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Prophesying Again

PETER IVER KAUFMAN

We know relatively little about prophecies or “exercises” that early Elizabethan reformers devised as in-service training. Nearly all textbooks report that Archbishop Grindal objected to government orders that prophesying be suppressed, for, in 1576, his reservations cost him the queen’s and regime’s confidence. Yet the suppressed exercises have lately been depicted as tame Elizabethan adaptations of continental practices that featured sermons delivered publicly but discussed only clerically. That was so in Zurich, Emden, and elsewhere, but I think that if we look at prophesying again, look, that is, at what the critics, patrons, and partisans said about the exercises in England, we will discover that lay involvement and initiative were just as subversive and disruptive as some thought at the time.

During the first decade of reform in Zurich and later among the refugee or “stranger” churches in London, authorities appear to have invited lay involvement. They identified reform with lay initiative and lay reflection on the fundamentals of Christian faith. But by the 1550s, lay comment was less welcome in England. Bishop Hooper admired refugees’ discipline, advocated prophesying in his diocese, but does not seem to have encouraged lay participation. Martin Bucer, who spent his last stretch in England, suggested while still in Strasbourg that a pious schoolmaster preside over exercises should learned clerics be unavailable, and he accommodated lay auditors. Nonetheless, into the 1560s, prophesying was almost unexceptionably viewed as a way to educate or form the clergy rather than as a way to edify, exhort, and reform the laity.¹

I. THE EXILES’ EXERCISES

“Let all that is spoken in the prophecy be spoken in the English tongue only,” for it would hardly do to pitch prophecy too far above

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1. Compare Philippe Denis, “La Prophétie dans les églises de la réforme au XVI siècle,” *Revue d’histoire ecclésiastique* 72 (1977): 289–316, which exaggerates both episcopal control of the exercises and episcopal tolerance of lay participation (310–11).

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pastors who had not been to university. They were, after all, intended beneficiaries of what their contemporaries called exercises—what Annabel Patterson now calls “education seminars on scriptural exegesis.” But those exercises of the 1560s and 1570s were different from seminars today in small classrooms and conference rooms. The prophesying opened with lectures and only afterward reconvened as clerical deliberations. Moreover, the public phase, a few sermons delivered consecutively on the same passage of Scripture, drew large crowds on market-day mornings. Partisans of prophesying thought it an excellent way to reach citizens with some of the region’s finest preaching; people in town for business or merely for amusement might be inclined on hearing a sermon, it was said, “to give God the glorye.” But even stripped of possible soterial consequences, the sixteenth-century prophecies were remarkable. Patterson suggests that they—and the regime’s suppression of their public phase—constitute a striking chapter in the history of the public’s right to information.²

Reconstructing that chapter, we have a chance to reconsider “the revolutionary force” of Tudor Puritanism, which, as Nicholas Tyacke concedes, may have been too peremptorily “deflated” over the last thirty years. But reconsideration is risky business, if only because there is insufficient information to put any of the rival characterizations beyond contest. Thomas Wood, writing to rally support for the prophesying in 1576, assured readers that “the harts of all godly men . . . knowe what singular benefitt doth daylie growe by such most godly exercizes.” But what the godly once knew is now lost to us. If by “singular benefitt,” Wood meant merely that the prophecies educated ministers, thus improving the quality of ministry, the “benefitt” daily grew by trickling down to the laity, and prophesying can hardly be said to have had “revolutionary force.” But if Wood referred to the inspiration and advantages related to a wider participation in the exercises, if he referred, that is, to what could be called their populism as well as to their popularity, we may be able to recover something of

2. Annabel Patterson, *Reading Holinshed's "Chronicles"* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 21. For “glory,” see the sermon in London, British Library (BL), Sloane MS 271, fol. 6v. Directives for the diocese of Norwich were circulated in 1575 and were printed in *Elizabethan Puritanism*, ed. Leonard J. Trinterud (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 199–201, specifying “the English tongue only.” For the popularity and geographical spread of the exercises, see Patrick Collinson, “Lectures by Combination: Structures and Characteristics of Church Life in Seventeenth-Century England,” *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 48 (1975): 182–213, reprinted in *Collinson's Godly People: Essays on English Protestantism and Puritanism* (London: Hambledon, 1983), with additional figures at page 563.

the "revolution" that many scholars, Thomas Wood's distinguished editor among them, think occurred only much later.³

The evidence for the "benefitt" that Wood and "all godly men" perceived is hard to interpret. Advocates of the exercises, answering critics, took some pains to assure the authorities that prophesying was tame and not treacherous, to offset observations such as those of Bishop Cox of Ely that the exercises agitated the laity (*exagitare* and *ventilare*) and that "forward," radical Calvinists permitted lay participation in exegetical disputes.⁴ But Patrick Collinson's case for the conservative character of prophesying is not just based on the advocates' assurances but braced by a sturdy inference that he draws from the puritans' transparent and persistent hostility to separatism in the 1570s and 1580s. A "conscientious abhorrence of separation," he says, was symptomatic of their devotion to a "unitive Protestantism." Given that devotion, Collinson supposes they were much likelier to "domesticate radical dissent" than to devise any opportunity in the exercises for its free expression.⁵

Ironically, however, an abhorrence of sectarian tendencies appears to have spurred those very reformers who first practiced prophesying in England to invite lay participation. John a Lasco, presiding over refugee French and Dutch congregations in London, trusted that free trade in opinion contributed to the solidarity of his "stranger churches."

3. See Wood's letter to the Earl of Warwick, in *The Letters of Thomas Wood, Puritan, 1566-1577*, ed. Patrick Collinson (London: Athlone, 1960), 10. For a concise statement of the "trickle down" claim, see the arguments compiled for or by Archbishop Grindal, *Quod prophetia sit retinenda*, London, Lambeth Palace Library (LPL), MS 2007, particularly fol. 144v: "usus prophetiae: ministros aptiores reddit ad docendum ignorantiam simul et ignaviam propellit." Consult Nicholas Tyacke, "The 'Rise of Puritanism' and the Legalizing of Dissent, 1571-1719," in *From Persecution to Toleration: The Glorious Revolution and Religion in England*, ed. Ole Peter Grell, Jonathan I. Israel, and Nicholas Tyacke (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), 17-18, for reservations about the "deflation." That the radical or "revolutionary force" of Puritanism and prophesying has been overlooked is particularly surprising inasmuch as the literary historians of the period lately have been preoccupied with late Tudor "repressive mechanisms" or "containment." What was repressed or contained, oddly, goes unreported, a point made by William H. Sherman, "Anatomizing the Commonwealth: Language, Politics, and the Elizabethan Social Order," in *The Project of Prose in Early Modern Europe and the New World*, ed. Elizabeth Fowler and Roland Greene (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 115-16.
4. Cox, *De sacris coetibus de novo instituendis quaestiones*, BL, Additional MS 29546, fol. 48r. But "some exercise," Cox elsewhere said, should be convened "when the greater ignorance, idleness, and lewdnesse of the greater number of poore and blinde prestes in the clergie shalbe depely weyed and considered"; BL, Lansdowne MS 25, fol. 61r.
5. Patrick Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society, 1559-1625* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982), 275-76; idem, "The English Conventicle," in *Voluntary Religion*, ed. W. J. Sheils and Diana Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 249-51; and for Puritanism and separatism, idem, "Sects and the Evolution of Protestantism," in *Puritanism: Transatlantic Perspectives in a Seventeenth-Century Anglo-American Faith*, ed. Francis J. Bremer (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1993), 147-66.

