacting religious reform and Nichols's account of bishops who sheltered dissenters and encouraged reform of the Church.

The English Reformation bequeathed the English Church a body of doctrines distinct from medieval belief, but the Church of England retained a hierarchy derived from the Medieval Church – its bishops.² These English bishops became in some Tudor and Stuart polemical texts both the withholders of reform and the persecutors of Protestants. Protestant dissenters, both named and anonymous, aligned the authority of bishops with Popish religion, rather than reformed religion. One anonymous author from 1609 delineated the actions of Protestant bishops in “upholding of their hierarchy”, a

¹ I am grateful to Dr Sarah Ferber of the University of Queensland for her comments on an earlier draft of this paper and thank the anonymous readers of *Comitatus* for their feedback.

² This point is made in John Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England 1646-1689* (New Haven 1991) 109.

hierarchy which was explicitly “from the Pope.”³ A controversial reputation adhered to individual bishops and the order in general. Archbishop Whitgift was lampooned after his death and in fact during his funeral for being “the Jesuits’ hope”; his successor, Richard Bancroft, was the willing host of the “Strumpet of Rome”.⁴ Bishop John King, their contemporary and the Jacobean bishop of London, despite a long career preaching down popery, went to his grave alleged to be a Roman Catholic.⁵

These reputations indicate perceptions that the episcopate was not simply popish but was inimical to reformed religion. Andrew Foster, the historian of the northern episcopate endorses this argument. He stresses that some English churchmen saw the government of the Church by bishops as being at odds with ecclesiastical reform. He quotes a contemporary opinion that bishops were “intolerable withstanders of reformation”.⁶ Foster’s point is that the imperatives of the Reformation conflicted with and complicated the authority and status of bishops.

But using writings on the episcopate by the wit, courtier and historian Sir John Harington and the dissenting minister Josias Nichols, this paper explores the contradiction of dissenters who nonetheless asserted their loyalty to and membership of the established Church and will show how episcopal authority was aligned with the dissent of the so-called “conforming puritans”. While rebellion *from* the authority of the established Church and its bishops is a familiar part of the modern scholarly landscape, this paper will survey the rebellion which some churchmen and writers identified *within* the established Church and which they expressed using the ecclesial hierarchy and structures of that Church. It will argue that dissenters from the Church of England interpreted their dissent according to the standards of the reformed episcopate.

This paper firstly establishes a scholarly and historical context for the exercise of English episcopal authority against dissent. The historical context is provided by the Hampton Court Conference of 1604, an event much interpreted by modern authors, whose works stress the contestation apparent between bishops and dissenters after this conciliar attempt to reconcile bishops with more eager reformers of the Church. This paper secondly examines the cataloguing of bishops undertaken by Sir John Harington (1561-1612) in his *Supplie or Addicion*, in which he used the reformed English episcopate as an interpretative device for explaining and justifying dissent. Harington

³ Anon., *An Ansvvere to a Sermon Preached the 17 of April Anno. D. 1608, by George Downame Doctor of Divinitie and Ivttivled, A sermon defendinge the honourable function of Bishops; wherein All his seafons, brought to prove the honourable function of our L. Bishops, to be divine institution; are answered and refuted* (1609) 6.

⁴ These views are indicated in Pauline Croft, “The Reputation of Robert Cecil: Libels, Political Opinion and Popular Awareness in the Early Seventeenth Century”, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* sixth series vol.1 (1991) 46. A more general discussion of rumour and gossip is provided in Richard Cust, “News and Politics in early 17th century England”, *Past and Present* 112 (1986) 60-90.

⁵ This allegation was vigorously denied by Bishop King’s son in a Paul’s Cross sermon in 1621.

⁶ Andrew Foster, “The Function of a Bishop: the career of Richard Neile, 1562-1640”, in Rosemary O’Day and Felicity Heal (eds.), *Continuity and Change: personnel and administration of the Church of England 1500-1642* (Leicester 1976) 34.

was the godson of Elizabeth I and a friend and courtier of Prince Henry of Wales (d. 1612), for whom he produced his catalogue of the Tudor and Jacobean bishops. Harington's catalogue was circulating in manuscript form by the early seventeenth century. Thirdly the paper studies Harington's contemporary, Josias Nichols (1553-c.1640), a deprived minister and dissenter from Kent, who asserted his loyalty to the Church of England and urged that a specifically reformed episcopate was coterminous with his own beliefs. Nichols's principal works, *Abrahams Faith* and the *Plea of the Innocent* were published in 1602 and 1603 respectively and he was deprived of his living at the turn of the seventeenth century.⁷ Nonetheless he stressed his fidelity to the Church of England and its episcopal hierarchy. He did so by summoning up in writing an episcopate which was explicitly recalled and interpreted as Protestant.

Since the seventeenth century writers including Thomas Fuller and John Strype have used Harington's catalogue as a source of information on Elizabethan and Jacobean bishops. But his work has not hitherto been regarded as material meriting interpretation in its own right. A catalogue transmitted biographical data on bishops, but this paper identifies the polemical significance of the bishops which Harington chose to interpret and the religious context in which he placed them. Nichols's early-seventeenth-century texts *Abrahams Faith* and *The Plea of the Innocent* have been taken by modern historians as statements of Nichols's dissent from the Church of England, but a more nuanced reading of them is possible and reveals Nichols as both dissenter and loyal member of the Church. Neither Harington nor Nichols has been adequately explored as a means of interpreting the reformation of English bishops and the application of their power.

