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# ANNE BOLEYN'S RELIGION*

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ABSTRACT. *It has become fashionable to characterize Henry VIII's second queen, Anne Boleyn, as evangelical in religion and as a patron of reformers. But this rests heavily on the later testimony of John Foxe and of one of Anne's chaplains, William Latimer. Contemporary evidence of Anne's activity, under critical scrutiny, turns out to offer a different impression, as does an analysis of episcopal appointments in the early 1530s. A remarkable sermon preached by John Skip, the queen's almoner, a few weeks before her death, casts further doubt on the claims for Anne's reformist zeal.*

That Anne Boleyn was both an evangelical and a patron of radical religious reform in England in the early 1530s has become the standard interpretation in recent years, vigorously advocated by Maria Dowling and Eric Ives. Anne, according to Dowling, 'was regarded as a reformer by her own servants and associates, and... in both her private life and public policy, she was a fervent and committed evangelical'.[1] Ives claims that she 'played a major part in pushing Henry into asserting his headship of the church', being 'the first to demonstrate the potential there was in the royal supremacy for that distinctive English element in the Reformation, the ability of the king to take the initiative in religious change', and that as an 'active promoter of the gospel', she 'promoted evangelical reform principally in terms of promoting reforming clerics'.[2]

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[1] M. Dowling, 'William Latymer's Cronickille of Anne Bulleyne', *Camden Miscellany*, xxx, *Camden Society*, 4th series, xxxix (1990), 27–44, esp. 44; 'Anne Boleyn and reform', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, xxxv (1984), 30–46, esp. 31; *Humanism in the age of Henry VIII* (Beckenham, 1986), pp. 57, 91; 'Anne Boleyn as patron', in D. Starkey, ed., *Henry VIII. A European court in England* (1991), pp. 107–11, 185. In order to distinguish them, William Latymer's name is always spelled with a 'y', Hugh Latimer's with an 'i'.

[2] E. W. Ives, *Anne Boleyn* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 302–3, 313; 'Stress, faction and ideology in early-Tudor England', *Historical Journal*, xxxiv (1991), 196. Cf. A. G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (2nd edn, 1989), pp. 135–6 (which includes comments on an earlier draft of this paper); D. Starkey, *The reign of Henry VIII: personalities and politics* (1985), pp. 91–2; G. R. Elton, *Reform and Reformation* (1977), pp. 105–6, 124; J. A. Guy, *Tudor England* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 116, 125, 153; J. A. Guy, *The public career of Sir Thomas More* (Brighton, 1980), p. 179; D. MacCulloch, 'England', in A. Pettegree, ed., *The early Reformation in Europe* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 167; S. Brigden, *London and the Reformation* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 127–8, 219, 221–2. Sceptics have been rare, but see the perceptive comments by R. N. Swanson, *Church and society in late medieval England* (Oxford, 1989), p. 352, and J. Loach, *History*, lxxiii (1988), 131. A somewhat confused position is adopted by R. M. Warnicke, *The rise and fall of Anne Boleyn* (Cambridge, 1989), who writes both that 'unquestionably, her beliefs also had reformist overtones' (p. 153) and that 'almost certainly' she

Such an interpretation draws largely on two writers in the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, on the *Acts and monuments* of John Foxe, and on a life of Anne Boleyn written by one of her chaplains, William Latymer, dean of Peterborough 1560–83, for her daughter. Both Foxe and Latymer presented Anne as a great patron of evangelicals. For Foxe Anne 'was a special comforter and aider of all the professors of Christ's gospel' and 'her life being also directed according to the same'; she maintained many learned men in Cambridge and brought them into favour with the king; the pope was repulsed out of England chiefly by her means; so long as Queen Anne lived, the gospel had indifferent success.[3] Latymer's account was similar. Anne helped those who suffered persecution, showing 'constante affecion towardes the poore gospellars', she was very severe with abbots whose 'licencious lyf', obstinate departure from true religion, obedience to the pope 'whoise detestable sleighte and frivelous ceremonyes, you have taken to be the pillour of yor fantasticall religione', 'vnprofitable drones'.[4] Both Foxe and Latymer thought her responsible for the preferment of several evangelical bishops.[5]

How seriously should this be taken? Foxe and Latymer, it can easily be forgotten, were writing propaganda. Here their polemical purpose was twofold. First, they were trying to influence the developing Elizabethan religious settlement. Secondly, and more importantly, in presenting Anne as a modest and virtuous patron of religious reform, they were by implication suggesting that so devout a lady could not possibly have been guilty of those shocking adulteries for which she had been condemned. They were not just presenting Anne as a pious evangelical, they were attempting to retrieve her reputation in general. At the accession of Queen Elizabeth in 1559, her mother stood in great need of rehabilitation: that is what in effect Foxe and Latymer attempted to do. Both purposes may have encouraged them to exaggerate, invent or misinterpret Anne's religion. That John Foxe was capable of distortions has already been shown elsewhere. In recording and interpreting his detailed evidence of the Marian martyrs in Kent, he 'presented as true protestants and co-religionists men and women who were nothing of the kind but rather rank heretics of a more extreme and eclectic kind'.[6] In his account of the London merchant Richard Hunne, Foxe again offered a misleading impression of his religious beliefs.[7] And the modern editor of Latymer's life

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'had many deep-seated impulses that can more easily be described as catholic than as protestant' (p. 154); cf. pp. 25–7, 94, 107–13, 151–62.

[3] J. Foxe, *Acts and monuments*, ed. J. Pratt (8 vols., 1877), v, 60, 137, 260.

[4] Bodleian MS Don c. 42 fos. 28$^{v}$–30 (Dowling, 'Latymer's Cronickille', pp. 56–60).

[5] Foxe, *Acts and monuments*, v, 60, 135–6; Bodleian MS Don. c. 42 fo. 29$^{v}$ (Dowling, 'Latymer's Cronickille', pp. 59–60).

[6] P. Collinson, 'Truth and legend: the veracity of John Foxe's Book of Martyrs', in A. C. Duke and C. A. Tamse, eds., *Clio's mirror: historiography in Britain and the Netherlands, Britain and the Netherlands*, VIII (1985), 31–54, esp. 36–7, 39, 42–3.

[7] S. J. Smart, 'John Foxe and "The Story of Richard Hun, Martyr"', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, XXXVII (1986), 1–14; S. J. Smart, '"Favourers of God's Word" John Foxe's Henrician martyrs', University of Southampton M.Phil. thesis, 1988.

commented that he 'deliberately suppressed all material relating to Anne which is not consistent with Latymer's portrait of a pious and solemn reformer'; 'the author's aims of rehabilitating Anne and advising Elizabeth led him to wander somewhat from the truth on occasion'. That said, Dowling does not, however, go on to question the veracity of the impression that Latymer seeks to give of Anne.[8] But perhaps we should subject both Latymer's and Foxe's claim to closer scrutiny and give greater weight to contemporary reports and letters than to a martyrology and a eulogy written decades after the events for obvious polemical and political purposes.

An appropriate test of the general reliability of Foxe and Latymer is how they presented Anne Boleyn's life at court. It is striking that both described her household as a centre of pious and godly living. Foxe's account stressed how there was no idleness among her ladies and gentlewomen and how she 'of her own accord would require her chaplains plainly and freely to tell whatsoever they saw in her amiss'.[9] Latymer's Life similarly emphasized the high standards that Anne set for her household. She told her council 'you are commended to be men of greate honestye modestye wysedom and experience such as wholy embrace vertue and vtterly deteste and abhore vice': they should show it 'by your vertuous conuersacion and gouernemente'.[10] They should watch out that her servants 'frequente noo ynfamous places of resorte ne yet that they keape noo companye with evil lewde and vngodly disposed brothers'.[11] She told her chaplains that she had carefully chosen them to be 'the lanterns and light' of her court. She knew that princes as on a stage play chief parts to the admiration of inferior subjects, 'and wee ourselves are not altogether ignorante of the necessarye charge requyred in so high a personage not founde wantones, not pampered pleasures not licentious libertie or tryfling ydilnes but vertuous demeanour godly conuersacion sobre communicacion and integritie of lyf'.[12] If ever they saw her 'yelde to any maner of sensualtie' they should tell her.[13] That they evidently never had to do. But Anne also told them to watch the doings of the rest of her court, and here 'they reprehended dyvers and sundrye persons as well of their horrible swearing as of their inordinate and dissolute talk together with their abhomynable incontynencye and fynding certayne persons incorrigible denownced their onhoneste demeanor' to the queen.[14] It is interesting to note the stress on Anne's personal honour and on her concern for the purity of her court. Both Foxe and Latymer emphasized her virtuous charity. She gave weekly alms to the poor, including sums of money to poor men to help themselves by buying kine,[15] and distributed clothes when she went on progress.[16] On Maunday Thursday