He thought that airing and answering dissent strengthened defenses against separatists who, he stated, were waiting to exploit whatever complaints went unspoken. Martin Micronius, a Lasco's clerical colleague during Edward VI's reign, told Bullinger and Zurich that the strangers' weekly exercises in London overcame both heresy and ignorance.⁶

The *Prophezei* in Zurich had once involved discussions with laity. But by the time Micronius reported, the name referred to conversations among ministers and students for the ministry, only occasionally followed by a public sermon. Hence, the strangers in England must have appeared innovative to Bullinger. They fled the continent in 1547, opposing the religious settlements imposed in the wake of Emperor Charles V's victories. With Thomas Cranmer's encouragement, they figured that the prospects were excellent in England for rapid reform and for some improvisation. The French permitted lay discussions of Scriptures; the Dutch countenanced questioning each previous Sunday's sermon.⁷ A few English church officials were favorably impressed. When Bishop Ridley of London expressed some reservations, Bishop Hooper of Gloucester replied with admiration for the strangers' practices. Archbishop Cranmer, Micronius wrote home, was a "special patron" and "chief support." A Lasco confided to the king of Poland that the English thought the strangers' discipline far more perfectly apostolic than the arrangements they were able to make for their realm's churches and that they were tempted to follow the refugees' lead.⁸

For their part, the strangers appreciated the hospitality. They welcomed the interest and, apparently, the participation of their hosts. In 1551, the Dutch proposed holding some exercises in English. The proposal could have been but a courtesy, though continental Calvinists might well have been bidding for greater integration. We do not know, and we cannot tell how the English responded. Years later, however,

6. *Original Letters Relative to the English Reformation*, ed. Hastings Robinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1847), 2: 575; and *Joannis a Lasco Opera*, ed. A. Kuyper (Amsterdam: Muller, 1866), 2: 102-103.

7. Consult Denis, "La Prophétie," 300-303; Werner O. Packull, *Hutterite Beginnings: Communitarian Experiments during the Reformation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 22-25; *Heinrich Bullingers Reformationsgeschichte*, ed. J. J. Hottinger and H. H. Vogel (Frauenfeld, 1838), 1: 117 for precedents. But also, for skepticism about the importance and influence of the strangers' experiments, see Peter Fairlambe, *The Recantation of a Brownist* (London, 1606), sig. E3v-E4r and Collinson, "Lectures," 188.

8. Andrew Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities in Sixteenth-Century London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 35, quoting a Lasco. Also consult *Original Letters*, 568, for Micronius; Susan Brigden, *London and the Reformation* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), 464-67; and Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1996), 477-79.

pastors in London grieved that parishioners "refuse[d] contemptuously their own churches" to attend those of the strangers, which by then had been dissolved during Mary's reign and refounded at the start of Elizabeth's.⁹

Mary's reign and Catholicism sent the strangers packing and hurried hundreds of English Calvinists into exile. The English on the continent assembled in several cities, among them Frankfurt, Emden, Geneva, and Wesel, where they appear to have experimented with lay participation in congregational administration.¹⁰ Queen Mary's death in 1558 drew them back. John Knox returned with an assortment of leveling ideas and took them to Scotland. He had hardly settled before welcoming laymen and ministers alike into the "cumpany of interpretouris" gathering weekly and publicly in "prophecieing." He argued that the prophecies had been commended by the apostle Paul to the Corinthians and thus to all committed Christians.¹¹ But Richard Bancroft later explained that Knox and the Scots had too quickly emerged from darkness into light, from Catholicism, that is, and that their blurred vision caused them mistakenly to embrace some populist and "dangerous positions."¹² Arguably, Knox merely institutionalized practices that developed while the church had been "under the cross." Had he been pressed, perhaps he would have acknowledged his debt to a Lasco and quite possibly have conceded two further points as well. Prohibitions he composed against digression and invective at the prophesying suggest that he would have concurred with his critics, that his fear of factions and feuds was similar to theirs. And Knox might also have allowed that, despite the effectiveness of precautions and prohibitions, prophesying could, and perhaps should, lead to disorder, specifically to the overthrow of that administrative order into which his fellow exiles, on their return, had been assimilated.¹³

When continental Calvinists again came to London, after Elizabeth

9. *The Miserable Clergy of London*, Oxford, Bodleian Library (Bodl.), Wood MS F.30-32, 87. For the Dutch proposal, see *Original Letters*, 587.
10. Consult the narratives compiled in 1574 by Thomas Wood and John Field and published as *A Brief Discourse of the Troubles Begun at Frankfurt* (London, 1846), cxxv-cxxvii, clxxvii. Also see Andrew Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism: Six Studies* (Aldershot: Scolar, 1996), 33-34, for Geneva; and 179-82, for Emden. Directions for appointing ministers and for censuring delinquents survive from Wesel, in LPL MS 2523, fols. 4r and 6v.
11. *The Works of John Knox*, ed. David Laing (Edinburgh, 1848), 2:242-45, citing 1 Cor. 14: 29-31.
12. Richard Bancroft, *Dangerous positions and Proceedings published and practiced within this iland of Brytaine under pretense of reformation and for the presbiteriall discipline* (London, 1593), 32.
13. Knox's debts to other reformers are assessed by Denis, "La Prophétie," 313-14; and by Janet G. MacGregor, *The Scottish Presbyterian Polity: A Study of Its Origins in the Sixteenth Century* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1926), 53-54, 67, 76-77, and 134.

replaced Mary, they were as alert as the critics of prophesying to the danger of disorder. It was one thing to come upon Henrick Moreels, who installed and cleaned carpets to earn his living, and to hear him respectfully discuss God's attributes with learned pastors and fellow laymen. It was quite another to let the conversations in the weekly prophecies deteriorate into acrimonious interrogations and wrangling. The Dutch authorities introduced several measures in 1561 to control their exercises, small but significant steps toward lay silence.¹⁴

The arrival or, more precisely, the eccentricity and aggressiveness of Justus Velsius almost certainly occasioned additional steps in the same direction. During the exercises, Velsius insisted upon introducing his strange ideas about the deification of human nature. Edmund Grindal, bishop of London, took exception to what the outspoken Dutchman had been saying, *aperte*. He must have been closely monitoring Dutch and French churches by the 1560s, and, if Patrick Collinson is right, he later assisted Nicholas Des Gallars, who developed discipline among French refugees "in the direction of aristocratic and clerical government."¹⁵

Grindal had been among the English exiles on the continent. He most likely witnessed the lay participation in their churches' elections and discipline. On his return, he professed high regard for the piety of those Calvinists advocating lay empowerment, but he was dispirited by the quarrels that attended their advocacy. And for one leading leveler, he had only contempt: Cartwright, he remarked, "hath a busy head stuffed full of singularities." The renegade, he continued, should be "bridled by authority."¹⁶ But Grindal is not ordinarily associated with the "bridling." Honors for that accomplishment, to the extent that one could confidently call it accomplished during the 1570s, go to John Whitgift who chased Cartwright from Cambridge in 1571, twelve years before succeeding Grindal as archbishop of Canterbury. Neither is Grindal connected with or credited for the drift towards conserva-

14. *Kerkeraads-Protocollien der nederduitsche Vluchtelingen-kerk te London, 1560-1566*, ed. Aart Arnout van Scheiven (Amsterdam, 1921), 247 and 251, for the restrictions; 384-85, for Moreels.

