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# The Literary Works of the Gentlemen of the Elizabethan Chapel Royal: Politics, Religion and Print

BY OSCAR PATTON 

*The Gentlemen of the Elizabethan Chapel Royal worked at the ecclesiastical heart of the English court. Their religious beliefs, when discussed by historians and musicologists, are usually characterised as ranging from crypto-Catholic conformity to the a-confessionalism of individuals keen to survive seismic religious change. This article revises orthodox images of the Gentlemen of the Elizabethan Chapel Royal as religious ‘conservatives’ drawn to royal employment by the ceremonialism of services, and instead emphasises their energetic theological interests and the strength of Protestant doctrinal opinion among their ranks. Their striking construction of public identities in printed religious works also illustrates the ways in which a group of ‘middling’ courtly churchmen and singing-men negotiated their own identities alongside and against that of their place of employment.<sup>1</sup>*

**Keywords:** Chapel Royal, Elizabeth I, English Church Music, Reformation, Religious Identity, Religious Print

In 1558, John Parkhurst wrote an epigram, eventually published in his 1573 *Ludicra*, which celebrated the ‘instruction in musical matters and sacred works’ of two Gentlemen of Elizabeth’s Chapel Royal: Robert Couche and Thomas Palfreyman.<sup>2</sup> Existing scholarship on music and the post-Reformation church has typically examined these royal singing-men and ministers as composers and performers, rather than religious writers. When scholars consider the faith of individual Gentlemen, they primarily concern notorious crypto-Catholics like William Byrd (singing-man between 1571–1623).<sup>3</sup> The conservative, even Catholic character of the personnel of the Chapel Royal is assumed. Yet Couche and Palfreyman, who were far from Catholic sympathisers, provide just two examples of the range of religious opinion among Elizabeth’s Gentlemen of the Chapel. Palfreyman was a staunch advocate of conformity to the Church of England and wrote a defence of the 39 Articles. More remarkably, Couche was a dissimulating anabaptist, critical of the theology of predestination. These views, recoverable from their surviving theological works, are part of the tapestry of doctrinal belief which made up the Elizabethan Chapel Royal.

The Elizabethan Chapel Royal is notorious for its maintenance of theologically ‘conservative’ accoutrements like a silver cross (until 1567), and candlesticks, images, stained, glass and

<sup>1</sup> This article was awarded *proxime accessit* in the Court Historian Essay competition, 2023. The author also thanks Dr Alexandra Gajda, Dr Ellen Patterson, Professor Peter McCullough, Ms Helena Rutkowska, the attendees of the IHR Tudor-Stuart seminar and the reviewers at *The Court Historian* for their helpful comments and suggestions at various stages of this research. This work was funded by the AHRC and Merton College, Oxford.

<sup>2</sup> John Parkhurst, *Ludicra sive Epigrammata juvenilia* (London 1573), p. 156. Thanks go to Ms Helena Rutkowska for assisting with this translation. Any errors are my own.

<sup>3</sup> See Kerry McCarthy, *Byrd* (Oxford, 2013) and John Harley, *The World of William Byrd: Musicians, Merchants and Magnates* (London, 2010).

an organ.<sup>4</sup> For the clergy and laymen who went into religious exile during the reign of Mary I, Elizabeth's retention of liturgical accoutrements associated with Catholic worship, despite the use of the 1559 Book of Common Prayer, was anathema.<sup>5</sup> Complaints were made across the clerical hierarchy, especially among the early Elizabethan episcopal bench, who feared that the conservatism of the Chapel Royal might be taken as precedent for the 'halfly-reformed' members of the Church of England.<sup>6</sup> Complaints continued even after 1567, when the Chapel cross was removed and replaced with a moveable tapestry.<sup>7</sup> The ceremonious worship and appearance of the post-Reformation Chapel Royal has led to its classification (with cathedrals and royal peculiars) as a 'cuckoo-in-the-nest' of an otherwise reformed Church. It has also been described as a place where 'Catholics who stubbornly refused to conform to Elizabeth's religious Settlement' composed 'beautiful music'.<sup>8</sup> While this conservatism formed part of the public liturgical and ceremonial outward appearance of the Chapel, and as Patrick Collinson and others have argued, and might have also contributed to a subtle part of Elizabethan diplomatic craft, such a perspective neglects the printed religious identities of the Gentlemen themselves.<sup>9</sup>

Gentlemen were selected by the Dean of the Chapel, Lord Chamberlain, and the sub-dean not for their ability as religious writers, but their 'sufficiencie of voice' and character. It is perhaps for this reason that the religious works of only six of the total 110 Gentlemen who served Elizabeth over her reign have survived. These six Gentlemen, who held offices including the sub-deanship, Mastership of the Children, and more menial jobs in the vestry, were all born in the reign of Henry VIII, and saw the full turbulent course of religious change in the sixteenth century. These men were also keen to advertise their status and relationship with the Chapel Royal on the title pages of their works, and in claiming this institutional authority and prestige, contributed to an explicitly doctrinally Protestant (and varied) public image of Elizabeth's Chapel. These tracts appear to have sold well (most went through multiple editions) and they engaged with sensitive issues regarding the church and state, targeting educated laymen and ministers. The variety and strength of theological learning seen in these texts begins to complicate the picture of musicians claiming 'vocational immunity to the controversies of their age', as Kerry McCarthy has written of William Byrd and John Taverner.<sup>10</sup> These works help to reveal an important and well-connected body of royal servants, whose doctrinally varied beliefs were, by virtue of their royal and courtly protection, allowed to find expression in public print.

The relationship between individual religious beliefs and the character of an institution has been profitably explored by Julia Merritt, who has suggested Westminster Abbey as the 'midwife' of Laudianism by the second half of the sixteenth century. Simon Thurley

4 Kenneth Fincham and Nicholas Tyacke, *Altars Restored: The Changing Face of English Religious Worship, 1547–c.1700* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 76–81.

5 Fiona Kisby, 'Religious Ceremonial at the Tudor Court: Extracts from Royal Household Regulations', in Ian Archer (ed.), *Religion, Politics, and Society in Sixteenth Century England* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 10.

6 Scott Wenig, *Straightening the Altars: The Ecclesiastical Vision and Pastoral Achievements of the Progressive Bishops under Elizabeth I, 1559–1579* (New York, 2000), p. 101.

7 *Calendar of Letters and State Papers Relating to English Affairs: Volume 1, Reserved Principally in the Archives of Simancas*, ed. Martin A.S. Hume (Cambridge, 2013), p. 690.

8 Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Later Reformation in England, 1547–1603* (Basingstoke, 1990), pp. 28–29.

9 Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (Oxford, 1990), p. 29; Katherine Butler, *Music in Elizabethan Court Politics* (Suffolk, 2015), p. 80.