I

This study of the episcopate does not seek to argue away dissent from the Church of England and its bishops, but it does argue for the complexity of relations between bishops and dissenters. This paper is not the first piece of historical writing to point out the difficulties in defining Puritanism or dissent in opposition to episcopacy and religious authority. Some time ago the historian Peter Lake asked if Matthew Hutton, the archbishop of York from 1596 to 1606, was a "Puritan bishop."⁸ He concluded that Hutton could justifiably be called a "puritan bishop", meaning that Hutton's career in the Church amalgamated and balanced a personally puritan religiosity with obedience to the demands of his high office.⁹ Lake has provided further clarification of this strand of thought. Studying the career of Stephen Denison, the seventeenth-century minister and incumbent of St Katherine Cree in London, Lake points out that he was both a victim of the Star Chamber, which was an instrument of episcopal control, but also an important

⁷ Nichols, *Abrahams Faith: That is, The olde Religion. Wherein is Tavght, that the religion now publikely taught and defended by order in the Church of England, is the onely true Catholike, auncient, and vnchangeable faith of Gods elect* (London 1602).

⁸ Peter Lake, "Matthew Hutton - A Puritan Bishop?", *History* 64 (1979) 182.

⁹ Lake, "Matthew Hutton - A Puritan Bishop?", 182.

witness there against dissent.¹⁰ Lake therefore sees the blurred distinctions between the victims and the agents of episcopal authority.

Lake's arguments have some priority in earlier scholarship. Patrick Collinson identified that dissent from the Church of England's bishops cannot easily be viewed as residing outside the legal and doctrinal parameters of the Church. Collinson points out that Puritans were in fact to be found within the Church of England.¹¹ It is for instance noteworthy that when King James appointed Henry Robinson, an Oxford don, to be a bishop, Robinson became "a bishop, and therefore no puritan", as the King expressed it.¹² Robinson's memorial brass in Oxford underscores the King's demarcation between the two aspects of English religion, for Robinson was depicted in his episcopal vestments and with his jewelled crozier. No trace remained of the apparent puritan which he had been.¹³ Yet in examining one of Robinson's colleagues on the episcopal bench, Rudd of St David's, Collinson advanced a definition of puritan and bishop which challenges this demarcation. He locates Bishop Rudd of St David's within a puritan framework. For Collinson, Puritanism could be defined by its association with accommodation, as he highlights this Bishop's belief that puritans and other members of the Church were able to agree in "substance of religion."¹⁴ This paper departs from Collinson's point, for while he stressed the connection between Puritanism and accommodation, it is instead possible to perceive that members of the Church nonetheless expressed their dissent using the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the Church. What this paper contributes is an understanding of episcopal authority as it was specifically interpreted by Nichols and Harington, but placed within the context of the religious policies of the Jacobean age. It points towards a more nuanced understanding of dissent but also of the application of episcopal authority which was reformed and Protestant. After all, Nichols could not have found amenable precedents for his dissent among the pre-Reformation bishops.

Both Nichols and Harington can be placed in a specific historical context. They were products of the Jacobean Church and their works interpreted the origin and authority of the English episcopate which governed that Church. Harington located the basis of episcopal authority in the Reformation, seeing the creation and establishment of reformed religion as an episcopal undertaking.¹⁵ His interpretation of the history of the

¹⁰ Peter Lake, *The boxmaker's revenge: 'orthodoxy', 'heterodoxy' and the politics of the parish in early Stuart London* (Stanford 2001) 2.

¹¹ Patrick Collinson, "The Jacobean Religious Settlement: The Hampton Court Conference", in Howard Tomlinson (ed.), *Before the English Civil War* (London 1983) 29.

¹² Cited in Conrad Russell, "The Reformation and the creation of the Church of England", in John Morrill (ed.), *The Oxford Illustrated History of Tudor and Stuart Britain* (Oxford 2000) 287.

¹³ Kenneth Fincham, *Prelate as Pastor: the episcopate of James I* (Oxford 1990).

¹⁴ Collinson, "The Jacobean Religious Settlement", pp.212-17. Bishop Rudd's comments are preserved in All Souls Oxford MS 155, ff.49-52.

¹⁵ John Harington, *Supplie or Addicion to the Catalogue of Bishops to the Yeere 1608* (ed. R.H. Miller), (Potomac, Maryland 1979). Harington's supplement existed in manuscript form during the early seventeenth century but an edition edited by the Presbyterian Sam Chetwynd, who was Harington's descendant, was published in 1653 as *A briefe view of the State of the Church of England as it stood in Q.*

episcopate dramatically undercut earlier episcopal catalogues, especially those actually authored by bishops, by stressing the origin of episcopal authority in the English Reformation rather than the remoter age of the Apostolic Church. Nichols's account of his loyalty to the Church of England and the unjustness (in his view) of being labelled a puritan or a dissenter was grounded in an explication of how bishops were reformed but in authority.¹⁶ Both *Abrahams Faith* and *Plea of the Innocent* indicate some confluence between episcopal authority and dissent.

The application of episcopal power has informed an interpretation of the place of bishops in the Elizabethan and Stuart Churches, which asserts the contestation between the bishops of the Church of England and their Puritan opponents. William Sheils's account of the diocese of Peterborough strongly asserts this version of English ecclesiastical relations. Although he studies one particular diocese, Sheils draws wider conclusions from his evidence and argues that during the late-sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Puritanism grew in opposition to the bishops of the English Church; it also grew in spite of the bishops. Sheils posits that Puritanism, a term which for him is synonymous with non-conformity, was an alternative to episcopacy, a point most clearly made in his work when he describes efforts by some politicians and courtiers such as Sir William Cecil, the secretary to Elizabeth I, to mediate between bishops and puritans.¹⁷ For Sheils, the bishops of the English Church were an alternative to the worship and church government of English puritans and he indicates that contestation prevailed between bishops and puritans by the early seventeenth century.