[8] Dowling, 'Latymer's Cronickille', pp. 43. [9] Foxe, *Acts and monuments*, v, 136, 60–1.
[10] Bodleian Library, MS Don c. 42 fo. 23 (Dowling, 'Latymer's Cronickille', pp. 48–9).
[11] Ibid. fo. 23$^{v}$ (Dowling, 'Latymer's Cronickille', p. 49).
[12] Ibid. fo. 24 (Dowling, 'Latymer's Cronickille', p. 50).
[13] Ibid. fo. 24$^{v}$ (Dowling, 'Latymer's Cronickille', p. 50).
[14] Ibid. fos. 24$^{v}$, 25$^{v}$ (Dowling, 'Latymer's Cronickille', pp. 51–2).
[15] Foxe, *Acts and monuments*, v, 60, 135.
[16] Bodleian Library, MS Don c. 42 fo. 27 (Dowling, 'Latymer's Cronickille', p. 54).

humbly 'kneling on her knees she washed and kyssed the fett of symple poore women'.[17]

At first this might seem plausible. Yet there is much evidence that Anne's household was rather more pleasure-loving. Sir Edward Bainton, the queen's chamberlain, sounding like Don Alfonso, told her brother in June 1533 that as for pastime in the queen's chamber, there was never more. 'Yf any of you that bee now departed have any ladies that ye thought favoured you, and somewhat wold moorne att parting of their servauntes, I can no whit perceyve the same by their daunsing and passetyme they do use here but that other take place, as ever hath been the custume.'[18] Whatever the truth of the charges of incest and adulteries brought against Anne in 1536 – and there may be more to be said in favour of some of them than is generally recognized[19] – the impression given by what Anne herself said in the Tower once under arrest suggests at least a good deal of flirtatious talk with friends not chosen for their religious zeal. According to her gaoler Sir William Kingston, Anne had teased the courtier Henry Norris over his hesitation in marrying the lady he was courting, saying, 'you loke for ded mens showys, for yf owth came to the king but good you wold loke to have me; and he sayd yf he should have any such thought he wold hys hed war of, and then she sayd she could undo him if she would and they wyth thay fell yowt both'. Pressed by Kingston, Anne declared, 'I can say no more but nay withyowt I shuld oppen my body and ther with opynd her gown adding O Norres hast thow accused me, thow ar in the towre with me, and thou and I shall dy together'.[20] If there are thus strong reasons to doubt the veracity of the accounts that Foxe and Latymer so lovingly offer of the queen's court, that raises the possibility they may be equally misleading and propagandist about Anne's religion, especially given their implicit (but of course by no means axiomatic) claim that the profession and practice of pious evangelical religion must disprove charges of sexual licence.

That Anne was anti-papal is, given her circumstances, hardly surprising. That she pushed Henry into his break with Rome is more doubtful. Indirectly of course she was the cause of Henry's search for an annulment of his first marriage, but what Ives is claiming here is something more substantial. Foxe describes how Anne was sent Simon Fish's *Supplication for the beggars*, how her brother saw it and urged her to give it to Henry, which she did; Henry then summoned Fish back from exile and embraced him. But even if these details

[17] Ibid. fo. 26 (Dowling, 'Latymer's Cronickille', p. 53). Warnicke is convinced by Latymer on her household and Foxe on her charity that 'Anne set not only a high moral and charitable standard but also a religious example, for she wanted her household to serve as a christian "spectacle" to others' (*Rise and fall of Anne Boleyn*, pp. 149–51).

[18] P[ublic] R[ecord] O[ffice], SP1/76, fo. 195 (J. S. Brewer, J. Gairdner and R. H. Brodie, eds., *L[etters and] P[apers, foreign and domestic, of the reign of Henry VIII]* (1862–1932), VI, 613), cited by Dowling, 'Latymer's Cronickille', pp. 33–4.

[19] G. W. Bernard, 'The fall of Anne Boleyn', *English Historical Review*, CVI (1991), 584–610; E. W. Ives, 'The fall of Anne Boleyn reconsidered', ibid. CVII (1992), 651–64; G. W. Bernard, 'The fall of Anne Boleyn: a rejoinder', ibid. CVII (1992), 665–74.

[20] B[ritish] L[ibrary], Cotton MS, Otho C x, fos. 229–229$^{v}$ (H. Ellis, ed., *Original letters illustrative of English history*, 11 vols. in 3 series, 1824–6, 1st series, II, 54–6; *LP*, X, 793).

were true (and their chronology is awkward), what Foxe's account shows is that Anne's involvement and her theological grasp were limited.[21] It is from the reminiscences of John Louth, archdeacon of Nottingham in 1579, that we know how Anne persuaded Henry to read William Tyndale's *The obedience of a christian man*. We are not told how and when Anne obtained the book. We learn that Anne had lent it to one of her servants, from whom her suitor George Zouche took it; Zouche was then spotted reading it by Dr Sampson, dean of the chapel royal; Sampson snatched the book from him and gave it to Wolsey; Anne went on her knees to the king to get it back. It was then that she persuaded Henry to read the book and utter the famous words 'thys booke ys for me and all kynges to reade', and in a little time Henry had his eyes opened to the truth about the pope. What is striking here is how accidental Anne's persuasion of the king to read the book was.[22] Moreover it is important to remember that the main thrust of both Fish's and Tyndale's books was not their Lutheran theology, sufficiently evident for those aware of it, yet by no means obtrusive, but their virulent anticlericalism and their attacks on Cardinal Wolsey which in the late 1520s and early 1530s coincidentally offered support for those pressures which Henry VIII was placing on the pope and on the church in England to persuade them to grant his divorce so that he could marry Anne. Those measures owed nothing in themselves to Tyndale and Fish – they can be seen from 1527 onwards – and the contribution that Tyndale and Fish made to the elaboration of the royal supremacy was very limited indeed.[23]

Possession of works by Fish and Tyndale would moreover hardly make Anne a Lutheran. The most consistent charge that she was indeed a Lutheran was that repeatedly made by Chapuys, the imperial ambassador, who always described Anne and her brother George, viscount Rochford, as Lutheran, and as true apostles of this new sect. Yet for Chapuys to break with Rome was in itself evidence of Lutheranism. He seems to have been unaware of the difference between breaking with Rome for essentially personal and jurisdictional reasons and breaking with Rome for more theologically-driven reasons. It is probable that Anne and Rochford seemed 'Lutheran' in his eyes simply because they supported the break with Rome.[24]

[21] Foxe, *Acts and monuments*, IV, 656–8; cf. F. Manley, G. Marc'hadour, R. Marius and C. H. Miller, eds., *The complete works of St Thomas More*, VII (1990), 437–44; Warnicke, *Rise and fall of Anne Boleyn*, p. 112. Foxe, immediately after giving the account cited in the text, sets down a different version, in which Anne played no part: one of the king's footmen told Henry about the book and obtained a copy from two merchants. Ives, *Anne Boleyn*, p. 163 n. 39, suggests that this may be what really happened, adding that Foxe (or his informants) may have confused Fish's book with Tyndale's.

[22] J. G. Nichols, ed., *Narratives of the Reformation*, *Camden Society*, 1st series, LXXVII (1859), pp. 52–6; J. Strype, *Ecclesiastical memorials* (3 vols., 1822), I, 171–2. Warnicke goes beyond the evidence in suggesting that Anne obtained and presented the book after the adjournment of the legatine court when the king was unfavourably disposed towards Rome (*Rise and fall of Anne Boleyn*, p. 113).

[23] Cf. G. W. Bernard, 'The pardon of the clergy reconsidered', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, XXXVII (1986), 258–87.