10 Kerry McCarthy, 'William Byrd: A Brief Biography', in Richard Turbet (ed.), *A Byrd Celebration: Lectures at the William Byrd Festival* (Richmond, 2008), p. 15.

and Bryan Spinks extended this association to the Chapel Royal, and both scholars identify precedents for Laudian worship in the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth century.<sup>11</sup> However, this view relies on characterisations of the Elizabethan Chapel Royal as distinctly ‘traditionalist’ and ‘conservative’ not just in liturgy, but also membership. While some revisions of this perspective have been offered by scholars like Peter McCullough, who illustrated the ways in which court preachers could become powerful proponents of Protestant opinion within the doctrinally orthodox boundaries of the Elizabethan Church, the Gentlemen themselves remain somewhat neglected by scholars of early modern religion.<sup>12</sup>

The religious works of Elizabeth’s Gentlemen of the Chapel Royal will be divided into three categories: those by Gentlemen who sympathised with Catholicism but conformed to the Elizabethan settlement; Gentlemen who expressed enthusiasm for Protestant doctrine; and one religiously heterodox Gentleman. The development of public individual religious identities calibrated to the official and professional expectations of the royal supremacy and a royal chapel will be examined to provide a fresh perspective on the courtly servants of this influential courtly institution.

### Religious Conservatives

The Elizabethan Chapel Royal was, for at least the first decade of her reign, largely comprised of what contemporaries sometimes called Nicodemites, referring to those Protestants who had conformed to the Marian Catholic church. Elizabeth herself, Archbishop Matthew Parker and most of the early Elizabethan Privy Council numbered among this group, and embarrassed those ‘hotter’ Protestants returning from exile.<sup>13</sup> On entry to the Elizabethan Chapel Royal, Gentlemen were required to swear a modified form of the oath of supremacy from 1558/59, which included the authority of the ‘imperiall Deane & subdeane’.<sup>14</sup> While Gentlemen who continued in their posts between 1558–9 were likely required to subscribe to the same oath, no positive evidence for this has yet been found. By an examination of the literary responses of two Gentlemen who served in the Chapel Royal across the 1550s and 60s, the process of doctrinal accommodation for Elizabethan Gentlemen who held conservative doctrinal beliefs, but were nonetheless willing to conform to the Elizabethan settlement, will be clarified.

Three Gentlemen left the Chapel Royal for their faith between 1558 and 1583. The first was Edmund Daniell, subdean between 1557 and December 1558, who was dismissed from his post for elevating the Host at the St Stephen’s Day communion service. He was dismissed, placed under house arrest and escaped to Rome four years later, where he joined the English College and died in 1576.<sup>15</sup> Two other men, Nicholas Morgan (singing-man between 1567–81) and Richard Morris (singing-man between 1579–82) left the Chapel following the execution of Edmund Campion and his fellow martyrs, with Morgan apparently joining the English

11 J. F. Merritt, ‘The Cradle of Laudianism? Westminster Abbey, 1558–1630’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 52, 4 (2001), p. 628.; Simon Thurley, ‘The Stuart Kings, Oliver Cromwell and the Chapel Royal 1618–1685’, *Architectural History* 45 (2002), p. 238.; Bryan Spinks, ‘Durham House and the Chapels Royal: Their Liturgical Impact on the Church of Scotland’, *Scottish Journal of Theology* 67, 4 (2014), p. 379.

12 Peter McCullough, *Sermons at Court: Politics and Religion in Elizabethan and Jacobean Preaching* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 97. A recent exception is found in Michael Bennet Page, ‘Polemic, Conspiracy, and Conformity Among the Singing Men of the Mid-Tudor Chapel Royal’, *Caliban: French Journal of English Studies* 67/68 (2022), pp. 59–82.

13 Karl Gunther, *Reformation Unbound: Protestant Visions of Reform in England, 1525–1590* (Cambridge, 2014), p. 99.

14 Andrew Ashbee and John Harley (eds), *The Cheque Books of the Chapel Royal* (Aldershot, 2000), vol. I, p. 58.

15 John Wainewright, ‘Deans Deprived Under Queen Elizabeth’, *Downside Review* 29 (1910), p. 50.

mission and Morris travelling to Rome.<sup>16</sup> A more common experience however, was that of the ‘conservative conformist’. This category included Gentlemen like Richard Bower (Master of the Children between 1545–61) and Thomas Tallis (singing-man between 1544–85), both of whom named members of the crypto-Catholic Roper family as overseers or benefactors of their wills.<sup>17</sup> Given the absence of further doctrinal indicators, their colleagues James Cancellor (singing-man between 1553–70) and John Angell (minister from 1553, and sub-dean between 1559–67), provide a more explicit indication of how these ‘conservative conformist’ Gentlemen reconciled themselves with the Elizabethan Church.

Despite their public and enthusiastic support for the doctrines and policies of the Marian regime, both Cancellor and Angell conformed to the Elizabethan church, and continued to receive royal reward. Only one of Cancellor’s Marian texts (of a recorded three) survives, his 1555 *Pathe of Obedience*.<sup>18</sup> Angell published twice under Mary: *The Agrement of the Holy Fathers* (1554) and *A Collection or gatherynge together, of certayne Scriptures* (1555/6), both of which systematically defended Catholic doctrines, especially the Real Presence. Significantly, Angell praised Mary as a ‘newe Judith’, who revived ‘the trewe light and knowledge of Goddes worde’, suspended since ‘the death of that noble prince her father’.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, Cancellor describes the Edwardian church as the ‘deisceytfull and disobedient church of Antichrist’, which Mary successfully defeated, not without serious opposition.<sup>20</sup> Cancellor’s emphasis on public obedience, and Angell’s doctrinal legitimization of the late Henrician church, coupled with both writers’ silence on the matter of papal authority (a controversial point given England’s involvement in Spain’s invasion of the Papal states in 1556 and the hostility of Pope Paul IV), reveal both Gentlemen to have been religious writers supportive of the direction of the Marian church.<sup>21</sup>

Understanding the conformity of these Gentlemen to the Elizabethan Church is a complicated and multifaceted matter. Alexandra Walsham and Michael Questier have produced helpful models for investigating processes of conformity and conversion, which encourage a more fluid conception of categories of doctrinal and individual allegiance, which could be influenced by a variety of factors.<sup>22</sup> Cancellor’s case provides a more explicit example of the anxiety of a former Marian Catholic signalling conformity to the Elizabethan regime. After his name appeared on the 1559 pardon roll, Cancellor reprinted Elizabeth’s *A godly meditation of a Christen Soule* (written when she was twelve years old, under the guidance of Katherine Parr) in the same year. While Cancellor’s first Elizabethan publication might have tried to signal his conformity, and perhaps encourage a return to the ‘softer’ Protestant ideas of Parr’s household, his second publication struck a more explicit chord. In 1564, Cancellor published his commercially successful *Alphabet of Prayers* (with at least eight editions between 1564–1626). Though otherwise a-confessional (like most devotional literature of this type), Cancellor was keen to explicitly condemn the Marian church as that of the Ninevites,

16 Andrew Ashbee and David Lasocki (eds), *A Biographical Dictionary of English Court Musicians, 1485–1714* (Aldershot, 1998), vol. II, pp. 806–10.