15. See Grindal's contribution to the Velsius dossier, PRO, State Papers 12/28, fols. 29r-30r; and Patrick Collinson's remarks in his *Archbishop Grindal, 1519-1583: The Struggle for a Reformed Church* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 132-34. Also Nicholas Des Gallars's provisions "de exercitatione prophetica," in *Forma Politiae Ecclesiasticae nuper Instituta Londini in Coetu Gallorum*, BL, Additional MS 48096, 7-8, recently reprinted in *Unity in Multiformity: The Minutes of the Coetus of London, 1575 and the Consistory Minutes of the Italian Church of London, 1570-1591*, ed. Owe Boersma and Auke J. Jelsma (London: Huguenot Society of Great Britain and Ireland, 1997), 119-20. For Des Gallars's part in persecuting Jean Morely for democratic notions, see John Quick, *Synodicon in Gallia Reformata* (London, 1692), 56-57.

16. *The Remains of Edmund Grindal*, ed. William Nicholson (Cambridge, 1843), 304-305, 336.

tism in the strangers' churches, though the government regarded him the superintendent of those churches while he was bishop of London. Instead, Edmund Grindal is best known as the prelate who grudgingly presided over the suppression of English prophesying.

II. SUPPRESSION

Instructed by the government to suppress the prophesying, Grindal polled his suffragans, looking for and getting replies that could eventually be patched into a defense of the exercises. He or an assistant combed passages from Scripture and from other texts of Christian antiquity, stocking a case for the prophecies' public face, *populus prophetiis interfuit*. Nearly any old public conversation would do as a precedent, including the debates that Augustine had with the Donatists in the early fifth century, for the venerable polemicist was known to have loved to play to, and for, the multitude. As for popular participation in prophesying, that was a more difficult drum to sound. The apostle Paul seemed to have commended it; the queen's government wanted to forbid it. A rare *nota bene* in Grindal's collection of precedents and proofs looks to have been exploring the prospects for compromise. That pointed finger called attention to the critical passage in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, especially to an interpretation attributed to John Calvin, which both licensed and limited lay involvement: all Christians should come to the exercises to be edified, but only the learned laymen should venture to speak.¹⁷

But the government seemed less concerned with learning than with "over much vehemency." For word circulated in the 1570s that extremists were turning reformed Christians against their pastors and bishops. John Field and Thomas Wilcox were accused in London. John Aylmer wrote Grindal from Leicestershire to arraign others, local preachers alleged to have been advocating insurrection at the exercises: "I have found great boldnesse in the meaner sort which will ere it long bring great confusion in the church if it be not speedily prevented."¹⁸

The queen's council was also concerned with sedition, associating crowds with unkind words about the government and perhaps believ-

17. *Forma seu Modus Prophetandi*, LPL, MS 2007, fols. 129r, 132r-v, and 134r. Also see arguments for limiting lay prophesying copied into a commonplace book, preserved now in Oxford, Bodl MS 3432 (Seiden Supra 44), fols. 64v-65r.

18. BL, Additional MS 29546, fol. 56v. An episode at Cambridge suggests that "over much vehemency" was occasionally pardoned when the sermon in question was "delivered in the Latin tongue and not popularly taught," but the offender's appeal for pardon attests the government's surveillance and seriousness, Cambridge University Library, MS Mm. 1.40, 373-74.

ing rumors of "confederacies" and conspiracies such as the report that unnamed puritans and several of their Flemish friends were targeting Elizabeth for assassination.¹⁹ Conspiracies of this kind need have extended no farther than informants' imaginations to color policy, though the queen's remarks concentrated on her subjects' susceptibilities rather than on wild schemes when she spoke about the exercises. Her people were "easy to be caryed [away] with novelties," she commented; the doctrine they hear at the prophesying or the discussions in which they participate might convince them of their powers to discern and their abilities to judge—powers that they ought not possess, abilities that they did not. Elizabeth blamed "no small number" of persons "presuming to be teachers and preachers." She may have been referring to pastors who had lost their pulpits for nonconformity, but also possibly to lay agitators who escaped episcopal examination and oversight. Any escape of that kind was impermissible, for the queen desired to govern her churches through her bishops, and crowds and fears stirred by the prophesying summoned her determination to govern her bishops and keep them on a fairly tight leash. "Considering the great abuses that have ben in sundry places of our realme by reason of assemblies callid exercises," she wrote, "we will and straightly charge yow that you do cause the same forthwith to cease and not be used."²⁰

The government's worries became those of the bishops who were "straightly charged" to enforce its cease and desist order. Several pastors in Peterborough were incredulous: "why should it displease you," they asked their bishop (Scambler), "when people come together to hear the word of God which they can't hear at home in these blynde corners about us?" "True laborers," those pastors continued, "cannot but rejoyce when they see the worke of their Lord . . . got forward as we did manifestly behold in these exercises."²¹ Authorities in Peterborough and elsewhere were not unaware of "blynde corners," parishes where sermons were few and far between. The complaint was common: lay proprietors alienated the parish revenues to such an extent that too little was left to attract and compensate learned, diligent preachers. The exercises were alternatives to direct confrontations with patrons. Scambler of Peterborough approved the regulations set for prophesying in Northampton in 1571. He once sent a layman to the prophesies to abjure publicly a fondness for Catholic

19. BL, Lansdowne MS 21, fols. 2r–3r.

20. See the queen's correspondence printed in Stanford Lehmborg, "Archbishop Grindal and the Prophesyings," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 34 (1965): 142–43. LPL, MS 2003, fol. 40r specifies "no small nombres."