[24] *LP*, V, 850, 1013; VI, 232; VIII, 666. Warnicke opines that Chapuys 'was probably using the term to encompass a wide range of reformers, for often supporters of Erasmus were labelled Lutherans' (*Rise and fall of Anne Boleyn*, p. 107).

Much has been made of Anne's interest in the Bible: she allegedly had a passionate commitment to the scriptures as the word of God and her 'central conviction was of the overwhelming importance of the Bible'. This owed much, it has been speculated, to her early residence at the French court and her supposed contacts there with scholars such as Jacques Lefevre d'Etaples.[25] According to William Latymer she had an English version and gave the nuns of Syon prayer books in English. Latymer also tells us that Anne lectured them on their ignorance. This must be fanciful. It ignores the fact that since the early fifteenth century the nuns of Syon had had manuscript copies of *The myroure of our ladye*, a translation made by Thomas Gascoigne or Thomas Fishbourne of the Brigittine office used by the nuns so that those who found Latin difficult could understand their religious offices. In effect the nuns of Syon possessed a vernacular primer that in some respects anticipated the Book of Common Prayer, for it included English texts of the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, the Nicene Creed and the Gloria. It is also possible that Syon possessed English Bibles.[26] Anne may have possessed a copy of William Marshall's *A godly prymer* (1535): he dedicated his study of poor relief in Flanders to her.[27] She did write to Cromwell on behalf of Richard Hermon, a merchant and citizen of Antwerp who claimed to have been expelled from his freedom and fellowship just for setting forth the New Testament in English in Wolsey's time.[28] William Barlow, whom Anne appointed prior of Haverfordwest, was astonished at local reactions when an English New Testament was found in the house of one of his servants: as if to have the testament in English were horrible heresy.[29] But just how committed and how radical, as opposed to fashionably humanist, does possession of the Bible in English or in French or of a French psalter and interest in vernacular translations make Anne?

Ives makes a good deal of some illuminated manuscripts allegedly made for Anne. It is not, however, clear that these can be taken to prove Anne's 'evangelism'. Ives claims that a manuscript called *The ecclesiate*, now in Alnwick Castle, a copy of a work printed in Alencon in 1530, with the commentary translated into English, was 'made for Anne, presumably because her shield of arms is at the centre of the front cover.[30] He also notes that the dedication of *Pistelles and gospelles*, a translation of Jacques Lefèvre d'Etaples by Lord Morley, states it was by Anne's commandment that he had

[25] D. Starkey, *The reign of Henry VIII: personalities and politics* (1985), p. 91; Ives, *Anne Boleyn*, p. 313; Warnicke, *Rise and fall of Anne Boleyn*, pp. 25, 27, 109, 153.

[26] Ives, *Anne Boleyn*, p. 313; M. Deansley, *The Lollard Bible* (1920), pp. 6–7, 336, 339–40,; M. B. Tait, 'The Brigittine monastery of Syon (Middlesex) with special reference to its monastic usages', University of Oxford D.Phil. thesis, 1975, pp. 74–5, 217–19; R. N. Swanson, *Church and society in late medieval England* (Oxford, 1989), p. 25; *The myrroure of oure lady* (1530) (S.T.C. 17542) J. H. Blunt, ed., *The myroure of oure ladye, Early English Text Society*, extra series XIX (1873), xl–xliv; A. J. Collins, ed., *The Bridgettine breviary at Syon Abbey*, Henry Bradshaw Soc. (1969 for 1963), pp. xxxi–xl.

[27] M. Aston, *England's iconclasts: laws against images* (Oxford, 1988), p. 417, nos. 6–7; G. R. Elton, *Reform and renewal* (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 71–6.

[28] *LP*, VII, 664.

[29] *LP*, IX, 1091.

[30] Ives, *Anne Boleyn*, pp. 289–92, 317, 322, 326.

done it.[31] In addition a manuscript version of *Le sermon du bon pasteur* or *Le pasteur evangelique* survives with an additional ending in praise of Henry and Anne, from which (and from Anne's arms on the front) it has been seen as written, or at least adapted, for her.[32] What may properly be inferred from these manuscripts about Anne's religion? These works stress the saving role of faith in Christ and say little of the role of the sacraments; the title *Le bon pasteur* implicitly suggests the church is full of wicked priests.[33] There is little to suggest that Anne shared such beliefs – indeed there is, as we shall see, telling evidence from her last days that she did not believe in justification by faith alone.[34] But Anne was of course willing to renounce the pope and the roman catholic church, unlike Lefèvre d'Etaples, the only author here whose identity can be established beyond doubt. Moreover the evidence for Anne's involvement in the production of what is a very small number of texts is not strong. *Le sermon du bon pasteur*, at least, may have been intended more for Henry VIII than his queen: the additional final verses praise him much more than they do Anne, who, the poet hopes, will conceive a son who will be the living image of his father, the king.[35]

And how sure is it that Anne read, understood and approved of the contents of such manuscripts and of books offered her? That translators sent or dedicated their works to Anne or praised her learning and devotion must be treated cautiously. It is making too much of the evidence to cite Tyndale's letter to John Frith of May 1533 as proof of Anne's 'evangelism': in it Tyndale reported that George Joye had printed two leaves of Genesis and sent one to the king and one to Anne.[36] That Tyndale sent her a presentation copy of his New Testament in 1534 proves little.[37] Thomas Alwaye, remembering 'how many deeds of pity' Anne had done 'without respect to any persons, as well to strangers and aliens', poor and rich, petitioned Anne to allow unrestricted sales of the Bible: but nothing he said about Anne was strictly religious.[38] True, Rose, daughter of the mercer William Lok, would recall in her eighties how Anne would ask her father 'to get her the gospels and epistles written in parchment in French, together with the psalms'.[39] But a rather different attitude to the text of scripture is revealed by the love notes Anne and Henry wrote to each other in the pages of a book of hours: 'Remember me when you do pray/That hope doth lead from day to day', wrote Anne; 'If you remember my love in your prayers as strongly as I adore you, I shall hardly

[31] Ibid. pp. 292, 318–19. BL, Harleian MS 6561.

[32] BL Royal MS 16 E XIII. Ives, *Anne Boleyn*, pp. 293, 319, 321; C. A. Mayer, 'Anne Boleyn et la version originale du "sermon du bon pasteur" d'Almanque Papillon', *Bulletin de la société de l'histoire du protestantisme français*', CXXXII (1986), 337–46 (I owe this reference to Dr A. C. Duke); C. A. Mayer, '"Le semon du bon pasteur": un problème d'attribution', *Bibliothèque d'humanisme et renaissance*, XXVII (1965), 286–303 (includes text).

[33] Ives, *Anne Boleyn*, pp. 293, 319, 321, 325–6.

[34] See below, p. 19.

[35] Mayer, 'Version originale', p. 341 (lines 467–80, 485–90).

[36] *LP*, VI, 458.

[37] Ives, *Anne Boleyn*, pp. 314–15; cf. Warnicke, *Rise and fall of Anne Boleyn*, p. 153.

[38] Dowling, 'Anne Boleyn and reform', p. 30, citing BL Sloane MS 1207, for text.