17 The National Archives (hereafter TNA), PROB 11/4/299, fo. 213v.; TNA. PROB 11/74/43, fo. 32.v.

18 Lost works by Cancellor include: *A Treatise, wherein is declared the pernicious opinions of those obstinate people of Kent* (1553) and *Of the Life active and contemplative, entitled The Pearle of Perfection* (1558).

19 John Angell, *The agreement of the holye Fathers* (1555/6), sigs A.ii.v–iii.r.

20 James Cancellor, *The pathe of Obedience* (1555), sig. A.viii.r.

21 Eamon Duffy, *Fires of Faith: Catholic England under Mary Tudor* (London, 2009), p. 144.

22 See Alexandra Walsham, *Church Papists: Catholicism, Conformity, and Confessional Polemic in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge, 1999) and Michael C. Questier, *Conversion, Politics and Religion in England, 1580–1625* (Cambridge, 1996).

urging England to repentance, which was called for ‘by the Preachers of hys Worde, by deathe and famine, otherwise by fyre fro[m] Heaven, by motion of warre, and lastly by mortalitie of Pestilence’.<sup>23</sup> This call might have been made in response to the potential release of John Bale’s unpublished manuscript, written around 1560/1, which publicly condemned Cancellor for failing to ‘recante by writing, hys frantyeck and folyshe Pathe of obedyence’.<sup>24</sup> It is unclear what stayed Bale’s hand regarding publication: it is possible that Cancellor’s position, and Bale’s unpopularity in the eyes of the Queen, prevented any further risk of Elizabeth’s displeasure.<sup>25</sup> Cancellor’s *Alphabet* also included a series of practical prayers for domestic and formal liturgical participation in the church, including a collect and prayer for continued obedience to Elizabeth’s and God’s laws, a prayer for the Queen at evensong and a reproduction of the official litany, including a prayer for the Queen with some minor changes to the words, which did not alter the meaning of the text.<sup>26</sup> Rather than an a-confessional conformist, Cancellor emerges as a royal servant eager to publicly signal his conformity to the new regime in both print and practice. Taking such indications of conformity seriously, whether made under the veil of dissimulation or not, is crucial for recovering a sense of the negotiated religious identities of former Marian Catholics in the 1560s.

Unlike his colleague, Angell did not publish any literary works under Elizabeth. His conformity may only be conjectured from his professional duties during the 1560s, when he guided the Chapel Royal through a difficult decade while remaining master of St Katherine’s hospital Bedminster, near Bristol.<sup>27</sup> Although Angell died before the imposition of a mandatory clerical subscription to the 39 Articles, he apparently found company among the moderate conservatives of the Elizabethan Church, leaving ten shillings for the ceremonialist Westminster Abbey, Gabriel Goodman, to preach his funeral sermon.<sup>28</sup> Angell’s conservative doctrinal beliefs might have found two important points of accommodation in the early Elizabethan Church. Firstly, his condemnation of clerical marriage as an act which ‘made voyde the fyrst faith of their conynency[sic]’ might have aligned with Elizabeth’s discomfort with the practice.<sup>29</sup> Although marriage hampered few clerical careers in the Elizabethan church, it was still something Elizabeth clearly felt uncomfortable with: for example, it was not until the appointment of William Day as dean of St George’s Windsor, in 1571, that a married priest was employed in a royal peculiar.<sup>30</sup> The first recorded married minister in the Chapel Royal came a year later, with William Jones’s marriage to his wife Alice, showing Chapel practice to have followed closely behind that of similar institutions.<sup>31</sup>

More controversial, though nonetheless testament to the convenient ambiguities of the early Elizabethan church, was Angell’s belief in the Real Presence. In his 1554 *Agrement*, Angell had already noted the hypocrisy of the Edwardian church, pointing to the communion prayer of the 1549 Book of Common Prayer as evidence of an endorsement of

23 James Cancellor, *The Alphabet of Prayers* (1564), sig. A.iii.v.

24 Lambeth Palace Library, Fairhurst MS 2001, fo. 1.r.

25 E.J. Baskerville, ‘A Religious Disturbance in Canterbury, June 1561: John Bale’s Unpublished Account’, *Historical Research* 65, No. 158 (1992), p. 340.

26 Cancellor, *The Alphabet*, Sig. D.i.v; Sig. C.iii.v; Sig. D.vi.v.

27 Ashbee and Lasocki (eds), *Biographical Dictionary*, vol. I, p. 25.

28 TNA, PROB 11/50/241, fo. 150v.

29 Angell, *The agrement*, sig. O.vii.v

30 Brett Usher, ‘Queen Elizabeth and Mrs Bishop’, in Susan Doran and Thomas Freeman (eds), *The Myth of Elizabeth* (Basingstoke, 2003), p. 202.

31 TNA PROB 11/63/119, fo. 67; Arthur Meredyth Burke (ed.), *Memorials of St Margaret’s Church, Westminster: The Parish Registers, 1539–1660* (London, 1914), p. 289.

the presence of ‘the bodye and bloude of thy moste dearly belovyd sonne Jesus Christe’.<sup>32</sup> Although the 1559 Book of Common Prayer altered the communion prayer, the words of administration remained the same as the 1549 Book, and was notoriously ambivalent on the issue of transubstantiation. As Angell died before the imposition of a doctrinal denial of transubstantiation in the 39 Articles, applied to all clergy and schoolmasters in 1572, his conformity reveals the strength of the doctrinal ambiguities of the early Elizabethan church, especially in ensuring the institutional continuity of institutions like the Chapel Royal.

For the Gentlemen who previously supported Marian persecutory policies, conformity to the Elizabethan church sometimes required a recantation of belief. While Angell only condemned open rebels, like ‘our Holifernus’ Sir Thomas Wyatt, Cancellor openly endorsed the persecution of Protestants under Mary.<sup>33</sup> Writing in 1555, Cancellor declared that all Protestants, regardless of their dissimulation, would return, like the recently martyred Cranmer, to their ‘shamefull heresies’.<sup>34</sup> This inevitable backsliding justified the burning of the ‘pretended bishops’, ‘Hoper, Rogers, Ridlei, Latimer, and Cra[n]mer’, who were condemned to ‘everlasting fier’.<sup>35</sup> Writing under Elizabeth, Cancellor changed his stance. While the Marian government gave ‘the dead bodyes of thy [God’s] servants [...] to the Foules of the ayre’, ‘every syde’ was guilty of having ‘shead like water the bloud of the Faithfull’.<sup>36</sup> This line followed the policy of reconciliation observed by the Elizabethan government during the 1560s and allowed Cancellor to distance himself from his earlier support of the Marian persecutions. While this might appear like the dissimulation of an ambitious hypocrite keen to be seen to be following the official governmental line, the exhaustion of religious persecution might also be recognised, and Cancellor’s limitation of persecution to Edwardian bishops, rather than the wider populace.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, in the context of increasingly insistent calls from returning Protestant exiles for a retributive campaign against the surviving Marian bishops, Cancellor’s later pacificism may have also served to bolster the reconciliatory policies of the early Elizabethan Church.<sup>38</sup>

Given the silence of both Gentlemen on specific Protestant doctrine in the 1560s, we cannot accurately make judgements on their theological beliefs while officiating and singing at Elizabethan services. However, the frequent alignment of doctrine and policy with the prevailing attitude of the Marian or Elizabethan regime indicates a possible expectation and reward of conformity among Gentlemen. Gentlemen clearly saw the value in publicly endorsing early Elizabethan policy, especially in Cancellor’s case, rather than making any explicit doctrinal statements. Further, in cases of literary silence, like Angell and other Gentlemen like Tallis and Bower, doctrinal conservatism could, in specific cases, conveniently suit the needs of the contested theological boundaries of an early Elizabethan church facing increasing

32 Angell, *The agrement*, sig. M.i.r.

33 *Ibid.*, sig. A.v.v.