Narratives of dissent from episcopal authority, including those of Josias Nichols, are given historical cohesion by the confluence of particular events: the accession of a new monarch, King James I, in 1603; and a major ecclesiastical conference held at Hampton Court Palace in 1604. In 1603 Queen Elizabeth died, and King James VI of Scotland came south to become James I.¹⁸ The new English king attracted flattering attention as a reforming prince.¹⁹ The Calvinist historian Theodore de Beze had

Elizabeths and King James his reigne, to the year 1608 (London 1653). This edition deviates markedly from the manuscript original and could not serve as the textual basis for a study of Harington's work.

¹⁶ Josias Nichols, *The Plea of the Innocent* (R. Schilders?, 1603). Nichols's *Plea* was published, according to the contemporary calendar, in 1603 but no publisher or printery was identified on the title page and nor was there any indication given as to where the tract could be purchased.

¹⁷ William Sheils, "Some problems of government in a new diocese: the bishop and the Puritans in the diocese of Peterborough, 1560-1630", in Rosemary O'Day and Felicity Heal (eds.), *Continuity and Change: personnel and administration of the Church of England 1500-1642* (Leicester 1976) 176.

¹⁸ Reactions to Elizabeth's death are noted in the "Diary of John Manningham, of the Middle Temple, and of Bradbourne, Kent, Barrister at Law" (ed. John Bruce), *Camden Society* (vol.99, 1868) 94; see also J.F. Merritt, "Puritans, Laudians, and the Phenomenon of Church-Building in Jacobean London", *Historical Journal* 41 no.4 (1998) 952-53.

¹⁹ The enduring significance of Elizabeth's reign and policies is noted in Jennifer Woodward, "Images of a dead Queen: historical record of mourning ceremony for Queen Elizabeth I of England", *History Today* (November, 1997), p.1. Inevitably Roy Strong has also adduced evidence to attest to a cult of Elizabeth persisting into the seventeenth century, although the cultic notion is described in vague terms; Strong, *Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I* (Oxford 1963)43. See also Peter Sherlock, "Henry VII's 'miraculum orbis':

dedicated the *Icones*, his biographies of various important figures of the English, Scottish and continental reform movements, to James when he was the King of Scotland.²⁰ The attention which James received as a reformist prince was reflected in public ecclesiastical affairs when in 1604 James summoned the Hampton Court Conference.²¹

Contemporary assessments of the Conference privileged the notion that it concluded with a number of clergy forced to reject the authority of the bishops and stress that the Conference disenfranchised a considerable number of clergy and reinforced episcopal power at the expense of dissenters. The seventeenth-century martyrologist and historian Samuel Clarke stressed that calls for further reform contested with the priorities of the Church's bishops.²² In his biographies of thirty-two notable divines, Clarke noted that Richard Rothwel was forbidden by his diocesan bishop to preach because his sermons had the potential to "mightily batter down their *Hierarchy*."²³ Therefore, in Clarke's opinion, the Conference of 1604 merely consolidated the breaches which he could identify in the Elizabethan Church, for opponents of the established Church were swiftly labelled "schismatics" by the Church's leaders.²⁴

Clarke's account of the conference was defined by the divisions which he saw between bishops and dissenters. However the efforts of King James I to negotiate between different aspects of English Christianity, including Anglican, Dissenting and Catholic Recusant, have been more recently charted by modern scholars, who stress that the King, James I, mediated between different factions of English Christians, a line of reasoning which can only indicate that some members of the clergy in particular dissented from the established Church. The notion of the King strategically negotiating between different factions of the English Church has been most coherently and systematically advanced by Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake.²⁵ They deduce that the first Stuart monarch perceived that English religion was divided into three different

Royal Commemoration at Westminster Abbey 1500-1700", in F.W. Kent and Charles Zika (eds.), *Rituals, Images and Words: Varieties of Cultural Expression in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Turnhout 2005) 193.

²⁰ Theodore de Beze, *Icones* (ed. John Horden), (Yorkshire 1971).

²¹ The Hampton Court Conference has generated an extensive scholarly literature. The proceedings and outcomes of this event have been examined in Nicholas Tyacke, "The 'Rise of Puritanism' and the Legalizing of Dissent, 1571-1719", in Ole Peter Grell, Jonathan I Israel and Nicholas Tyacke (eds.), *From Persecution to Toleration: The Glorious Revolution and Religion in England* (Oxford 1991) 17-49; Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake, "The Ecclesiastical Policy of King James I", *Journal of British Studies* 24 no.2 (1985) 169-207.

²² Clarke, *A general martyrologie*, p.45.

²³ Clarke, *A general martyrologie*, p.69.

²⁴ Clarke, *A general martyrologie*, pp.116-117.

²⁵ Fincham and Lake, "The Ecclesiastical Policy of King James I", 169-207. Fincham and Lake have expanded upon their points in other publications. See especially Kenneth Fincham, *The Prelate as Pastor: The Episcopate of James I* (Oxford 1990) and Kenneth Fincham (ed.), *The Early Stuart Church, 1603-1642* (London 1993). The point that some parties of dissenters wished to co-exist beyond the episcopal regulations and oversight of the Church of England was made by Stephen A. Bondos Greene in "The End of an Era: Cambridge Puritanism and the Christ's College Election of 1609", *Historical Journal* 25 no.1 (1982) 197.

categories, notably Catholic Recusants, Dissenters and the orthodox clergy of the Church.²⁶ Their work charted the King's efforts to conciliate the different parties and challenge the more bombastic portrayal of the King as an impartial adjudicator of the Hampton Court Conference.