21. BL Additional MS 27632, fol. 47v.

apology and to provide "some hope of reformation" as an example to others. Archbishop Grindal similarly acknowledged that the prophesying was useful. The sights and sounds of the pastors deliberating, he imagined, inspired reformed Christians pouring from "ordinary parishes," giving them greater respect for the clergy's intelligence and industry.²²

Grindal's predecessor, Matthew Parker, came to a very different conclusion. Parker was especially worried about the exercises in Norwich, a diocese he described as infested with "puritaynes" and in a "miserable state."²³ He ordered Bishop Parkhurst to suppress the "vain prophesying," but on receiving that directive, Parkhurst stalled, sought help from influential courtiers and counsel from fellow bishops, and slyly misread the archbishop's intent. Parkhurst finally agreed to suppress any of the exercises that were patently "vain." But by spring 1574, the archbishop had clarified: all prophesying was "vain," Parker let it be known, so no prophecy could be found "so good an help and mean to further true religion" as partisans and patrons claimed. All prophesying in Norwich, therefore, was to be discontinued.²⁴

Parkhurst earlier had described himself as "a slow paced horse."²⁵ His confrontation with Parker slightly slowed the pace of official policy, but Parkhurst was unable to alter policy. He was not the only bishop uncomfortably hitched to Parker's plans. Richard Cheney managed to save one exercise in Gloucester. After Thomas Cooper closed the prophecies that permitted "base persons" to participate in Lincoln, he spared another. Congratulated by John Aylmer for having "inhibited" a few exercises, Cooper was reputed to be on the brink of restoring them just as the queen gave Grindal orders that Parker more readily, if not altogether effectively, had circulated.²⁶

What choice was left to Edmund Grindal? Five years before, he counseled a leading Heidelberg reformer against interceding directly with Elizabeth on behalf of religious nonconformists. Grindal advised

22. LPL, MS 2003, fol. 70r. For Peterborough, PRO, State Papers 12/78, fols. 243r-44r; and BL, Lansdowne MS 21, fol. 4r. For the conventional case against proprietors' greed and for comments on the failure of reformed churches to obtain and sustain "an holy preaching ministerie," consult "The Lamentable Complaint of the Commonaltie," printed in *A Part of the Register* (Middleburgh, 1593), especially 206-207, 221-23, 247-49, and 269.

23. BL, Lansdowne MS 17, fol. 129r.

24. *The Letterbook of John Parkhurst*, ed. Ralph Houlbrooke (Norwich: Norfolk Record Society, 1975), 231-33, 235-36, 241-47; *Gleanings of a Few Scattered Ears during the Period of the Reformation in England*, ed. George Cornelius Gorham (London, 1857), 484-92; and Patrick Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 191-92.

25. *The Zurich Letters*, ed. Hastings Robinson (Cambridge, 1842-1845), 1:98.

26. BL, Additional MS 29546, fols. 56r and 57r; for Cheney and Aylmer respectively; LPL, MS 2003, fol. 29r, for Cooper.

Girolamo Zanchi to route appeals to the queen through her bishops.²⁷ In 1576, the archbishop did as he had advised Zanchi; he cranked up a campaign to retain prophesying, canvassing episcopal opinion on its value. He hoped to collect endorsements—and he did collect them—from known partisans of the prophecies. But critics volunteered comments that must not have made Grindal very optimistic about his chances at court. Bishop John Scory of Hereford recalled that he had suppressed exercises in his diocese two years earlier. He claimed they had given the enemies of the prevailing church order huge advantages over the administrators they pilloried while prophesying. Those enemies were skilled, Scory said; they made Thomas Cartwright's ideas seem compelling and made any bishop who opposed them seem contemptible. So the bishop of Hereford suggested scaling down prophesying to a single sermon and requiring that anything said be spoken in Latin, every opinion uttered from the pulpit or in conference.²⁸

Grindal was unlikely to welcome Scory's proposal, though most replies to his survey seem to have gratified him. The count was clearly in favor of retaining the exercises. Bishop Sandys of London saw to it that letters from laymen and clerical moderators of the prophecies were forwarded for the dossier, long letters of commendation, but nearly every expression of support included an important stipulation: laymen were to come but were forbidden to speak. Sandys's archdeacons, along with the bishops of Gloucester, Coventry and Lichfield, and Exeter, added the condition, as if by prior arrangement.²⁹ Maybe the consensus was that the in-service training was simply too important to risk for the preservation of lay participation or later for lay presence. A few years earlier, in the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield, laymen were implicated in the ministry. The church authorities invited "men such as live honestlie in any vocation" to preside over some parts of worship as substitutes for parish priests judged unfit to preach

27. *Remains of Edmund Grindal*, 342. Zanchi nonetheless wrote directly to the queen, *Zurich Letters*, 2: 339–53.

28. LPL, MS 2003, fol. 10v and Lehmburg, "Prophesying," 115–17. "Enemies of the prevailing order" may have compassed the critics who aimed to make Scory rather than episcopacy contemptible, for the bishop's misconduct in office became something of a public scandal early in the next decade—see, for example, the Privy Council's letter to John Whitgift, BL, Egerton MS 3048, fols. 207r–208r.

29. LPL, MS 2003, fols. 5r, 8r, 13r, and 16r, printed respectively in Lehmburg, "Prophesying," 113, 97, 108–109, 101. Neither set has the letter from Bishop Cheney of Gloucester, for which, see BL, Additional MS 29546, fol. 56v, but note that an independently composed summary misleadingly abbreviates Cheney's position and substitutes "admit no layman" for the original "admit no layman to speak," BL, Additional MS 21565, fol. 26v.

by dint of conduct, incapacity, or Catholic persuasion.³⁰ The experiment lasted less than a year. Diocesan administrators mistrusted the laity and bet instead on the exercises, assuming that education assured clerical improvement. Bishop Parkhurst of Norwich, for one, was a realist. He knew he had little choice but to oblige the church's powerful patrons, but he was exasperated with them for having nominated candidates unsuitable for service. He was reluctant to suppress what Parker had called "vain Prophesying," it would appear, because that form of remedial education was the one acceptable compensatory strategy on offer.³¹

An undated alternative exists in manuscript, but even had its "plot" for reformation circulated during Elizabeth's reign, no bishop would likely have been tempted to register support because the document called for the dismemberment of every diocese. It asked that small administrative units be created, none larger than a few parishes—the purpose, to increase the effectiveness of tuition and supervision.³² Arguably, bishops were already complying without shredding their jurisdictions, inasmuch as they delegated authority to the moderators of the exercises. And if that argument had been made, presumably the earl of Leicester and likeminded laymen would have agreed. For the lay partisans of prophesying proffered no new "plot"; they thought the exercises and a progressive reform through clerical education were perfectly compatible with their bishops' current authority. As for Leicester, he was trying to reconstitute the Dudley patronage network that dissolved soon after his father's execution in Mary's reign. Only gradually did he try to acquire support by associating himself with radical Calvinism and with international Protestantism. Hence, he was not about to replot diocesan jurisdictions, yet he was concerned in the late 1560s and 1570s that "examinations be of the pastors had contynuallye." And perhaps he figured that the exercises provided ample testing and offered just the right incentives (and disincentives) to get pastors to learn and improve. "Driven to give account thereby of their habilitie, they either must employ them selves to become hablier to discharge their office or become a reproof and shame." It was enough, then, that delinquent pastors "become a shame to them selves" and

30. Review Archdeacon Thomas Lever's "Notes for Some Reformacon of the Mynistrye," London, Inner Temple Library, Petyt MS 538/38, fols. 71v and 73r.