[39] J. Shakespeare and M. Dowling, 'Religion and politics in mid-Tudor England', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, LV (1982), 97; cf. *LP*, VIII, 197.

be forgotten, for I am yours', wrote Henry, adding 'By daily proof you shall me find/ To be to you both loving and kind'.[40]

And just how evangelical was Anne? In urging Dr Crome to take up the parsonage of Aldermary which she had got for him, she asserted that the furtherance of virtue, truth and godly doctrine would be not a little increased if he resided there: but 'godly doctryne' may have been lip-service to a phrase of the moment rather than any deeply felt commitment.[41] During these years Bainham, Bilney and Frith were burnt as heretics, indicating limits either to her beliefs or to her influence. Just how keen was Anne on preaching, the central feature of evangelical religion? When Cranmer informed Latimer that the king was content that Latimer should preach before him on Wednesdays in Lent, he advised him not to be longer in the pulpit than an hour or an hour and a half, for the King and Queen might perhaps wax so weary that they would have small delight to continue throughout to the end.[42] All that almsgiving and support of scholars could easily be interpreted as a search for popularity rather than evidence of a strong religious commitment. After all Catherine of Aragon had distributed money and alms, and Anne (according to Chapuys), perhaps revealingly, had said that Catherine had been banned from holding her Maunday because the alms she once distributed among the poor were the real cause of the love and affection which the English bore her.[43] That Anne favoured scholars at Cambridge like John Aylmer is in itself hardly significant and that she supported the petition by the University of Cambridge for exemption from tenths and first fruits suggests no more than a conventional sympathy with learning.[44] What we have is a number of scraps of evidence of isolated instances of possible interest, intervention, protection or patronage (though often open to explanations, such as compassion, not requiring pious commitment) with little to clinch the case that Anne's motivation must have been the furtherance of reformed religion. There is no evidence of any consistent and sustained policy; no dialogue, no debates, no conferences of divines. It is striking that the Frenchman Lancelot de Carles who was resident in the French ambassador's house and who wrote a metrical poem on Anne's fall never describes Anne as an evangelical.[45] Nor did Anne write any religious

[40] Ives, *Anne Boleyn*, pp. 7–8, 322–3; BL, Harleian MS 6148, fo. 79b (*LP*, VII, 693).

[41] *LP*, VII, 693. Foxe suggests that Anne secured the release from prison of Thomas Patmore – one of his 'brethren', we are told, 'made such suit unto the king (by means of the queen) that after three years' imprisonment, he was released' and a commission under Audley, Cranmer and Cromwell appointed to inquire into the unjust dealings of Bishop Stokesley. Patmore was by no means a defiant reformer, on Foxe's account: perhaps Anne was moved by simple humanity rather than necessarily by religious conviction (*Acts and monuments*, V, 36–7).

[42] *LP*, VII, 29.

[43] G. A. Bergenroth, P. de Gayangos, M. A. S. Hume, G. Mattingly and R. Tyler, eds., *Calendar of state papers, Spanish* (13 vols. in 20, 1862–1954), V (i), no. 40, p. 118.

[44] *LP*, VII, 170, X, 345. Cf. also J. T. Bruce and T. T. Perowe, eds., *Correspondence of Matthew Parker 1535–1575, Parker Society* (1853), no. 3.

[45] *Epistre contenant le proces criminel faict a l'encontre de la royne Anne Bovllant d'Angleterre* (Lyon, 1545); text printed in G. Ascoli, *La Grande Bretagne devant l'opinion française depuis la guerre de cent ans jusqu'à la fin du XVIe siècle* (Paris, 1927). Cf. Dowling, 'Latymer's Cronickille', pp. 37–8.

works, here offering a sharp contrast to Catherine Parr, who produced the *Lamentation of a sinner* in the mid-1540s.[46]

How far does Anne Boleyn's religious patronage support the case for her as reformer? Given her vested interest in that break with Rome, Anne would obviously favour clergy who defended it. Most of those who assailed the papacy vigorously in the early 1530s were of course sympathetic to Lutheranism. But is it clear that Anne favoured them for both reasons?[47] Did she favour 'professors of Christ'? Did she choose them because she agreed with their theology? Did Anne maintain the French exile Nicholas Bourbon because of his evangelical doctrine – or because he had been imprisoned in France for 'that he hadd uttered certayne t[a]lke in the derogacion of the bisshop of Rome and his usurped authority'?[48] Foxe claims that Anne placed Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Shaxton in bishoprics and brought the future bishops Nicholas Heath and Thomas Thirlby to favour with the king; William Latymer asserted her mediation to the king for the preferment of Thomas Cranmer, Latimer, Shaxton, and the future bishops Thomas Goodrich and John Skip. But neither Foxe nor Latymer offer sufficient detail to justify the claim that Anne was a patron of evangelicals.[49] Yet this is just where advocates of Anne's evangelism need convincing evidence to substantiate their claims, not least since a closer scrutiny offers a much more mixed impression.

The single most important factor in appointments to bishoprics in the early 1530s was not evangelical or Lutheran doctrine but involvement in the canon law and diplomacy of Henry VIII's divorce.[50] John Stokesley, appointed bishop of London in July 1530, had long been so engaged, notably when sent to France the previous autumn and later when accompanying Anne's father to see the Emperor.[51] Edward Lee, king's almoner, who wrote against the pope's dispensing power, and who had gone on embassy to Valladolid in early 1529, was appointed archbishop of York in September 1531. Was he appointed because Henry had hopes that he would grant him his divorce? Chapuys later noted that he had changed his mind after he had taken up his office.[52] Stephen Gardiner, the king's secretary, appointed bishop of Winchester in September 1531, had also been involved in the campaign for the divorce, notably when persuading the pope to issue a decretal commission in 1528, but he also failed fully to support Henry over the jurisdictional

[46] S. E. James, 'The devotional writings of Queen Catherine Parr', *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*, LXXXII (1982), 135–40; 'Queen Kateryn Parr (1512–1548)', ibid. LXXXVIII (1988), 107–20 (though neither is very helpful in characterizing Parr's theology).

[47] G. Redworth, papers read at Christ Church, Oxford, 5 June 1986 and 4 June 1987.

[48] Bodleian, MS Don c. 42 fos. 28–28$^{v}$ (Dowling, 'Latymer's Cronickille', p. 56).

[49] Foxe, *Acts and monuments*, v, 60, 135–6; Bodleian MS Don. c. 42 fo. 29$^{v}$ (Dowling, 'Latymer's Cronickille', pp. 59–60).

[50] Warnicke notes the role of several of those appointed as bishops in 'the polling of the universities about Leviticus' (*Rise and fall of Anne Boleyn*, p. 156), but their involvement was broader than that suggests.

[51] *LP*, IV (iii), 5945, 5983, 5996, 6026, 6073, 6154–5.

[52] *LP*, IV (iii), 5278; V, 5 (2), 418, 432, 483; VI, 180.

independence of the church in spring 1532.[53] Not surprisingly when the archbishopric of Canterbury then fell vacant in August 1532, the man chosen, Thomas Cranmer, had already shown himself unequivocally in favour of the divorce and ready to defend royal policy against the pope. Was Cranmer Anne's man – or should we give greater credence to Chapuys' statement that the king promoted him? It has been shown that Cranmer put forward canonical arguments that were especially helpful for Henry: in particular he claimed (somewhat against the trend of European opinion) that the Levitical prohibition on marrying a brother's widow was not dependent on the consummation of the first marriage.[54] Often described as a Boleyn family chaplain, Cranmer, according to Foxe, had rather been committed to the care of Anne's father on the king's instructions, after Cranmer had first made suggestions to the king on how he might strengthen his case, advice he had first given to Stephen Gardiner and Edward Foxe, former Cambridge acquaintances, at a chance meeting at Waltham Abbey.[55] Cranmer did write to the king after Anne had been arrested that 'I was most bownde vnto her of all cretures lyvynge',[56] but that need refer to no more than her family's hospitality towards him after the king's request. Interestingly, John Foxe – unlike Latymer – did not link Cranmer's rise to Anne Boleyn's favour: he rather emphasized his part in the formulation of the defence of the king's divorce and saw his promotion 'as worthy for his travail'.[57] John Salcot or Capon, appointed bishop of Bangor in summer 1533, had been involved in securing the opinions of Cambridge divines on the divorce in 1530, and had been one of four names Henry put forward in July 1531 as neutral judges of the matter.[58] Rowland Lee, appointed bishop of Chester and Lichfield in autumn 1533, had been active in persuading Cuthbert Tunstall, bishop of Durham, and the northern convocation to accept the divorce earlier that year.[59] Thomas Goodrich, appointed bishop of Ely in March 1534, had been on the committee of Cambridge divines pronouncing on the canon law of the divorce in 1530 and had been involved in correcting the king's pamphlet *A glass of the truth*.[60] Edward Foxe, king's almoner, appointed bishop of Hereford in summer 1535, had been sent to the pope with Gardiner in 1528, was especially active in 1530 and 1531 in persuading the university of Paris to support the divorce, and wrote a treatise on the difference between the powers

[53] *LP*, IV (iii), 3913, 4119, 4167, 4251; VI 419, 432, 1013, 1058. In one place Foxe suggests that Gardiner 'was first sent to Rome, and then to the emperor with Edward Foxe, as chief agent in the behalf of the lady Anne by whom also he was preferred to the bishopric of Winchester' (*Acts and monuments*, VII, 586). Yet later, with equal implausibility, Foxe saw Gardiner as responsible for Anne's downfall (*Acts and monuments*, V, 135, 137).