In presenting the Conference as not so bifurcated or easily divided, Fincham and Lake have provided an interpretative foundation for recent interpretations of the early seventeenth-century Church. A.W.R.E. Okines posits that early Stuart religious policy responded to the differences between different ecclesiastical groups.²⁷ Scholars have also scrutinized the position of some members of the English Church who wished to "co-exist" beyond the ecclesial confines of the Church of England. Similarly Stephen Bondos-Green argues that by the reign of James I, many English dissenters wished for "peaceful co-existence" with the Church of England, meaning that they would enjoy freedom of reformed worship without requiring episcopal licensing and supervision, the conditions which were attached to the clergy of the established Church.²⁸

These arguments are persuasive, but one must be wary of drawing too strong a distinction between bishops and puritans, when strong contemporary evidence would complicate any attempt to do so. Stuart bishops cannot simply be interpreted as opponents of puritans. To take two examples: in the first place, Clarke, the martyrologist and cataloguer of victims of episcopal malevolence, also included a puritanical bishop among the thirty-two eminent divines whose lives he recounted.²⁹ In the second place, an exchange between King James I and Bishop Godfrey Goodman is preserved; while the King complained of the number of puritans in his English Kingdom, Goodman could riposte that the King made many puritans to be bishops.³⁰

II

While it was a quip, Bishop Goodman's comment to King James raises a point pertinent to the study of both John Harington and Josias Nichols. The preceding survey shows modern scholars highlighting the divisions within the English Church through precisely delineated factions between which King James mediated. The two authors surveyed here, Harington and Nichols, convey a significantly different conception of the English Church

²⁶ This work has subsequently been expanded into "The Ecclesiastical Policies of James I and Charles I", in Kenneth Fincham (ed.), *The Early Stuart Church, 1603-1642* (London 1993).

²⁷ Okines's article was concerned with the aftermath of the November 1605 Gunpowder conspiracy. Asking why no wide-scale persecution of Catholic laity or religious followed this notorious event, Okines finds his answer in the work of a religiously conciliating monarch; A.W.R.E. Okines, "Why was there so little reaction to the Gunpowder Plot?", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 55 no.2 (2004) 275-92.

²⁸ Bondos-Greene, "The End of an Era" 197-208.

²⁹ Clarke, *A general martyrologie* 156.

³⁰ Bishop Goodman thought that some, even many of his brother bishops were puritans; other evidence reveals the efforts of Bishop Laud and the Duke of Buckingham, to distinguish between the Orthodox and Puritan candidates for the episcopate. Laud presented Buckingham with a list of candidates for episcopal office marked "O" for orthodox and "P" for puritan; William Laud *Works* (7 vols, Oxford 1847-60), III, 159. A context for this correspondence is provided by D.E. Kennedy, "The Jacobean Episcopate", *Historical Journal* 5 no.2 (1962) 177.

and its episcopal hierarchy. Both authors reveal that dissent emanated from within the episcopal hierarchy.

As the full title to his text indicates, Harington's work was intended to supplement the *Catalogue of Bishops*, published by Francis Godwin in 1601.³¹ Godwin (or Goodwin) was the Bishop of Worcester and previously of Llandaff.³² Harington referred throughout the *Supplie or Addicion* to "my Author", meaning Bishop Godwin. Harington explained that his episcopal catalogue was a text written for Prince Henry of Wales, the eldest son of James VI and I, apparently at the behest of the Prince himself and was designed to enrich his knowledge of the history of the reformed English Church. Harington, addressing Prince Henry directly, stated that "my purpose from the beginning, though it were chiefly to enforme your knowledge, with a faithfull report of some things passed in Queene Elizabeths tyme."³³ Harington's purpose in compiling the catalogue was spelt out most fully in the passages which opened his account of the bishopric of London, where he observed: "My purpose in this worke from the beginning and my promise to your highness [Prince Henry] being, to add to this Author a supplie of some matters (that he purposely omitted, writing in the latter yeares of Queene Elizabeth)."³⁴ As an example, speaking of one particular bishop, Richard Vaughan, Harington indicated the necessity to enrich the biographical data given by Godwin, as Vaughan was "the last man named in my Authors booke and of him he [Godwin] hath but two lynes."³⁵ In writing for the Prince of Wales, Harington's text is thus product of the wits, scholars and clergy who surrounded Prince Henry until his death in 1612 and who may loosely be termed his "court". As an historian but also a noted wit and writer of epigrams, Harington was a leading figure in this circle.³⁶ But Harington's work was a product of a more explicitly clerical and intellectual context. In endeavouring to augment Godwin's work, Harington was contributing to a wider body of historical literature. The work by Godwin which Harington wished to enrich was itself an elaboration of *De Antiquitate Ecclesiae et Privilegiis Ecclesiae Cantuariensis*, written by Archbishop Matthew Parker in 1572. It is into this scholarly context that Harington's catalogue can be placed.

³¹ Godwin's text was re-issued in 1616.

³² Harington implied more than once that he is filling in lacunae in Godwin's catalogue that had to be left because of the political restraints of the Elizabethan period. However, the only notably controversial exception is the account of a sermon preached in the Chapel Royal by Matthew Hutton, the Archbishop of York, in which the Archbishop addressed the problem of the Queen's virginity and the absence of a clear successor to the English throne. The account of the Archbishop's sermon as well as his subsequent private reprimand from two members of the Council, Sir John Fortescue, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Sir John Wolley, the Chancellor of the Order of the Garter, dominates Harington's entry on this archbishop. Harington, *Supplie or Addicion* 171-73.

³³ Harington, *Supplie or Addicion* 59. Harington indicated that he would present his subject matter in a way that would make it interesting for the young man, saying that it was also his intention "to sawce it in such sort, with some varietie of matter not impertinent, to cheere your spirit, least a dull relation of the acts of graue graybeards to a young prince might grow fastidious."