31. For Parkhurst's exasperation, consult his letter to William Heydon (1573), printed in John Strype, *Annals of the Reformation* (Oxford, 1824), 2.2: 523–24.

32. BL, Additional MS 48066 (Yelverton MS 62), fols. 2v–3r.

before their clerical colleagues and in their conferences. Neither lay presence nor public embarrassment was necessary.³³

But as long as laymen attended, public censure was probable. Informal comparisons of the prophecies' consecutive sermons could descend from the courteously critical to the cranky. Instructions to speakers varied. They had been told to "medle not with matters in controversie" but also encouraged to identify and denounce the "abuse" in others' interpretations.³⁴ John Aylmer observed that prophesying tended to be an occasion for complaint and that the complaining was contagious. Younger clerics, he said, were the most susceptible: driven by envy, they echoed charges, however preposterous, against their senior colleagues.³⁵ This indictment was uniquely strident and no doubt stretched a point, but it can hardly be denied that talk of this type would have made a strong impression at court. The queen mistrusted crowds and was anxious to maintain "an uniform unitive . . . among the clergy."³⁶ Aylmer also would have made sense to Bishop Curteys who discovered that the exercises in Chichester were breeding grounds for grievances of a different kind. Curteys advocated lay presence and endorsed a menu of preachers at each prophecy, so he could only have been ranked with the episcopal partisans of prophesying. Nonetheless, when he restricted participation, specifying the silence of less learned laymen, his enemies from the cathedral close joined with persons who "favor and fansye innovacion" and "afford me and mye officers manye ill words."³⁷ Curteys preached that year against the sophistry of several sorts of critics, especially of laymen who "can talke of the reformation of the church and meane the spoile of the goods and lands of the church." Critics responded by circulating libels, and Curteys took them to court. Envy and anger attached, if not always to discussions *in* the exercises, almost unavoidably to discussions *of* the exercises and their suppression.³⁸

33. See Leicester's letter to Bishop Scambler of Peterborough, Cambridge, Magdalen College, Pepys Library, MS 2503, 647; and, for Leicester's patronage, consult W. J. Tighe, "Courtiers and Politics in Elizabethan Hertfordshire: Sir James Croft, His Friends, and His Foes," *Historical Journal* 32 (1989): 260.

34. Compare BL, Additional MS 21565, fol. 26v with PRO, State Papers 12/78, fol. 244v.

35. BL, Additional MS 29546, fol. 57. So seriously did Aylmer take this epidemic that, as bishop of London two years after its suppression, he was quick to imprison a preacher simply for "touchynge that which theye call exercise," BL, Cotton MS Titus B VII, fol. 18v.

36. BL, Additional MS 25, fol. 92r.

37. LPL, MS 2003, fol. 4; and Lehmborg, "Prophesying," 110–11.

38. See *Two Sermons* (London, 1584), sig. C2, for Curteys's 1576 sermon against "sophisters." For his case that same year against libelers, review the pleas in PRO, STAC 5 / c43 / 10, and consult Roger B. Manning, *Religion and Society in Elizabethan Sussex: A Study of the Enforcement of the Religious Settlement, 1558–1603* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1969), 104–106.

If we knew how much anger was spent during the exercises, how many "ill wordes" were exchanged as bishops labored to save and then suppress prophesying's public phase, of course we could measure the "revolutionary force" of those proceedings much more confidently and accurately than we now can. Yet it is safe to say that had lay disruptions been seismic, Aylmer would not have kept the news from us. Had they been insignificant, Edmund Grindal's concessions would certainly have been formulated differently. I have presented the story of concessions and suppressions during the 1570s to suggest that leveling and lay involvement may help us understand why the exercises seemed so promising to some, and so sinister to others. No doubt, to describe the prophesying as tame, "sober," straightforwardly didactic, monotonously clerical, as scholars have, is to remind us of its principal function. But the calm that has lately come to the prophecies is difficult to reconcile with the rush to restrict lay participation and harder still to reconcile with Grindal's summation, which has something about it of the scent of desperation: "*ante omnia*," he specified "that no lay person be suffered to speak publicly."³⁹ Or, to put this difficulty as a question, if the exercises were "sober" and tame, why were they so troubling in 1574 and 1576? Why should it have been lawful for citizens to assemble for games that paraded the charms of Robin's "mayde Marion" yet unlawful for them to congregate for prophesying?⁴⁰

One can, of course, strike at the premise of that question, namely, that regulations were based on reasonable assessments of real or potential harm. When Wallace MacCaffrey considers issues related to the prohibition of prophesying, he figures that rumors counted more than reason. He suggests that the queen was moved at first "by some bit of tittle tattle" then hustled into opposition "by private parties for factious ends." The prophecies and their on-site partisans were relatively unimportant, on this reading; the real drama was at court.⁴¹ Polemic at the time inclined to this type of displacement. William Harrison admitted that some reckless laymen occasionally "intrude themselves with offense," but the exercises were banned, he said, because Satan stirred up adversaries at court. Harrison, however, had he gone into detail, could not have been any more acidic than John Udall who composed quite a cabal in his *State of the Church*, where a crypto-Catholic royal official coached a boardroom bishop how to

39. *Remains of Edmund Grindal*, 373–74.

40. BL, Additional MS 27632, fol. 49v, for the questions asked in the aftermath of suppression; and Collinson, *Grindal*, 233–41, for sobriety.

41. Wallace T. MacCaffrey, *Queen Elizabeth and the Making of Policy, 1572–1588* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 84–89.

vilify exercises and simultaneously to appear wholeheartedly to support in-service clerical education.⁴² Udall must have had John Whitgift in mind; Whitgift succeeded Grindal as archbishop of Canterbury in 1583. Christopher Hatton seems to have been the model for the crypto-Catholic councilor in Udall's *State*. Hatton's rise through the 1560s and 1570s has been described as "slow" and "imperceptible," but by 1576, he had already taken Whitgift and Aylmer under his wing. Before concentrating attention on the Elizabethan court, however, perhaps we ought to ask how Hatton could have sounded the alarm so effectively if there were no cause for alarm.⁴³

Had there been no Southam and no Grindal, one could argue, Christopher Hatton's opposition to the exercises would have been inconsequential. Nonetheless, what started as common proceedings at Southam, a market town not far from Warwick, developed into a conspicuously controversial exercise and episode. "Discention for trifles" there troubled even the earl of Leicester, prophesying's dependable advocate in the queen's council. Elaborating on the earl's disquiet, Patrick Collinson identified the "over busy dealing" of certain partisans at Southam as "the final crisis" for all and everywhere. Leicester might have demurred: "to be plain with you," he brooded to Thomas Wood, "I know not . . . the cause" of Elizabeth's disapproval.⁴⁴ But Collinson insisted that the prophecies at Southam were taken at court as a "crisis" and that Grindal's response guaranteed it would be "the final crisis." The clouds would have "blown over," Collinson assumed, if Grindal's "awkward conscience" had not "ensure[d] that the matter would come to a head."⁴⁵ Queen and council asked the archbishop to implement policy; instead, he questioned it, and, what was more objectionable than his questioning the suppression, he had challenged the queen's authority to interfere. He lectured Elizabeth with cautions clipped from Ambrose of Milan, the bishop known then for his defense of the church's autonomy in the fourth century—and, some would

42. Compare John Udall, *The State of the Church Laide Open* (London, 1588), fols. H1r-H2r with Harrison's *Description of England in Shakespeare's Youth*, ed. Frederick Furnivall (London, 1877), 18-19.