[54] *LP*, VI, 89, 142, 180; H. A. Kelly, *The matrimonial trials of Henry VIII* (Stanford, 1976), pp. 222–38.

[55] Foxe, *Acts and monuments*, VIII, 8, 10; Nichols, *Narratives*, p. 242.

[56] BL, Cotton MS, Otho C x. fo. 230 (*LP*, X, 792).

[57] Foxe, *Acts and monuments*, VIII, 6–10, esp. 10. Dowling, 'Latymer's Cronickille', p. 59 n. 26, cites Foxe, *Acts and monuments*, VII, 6, in support of her suggestion that 'possibly Anne's mediation did procure him the see of Canterbury', but the reference is wrong and nothing in *Acts and monuments*, VIII, 6–10 supports it.

[58] *LP*, IV (iii), 6247; V, 327.

[59] *LP*, VI, 437, 451, 491, 493.

[60] *LP*, IV (iii), 6247; V. 1320, 1660.

of the king and the church in 1534.[61] John Hilsey succeeded John Fisher at Rochester in 1535: he had earlier been much concerned with securing the submission to the royal supremacy of the Observant Friars.[62] Of all these bishops appointed in the early 1530s, it is hard to see much evidence of any direct involvement of Anne Boleyn. If any individual influenced the king it seems more likely to have been Thomas Cromwell. One of Cromwell's correspondents thought him responsible for Rowland Lee's elevation, and berated him on it: another wrote that on hearing of Lee's elevation to Chester he would now reckon Cromwell bishop there himself. Lee frequently called Cromwell his friend and had thanked him for an earlier appointment. Salcot thought himself wholly bound to Cromwell for his goodness.[63] But more generally, involvement in the divorce and prominence in royal service, often in positions of trust such as almoner or secretary, seem still more important, suggesting that the most significant decisions were made by Henry himself.[64]

In three cases of episcopal appointments a case of sorts could be made for the influence of Anne Boleyn. Anne showed favour to William Barlow: she had earlier appointed him prior of Haverfordwest, where his advocacy of the gospel of Christ and the English New Testament had provoked controversy. He had earlier connections with Anne's father. In January 1536 he was appointed bishop of St Asaph and in April he was translated to St David's. But there is nothing to prove that it was Anne who secured him these bishoprics. In 1534 and 1535 he had been sent on royal diplomatic missions to Scotland, and travelled there again in early 1536: he was clearly in the king's favour and working closely with Cromwell, so there is no need to seek for any special reasons for his promotions.[65] Nor is there a compelling case that it was Anne who was responsible for Hugh Latimer's elevation to the bishopric of Worcester in 1535. Foxe contradicts himself. If in one place he does indeed state that Anne placed him in the bishopric of Worcester, elsewhere he notes that it was 'through the procurement partly of Dr Butts [the king's physician], partly of good Cromwell... that he [Henry VIII] advanced him to the degree and dignity of a bishopric': here he makes no mention of Anne.[66] Latimer had enjoyed a stormy career as a preacher in the early 1530s, repeatedly in trouble before senior bishops, stirring controversy in Bristol in 1533.[67] But there is no sign that Anne was in any way involved or that she protected him. Cranmer

[61] *LP*, IV (iii), 3913, 4167, 4251, 6505; V, 238, 251, 340, 368, 393, 427, 432; VII, 1602 (3).

[62] *LP*, VII, 939, 1169.

[63] *LP*, VI, 333, 981, 1011, 1014, 1226, 1385; IV app., 724; VI, 1067.

[64] Cf. Warnicke's comment that 'to suggest that Anne alone had won for these men either the bishoprics or sufficiently advanced positions in the church that made their subsequent episcopal election possible would be to exaggerate greatly her influence in religious matters. The king, his new archbishop of Canterbury, and Cromwell... had personal agendas to fulfil and vital interests to protect in the selection of new bishops'; but note her later reference to 'the eight Henrician bishops favoured by Anne' (*Rise and fall of Anne Boleyn*, p. 156).

[65] *LP*, VII, 1528–30; VIII, 412; IX, 1091; X, 527, 730.

[66] Foxe, *Acts and monuments*, V, 135; VII, 461.

[67] *LP*, VI, 246–7, 317, 411–12, 433 (i–iii), 573, 796, 1214; Foxe, *Acts and monuments*, VI app; VII, 459–60, 473–7; G. R. Elton, *Policy and police* (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 112–17.

did, arranging for him to preach before the king in Lent 1534.[68] Latimer played his part in the advancement of government policy: he appears to have suggested to Cromwell the policy of asking the gentry to swear an oath to the king's issue, and in 1534 he also denounced the pope at Exeter.[69] It is just possible that Anne was involved in his promotion, but the evidence is very slight. Apart from the assertions of Foxe and Latymer, there is just the loan of £200 that Anne subsequently made Latimer towards payment of his first fruits to the king.[70] Anne made a similar loan to Nicholas Shaxton on his appointment as bishop of Salisbury in 1535.[71] His connections with Anne go back further: he had become the queen's almoner.[72] He too had been involved in the canon law of the divorce, but had briefly come under suspicion by Bishop Nix of Norwich for his views on purgatory and clerical celibacy in 1531.[73] Foxe clearly attributes his promotion to Anne.[74] Shaxton himself – though at a time when Anne was already in the Tower – wrote to Cromwell that he was mindful of the many kind offices Cromwell had done him, especially in promoting him to the bishopric.[75] It seems reasonable to suppose that Anne may well have played some part in Shaxton's elevation, but if even in the case of someone personally close to Anne the evidence is by no means conclusive, considerable doubt must remain on the validity of any larger claims for Anne's influence.

True, under arrest in the Tower, Anne spoke of 'my' bishops when she lamented 'I would to God I had my bysshoppys for they wold all go to the Kyng for me'.[76] What is most striking here is not any evangelical piety but a rather secular, political, personal, possessive attitude towards 'my' bishops. While this could be seen as evidence of a measure of patronage, it might more realistically be taken as evidence of Anne's political naivety: those bishops who had apparently taken her part during the king's divorce and the break with Rome had not then been supporting her, but rather the king, to whom their primary loyalty was owed. It is interesting that none of the bishops attempted to save her in 1536. Cranmer was shocked but persuaded by the charges against Anne. He was clean amazed, he wrote to Henry, but he thought the king would not have gone so far if she was not guilty. He had been summoned to the star chamber by various councillors and was sorry that such faults as they reported could be found against her. Shaxton judged that by her misconduct she had sorely slandered God's honour – and exceedingly deceived him.[77]

[68] *LP*, VI, 1249; VII, 29–30, 32, 228.

[69] *LP*, VII, 578; R. Whiting, 'Abominable idols: images and image-breaking under Henry VIII', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, XXXIII (1982), 39.

[70] *LP*, IX, 203, 252, 272; X, 1257 (ix); XI, 117 (7). Cf. the comment in *Dictionary of national biography*, XI, 615, 'we do not find in his writings any expression of regard for her'.

[71] *LP*, IX, 203, 252, 272; X, 1257 (ix); XI, 117 (10).

[72] *LP*, VII, 577 (cf. 30).

[73] *LP*, V, 297; Foxe, *Acts and monuments*, IV, 679–80.

[74] Foxe, *Acts and monuments*, V, 135–6.

[75] *LP*, X, 835.

[76] *LP*, X, 797.

[77] BL, Cotton MS, Otho C x. fos. 226–226$^{v}$ (*LP*, X, 792); *LP*, X, 942 (in which Shaxton also hoped that Cromwell would be no less diligent in setting forth the honour of God and his holy word than when the Queen was alive – as she had often incited him to).