34 Cancellor, *The Pathe*, sig. C.viii.v.; sig. E.ii.v.

35 *Ibid.*, sig. B.viii.r.

36 Cancellor, *The Alphabet*, sig. C.iii.r.

37 Karl Gunther, ‘The Marian Persecution and Early Elizabethan Protestants: Persecutors, Apostates, and the Wages of Sin’, *Archiv für Reformationgeschichte* 107 (2016), p. 147.

38 Robert Harkins, ‘“Persecutors Under the Cloak of Policy”: Anti-Catholic Vengeance and the Marian Hierarchy in Elizabethan England’, *Sixteenth Century Journal* 68, 2 (2017), p. 358.



demands from ‘hotter’ Protestant expectations, especially with regard to the controversial style of worship maintained in the Chapel Royal.

### ‘Hotter’ Protestants

The Protestant Gentlemen of the Chapel whose literary works survive represent a remarkable range of offices in the ranks of this courtly ecclesiastical institution. From sub-dean to the Master of the Children, these men represented an influential and respected body of opinion in the Chapel Royal. However, compared to their more compositionally inclined colleagues, they have attracted far less scholarly attention. Their literary survivals, which cover almost every decade of the Elizabethan regime, provide a revealing cross-section of the Elizabethan Chapel Royal.

The ‘Nicodemite Reformation’ of the Elizabethan Church was not just limited to the triumvirate of Elizabeth, William Cecil and Archbishop Matthew Parker, as Andrew Pettegree has recognised.<sup>39</sup> While Nicodemite bishops and councillors have received individual attention, the process of reconciliation with Nicodemite identity among the ‘middling’ classes of Protestant courtly ecclesiastics and singing-men has been neglected.<sup>40</sup> William Hunnis (singing-man from 1552, and Master of the Children between 1564–97) was one of the few Elizabethan Gentlemen of the Chapel who, with his colleague John Bendbowe (singing-man between 1547–70) might *not* be considered a Nicodemite. The two men were involved in Sir Henry Dudley’s coup against Mary and Philip, with Hunnis intending not only to travel to Dieppe to raise money for French mercenaries, but also joining eleven other ‘handsome men’ appointed to ‘have slayed the quene and after that the kynge’.<sup>41</sup> Escaping execution through his collaboration with the authorities, Hunnis was released from the Tower early in Elizabeth’s reign, and found rapid reward at the hands of the Elizabethan government. Though famous as a dramatist, Hunnis also penned at least three religious works: *A Hyve full of hunnye* (1578); the successful *Seven sobs of a sorrowfull soule for sinne* (1583), which went through fifteen editions between 1583 and 1636; and his *Recreations*, originally published in 1588, with an extended edition following in 1595. The answer to Hunnis’s courtly reward and rehabilitation might be found through his service to Sir William Herbert (revealed in the title page of a short book of psalms printed by Hunnis in 1550), who might in the early 1560s have suggested Hunnis as a client of Sir Robert Dudley, the dedicatee of Hunnis’s *Hyve*, and who is explicitly thanked for his ‘Bountie towardes mee, more then I here confesse’.<sup>42</sup> If Hunnis was unwilling to reference his former rebellion in his printed works, it is clear that his political links, forged perhaps through confessional commonality, were crucial to advancing his musical, literary and theatrical career.

Thomas Palfreyman, meanwhile, conformed as a royal servant throughout Mary’s reign. Palfreyman published without penalty under Mary, producing a reprint of the Protestant William Baldwin’s *Treatise of Morall Philosophie* (1547) in the final months of 1553, with potentially controversial passages removed and quotations from classical authors alphabetised to

39 Andrew Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism: Six Studies* (Aldershot, 1996), p. 106.

40 Gunther, *Reformation Unbound*, p. 98.; Anne M. Overell, *Nicodemites: Faith and Concealment Between Italy and Tudor England* (Leiden, 2018), p. 186.

41 TNA SP, 11/7 fo. 89.r.

42 William Hunnis, *A Hyve Full of Hunnye* (1578), p. 1; Narasingha P. Sil, ‘Herbert, William, first earl of Pembroke’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2009), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/13055>.



provide more of a devotional manual than a philosophical history.<sup>43</sup> Under Elizabeth, Palfreyman lent his full support to the doctrinal and political stance of the English Protestant church, seen in his *Myrroure, or cleare glasse for all estates* (1560), *Divine Meditations* (1572), and *A Paraphrase uppon the Epistle of the Holie Apostle S. Paul to the Romans* (1572), all of which received respectable print runs. In his *Paraphrase*, Palfreyman recognised his earlier Nicodemism, if somewhat half-heartedly. It was by the help of an unidentified ‘friend’ (probably one of the officers of the Queen’s wardrobe, to whom the treatise was dedicated), that he preserved a bundle of banned religious texts, intended for the pyre by Marian authorities.<sup>44</sup> Palfreyman reassures his reader that he acted ‘according to the analogie and true sense of the holy scriptures’, something especially sensitive, given the obedience to royal authority promoted in his own gloss on the Pauline epistles and preached by the Elizabethan authorities.<sup>45</sup> Palfreyman’s declaration of this minor act of disobedience, twelve years into Elizabeth’s reign, indicates the growing vitriol of anti-Nicodemite voices from within the Church, noted as especially pronounced during the early 1570s by Karl Gunther.<sup>46</sup> Not only ‘conservative’ Gentlemen, but Protestants too, were concerned about their former obedience to a Catholic queen.

Anthony Anderson (minister from 1591 and sub-dean between 1592–93), though only briefly employed in the Chapel Royal, made a considerable impact there. Anderson reinforced the application of the Chapel oath and improved Chapel security as subdean, recorded in the Chapel ‘Cheque Book’, an administrative document which recorded admission and attendance. His works comprised three tracts, *An Exposition of the hymne commonly called Benedictus* (1573), *The Shield of our Safetie* (1581), and *An Approved Medicine against the deserved Plague* (1593), and four printed sermons (1576, two in 1581, and 1586), and expressed a particular emphasis on church discipline. His service as commissary to the archdeacon of Lincoln, and as rector of parishes in Bedfordshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, Essex and Middlesex is witness to his claim in 1573 that although he had been ordained an ‘Idolatrour priest’ under Mary, he had since reformed.<sup>47</sup> More concerning for this future sub-dean were those who ‘now confesse themselves chaunged fro[m] Popish life’ but continued to hold conservative doctrines and might, should anything happen to Elizabeth, restore the church to idolatry, like the members of the church of Ephesus, after the death of king Josiah.<sup>48</sup> Given the instability of the English succession in the 1570s, this is particularly revealing of Anderson’s attitude towards Nicodemism, which although less of a problem by the 1590s, helps to explain Anderson’s reforms of Chapel discipline and attendance.