43. Simon Adams, "Eliza Enthroned? The Council and Its Politics," in *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, ed. Christopher Haigh (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985), 70-71; Rosemary O'Day, *The English Clergy: The Emergence and Consolidation of a Profession, 1558-1642* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1979), 72-73; and Collinson's introductory remarks in *Letters of Thomas Wood*, xxvii.

44. *Letters of Thomas Wood*, 15. From what we now know of the subsequent agitation connected with one of the preachers at Southam, Eusebius Paget, we could conclude that Leicester's demurral was disingenuous. For at Kilkhampton, a number of Paget's partisans protested official sanctions by leafleting parishioners "in the high wayes," LPL, Cartae miscellaneae 12/16, fol. 5v.

45. Collinson, *Godly People*, 375.

have said, known—or notorious—for his stubborn defense of the church's political supremacy as well. Of course, neither church autonomy nor supremacy was fashionable in late Tudor England. The queen was supreme governor of her church. Whatever courtiers thought of Ambrose's courage and whatever they made of the church's prerogatives, just about everyone at court, everyone, that is, addicted to the queen's favor was suitably outraged by Grindal's "wilfulnesse" and insolence.⁴⁶

The archbishop's counter was uncomplicated. He said that he made inquiries "immediately" upon hearing of disorders associated with the prophesying at Southam. But the circumstances there were particularly hard to sift, so considerable was the lay support in the vicinity. Grindal resented what antagonists were saying about him, he continued; he was neither stubborn nor self-important. He remained resolute because historical studies convinced him "suche kinde of exercize [had been] sett downe in the holie scriptures" and practiced in the earliest churches. And he saw "no reason why the people shulde be excludett."⁴⁷ He bravely suggested that the government—not the partisans of prophecies—had improvised. The queen preferred conformity, to the point of having only standard-issue homilies read in the realm's parishes. But "reprehensions" and persuasions that were drawing crowds to the public preaching were apparently more popular than the homilies and made them seem both uninspired and uninspiring. Grindal insinuated preaching and prophesying were vastly superior. Bishop Sandys of London agreed and, as we saw, assisted Grindal with that dossier in defense of the exercises, although three years before, Sandys acknowledged how hard it was to supervise sermons at St. Paul's cross. Even the preachers commended to him by trusted episcopal colleagues, he recalled, had upset both the crowds and the court with their radical talk. Grindal, though, would say that preaching at "the cross" was successful, promising the government that he and his suffragans would vet the preachers there and at the exercises, cork the radicals, and control the crowds. There is no gainsaying that his "awkward conscience" and his apparent arrogance offended queen and regime, but the archbishop was wrecked, and the

46. LPL, MS 2003, fols. 70v–71r; Lehmborg, "Prophesying," 139; and Collinson, "If Constantine, then also Theodosius: St. Ambrose and the Integrity of the Elizabethan *Ecclesia Anglicana*," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 30 (1979): 205–229; reprinted in Collinson, *Godly People*, 109–133.

47. BL Lansdowne MS 23, fols. 7r and 20r; and Lansdowne MS 25, fol. 163v, also printed in *Remains of Edmund Grindal*, 392–93. Grindal's protest, "not of my stubbornness and wilfulnesse," was filed in Cecil's papers with a letter from the bishop of Durham declaring the archbishop's "owne wilfulnesse and undeutifulnes towards his sovereign to be the just occasion of his troubles," Lansdowne MS 25, fols. 161v–162r.

public phase of prophesying went under, in large part because officials at court did not believe he or any diocesan could deliver on his promise.⁴⁸

Nicholas Bacon expressed the skepticism in his address in Parliament, putting the government's spin on Grindal's scruples ("disobediencie"). The Lord Keeper stressed that the religion of the realm must be "uniforme." Despite the bishops' best efforts, he averred, prophesying undermined uniformity, spawned disputes that ran to "greate devisions" and left religion "nulliforme." Bacon touted the alternatives to such anarchy: homilies read regularly and sermons preached frequently in parish churches. Provisions for instruction were in good repair, he insisted; piety would survive "the removing of certaine exercizes and prophesinge used as well by laie and unlearned people as by other." It is important, yet impossible to understand exactly what the Lord Keeper meant by "used . . . by lay and unlearned people." He gave no further descriptions and said nothing more than that the partisans of prophesying had assumed "laye people should be parties" and that their assumption was unwarranted and their protocol unprecedented ("nerely begune"). All we can infer is that, for Bacon, exercises led to a leveling unlike anything he experienced in parish worship. His line, of course, could be classed with those of Cox and Aylmer; Bacon, too, may have been trying to offset Grindal's assurances, trying to distort rather than depict. But the Lord Keeper's remarks can also be taken to substantiate the argument that those assurances and the critics' complaints, although they point to a reality less "nulliforme," anarchic, and dangerous than perceived at the time, point nonetheless to a reality more populist than received now.⁴⁹

Satan, Hatton, Southam, and Grindal were often blamed for the firestorm over prophesying in 1576. In some combination, the latter three are still credible causes. Hatton may well have been underhanded and amazingly successful discrediting the prophecies' patrons at court. Grindal became something of an embarrassment to them, speeding the suppression that he, and they, tried to avert. The proceedings at Southam looked "over busy," even to admirers. As for Satan, by comparison, he seems a useless old swell, but it could be argued that the historian who cannot imagine that people became "parties" or "used" the prophesying in any significant way has demonized Southam, Grindal, and Hatton, misleadingly reading the laity out of the story of suppression. No wonder, therefore, that "a picture of

48. BL Lansdowne MS 17, fol. 96r, for Sandys's difficulties keeping "fanaticall spirits from the Crosse"; LPL, MS 2003, fols. 35v and 69v-70v, for Grindal's confidence and promise.