Anne has also been asserted by Foxe or Latymer as the patron of other reformers, some of whom became bishops later. Once again clinching detailed and independent evidence is lacking. Thomas Thirlby and Nicholas Heath were among learned men whom Anne allegedly maintained at Cambridge: Thirlby became a close associate of Cranmer, Heath was sent on embassy to Germany in 1534.[78] In the case of John Skip, who became bishop of Hereford in 1539, there is no doubt about his connection with Anne, since he seems to have succeeded Shaxton as the queen's almoner.[79] Yet it is far from clear that Skip was a reformer, which casts further doubt on the claims that Anne was an evangelical and that 'Anne took only evangelicals into her service'. On 2 April 1536 Skip preached a remarkable sermon before the king's counsellors in the king's chapel, the contents of which we know from a summary and from a series of interrogatories questioning his purpose. This sermon has not received the attention that it deserves.[80]

Skip's matter was not exclusively religious, but as it was difficult to disentangle religion and politics in the 1530s, any criticisms of the government soon touched upon religious issues, which makes his argument relevant to a consideration of Anne's religion. No doubt if he had limited himself to claiming that 'nobilite standithe nott in fleishe nor bludde' but in virtuous living, and, for a king, in good government of the commonwealth, he might not have disturbed anyone. When, however, he went on to contrast how king Solomon began his reign as 'a veray wiese and noble kyng moiche beloved of his subiectes bycause that he governed them verey ientilly and wiesly euer having respecte to their commyn welthe', with how 'in the later ende of his reing he became verey onnoble and defamed hym selff soire by sensuall and carnall appitide in takyng of many wives and concubyines And also by averishe mynde in leyng to greit or soire burthons and yowickes apon his subiectes overpressing them to soire theirby', the contemporary parallels were obvious.[81] The interrogatories pointedly asked Skip to what end the example of Solomon tended, 'but that he entended in his mynde to touche the kynges grace with thesayd symylitude. Albeit he shewed not his mynd yn playne and expresse wordes, but by those wordes his audience conceyved right well the malice of his mynd aswell by that generall example as if he had coyned the

[78] Foxe, *Acts and monuments*, v, 60; viii, 71–2; *LP*, vii, 14, 19–21. Warnicke is unfair to use the later conservatism of Thirlby, Heath, and, one might add, Shaxton, to throw light on Anne's attitudes in the 1530s (*Rise and fall of Anne Boleyn*, pp. 158, 162).

[79] *LP*, viii, 632.

[80] PRO, SP6/1 fos. 7–10$^{v}$ (*LP*, x, 615 (4), partially quoted by S. E. Lehmberg, *The Reformation parliament 1529–1536* (Cambridge, 1970), pp. 244–5) is headed 'Heirafter folloith the sume of the moest speciall and principall places wheiche maister Skyppe broght in his sermonde sayde in the kynges chappell apon passion Sunday in the yer of our lorde 1536' (PRO SP6/2 fos. 1–3 is a shorter summary). PRO SP1/103 fos. 75–81 are a series of 'interrogatoryes and articles to be admynystred to the precher whiche preched the Sermon yn the Corte on Passion Sonday'. The text of the interrogatories refers to the sermon as preached in Lent and before members of the king's council. It is hard to see why the attribution should be wrong. There is no evidence of what, if anything, happened: Skip's career does not seem to have been affected. Cf. Dowling, 'Latymer's Cronickille', p. 36, for the suggestion that Anne took only evangelicals into her service.

[81] PRO, SP6/1 fos. 7–7$^{v}$.

symylitude particulerly'. He was to be asked 'whether a precher spekyng generally of any notable cryme or vice in suche wise as all his audience dothe as playnly persayve what persone he meanethe as though he specified hym by his name, dothe slaunder that persone'.[82]

Skip had continued by telling the story of Rehoboam, Solomon's son. When the people appealed to him to relieve the great yoke his father had laid upon them, Rehoboam had asked them to wait until he had asked his council. His councillors advised him that he should lift the yoke. Rehoboam, however, was a covetous prince and was not pleased with the advice of his sage and ancient councillors. He therefore 'cownselled also withe his yowngger cownsellers whom he so had promoted and dayngered vnto hym by his gyftes that for that and further promocions whiche they loked fore, they wold nott aduertiese hym to do ony thing butt suiche as they perceved or thought hym inclined to'. So since they saw him keen to maintain the burdens on his people, they advised him to continue to do so, indeed to take even more from them. That provoked civil war.[83] The interrogatories asked whether the story of Rehoboam was told in order 'to put into the peples hedde that it were lefull for theym if they were overburdeyned by the prynce to fall from hym and to rebelle'.[84] Skip, however, had gone on to draw the lesson that 'a kyng had neide to be lerned hym selff and to know the staite of his peple', before continuing dangerously that for 'as for his cownsell nowadayes will move hym no otherwise vnto any thing butt as they see hym disposed and inclined to the same'.[85] The interrogatories asked whether this was to accuse the king's council 'as flaterers and decevours of the kynges grace', and bitingly denounced the preacher's anticipated response, 'if he will say that he ment not of the kynges councell than was his sermon not mete for the audience for ther were none other counceillors of any other kyng present'.[86] Skip returned to the theme of true nobility and declared that any stranger who knew well what true nobility was would, if he came to this realm and saw those who were called noble, 'thincke playnly that nobilite weyre hence clerly banneshed'.[87]

To attack king, council and nobility in 1536 was implicitly to call in question much recent government action. When Skip turned next to the clergy, his fundamental concerns became evident, and undermine any claims that Anne's religious patronage was confined to reformers. Christ, he said, had been a lesson to all preachers and declarers of God's word that they should live as near as they could without sin.

> Now (he sayde) the clergye hathe byn rebuked and is moiche rebuked dayly... nowadays mony men take apon them to rebuicke the clergy verey soire fare otherwise moved by their malious mynde or elles bycause they wold haue from the clergy their possessions rebuickyng them in euery plaice att the table and elleswheir verey soire in so moiche that yff they maye spye a greite or notable vice or fawite in one preiste or eny of the clergy then they will infame and rebuycke all the hoill clergy for the same.

[82] PRO, SP1/103 fos. 77, 75v. [83] PRO, SP6/1 fo. 7v. [84] PRO, SP1/103 fo. 77.
[85] PRO, SP6/1 fo. 8. [86] PRO, SP1/103 fos. 77–77v. [87] PRO, SP6/1 fo. 8.

Often some of those rebuking the clergy were no less guilty of such vices. But many of the clergy, Skip continued, were justly to be rebuked, even by sinners, just as Nebuchadnezzar 'whiche was sentt as a minister of God to poneshe the Jewes And eyt he was damned for his labor'.[88] 'It is not evident', asked the interrogatories, 'that he meanethe that the kynges highnes whome he takethe to be a rebuker and punyssher of the clergie (as it apperethe by his example of Nabugodonosor) shalbe therfore rebuked of god as though the precher knewe the will and determynacion of god'?[89]

Skip went on to tell the story of Asseurus (Ahasuerus, or Artaxerxes, of Persia) and Aman to illustrate 'that a kyng had neide to be well warre what he doithe after the cownsell of his cownsellers for som tyme for the malice that they beyr towarde mony men, or towarde one man of a multitude they wold haue the hoill multitude distroed'. King Asseurus, gentle and tractable, had a counsellor Aman who 'bayre all the swynge withe hym'. Aman bore a grudge against the Jews because of a private quarrel; he told the king how the Jews used strange laws and ceremonies and broke the laws of the realm, and said that if they were destroyed that would enrich the king; Asseurus told him to go ahead; but a good woman – Skip did not name her, but in the Biblical story she was Esther, the king's queen – warned the king of Aman's malice and told him that the Jews were innocent. In case his allusion was not clear, Skip repeated the need for princes 'to take good heide what cownsellers they take abowitt them, and their cownsellers had also as moyche neide to be well warre and circumspectt what cownsell they gyve vnto their princes specially in towiching the renovacion or alteracion of ony olde or awncient custumes or ceremonys'.[90] If any doubt remained about his meaning, Skip continued 'as for the litle ceremonys of the churiche wheiche haue byn vsed tyme owitt of memory as holy water holy bredde holy ashes palme and suiche other I am suire their is none of you that wold haue them takon awey nor I never harde eny man of lerning and good iudgement that wold haue them takon cleirly awey, for they be verey good and profettable yff they be used for the purpas and intentt that they weyre furste ordened and instituted'. He then offered detailed justification:

holy water to sprinkell apon us to signifye vnto us and to putt us in rememberance that ou synnes be waishon awey by the sprinkullyng and shedyng of christes bludde, holy bredde to putt us in rememberance that all we that haue professed christes faithe be one body misticall and ought to be one in mynde in spirite in chrieste our hedde, evon as theis mony litle peces of holy bredde wheiche we receue be cutt or divided owitt of

[88] Ibid. fos. 8–8$^{v}$. Cf. the complaint made by the church in the *Answer of the ordinaries* in 1532 that 'the evil acts and deeds of men be the more defaults of those particular men, and not of the whole order of the clergy' (H. Gee and W. J. Hardy, eds., *Documents illustrative of English church history* (1896), p. 161).