³⁴ Harington, *Supplie or Addicion* 44.

³⁵ Harington, *Supplie or Addicion* 55.

³⁶ For which see Roy Strong, *Henry Prince of Wales and England's Lost Renaissance* (London 1986).

What is the value of episcopal catalogues to this analysis? Their writers typically saw the history of the English Church, as well as its apostolic authority, as being embodied in the English episcopate. The *Catalogue of the Bishops* of Francis Godwin and before him the catalogue of archbishops of Canterbury written by Matthew Parker outlined the continuities apparent in the English episcopate from its Anglo-Saxon establishment through the reformation and, in Godwin's work, into the early seventeenth century. Their works are not the only products of this period to catalogue bishops. A Jacobean scroll preserved at Lambeth Palace records "the names and dates of consecration and translation of the Archbishops of Canterbury" from John Peckam in the thirteenth century to George Abbot, the Jacobean primate and Godwin's contemporary.³⁷ A work such as this merely transcribed dates; the works of Godwin and Parker went further and included biographical details. The catalogues were organized bishop by bishop, much as medieval chronicles told the history of an institution through a sequence of church dignitaries.³⁸

Comparison between them highlights the value of Harington's work to this analysis. Harington, Godwin and Parker adhered to a similar structure and methodology. Like other catalogues, such as a later anonymous episcopal catalogue from 1674, individual bishops of each diocese were described according to when they were appointed to their sees.³⁹ As such, the texts share a unity of structure and in the organizing principles behind them.

These similarities merely stress the differences between Harington and the episcopal cataloguers. Harington's account began with the period of Parker's incumbency in Canterbury up until the reign of Richard Bancroft, who became the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1604. In York, the same period saw Harington recount the lives of the bishops and archbishops of the Northern Province between the primacies of Dr Thomas Young and Tobie Matthew. As such, Harington's narrative owed little to the work of either Godwin or Parker. The episcopate charted by Harington originated in the Reformation; but he also delineated dissent derived from within that reformed institution. The two episcopal writers stressed the continuities of the English episcopate, whereas Harington's text located the Elizabethan and Jacobean episcopates in a narrower period of history and examined them as products of the reformation of the Church.

³⁷ Lambeth Palace Library CM XV/14, "A roll containing the names and dates of consecration and translation of the Archbishops of Canterbury from Peckham to Abbot".

³⁸ Chris Given-Wilson, *Chronicles: The Writing of History in Medieval England* (London 2004) 84-85. The chroniclers of medieval abbeys and priories were not writing episcopal catalogues in the manner of Parker, Godwin or Harington, but often structured narrative histories of foundations through abbatial biographies.

³⁹ The order of precedence among the bishops also shaped the episcopal catalogues. For obvious reasons, the two archdioceses came first, followed by the ancient and pre-eminent sees such as London, Durham, Winchester and Rochester.

In Harington's *Supplie or Addicion*, the Reformation was conceived of as a battle. According to Harington's formulary, Latimer, Cranmer, Ridley, Parker and other reforming bishops were the generals and the battle, although it had been brought to a successful conclusion, was now threatened by the soldiers of the Protestant "army". Harington used the names and reputations of the reformers and the ecclesiastical legislation which they had propounded in order to impose the Church's authority, but it is significant that Harington saw that threats to the established Church emanated from within it. Harington's analysis of the episcopate does in fact gain meaning and coherence from its focus on the Church's leadership during these two epochs, for his attention is directed towards the disturbances which emanated from within the reformed Church.

In his account of Archbishop Parker, Harington placed him within a specifically reformed context and in fact the work began with Harington's personal reflections, by use of a simile, on the progress and vicissitudes experienced by the Tudor reformers of the Church of England.⁴⁰ In this catalogue, the battle of the Reformation was a victory which had been achieved but with many casualties. He said: "When I consider with my selfe the hard beginning, though more prosperous success, of the reformed Church of England, mee thinks it may be compared to a battaile fought, in which some Captayns and souldiers that gaue the first charge, either dyed in the field, or came bleeding home, but such as followed, putting their enemies to flight remained quiet and victorious."⁴¹

Harington then moved to a more specific account of the reformation of the English Church. Invoking the names of the episcopal victims of the reign of Queen Mary, Harington said that:

For in such sort *Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, Hooper, Rogers, Coverdall* and many others, induring great conflicts, in those variable tymes of Henry the eight, King Edward, and Queene Mary, suffering by fyre, by Imprisonment, banishment, losse and deprivation... theis that dyed, had the glorie of valiant soldiers, and worthie Martirs.⁴²

⁴⁰ Harington's simile stressed that the battle of the Reformation was over and the triumph complete. A further episcopal catalogue, the *Catalogue of all the Bishops* referred to above similarly stressed that since the Reformation, at which time the Church "was manumitted from the Pope", it had been "the moft exact and perfect of the Reformation." As with Harington, this anonymous author endeavoured to locate this perfection and completion in the Church's episcopate. Anon., *Catalogue of All the Bishops* 68-9.

⁴¹ Harington, *Supplie or Addicion* 33.

⁴² Harington, *Supplie or Addicion* 33-4. As well as Thomas Cranmer and Nicholas Ridley, Harington here refers to Hugh Latimer, martyred in 1555, Thomas Rogers and John Hooper, who also perished during the reign of Queen Mary, and Miles Coverdale, who went into exile during the reign of Mary and returned to England, although not to the episcopal bench, upon Elizabeth's accession.