All three of these Protestant Gentlemen of the Elizabethan Chapel Royal publicly expressed some level of belief in the form of Predestination as declared by the 39 Articles.<sup>49</sup> This

43 Paul Gaudet, ‘William Baldwin’s A Treatise of Moral Philosophy (1564): A Variorum Edition With Introduction’, unpubl. PhD diss. Princeton University (1972), p. 36.

44 Thomas Palfreyman, *A Paraphrase uppon the Epistle of the holie Apostle S. Paule to the Romans* (1572), sig. \*.ii.v.

45 *Ibid.*, sig. \*.ii.v–iii.r.

46 Gunther, *Reformation Unbound*, p. 113.

47 Gary W. Jenkins, ‘Anderson, Anthony’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/467>; Anthony Anderson, *An Exposition of the hymne commonly called Benedictus* (1573), fo. 73.r.

48 Anthony Anderson, *A Godlie Sermon, Preached on Newe yeeres day last* (1576), sig. B.ii.v.

49 The seventeenth article of the thirty-nine doctrinal statements of faith in the Church of England, drawn up in 1563 and finalised and applied to all ministers and schoolmasters in 1571, taught a Calvinistic expression of predestinarian theology, emphasising the salvation of the predetermined elect, who were distinct from the reprobate (crucially, the Articles remained silent on whether the reprobate’s fate was predetermined). For more, see: W.B. Patterson, *William Perkins and the Making of a Protestant England*, (Oxford, 2014), Chapter 3.

soteriological factor helps to challenge the wider assumption of a proto-Arminian ‘Laudian cradle’, identified in Westminster Abbey. Hunnis, Palfreyman and Anderson all explicitly referred to their belief that, as Hunnis wrote, ‘thine elect, and those whom thou has shewed mercie upon, shall be severed from the wicked reprobates, as lambes from wolues’.<sup>50</sup> These statements could however, also serve to defend the doctrinal formularies of the Elizabethan Church. Palfreyman illustrated this by his use of the same prelapsarian wording from the 39 Articles in his 1572 *Paraphrase*, translating the German reformer Martin Cellarius’s statement that the elect had been saved ‘before the foundations of the worlde were layde’, a year after clerical subscription to the Articles was made mandatory.<sup>51</sup> It is also significant that by Anderson’s appointment as sub-dean of the Chapel Royal, he had assumed an exclusionary vision of the identity of the elect, moving from his universalist position common in the 1560s and 70s, that even ‘persecutors of [God’s] gospel’ might be elect, to his declaration in 1586, that Catholic ‘rebellious Traytours’ were ‘reprobate silver’, something especially pertinent in the context of Jesuitical threats against Elizabeth’s life.<sup>52</sup> Anderson, Palfreyman and Hunnis may, in the context of Elizabeth’s hostility to the more radical limits of the double-predestination expressed in Archbishop Whitgift’s Lambeth Articles, and the public position they occupied as Gentlemen of the Chapel, have been keen to emphasise their predestinarian limits, further illustrating their public and almost catechetical conformity to the reformed doctrines of the Church of England.

Oaths were an important test of conformity and personal loyalty to Elizabeth, and a crucial point of debate and anxiety for prominent members of the Elizabethan establishment.<sup>53</sup> These concerns extended to the Chapel Royal: in 1593 Anderson, responding to a petition made by an ‘unkind faction begon by sondrie of the companye abowt the deverse man[n]e[r] of oath taken’, codified the modified oath of Supremacy and appended clauses requiring regular attendance.<sup>54</sup> While reflective of the perennial problems of attendance in a large choir, the petition also highlights an internal concern with individual conformity beyond the concerns of a zealous sub-dean. Though it is unclear whether the new oath was intended to be tendered to crypto-Catholics, it is significant that William Byrd moved into a semi-retirement marked by repeated recusancy only a year later.<sup>55</sup> Anderson and Palfreyman also expressed concerns about the form of oath-swearing, with both men agreeing that oaths were only valid when sworn between man and God, not, like Anderson witnessed in Westminster Hall, to the ‘favour of the one, or dread of the other, or lineage, bloud, or worldly respectes’.<sup>56</sup> Individual dissimulation was also a concern: Anderson condemned the minister riding to his bishop to apply for a benefice, and ‘swore outwardly to subscribe &c. and softly saying to himself, as far forth as they are warranted’.<sup>57</sup> If these concerns extended beyond the concerns expressed in print of men like Anderson and Palfreyman, it seems that at least by the 1590s, a substantial number of Gentlemen had developed a keen sense of the importance of orthodoxy and obedience to their Protestant governor, alongside a serious understanding of the spiritual weight of the Chapel oath.

<sup>50</sup> Hunnis, *Seven Sobes*, p. 77.

<sup>51</sup> Palfreyman, *A Paraphrase*, sig. X.ii.r

<sup>52</sup> Anderson, *An Exposition*, fo. 72.r.; Anderson, *A sermon profitably preached*, sig. V.r.

<sup>53</sup> John Michael Grey, *Oaths and the English Reformation* (Cambridge, 2012), p. 8.

<sup>54</sup> Ashbee and Harley (eds), *The Cheque Books of the Chapel Royal*, vol. I, p. 4.

<sup>55</sup> Harley, *The World of William Byrd*, p. 152.

<sup>56</sup> Anderson, *An Exposition*, fo. 24.v.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, fo. 26.v.

The concerns of the Gentlemen of the Chapel Royal regarding conformity and orthodoxy could, at times, spill over into explicit anti-Catholicism. While this might seem unsurprising in Protestant devotional literature, their particular concern regarding dissimulating Catholics, especially given the presence of their colleague William Byrd (who was known on recusancy registers from at least the 1580s), is significant. While Palfreyman began his treatment of Catholics in 1560 with a line echoing the official state toleration of spiritually conservative neighbours, he nonetheless warned against their ‘fayre coloured wourdes and goodly painted shewes’, which threatened to make ‘marcha[n]dise’ of the early Elizabethan church, for which they would face both the ‘jusitice of god’ and ‘the Kynges actoritie’.<sup>58</sup> In light of these comments, it is significant that Palfreyman would have been subject to the disciplinary authority of the doctrinally conservative Angell in the Chapel, indicating a potential institutional tension.