49. BL, Harley MS. 36, fols. 298r-299r.

continuity and growth" emerges, for the laity has been cut from the canvas. Only then can those assemblies and conferences of clergy after suppression and into the seventeenth century be seen to have "perpetuate[d] traditions of prophesying in an exercise or combination lecture."⁵⁰

The case for continuity requires two reductions. It only stands if lay participation prior to suppression is reduced to the occasional disturbance and if lay presence is otherwise reduced to irrelevance. Admittedly, evidence can be found to license both reductions, for, as said at the start, apologists for the exercises tried at the time to minimize whatever there was of "revolutionary force." Archbishop Grinda's dossier was defensive. Its stipulation that laymen, thereafter, never would speak lodges uneasily alongside its assurances that laymen never had spoken. Yet the evidence composed by more moderate reformers protesting excessive and disorderly lay participation is equally difficult to trust. Perhaps literature connected only indirectly to the controversies over the suppression will permit us to see, relatively unobstructed, more of the lay of the land.

III. "HE THAT IN EXERCISE CAN SPEAKE"

In 1575, Richard Fletcher wrote from Rye to answer critics of his father's ministry in Cranbrook: "It is a common thing now for every pragmaticall prentise to have in his head and in his mouth the government and reformation of the church, and he that in exercise can speake thereof, that is the man. Every artificer must be reformer and teacher, forgetting their state they stand in both to be taught and to be reformed. . . . We may say of our time as Seneca said . . . much of man's life passeth away either with doeing ill or doeing nothing, but the greatest part with doing other things such as do no whit appertain unto them or concerne them."⁵¹

Just who is "he that in exercise can speake"? From the preceding statement, "every pragmaticall prentise" appears a likely, if not leading, candidate. Forgetting their stations, artificers were quick to take to platforms and to pronounce on religious affairs during the exercises. At least that was what the younger Fletcher would have his readers believe, not because he had prophesying in his sights but because lay critics in Kent were hounding his father. They had been aroused by John Stroud, whom Fletcher senior had hired as curate. Stroud may have been the one "in exercise" to have spoken, but Fletcher's com-

50. Collinson, "Lectures," 195-96.

51. London, Dr. Williams's Library (DWL), Morrice MSS B.2, fol. 8 and C, 218.

plaint suggests someone (or some) without clerical standing, possibly Mr. Good, the schoolmaster in Cranbrook. The schoolman's answer to Fletcher survives, defends Stroud, and celebrates the concerns that laymen appear to have been displaying for the reformation of the ministry and their churches. Fletcher accused Good and others of meddling with such things "as do no whit appertain to them." Good responded that both duty and discontent drove Christians disappointed in the senior Fletcher's leadership, and in their lot, "to bleat for sweeter."⁵²

Schoolmasters of Good's persuasion probably figured in the fate of the exercises from the 1560s and 1570s. Perhaps Grindal's provision that "able and suitable laymen" might substitute at the prophesies for indisposed pastors referred to learned members of each community who occasionally traded lectern for pulpit. Grindal offered Origen of Caesarea as the model, a renegade lay catechist of the third century who had been considerably rehabilitated by Renaissance scholars.⁵³ And one of Bishop Sandys's archdeacons praised a schoolmaster in Essex for standing in "somtymes whan such ministers as were appoynted to speke dyd fayle."⁵⁴ "Worthy grave men being schoolmasters," however, sometimes were trouble. John Leech, supposedly "very discreet and learned," nonetheless befriended the enemies of his parish minister in Essex and took to preaching in his home to neighbors.⁵⁵ In 1584, schoolmaster David Black (or Blake) was accused of preaching "publiqiy . . . and privatly in divers houses" in the parish of Kilkhampton in Cornwall. Paget, the parish minister at the time, had not minded, but the bishop of Exeter was outraged that Black had been allowed to preach "beinge neither mynister or deacon."⁵⁶ But support for supply preaching did not dry up. Paget's was predictable; he was active in the Southam exercises and later came to depend on Black when he had to be away from the parish. Moreover, lay patrons and other clergy continued to value learned lay orators. Petitions in the 1580s encouraged their employment, one of them referring, as had Grindal, to the catechist Origen and pressing the church to use schoolmasters "in such scarcity of preachers." There was no need for

52. DWL, Morrice MSS B.2, fol. 18r and C, 228.

53. LPL, MS 2007, fol. 131r: *laici idonei et habiles*.

54. LPL, MS 2003, fol. 13r and Lehmborg, "Prophesying," 106.

55. But note the difficulties Leech's critics experienced formulating the differences between teaching and preaching—and their indictments: Marjorie Keniston McIntosh, *A Community Transformed: The Manor and Liberty of Havering, 1500-1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 207-211.

56. LPL, Cartae miscellaneae, 12/15, fol. 1v.

more preachers in Cranbrook; Fletcher senior and John Stroud competed intensely for the loyalties of locals. Another cleric could only have complicated the contest, so schoolmaster Good now looks to have been the likeliest "he that in exercise [did] speake." Certainly his mien and message corresponded with the then current, if contested, practice of lay prophesying and preaching.⁵⁷

Dudley Fenner replaced Stroud as Fletcher's curate several years later. Fenner recalled that laymen had spoken at exercises, and he mourned the loss of that opportunity. He argued there was insufficient "exposition, interpretation, and application of the holy and wholesome word of God to the heart and conscience of the people" in the wake of the suppression of the prophecies' public phase. He maintained that reactionaries in the regime overstated the dangers of public assemblies and underestimated the patience and good sense of each gathering. "One [person] is sooner carried into ambition and covetousness," Fenner proposed, "than an whole church . . . into disorder"; congregations were apt to bear with "contrarities and strifes" to get to the truths of their sacred texts. Fenner was a late entry, to be sure, yet he imagined that he knew what had provoked the crisis in the mid-1570s and how, in the 1580s, wary officials might be reconciled to a revival of the prophesying. "[G]overnment or cariage of matters wee give not to" laymen, he assured them, "others besides ministers are permitted to speake but not out of the pulpit as with authoritie." Chances to speak, question, and challenge let the laymen know that their "determinations" were valued and that critics' objections were answerable.⁵⁸

Fenner thought that it was prudent as well as apostolic to provide a forum for laymen to "shew their doubttes," though church officials in Kent and elsewhere were unconvinced. Either they or their immediate predecessors outlawed prophesying, having found it, or having imagined it, an occasion and excuse for sedition. They called Fenner and his friends "makebates" and accused them of having touched off religious arguments only to have ordinary laymen as the "debators and judges of controversies." Those Kent "makebates" replied that it was a mistake to say their exercises were either treason or sport. Jesus had not come to bring peace but to debate, they noted, idiosyncratically translating Luke's *separatio* (12: 51). Besides, Fenner and his friends

57. DWL, Morrice MSS, B.1, fol. 276 and C, 338-39.

58. Dudley Fenner, *A Defense of the Godly Ministers against the Slaunders of Dr. Bridges* (London, 1587), 70-72, citing Acts 11: 2-4, and 128-29; Fenner, *A Counterpoisson* (London, 1584), 30-31, 140-43; and DWL, Morrice MS A.2, 131.

insisted, Scripture itself stirred controversies without their having vamped it up.⁵⁹