[89] PRO, SP1/103 fo. 79.

[90] PRO, SP6/1 fos. 8$^{v}$–9. For a study of a contemporary play, *Godly Queene Hester*, drawing on the story of Ahasuerus, Aman and Hesther arguably to make a comparable conservative case in defence of the monasteries in 1529, see G. Walker, *Plays of persuasion: drama and politics at the court of Henry VIII* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 102–32. For a comparison of Thomas Cromwell with Aman and the Pilgrims of Grace with the Jews, see *LP*, XII i 1021 (5).

one loiff, holy ashes to putt us in rememberance that we be ashes and duste and into ashes and duste we shall returne And palmes to putt us in rememberance that our saviour chrieste hathe goton the victory And overcum the devill and synne.

Since such things were 'verey good and commodius', it would be a 'greite pyte' if they were taken away. It was right to take away the abuses of such ceremonies – but not the good things themselves, unless it was impossible to take away just the abuses. 'As for theis litle ceremonys of the churiches (he sayde) I am suire their is none of you that wold haue them takon awey and no marvell therof for they cost you litle and litle ye shall gayne by the takyng awey of them.' Was this not intended, asked the interrogatories, to diminish the authority and the good name of the king's councillors?[91] However that may be, Skip's language and reasoning were emphatically not those of a religious reformer.[92]

Skip then went on to criticize royal councillors who went about to make 'renovacions or alteracions in civill matters that haue byn instituted for the commyn weilthe by good men': that would make the commonalty grudge at it. He told the story of the nation called the Locrenses who, much troubled by renovacions and alterations in civil matters, by statute upon statute, devised a law that no man should bring into their parliament house any bill for the alteration of any civil matter except if he had a rope around his neck: if when it was read the people thought the bill against their commonwealth they could pull the rope and strangle him. As a result they were spared alterations for a hundred years and more, for no one dared bring any such bill.[93] In response, the interrogatories asked whether it was not necessary to have the ancient laws of the realm altered and renewed. 'Were not the eldest and moest auncient lawes of this realme ons made newe for the reformyng of suche inconvenyences as were vsed at the tyme of makyng of theym'? 'May not some ceremonyes instituted by the old fathers be altered or be taken away accordyng to thexample shewed by christ'? And what was the preacher doing in preaching in civil and worldly matters which were no part of the preaching of the gospel?

[91] PRO, SP6/1 fos. 9–9$^{v}$; SP1/103 fo. 79.

[92] Skip is here defending not the apotropaic power of holy water, holy bread, holy ashes and palmes (that is, their power to drive away demons, diseases and ill fortune), but rather their value as aids for the inculcation and remembrance of fundamental christian truths. It has recently been suggested by E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: traditional religion in England 1400–1580* (1992), in an analysis of the Ten Articles of 1536 and of radical preachers in Kent in the early 1540s, that such an emphasis marks a retreat from traditional religion (pp. 393–4, 439). But to interpret Skip's sermon in that way would be to fly in the face of what the sermon says taken as a whole. It is clear that in explaining the significance of these ceremonies and in making a distinction between ceremonies and possible abuses of such ceremonies, Skip was arguing not for their rejection but rather in order to defend them from exaggerated criticism and precisely to protect them from outright abolition. Contradicting his earlier position, Duffy goes on in his discussion of the Marian church (p. 533) to note in passing, and in my view more perceptively, that strategies of this kind were one of the ways by which Henrician conservatives such as Cuthbert Tunstall, bishop of Durham, and Edmund Bonner, bishop of London, strove to prevent the outright abolition of ceremonies. It is striking that the evidence of this sermon would place Skip in their company.

[93] PRO, SP6/1 fo. 9v. Cf. Lehmberg, *Reformation parliament*, pp. 244–5, but note that the text speaks not of 'innovations' but of 'alterations'.

And was it not the provision that anyone bringing a bill to the parliament should bring a rope about his neck itself a new law contrary to the ancient custome of the Locrenses? 'It were a very good ordynaunce that suche prechers as he is, shuld bryng a rope about his nek into the pulpet that he myght be hanged therwith when he fallith to slaunderous tales and levethe the gospell vndeclared.'[94]

It was not to be thought, Skip continued, that anything was done in 'this hight cownsell or cowrt of parliament' except for the commonwealth.

> for their be moeste noble men of this realme, the moste prudentt and awncient fathers, the moeste expert men, the moeste hyght lerned men and suiche as haue for their laburs their is no onquietnes no tumultuus fashion, their is no checking or tawntyng of eny man for shoyng his mynde, their is no man that will stande up and saye that hitt is the plyessuire of eny person that this or this hitt shuld be, their spekithe nott paste one att oins and yff his reson be good hitt is alowed. And yff hitt be otherwise he is answared withe ientle manner and fashion. Their is no man spekithe for eny carnall affections or lucre of the promocions of this worlde butt all thing is done for zeill of the commyn weilthe, this I thincke and other men ought to thyncke the same.[95]

The interrogator was not taken in by this. 'What goodnes or honestie is in thesayd precher to vse suche ironyes or mockes agaynst the parliament'? Let the precher be examyned vpon his othe whether he spake not all this sentence ironice and mokkisshely in displeasure and rebuke of the parliament – where, he added, 'be a great nombre of sadde and discrete men whiche love the common welthe aswell as the precher' who 'meanythe the contrary by his ironie, for in all ironyes the meanyng is contrary to the wordes. And so all the foresayd sentence is to be taken clene contrarye to the wordes'.[96]

Not surprisingly the interrogatories had begun by asking what connection much of this had with the preacher's text, 'which of you convicteth me of sin? And if I say the truth why do ye not believe me?' (John, 8 xlvi). Not surprisingly they asked whether the preacher had not slandered king, council, the nobles and the parliament, in a seditious, indeed treasonable, sermon that would sow dissension among the people.[97] It is an astonishing sermon for the queen's almoner to have preached. In attacking innovations he was implicitly attacking much that had been done in recent years: in defending ancient ceremonies he was taking the side of those who did not seek any radical reformation. The timing of his sermon was not accidental. In early 1536 a bill dissolving the smaller monasteries had gone through parliament. Edward Foxe, bishop of Hereford, led an English delegation which was negotiating on doctrine with Lutherans in Wittenberg. Most relevantly, in March a group of bishops had been meeting to determine certain articles and to reform ecclesiastical ceremonies, studies which were to result in the elaboration of the

[94] PRO, SP1/103 fos. 79$^{v}$–80$^{v}$.

[95] PRO, SP6/1 fos. 9$^{v}$–10.

[96] PRO, SP1/103 fos. 80$^{v}$–81. Cf. Thomas More's definition: 'such maner of spekynge as euery man vseth, when he calleth one self noughty lad, both a shrewd boy and a good soone, the one in the proper symple speche, the tother by the fygure of ironye or antiphrasys', J. Guy, R. Keen, C. H. Miller and R. McGugan, eds., *The complete works of St Thomas More*, vol. x, *The debellation of Salem and Bizance* (1987), p. 24.

[97] Ibid. fo. 75.

Ten Articles in Convocation in June. Skip's sermon was surely a contribution to that debate, intended to halt the speed of reform.[98] That such a man was Anne's almoner – and was to be continually with her in the Tower as she awaited execution[99] – must at the very least cast doubt on her own alleged radicalism.