While emphasising religious conformity, Anderson could prove flexible on specific issues. Although dissembling Catholics posed a practical threat through their sinister plots and influence through certain unnamed councillors and courtly servants, prompting Anderson to remind privy councillors, bishops and preachers of their duty to ‘stop [Elizabeth’s] gracious eares against the wylie charmes of suche [...] that] would doe their best to drawe us to their former Idolatrye’, Anderson extended greater tolerance to ‘hotter’ Protestants.<sup>59</sup> In 1573, Anderson declared that among ‘the reverent fathers the Bishops, with others the preachers of his holy word, in this our nation, & now government’, one might identify ‘in the substance of our religio[n], some little jarring crochet in lesse matters out of musicke her concorde’. These ministers who disagreed over adiaphoric religious matters were, however, ‘to be accompted as members of that musicall body, whereof Christ is the head’.<sup>60</sup> Anderson’s emphasis on Protestant unity and moderation towards those who disagreed with ‘lesse matters’ (presumably referring to heated topics of debate such as the vestiarian controversy and potentially church music) contrasted with his strict recommendations for dealing with conservative sympathisers. Anderson complained how the Church, with a ‘weake woman’ at its head, ‘dandleth them on her Motherly Knee, hoping to suppress [their] brawling voyce with her patient compassion’.<sup>61</sup> Anderson’s urgent calls for a greater degree of discipline within the Church, couched in remarkably forthright and hostile language (with particular reference to Elizabeth’s gender), makes his appointment in the Chapel Royal twenty years later particularly interesting. Anderson was also responsible for implementing an incremental fine of 5s for the first offence, 10s for the second and dismissal on the third for discussing the ‘lawfful secrets’ of Chapel business in public while Chapel sub-dean, in 1592.<sup>62</sup> This concern with orthodoxy and security was significant and likely related to Anderson’s awareness of Catholic plotters, who were ‘Imps of very green youth [...] some of them as sprouts spread into her majesty’s Courte’, as declared in a sermon of 1586.<sup>63</sup> These concerns help to contextualise the broader encouragement in the Chapel Royal of the 1590s towards a greater internal emphasis on orthodoxy, attendance and security. Significantly, they also align with the ecclesiastical policy of John Whitgift, archbishop of Canterbury from 1583, who urged for greater

58 Thomas Palfreyman, *A Myrrour of cleare glasse, for all estates* (1560), sigs B.viii.r-v.

59 Anthony Anderson, *A Sermon preached at Paules Crosse, the 23. Of Aprill* (1581), sig. A.ii.v.

60 Anderson, *An Exposition*, sig. 33r.

61 *Ibid.*, sig. 30.r.

62 Ashbee and Harley (eds), *The Cheque Books of the Chapel Royal*, vol. I, pp. 66-67.

63 Anthony Anderson, *A sermon profitably preached in the Church within her Majesties honourable Tower* (1586), sig. 27ii.r.

orthodoxy in the discipline of the Church of England, across scripture, doctrine and liturgy. This trend places the Chapel Royal in closer step with the wider church, indicating a point of theological commonality in a church usually cited for its extraordinary relationship with the rest of the Church of England.

It is significant that despite the overwhelming visual majesty and controversial ceremonialism of Chapel Royal services, the Gentlemen of the post-Reformation Chapel Royal were less willing to discuss ideal liturgical practices. Nonetheless, William Hunnis, who did not, like his colleagues, make extended comment on church discipline and authority, indicated his position in his 1595 *Recreations*. In a versification of the Nativity of Christ, he declared that all elaborate places of worship, even ‘curious worke by Salomon [...] must yield and base it selfe, and stoope this place unto’, to offer obeisance to the Christ-child.<sup>64</sup> ‘Lady Rome’, who would ‘strike saile, and under hatches go’, with ‘image of brasse likewise false’, was the only exception.<sup>65</sup> Though partly a condemnation of Catholic idolatrous practice, an elegant excuse for the majesty of Chapel Royal services is also identifiable: unlike Catholic idolatry, Chapels Royal, just as Solomon’s temple, were sumptuous according to their status and crucially remained deferential to Christ. Significantly, similar defences are not found in the works of Anderson or Palfreyman. The only comment made by Anderson was to condemn the ‘treasures of wickednesse’, meaning Catholic devotional accoutrements, in Londoners’ homes, which he blamed for the especially bad plague ravaging London (which left some 15,000 dead, including Anderson) in his 1593 *Approved Medicine*.<sup>66</sup> This literary silence is a significant one: while Gentlemen have been shown to have publicly defended certain ecclesiastical policies promoted at the highest level of the Church, they do not appear to have been expected to defend the controversial position of their place of employment.

Music however, attracted greater comment from the Gentlemen of the Chapel. Given their professional employment as singing-men, this is perhaps unsurprising, though more significant is the variety of belief in music’s role in the reformed English liturgy. Thomas Morley (singing-man between 1592–1602), robustly defended church music. In Morley’s *Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke* (1597), readers were told that church music should be textually distinct, and ‘draw the hearer [...] in chaines of gold by the ears to the consideration of holy things’. This should, Morley declared, be relatively elaborate, as ‘singing onely the bare note’ will ‘show the nature of the music but never carry the spirit’.<sup>67</sup> While Hunnis echoed elements of Morley’s endorsement of instrumental music for the praise of God, referring to the ‘warbling pipes’, ‘chaunt[ing]’ and ‘laie’ of the shepherds to celebrate ‘this blessed babes birth-day’ in his *Recreations*, the context is not explicitly liturgical.<sup>68</sup> Hunnis was more eager to emphasise domestic devotional music, setting catechetical tools like versified and simplified forms of the Athanasian and Apostle’s creeds in his works.<sup>69</sup> Anderson was more explicit on the issue of church music: he declared in 1573 that only metrical psalms were acceptable in the liturgy, as ‘al other chaunting notes and changing keyes, seeme they never so pleasant in the eares of men, are farestranged from the good like of god’.<sup>70</sup> Although it is unclear whether Anderson maintained this Calvinistic perspective on liturgical music by his appointment to

64 William Hunnis, *Hunnies Recreations* (1595), p. 26.

65 *Ibid.*, p. 27.

66 Anthony Anderson, *An Approved Medicine against the deserved Plague* (1593), sig. A.iii.r.

67 Thomas Morley, *A plaine and easie introduction to practicall musicke* (1597), p. 179.

68 Hunnis, *Recreations*, p. 32.

69 William Hunnis, *Seven Sobs of a Sorrowfull Soule for Sinne* (1583), p. 16; *Ibid.*, pp. 46–47.

70 Anderson, *An Exposition*, sig. A.iii.r.

the Chapel Royal in 1591, it is significant that his parish church of Stepney (Anderson served as rector between 1589–93) had removed its organ in 1585.<sup>71</sup> Further, John Morehen and other musicologists have pointed to an increased emphasis on the clarity of text in later-sixteenth-century English church music, indicating that Anderson might have been able to adjust his apparent hostility to elaborate liturgical music, especially given the influence he exercised as sub-dean over the music heard at Chapel services.<sup>72</sup> This variety of perspectives on liturgical music among Gentlemen of the Chapel indicates that professional employment did not always necessarily sit comfortably with liturgical preference, though efforts, both in public and private, could be made to accommodate individual Gentlemen with the ceremonial practices of the Elizabethan church.