Harington then continued by placing Parker in this company by noting that: “Among the Survivors of these first leaders, that past so many pykes, the first in tyme, and the highest in place was Doctor Mathew Parker.”⁴³

Harington’s account of Parker’s place in history is strikingly at variance to Parker’s own assessment of the historical precedents of his archbishopate and dislocated the archbishopric of Canterbury, along with the other English sees, from ancient roots. In doing so Harington has gained the reputation among modern scholars of producing an anti-episcopal work. In 1967 Phyllis Hembry noted Harington as having exhibited hostility towards English bishops in his catalogue.⁴⁴ Hembry derived her impression from seventeenth-century readings of the *Supplie*, including the historians Thomas Fuller and John Strype. Fuller believed that the *Supplie or Addicion* contained “some tart reflections” on the bishops of the late-sixteenth-century Church, a view later endorsed by Strype when he encountered the text during his own researches for his lives of various Elizabethan bishops.⁴⁵

Fuller and Strype, as much as Hembry, were reading the edition of Harington’s text prepared by Samuel Chedwynd, who while being Harington’s relative was also a Presbyterian and detached from the text Harington’s short treatise explaining his intention to defend the episcopate. Again, Harington’s work gains meaning from its courtly context, as Harington not only produced the text for Prince Henry, but in writing was reacting to the reputation that the Prince had gained for religious radicalism. In textual material deleted by Chedwynd, Harington explained he had chosen to write of the English episcopate, in the period following the appointment of Matthew Parker to Canterbury, because of the reputation then adhering to Prince Henry that he would enact religious change and abolish bishops.⁴⁶ His closeness to Henry allowed him to discount these ideas. Yet Harington’s narrower focus in his catalogue reflects his concern to describe the danger facing the Church of England from those he variously described as “puritans” and “novelists.” Harington also excoriated them as “fanatical”.⁴⁷

His interpretation of the episcopate’s opponents makes sense of his decision to ground Parker, as well as his immediate successors and the episcopate of his time in a

⁴³ Harington, *Supplie or Addicion* 34-5.

⁴⁴ Phyllis Hembry, *The Bishops of Bath and Wells 1540- 1640: Social and Economic Problems*, (London 1967) 102.

⁴⁵ Thomas Fuller, *Worthies of England* (London 1952) 500. John Strype was even more damning, accusing Harington’s work of being boring as well as critical of the bishops, complaining that while Harington “undertakes to give some strictures” of the Elizabethan bishops, his material was “but light rumours of the court, and often idle and trifling.” Strype, *Life of Edmund Grindal* (New York 1974) 54. These references are cited in the 1979 edition of the *Supplie or Addicion* and were gathered together by R.H. Miller.

⁴⁶ Harington, *Supplie or Addicion* 92.

⁴⁷ Harington, *Supplie or Addicion* 42. Harington used terminology then in current use. Harington’s contemporary John Boys, the Dean of Canterbury, condemned opponents of the established liturgy as “novelists” ; *The Plain Man’s Instructor in the Common Prayer of the Church of England, shewing the Reasonableness, Usefulness, and Excellency thereof, From Dr. Boys, Mr. Hooker, Bishop Sparrow, Dr. Comber and Dr. Nichols* (London, 1719, 3rd edition).

specifically reformed context. Harington saw that the reformed Church of England was threatened by the activities of those who regarded themselves as more ardent Protestants than the ecclesial hierarchy which governed the Church; significantly, opponents of the episcopate nonetheless existed within the confines of the episcopal Church. Harington's conceptualization of the Reformation as a battle won against great odds was cited earlier; he expanded upon this idea and on his simile, for while he saw that Cranmer, Latimer, Ridley, Parker and other reformers secured victory for their side in the "battle", there was now the danger that "some mutinous souldiers of their own Campe" were intent on "disturbing the peace at home", so as to "giue hart to the enemy abroade."⁴⁸

III

Harington's catalogue expressed the reformed characteristics of English episcopal power, but was also alert to its vulnerability. According to Harington, dissent from the Church of England lay within that institution. Harington gave no indication in his catalogue from what sources he gained his knowledge of the so-called mutinous soldiers, although there is a striking congruence between Harington's assessment of dissenters and works which can be classified as non-conformist. While Harington considered that threats and challenges to the Church of England emanated from within its own "camp", the dissenting minister Josias Nichols similarly located his opposition to the Church within the Church. Nichols was expelled from the orders of the Church of England, but his account of the reformed episcopate allowed him to place himself within an orthodox framework. Nichols's account of his dissent from the Church's regulations was embedded in a summary of the bishops and archbishops who had governed the late-sixteenth-century Church. Nichols's text makes clear that he repudiated any suggestion of being a dissenter or, worse, a puritan, this declaration dominating the title page of his text. Instead, Nichols examined the reformation of the English episcopate and used the names and reputations of late-sixteenth-century bishops to argue away his own rebellion from the Church.

As with Harington's catalogue, Nichols's account of the Church surveyed the turning point from the Elizabethan to the Jacobean period and Nichols's account surveyed this epoch as a discrete period of time.⁴⁹ Peter Clark, one of the few historians to have interpreted Nichols's career and writings makes sense of the *Plea of the Innocent* and *Abrahams Faith* by examining the ecclesiastical policies of the Church at the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁵⁰ By placing Nichols into this setting, Clark stresses the dissonance between Nichols and the Church of England. To some extent, Clark's interpretation has, in a more general analysis, been endorsed by a new study of the Tudor period by Susan Brigden, who has dramatically argued that dissenters from the

⁴⁸ Harington, *Supplie or Addicion* 34.

⁴⁹ Nichols's opens the *Plea* with some narration of the accession of Queen Elizabeth and the early years of her reign; Nichols, *The Plea of the Innocent* 3, 7.

⁵⁰ Peter Clark, "Josias Nichols and Religious Radicalism, 1553-1639," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 28 no.2 (1977) 133.