Moreover there were many conservative elements in Anne's religion. Richard Lyst, a dissident lay brother at the Observant Franciscan house at Greenwich, wrote to Anne in February 1533 that he had often spoken and answered in the king's cause and hers for which he had been rebuked and troubled, and called in derision Anne's chaplain. Earlier he had thanked Cromwell for Anne's charitable benefits to himself and his mother. But, significantly for any perceptions of Anne's religion, what Lyst offered by way of thanks was to say 100 masses for Anne's prosperous state, spiritual and corporal, as soon as he had taken priest's orders. That suggests a very traditional faith, unerasmian and non-evangelical. It is evidence more of his religious beliefs than of hers, yet at the least this shows that he did not know of her supposed radicalism.[100] On the doctrine of the mass she was orthodox: when Tristram Revell, late scholar of Christ's College, Cambridge, wanted to present a translation of Francis Lambertus' *Farrago rerum theologicarum* to her in early 1536, she refused it.[101]

Finally the evidence of Anne's imprisonment, trial and execution is relevant. It is very interesting to see how keen Anne was to have the sacrament when she was in the Tower. 'Jesu have mercy on me', said Anne, reported by Kingston, 'and kneled down wepyng a great pace'; then she laughed and asked him to move the king that she might have the sacrament in the closet in her chamber so that she might pray for mercy.[102] Later the queen, Kingston reported, 'hathe meche desyred to have here in the closet the sacraments'.[103]

[98] On the polemical context see especially *LP*, x, 601; cf. A. Kreider, *English chantries: the road to dissolution* (1979), pp. 117–18. Towards the end of April both Chapuys and Archbishop Lee reported that the king had ordered that preachers should avoid new opinions on rites and ceremonies lest dissension arose (*LP*, x, 716, 752; cf. 804, 891). In noting that Skip's sermon 'apparently contained a good deal in defence of tradition in the church' but 'got him into hot water... when it moved on to deal with the morality and integrity of parliament, the council and the leaders of society', Ives misses the significance of Skip's religious conservatism (*Anne Boleyn*, pp. 312–13). L. B. Smith noted the essential conservatism of the sermon but drew no broader conclusions: *Tudor prelates and politics 1536–1558* (Princeton, 1953), pp. 178, 227–8.

[99] BL, Cotton MS, Otho C x fo. 223 (Ellis, *Original letters*, I ii. 64; *LP*, x, 910); Anne had greatly desired to have the company of her almoner (BL, Cotton MS, Otho C x fo. 228$^{v}$ Ellis, *Original letters*, I ii. 59; *LP*, x, 797).

[100] BL, Cotton MS, Cleopatra E IV. fos. 29, 28* (*LP*, v, 1525; vi, 115).

[101] *LP*, x, 371; M. Dowling, 'The gospel and the court: reformation under Henry VIII', in M. Dowling and P. Lake, eds., *Protestantism and the national church in sixteenth century England* (1987), pp. 36–77 at p. 47.

[102] BL, Cotton MS, Otho C x fo. 229 (Ellis, *Original letters*, I ii. 54; *LP*, x, 793). Cf. Warnicke, *Rise and fall of Anne Boleyn*, p. 108, who wrongly cites *LP*, x, 797, and comments that 'catholics at this time believed that the sight of the sacrament or having it nearby was spiritually efficacious'. Ives, *Anne Boleyn*, pp. 325–6, notes Anne's reverence for the mass, but does not grasp how much her emotional emphasis on the host must qualify his characterisation of her religion.

[103] BL, Cotton MS, Otho C x fo. 228$^{v}$ (Ellis, *Original letters*, I ii. 59–60; *LP*, x, 797).

Still more tellingly, nor had Ann moved towards justification by faith alone. She asked Kingston 'shall I be in heaven for I have done mony gud dedys in my days'.[104] All this is a great distance from the explicit stress on the saving grace of faith to be found in those manuscripts which some scholars have seen as revealing Anne's 'evangelism': yet the evidence of Anne's words as reported by Kingston deserves to be given far greater weight than inferences from sentiments within texts possibly prepared for her.[105] After her trial she talked of going into a nunnery and much desired to be shriven.[106] True, George Constantine claimed that at her execution she had said 'I do not entend to reason my cause, but I committe me to Christ wholy, in whome ys my whole trust':[107] but that could have been a misleading elaboration of the words that Hall, Wriothesley and Spelman more briefly recorded, 'To Christ I commend my soul', and Foxe's rendering, 'O Lord have mercy on me! To God I commend my soul', offers further qualification.[108] The French poem stressed (as did Chapuys) Anne's stoic acceptance of her fate, her denial of her crimes, her appeal to God whether she deserved her death, her regular contemplation of Christ and his passion, her devout preparation for the sacrament and her sure hopes of heaven: but if on the scaffold she asked for prayers to be said to Jesus for her sins so that her soul would not be burdened by her sins after she died, as the French poem says, that seems to imply a belief in purgatory.[109] Her brother Rochford's religion is worth considering here too. According to Chapuys, after he had been convicted he accepted that he deserved death but he asked the king if his debts, which he listed, could be paid from his estate, that is his property confiscated because of his conviction for treason. That was a very conventionally religious concern.[110] On the scaffold Rochford, according to some accounts, admitted that he had been a diligent reader and setter forth of the word of God, and a favourer of the gospel of Christ, but lamented that if he had followed it truly he would not be there now.[111] Chapuys reported that Rochford said that he had deserved death for being so much and so far contaminated by the new sects and having infected several people, for which he was justly punished by God: he asked everyone to

[104] BL, Cotton MS, Otho C x fo. 228$^{v}$ (Ellis, *Original letters*, I ii. 59–60; *LP*, x, 797). Warnicke quite mistakenly refers to 'Anne's *prediction* [my italics]... that she would go to heaven, for she had "done mony gud dedys"' (*Rise and fall of Anne Boleyn*, p. 108). [105] See above, p. 7.

[106] *LP*, x, 890, 902.

[107] T. Aymot, 'A memorial from George Constantyne to Thomas, Lord Cromwell', *Archaeologia*, XXIII (1831), 65.

[108] J. H. Baker, ed., *The reports of Sir John Spelman*, *Selden Society*, XCIII, XCIV (1977), I, 59; W. D. Hamilton, ed., *Wriothesley's chronicle*, *Camden Society*, 2nd series, XI (1875), 42; E. Hll, *Chronicle* (1809 edn), p. 819; Foxe, *Acts and monuments*, V, 135; cf. Smart, '"Favourers of God's Word?"', pp. 191–2.

[109] Ascoli, p. 270, lines 1219–50, esp. 1229–32; Vienna, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, England, Karton 7, Korrespondenz, Berichten 1536, fo. 107$^{v}$ (PRO, PRO31/18/2/2 fo. 144; *LP*, x, 908).

[110] Vienna, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, England, Karton 7, Korrespondenz, Berichten 1536, fos. 107$^{v}$, 109 (PRO, PRO31/18/2/2 fos. 144, 145; *LP*, x, 908); Ascoli, p. 260, lines 915–24.

[111] *Wriothesley's chronicle*, p. 40; S. Bentley, *Excerpta historica* (1833), p. 263; J. G. Nichols, ed., *Chronicle of Calais*, *Camden Society*, 1st series, XXXV (1846), 46–7.

abandon such heresies and to stand with the true faith and religion.[112] But that dabbling with the new sects may for both Rochford and Anne have been more a matter of politics and radical chic than a matter of religious conviction. The break with Rome, which had made Anne's marriage to Henry possible, had to be explained and defended; the very preachers like William Barlow, prior of Haverfordwest, who were willing to work against antichrist – the pope – were also keen on spreading the gospel of Christ, the Bible in English, attacking 'abuses' of the church. Whether Anne Boleyn went much beyond the conventional and the political is much more doubtful than the thrust of recent writing allows. Anne was much more secular than the Elizabethan or the modern portrait of her as a pious lady suggests; she (and Henry) distributed patronage because they sought support more than enlightenment; the undoubted recipients of that patronage included conservatives such as John Skip; and what she revealed in the Tower through her belief in good works and her attachment to the sacraments was a deeply conventional catholicism.

[112] Vienna, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, England, Karton 7, Korrespondenz, Berichten 1536, fos. 107$^{v}$, 109 (PRO, PRO31/18/2/2 fos. 144, 145; *LP*, x, 908).