If Anderson, Palfreyman and Hunnis can be taken as representative of at least a limited cross-section of Protestant opinion in Elizabeth's Chapel Royal, it becomes clear that arguments regarding a sense of institutional 'conservatism' cannot be entirely maintained. Individual doctrinal orthodoxy, efforts to defend the policies and doctrines of the Elizabethan church, and occasional (especially in Anderson's case) calls for further reformation illustrate that Gentlemen of the Chapel could be theologically learned and eager to publicly express their opinions on the direction of the Church of England. This explication of their views helps to clarify the extent to which belief and professional service could be reconciled in the theological boundaries of the Elizabethan church, and further elucidates the doctrinal make-up and influence of certain individuals on this liturgically controversial and spiritually and diplomatically sensitive institution.

### Religious Heterodoxy

Discussions of religious heterodoxy in the Elizabethan Chapel Royal usually centre around the notorious crypto-Catholic William Byrd (singing-man between 1571–1623). While Byrd's faith, protection and compositional output have been extensively explored, his colleague Robert Couche (singing-man between 1564–87) provides a revealing example of an anabaptist in Elizabeth's Chapel.

The presence of anabaptism at the Elizabethan court is curious. The 'Familists', an anti-predestinarian sect with anabaptist roots included among their number several Yeomen of the Guard, Gentlemen Pensioners, keepers of the Armoury at Greenwich and officers in the Tower.<sup>73</sup> However, Couche's status as a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal and the specific sacramental beliefs he held, indicates a complex and detailed case study of a doctrinally heterodox Protestant, closely involved in the conduct of public worship in the Chapel Royal. Couche's doctrinal belief departed from the Elizabethan church on three main points: the validity of infant baptism, the form of the eucharist and predestination. Although none of Couche's original works survive, their extensive quoting by his literary opponents, William Turner and John Knox, provide sufficient evidence to reconstruct elements of his religious thought.

Couche's heterodox ideas can be identified from the 1550s. Turner's response to Couche's published confutation of a lecture given by Turner at Isleworth in 1552 notes that Couche declared infant baptism a 'vayn & bare sign' when administered to 'infants [...]' and

71 London Metropolitan Archive, Po3/DUN/327, fo. 12.v.

72 John Morehen, 'English Church Music', in Roger Bray (ed.), *Music in Britain: The Sixteenth Century* (Oxford 1995), vol. II, p. 179.

73 Christopher Marsh, *The Family of Love in English society, 1550–1630* (Cambridge 1994), p. 16.

unbelievers'.<sup>74</sup> Turner further reveals that Couche believed that baptism should only be given after a period of catechesis, 'after dewe prooffe of unfayned repentaunce', and after the catechumen reached twenty-one years of age.<sup>75</sup> Further, he believed that the Eucharist should not be consumed as a 'morsel of bread in mockery of a supper', but 'a variety and abundance of meat and drink', as declared to Rudolf Gualter in 1573.<sup>76</sup> Couche also seems to have held this belief in the early 1550s, with Turner condemning his call for a 'gluttenous supper [...] which ye call the supper of our Lord'.<sup>77</sup> It is significant that despite these beliefs, Couche remained communicant with the Church of England under Edward and Elizabeth (significantly no evidence survives for Couche's conformity under Mary). Turner notes Couche's hypocrisy, referring to his 'pying' in an unidentifiable church and his public reception of the sacrament on Easter Sunday 'right Popishly knelyng'.<sup>78</sup> Couche's eucharistic heterodoxy does not, however, appear to have diverged on any major theological point beyond the materials used: it was, as Gualter dismissed, a matter 'more curious than useful'. Despite Couche's public conformity, he was made to sing 'his Palinodia' (or recantation) by the Elizabethan authorities shortly before 1574.<sup>79</sup> Given that Couche had written to Gualter after this recantation, he clearly fell back into his heterodox beliefs, indicating the practical limits of enforcing doctrinal conformity among the Gentlemen of the Chapel Royal, and potential individual and institutional tensions.

Couche may have also been an aggressive anti-Predestinarian. Although Couche's authorship of the *Confutation* has been questioned, the association of one 'R.C' with the Kentish 'Free Willers', who disputed with John Careless over the matter of predestination in the 1550s, makes Couche the most likely candidate.<sup>80</sup> Couche's declaration that obedience to God's word must be maintained, otherwise 'the latter fall should be worse then the first', and even the 'elect, chosen, and predestinat[e]' could be 'ordained unto damnation'.<sup>81</sup> This was compounded by the assertion that the true God could never 'beget and create man, His own image, to perpetual pains'.<sup>82</sup> It is likely that Couche maintained these beliefs by his admission to the Chapel Royal in 1564. It is significant that he was joining an institution which, by the 1560s, had a body of doctrinal conservatives, and offers further evidence that during this period Elizabeth saw the importance of packing her royal chapel with men who, while sufficiently musically trained, might also block 'hotter' Protestant attempts at courtly reform.

Despite Couche's public conformity to the Edwardian and Elizabethan church, he was nonetheless at constant risk of persecution. Couche witnessed the Edwardian, Marian and Elizabethan campaigns against Anabaptists, which makes his willingness to publicly engage with key sacramental issues all the more surprising. Indeed, both of his literary opponents threatened to see Couche executed for his heretical views: Turner declared that he 'knew

74 William Turner, *A preservative, or triacle, agaynst the poison of Pelagius* (1551), sig. F.i.v.

75 *Ibid.*, sig. B.vii.r.

76 Hastings Robingson (ed.), *The Zurich Letters, Comprising the Correspondence of Several English Bishops and Others* (Cambridge 1842), vol. I, p. 236.

77 Turner, *A preservative*, sig. G.vi.r.

78 *Ibid.*, sig. K.vii.r.; sig. D.vi.v.

79 George Cornelius Gorham, *Gleanings of a Few Scattered Ears, During the Period of the Reformation in England and of the Times Immediately Succeeding, A.D. 1533 to A.D. 1588* (London 1857), p. 482.

80 C.J. Clement, *Religious Radicalism in England, 1535-1565* (Carlisle 1997), p. 242.

81 John Knox, *An Answer to a Great Number of blasphemous cavillations written by an Anabaptist, and adversarie to Gods eternal Predestination* (1560), pp. 185-186.

82 *Ibid.*, 377.



and know meanes enow to [...] cure yow with fyer', and Knox made it his 'ful purpose' to see Couche persecuted, 'if I shal apprehend the[e] in any comon welthe where justice against blasphemers may be ministred'.<sup>83</sup> It is unsurprising that Couche himself condemned religious persecution, incensing Knox by suggesting that the Marian martyrs deserved their fate, having 'in their crueltie set furth bookes affirming it to be lawfull to persecute'.<sup>84</sup> However, despite his public dissimulation, Couche declared in his *Confutation* that those who 'at the voice of their capteyn ryse up, and turne againe, and fight Lawfully, even unto the end [...] are chiefly above all other called elect and chosen'.<sup>85</sup> It is possible that Couche did not see his public conformity to the Church of England necessarily as a form of Nicodemism, given his continued propensity to make his heterodox views known to leading reformers. Such an understanding of religious conformity might explain how Couche was able to survive in the Chapel Royal and reconcile his own beliefs with those of the Edwardian and Elizabethan church.