Church of England moved to convert it “by stealth”, by planting “presbytery within episcopacy”.⁵¹ Clark’s material on Nichols is largely discursive, but he does analyse Nichols’s dissent from the established Church, recording that in 1603 Nichols was deprived of his living.⁵² Clark’s paper records this clergyman’s battles with ecclesiastical authorities and his expulsion from Holy Orders. Clark was content to leave Nichols there, outside the Church of England, deprived of his licence to preach and degraded from his orders.⁵³

While narrating Nichols’ dissent from the Church of England, Clark’s article on Nichols expresses the moderation inherent in Nichols’s commentaries, especially the *Plea*, and he confirms Patrick Collinson’s opinion on this matter.⁵⁴ For Clark, Nichols’s moderate nonconformity was partly exhibited in his adherence to monarchical if not ecclesiastical authority, and Clark recounts the reproofing opinion of Nichols’s dissenting contemporary William Covell, who identified Nichols’s acceptance of the Elizabethan government but not the Church’s hierarchy.⁵⁵ For Covell, Nichols’s dissent was not taken far enough.

Yet Nichols’s writings, *The Plea of the Innocent* and *Abrahams Faith*, stressed the continuities between the English bishops and his own ecclesial priorities. It is important to note at this point that the bishops interpreted by Nichols, including the Elizabethan Edmund Grindal, are those whom modern commentators see as having been most tolerant of dissent and non-conformist preachers. Kenneth Fincham’s survey of the English episcopate under Archbishops Abbot and Laud singles out a number of bishops, among them Abbot himself, Matthew Hutton and Tobie Matthew of York, King of London and Lake of Exeter, who patronized and often protected dissenting clergy.⁵⁶ Fincham takes this point further, identifying a coherent identity for Protestant bishops as patrons of an educated preaching clergy and vocational training to this end, and as preachers themselves.⁵⁷ It is important to bear this analysis in mind, for Fincham delineates characteristics of episcopal government which Nichols had praised in the *Plea of the Innocent*.

Fincham’s analysis indicated that some bishops were tolerant of dissenters, yet Nichols’s 1603 text, the *Plea of the Innocent*, repudiated any notion that his dissent placed him outside the Church of England, arguing that he had been “vncharitable and

⁵¹ Susan Brigden, *New Worlds, Lost Worlds: The Rule of the Tudors 1485-1603* (London 2000) 328.

⁵² Clark, “Josias Nichols and Religious Radicalism” 145.

⁵³ Clark, “Josias Nichols and Religious Radicalism” 133.

⁵⁴ Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (London 1967) 129.

⁵⁵ William Covell, *A Modest and Reasonable Examination of some things in use in the Church of England* (1603) 3.

⁵⁶ Fincham, “Episcopal Government” 74.

⁵⁷ Fincham, “Episcopal Government” 73. Fincham also discusses the work of pastoral bishops in “The Ramifications of the Hampton Court Conference in the Dioceses, 1603-1609”, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 36 no.2 (1985) 227-8.

vniuftlie called by that odious and hereticall name of Puritane.”⁵⁸ Other works of this era were intended to reject particular allegations or reputations. For instance, the contemporary dissenting minister Dudley Fenner had emitted outraged squawks against the “falte accufations and flanders of their aduerfaries” (in his case the controversialist William Fulke). At least on the title page, Fenner left the nature of these allegations unspecified, whereas Nichols did not, moving swiftly to stress his fidelity to the Church of England and his care for its peace and good name.⁵⁹

Nichols self-consciously rejected the implications of this label and just as self-consciously stressed his adherence to the established Church and its episcopal leaders. Nichols offered his own highly original definition of the word “puritan”, arguing that Catholic religious such as monks and nuns “may & are properly to be called Puritaines, becaufe they arrogate vnto them felues puritie and holiness.”⁶⁰ Having off-loaded the term onto the Church of Rome, Nichols highlighted his own moderation through asserting the disjunction between himself and the more extreme “Martin Marprelate”, whose pamphlets, in Nichols’s words, “slanderosly abused” important figures in the established Church.⁶¹ In contrast to “Martin’s” abuse of the senior clergy, the bishops and archbishops were of great importance to Nichols, who stressed that his beliefs comfortably resided within an episcopal Church. At one point, Nichols adduced an even higher authority to his cause. He argued that Queen Elizabeth I, then recently deceased, had “fuffered & endured great troubles and reproach” for the sake of reformed religion. Nichols did not claim the late Queen as a dissenter; he instead stressed the place of reform within the Church of England.

Importantly, Nichols’s claim on these matters went beyond mere assertion. The *Plea of the Innocent* further explicated the importance attached to the reformed episcopate in Harington’s own writings. The idea that dissenting writers criticized aspects of the Jacobean Church such as the use of the surplice and cap during divine service, or the signing of the cross manually during baptism, are ideas relentlessly encountered in surveys of this period. These assessments are made with good reason, as complaints on these issues recur in contemporary critiques of the Church and its rubric. Yet Nichols exhibited a more unusual approach to the contemporary Church, one which is inextricably combined with ecclesiastical history, for the reformed episcopate was used by Nichols to justify his dissent from an inadequately reformed institution.⁶²

⁵⁸ Nichols, *Plea of the Innocent* 3.

⁵⁹ Fenner, *A Briefe and plaine declaration, concerning the defires of all thofe faithfull Minifters, that haue and do feeke for the Difcipline and reformation of the Church of Englande: Which may ferue for a iuft Apologie, againft the falte accufations and flanders of their aduerfaries* (London 1584).

⁶⁰ Nichols, *Plea of the Innocent* 5.

⁶¹ Nichols, *Plea of the Innocent* 31-2.

⁶² Nichols, *Plea of the Innocent* 61.