Dudley Fenner asked merely that laymen be allowed to speak "in some maner." He and his associates were thought to be prying open what officials imagined they had closed for good.⁶⁰ Indeed, they had turned deaf ears to Grindal's appeals that many should prophesy. They rejected as preposterous the pitch in 1585 from a "gentleman in the country" who wrote to London that "all people of God" had once been and should again become prophets. Grindal's "many" was too many; that gentleman's "all" was unthinkable.⁶¹ The prophecies' public phase had been suppressed years before. The queen, in 1585, was still on record against "popularitie." Neither the church's nor the government's highest authorities could see anything that might persuade them to reconsider, save Fenner and a small platoon of malcontents, and Fenner soon left for the continent.⁶²

For Archbishop Whitgift was stalking nonconformists through the 1580s. He was especially on the lookout for preachers partial to his predecessor's (Grindal's) "platform" or "program," and he found plenty of them in Fenner's and Fletcher's Kent, though the latter, the senior minister in Cranbrook, was among those who had conformed.⁶³ Fenner was among the uncooperative, whose opinions, much as Grindal's "platform," "smelled of a popularity and bred disorder." That was the way Marshall Knappen characterized the partisan program in a study that tended to reflect Whitgift's sensibility and opposition to the exercises.⁶⁴ To his critics, Whitgift appeared to be recycling the "old policie of popish prelates," that is, to be substituting a Catholic "hush" for something that seemed like the necessary noises of reform in operation, a "necessarie discorde" of reformed Christianity. Nonetheless, if only because John Whitgift was rapidly becoming

59. "The Defense of the Ministers of Kent," DWL, Morrice MSS B.1, fol. 411 and C, 377-78. Also see a contemporary clerical petition for the resumption of exercises and in-service training, in BL, Lansdowne MS 42, fol. 208r.

60. Fenner, *Defense*, 71.

61. For "many," see Grindal's *De horum nominum*, LPL, MS 2014, fol. 73, citing Matt. 7:22; for the gentleman's letter and "all," *Part of the Register*, 175-76. Jean Morely had published similarly "democratic" sentiments more than twenty years earlier, but there is no way now to be sure how widely his remarks were known in late Tudor England. For Morely and democracy, consult Robert M. Kingdon, *Geneva and the Consolidation of the French Protestant Movement, 1564-1572* (Geneva: Droz, 1967), 57-61; and, for Morely and prophesying, Tadataka Maruyama, *The Ecclesiology of Theodore Beza: The Reform of the True Church* (Geneva: Droz, 1978), 88-89. Further observations on, and arguments against, the "copia prophetarum" can be found in Oxford, Bodl. MS 3432 (Selden supra 44), fol. 64v.

62. See PRO, State Papers 12/176/68, fol. 215r for the queen's address to her bishops in 1585.

63. BL, Add MS 34729, fols. 50v-51r.

64. Marshall M. Knappen, *Tudor Puritanism: A Chapter in the History of Idealism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939), 255-82, quoted at 278.

the censor in chief of the realm's political imagination, one was less and less likely to discover very many respectable people publicly agreeing that any sort of discord was "necessarie."⁶⁵

The authorities who closed the public phase of prophesying in 1576 believed that public discourse and discord were not only unnecessary but dangerous. They discovered dangers in the active listening encouraged during the exercises. For, at one extreme, "active listening" suggested something quite confrontational, a lay empowerment explicit in Edward Dering's appeal in the early 1570s that he "be judged by the hearers," not by his superiors. "Active listening" could also compass questions directed to the preachers "in their often meetings and conferences," which John Barstow reported in 1576, urging town magistrates to assist the clergy and to promote frequent conversations.⁶⁶ Finally, active listening might be equally well, or better, illustrated by what William Weston saw from a prison cell in Wisbech in 1586, where he and incarcerated fellow Catholics witnessed "discussions" in the prison yard. Persons from nearby and far afield congregated in the yard after public sermons to repeat and review what they had heard. Witnesses and participants alike called the exchanges "exercizes"; Patrick Collinson called their prison yard congress a "holy fair" where everyone opened their Bibles and "debated," "comparing different passages to see if they had been brought forward truly and to the point."⁶⁷ It was not what government and church officials wanted to have happen, there or anywhere. Their disapproval prompted a response from the anonymous author of *A Dialogue Concerning Strife in Our Church* who suspected that Elizabethan officials conspired to keep laymen "like dumbe asses [that] saye never a word." But one need not subscribe to *Strife's* indictment to imagine that John Whitgift would have been happy to have had the Wisbech debaters—Weston said "a great multitude"—collared and corralled in the prison they had conveniently chosen for their colloquy.⁶⁸

"A great multitude of puritan visitors"—that was Weston's count. He despaired of the "debaters" who preferred preaching and proof-texting to the sacraments he and fellow prisoners held dear. Whitgift

65. For the "hush" and "necessarie discord," consult William Overton, *Godlye and Pithie Exhortation* (1582), sigs. B6v–C5r.

66. See Dering's letter to Burghley, BL, Lansdowne MS 17, fol. 197r and Barstow, *The Safegarde of Societie* (London, 1576), fol. 104r.

67. See *The Troubles of Our Catholic Forefathers Related by Themselves*, ed. John Morris (London, 1575), 240–41 for Weston's report. For Collinson's characterization, see his "Elizabethan and Jacobean Puritanisms as Forms of Popular Religious Culture," in *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560–1700*, ed. Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), 54.

68. For "dumbe asses," *A Dialogue Concerning Strife in Our Church* (London, 1584), 68–69.

and his diocesans knew those “visitors” and “debaters,” and their outspoken partisans among the more radical reformers, as implacable, abusive critics who resented church administrators for too seldom delivering sermons. All dissident preaching about preaching, however, tended to undermine lay initiative. As Glynn Parry suggests, “any claims that the laity might have [had] in a truly reformed church” were “largely ignored.”⁶⁹

It is hard to quarrel with Parry’s suggestion. Laymen’s places in prophesying—and in “a truly reformed church”—were secured, if anywhere after suppression, only in conventicles, that is, in those makeshift, underground, usually transitory congregations that avoided episcopal surveillance as best they could. Detection ordinarily led to depositions, and depositions to prosecutions, which yield most of what we now know about lay initiative in the late sixteenth century. In 1593, for example, authorities caught up with Thomas Settle, who might have passed as something of a born-again layman. For, some years before, he had renounced his ordination and, he deposed, “severed himself from the parish.” When he was apprehended, he was worshipping with those Christians who had collected around pastor Francis Johnson in a London conventicle. Settle’s deposition tells us little about Johnson’s ministry but something that bears quite directly on our interest in lay prophesying: Thomas Settle said to his examiners that “he hath never served in any office in the congregation, but he hath spoken in prophesie.”⁷⁰

69. G. J. R. Parry, *A Protestant Vision: William Harrison and the Reformation of Elizabethan England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 168–69.

70. BL, Harleian MS 7042, fol. 59v.