Couche's religious beliefs are perhaps best contextualised by his extraordinarily diverse circle of theologians and prominent reforming churchmen. Throughout his life, he proved himself extraordinarily willing to engage directly with leading reformers. Beyond those already mentioned, he also wrote to Peter Martyr Vermigli, Miles Coverdale and John Jewel.<sup>86</sup> These interactions were not always negative: Vermigli referred to him as 'my deare friende in the Lorde' while generously responding to a learned letter from Couche, penned around 1549 which cited Tertullian and Juan Luis Vives as authorities against infant baptism.<sup>87</sup> Perhaps more significant is Couche's familiarity with the German reformer Martin Borrhaus (or Cellarius), who offered his 'salutations' to Vermigli through Couche's letter.<sup>88</sup> Cellarius, rector at Basel University by 1546, might have been the source of Couche's anabaptism, given his notorious flirtations with the doctrine throughout his life. It is also significant that Couche's later colleague, Thomas Palfreyman, revealed himself to be particularly familiar with the reformer's works, not only extensively quoting them in his 1572 *Paraphrase*, but also potentially working on an English translation of Cellarius's *De Operibus Dei* (1527), one of the earliest predestinarian works of the Reformation, in 1562.<sup>89</sup> Though attribution of the translation is difficult, as the monogrammed 'T.P' is the only clue and the provenance of the manuscript is yet unknown, Palfreyman seems for now as likely a candidate as any. Regardless, both Couche and Palfreyman were clearly interested in Cellarius for different reasons, though the early reformer appealed equally. While partly evidence of the flexibility of early sixteenth century reformed writings for members of the early Elizabethan church, Couche's extensive network of continental reformers illustrates just how far these musicians and singing-men could find themselves embroiled within overlapping theological networks, despite a difference in individual doctrinal belief.

Couche's extraordinary survival at the Elizabethan court reveals some striking elements about the nature of religious heterodoxy among the Gentlemen of the Chapel Royal.

83 Turner, *A preservative*, sig. N.i.v.; Knox, *An Answer*, p. 207.

84 *Ibid.*

85 *Ibid.*, p. 101.

86 Clement, *Religious Radicalism*, p. 238.

87 Peter Martyr Vermigli, *The common places of the most famous and renowned divine Doctor Peter Martyr* (1583), vol. IV, p. 113.

88 *Ibid.*, p. 115.

89 Reigate Parish Church MS 1463.; R.L. Williams, 'Martin Cellarius and the Reformation in Strasburg', *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 32, 4 (1981), p. 478. Thanks go to Ms. Hilary Ely for her assistance.



Clearly, these men could exercise not just an impressive command over scripture and theological commentaries, but also wrote and lived in communication with some of the leading theological figures of their day, and often responded directly to their influence. These ‘middling’ royal servants, usually regarded for their compositional ability rather than theological interest, lived and worked in a role that granted them considerable courtly influence. In light of this courtly influence, their awareness of their public identities and protection at the hands of certain courtiers and noblemen (it is significant that Couche’s patronage remains unclear) reveals the processes of private dissimulation and communication that could help facilitate the continued service of an anabaptist Gentleman to the Elizabethan church.

### Conclusion

The Gentlemen of Elizabeth’s Chapel Royal were not all traditionally minded conservatives, nor were they clearly committed to the liturgical ceremonialism maintained in post-Reformation royal worship. Rather, from this cross-section of the surviving religious works of an influential generation of Gentlemen of the Chapel Royal, the religious make-up of the Chapel Royal included, at the beginning of Elizabeth’s reign, traditionalists who formerly eagerly supported Mary and made their peace with the Elizabethan settlement, and a group of more advanced Protestants who survived throughout the later-sixteenth century, actively engaged with continental Protestant reformers and called for further reformation in England.

This variety of religious opinion reveals how a generation of singing-men, all born around the 1530s and 1540s, employed in Elizabeth’s Chapel during the least stable years of the post-Reformation church, and who witnessed successive regime changes, proved willing to craft their public identities in print, and make direct comment on the religious and political issues of their day. Though individual motivations for printed works are difficult to recover, and reasons from economic incentive, royal advancement, and strength of doctrinal position are all identifiable in the examples discussed above, what is most revealing about these remarkable works is the extent of serious theological engagement and international networks in a Chapel staffed by men commonly thought to have been ‘indifferent’ to religious change. It is clear, when considering the extent of scholarly engagement and occasional anxiety shown across a range of doctrinal positions evidenced by these works, that arguments explaining continuity in the Chapel Royal by liturgical preservation do not take the personnel of the Chapel fully into account. Rather, as revealed when the Gentlemen do make comment on liturgical matters (significantly, it is only the Gentlemen who expressed some support of the orthodox doctrines of the Elizabethan church who did this), liturgical preferences could vary and occasionally conflict with the requirements of certain duties of the Chapel Royal.

Although it is difficult to prove any direct royal intervention in the administration or patronage of the Chapel Royal under Elizabeth, these men were clearly valuable to the early Protestant church. Not only did some compose clear-texted music for services, but their religious heterogeneity of opinion, publicly expressed, met the concerns of a variety of wings of the Elizabethan Church, in a way reminiscent of the religious diversity of James I’s royal chaplains, as outlined by Kenneth Fincham.<sup>90</sup> This trend is especially significant when considering the public role many of the Gentlemen appear to have perceived for themselves.

90 Kenneth Fincham, *Prelate as Pastor: The Episcopate of James I* (Oxford 1990), p. 24.

It is significant that when Elizabeth assumed the throne, she was only twenty-five years old, and these men had seen the tumultuous course of the Reformation (some of them had already published) and may have felt that as servants in the foremost ecclesiastical institution of the English court, their comments might have been valued. None of the Gentlemen born under Elizabeth, or indeed James, took to print in order to express their religious views with quite the same clarity as the men discussed in this article. This is especially surprising for James's reign, when court patronage and print was relaxed slightly, offering what is usually characterised as a boom in religious works from a similar social group as the Gentlemen of the Chapel Royal.<sup>91</sup> Though this might have been the result of a shift towards musical skill in the Chapel Royal, aided by the growing English trade in printed music, it is nonetheless significant for analyses of early modern 'occupational' identity, indicating generational identity as much as musical skill, as a powerful force for change.<sup>92</sup> Future studies might build on these 'occupational identities', examining the personal tensions and consequences of administrative continuity in courtly, ecclesiastical and legal institutions, and give greater insight into the professional consequences of the Reformation.<sup>93</sup>

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