In Nichols's assessment of the reformed episcopate, the career of Edmund Grindal is of greatest significance.⁶³ Nichols, born in 1555, lived through Grindal's archiepiscopate (1576-1583) and looked back from the early seventeenth century to that period with affection.⁶⁴ As Nichols recalled, the time when "the reuerend father Maifter *Grindall* was Archbilhoppe of Canterburie" was something of a golden age for him.⁶⁵ In Nichols's estimation, two features distinguished Grindal's archiepiscopate. Firstly, it was a time when "there was greate concorde among the Ministers", who were thus able to enact the "moſte godly proceedings."⁶⁶ But secondly, after Grindal's death, clerics such as Nichols found themselves begging Grindal's episcopal successors for mercy while asserting their loyalty to the established Church: "Yet doe we intreat our reuerend Fathers we be not held for rebels."⁶⁷ As with his analysis of the term "puritan", Nichols again dealt with the meaning of the religious terminology of his age. He was not a puritan and neither was he a rebel. Instead, a reformed episcopal pastor exonerated Nichols and his contemporaries from any such accusations; episcopal authority which was reformed and Protestant accommodated, sheltered and encouraged the ecclesiology of churchmen such as Nichols.

Nichols's earlier text, *Abrahams Faith*,⁶⁸ contained some indication of the interpretation he would advance in his major work, for Nichols showed the reformed episcopate to have sheltered reformist ministers. In *Abrahams Faith* Nichols compared and contrasted the Elizabethan archbishops, for while Whitgift was repressive, the privations endured by some clergy during his time in office contrast with the freedoms enjoyed under the esteemed Grindal. In this account, the Elizabethan episcopate when led by Grindal was amenable to the ecclesiology of Nichols and his associates,⁶⁹ and Nichols was able to underpin his rebellion from the Church and his assessment that it was insufficiently reformed by invoking the names and authority of its leadership.

⁶³ Patrick Collinson argues that the destruction of Grindal's archiepiscopate may be attributed to that prelate's attempts to reactivate the reformation of the Church; *Archbishop Grindal: The Struggle for a reformed Church* (Berkeley 1979) and "The Downfall of Archbishop Grindal", in *Godly People: Essays on English Protestantism and Puritanism* (London 1983). Grindal's complaint to the queen is printed in his *Remains* issued by the Parker Society (ed. William Nicolson), (Cambridge 1843) 378.

⁶⁴ Clark stresses that Nichols saw that reform could be carried out from within the Church; Clark, "Josias Nichols and Religious Radicalism" 142.

⁶⁵ Nichols, *Plea of the Innocent* 9.

⁶⁶ Nichols, *Plea of the Innocent* 9.

⁶⁷ Nichols, *Plea of the Innocent* 17.

⁶⁸ *Abrahams Faith*, sig. B2. Nichols was particularly recalling the Three Articles introduced by Whitgift, which brought to an abrupt end the godly experiments patronized by Grindal. They are described in Collinson's *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (London 1967) 159-90.

⁶⁹ Grindal was perhaps the obvious choice of archbishop for Nichols to use in his work. Whitgift is usually portrayed by historians as a disciplinarian; On Whitgift see John Guy, "The Elizabethan Establishment and the ecclesiastical polity", in Guy (ed.), *The Reign of Elizabeth I: Court and culture in the last decade* (Cambridge 1995); Patrick Collinson, "The 'nott conformytye' of the young John Whitgift", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 15 (1965). The Lambeth Articles are transcribed and explained in John Strype, *The Life and Acts of John Whitgift, D.D.*, I (Oxford 1829) 111.

Nichols's *Plea* presented his own ecclesiology as conformant with one Elizabethan archbishop. The association that Nichols drew between the episcopate and his dissent resonates with other accounts of the reformed episcopate. The Jacobean minister Sir Robert Cecil attempted to moderate the severity shown against puritans by stressing the King's love of them. He argued that James "loved and revered" puritans, to the extent that he would "prefer [them] to the best bishopric that were void" if they would only conform.⁷⁰ An influential modern interpreter of Robert Cecil, Pauline Croft, believes that such sentiments and promises were intended as a "lure" for puritans and dissenters and that the seduction of ambition was a substitute for discipline.⁷¹ Yet it seems unlikely that the ambitions of dissenters would have been especially lured by a solitary promise of ecclesiastical preferment; if Croft is to be believed, then Cecil was offering a particularly feeble and implausible inducement to conform. Instead, Cecil's comment is important because of the light it can shed on Nichols's writings. According to Nichols, dissenters did not have to be seduced into accepting bishoprics; they were already there.

Conclusion

Surveying Nichols's writings, it is possible to argue that he protested too much for his loyalty to the Church of England. The downfall of Archbishop Grindal and his apparent sympathy for those of Nichols's churchmanship was a convenient means for Nichols to argue away his dissent. However, Nichols also repudiated the label puritan and expressed his anxiety for the well-being of the Church. As much as these are rhetorical aspects of his text, they also inhabit a similar ecclesial world to the episcopal battleground of John Harington's supplementary catalogue. Harington adduced the reformist attributes of the episcopate but also the dissent which emanated from within the reformed Church of England. For Harington this was worrying, as reformed episcopacy was undermined by members of the same camp; for Nichols, puritan bishops were a source of support and patronage. In arguing away his dissent, Nichols resorted to the careers of Protestant bishops; according to Nichols's understanding of Protestant episcopal authority, if the bishops were not dissenters, then neither was he.

⁷⁰ Cited in Pauline Croft, "The Religion of Robert Cecil", *Historical Journal* 34 no.4 (1991), 777.

⁷¹ Croft, "The Religion of Robert Cecil" 777.