

Pamphlets for War:

The Role of Lord Burghley's Pamphlet Discourse in Avoiding Civil War

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HIST 3230

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Thesis:

Lord Burghley's pamphlet contributed to keeping the religious turbulence within the realms of discourse rather than a full-fledged civil war through his logical rhetoric and his determination to maintain peace and order.

Introduction:

England Under Elizabeth I
"By projection of an intensely royal presence, a personality so commanding and forceful as to strike awe, even terror into her servants' hearts, she was quickly able to command unquestioned obedience in court and country" (MacCaffrey).

Qualities of Queen Elizabeth I

- She had a sense of need for compromise, which likely stemmed from a vision of conformity. She also grew up during the Reformation and watched as her country shifted between Catholicism and Protestantism.
- Diplomacy helped England stay away from civil war. Because of her vision for conformity, she took charge of all the politics of her reign. She felt her presence was needed to successfully run the country, especially during a turbulent reformation.
- She had to appease religion while being head of the Anglican church. Because she was a religious leader, she had to find a balance between being the head of the Anglican church and the head of the country.

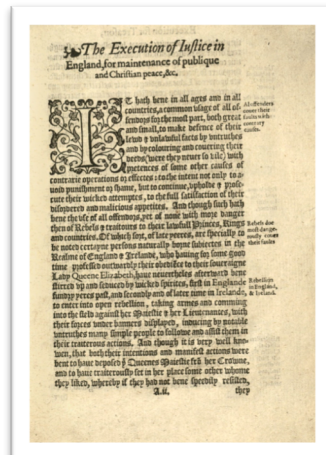


Meet the Author: William Cecil, Lord Burghley
September 13, 1520-August 4, 1598

Lord Burghley was an English statesman and a chief advisor to Queen Elizabeth I for most of her reign. He was very devoted to Elizabeth and to England, which earned him several powerful positions. Lord Burghley saw civil war as almost apocalyptic for the country, which influenced how he collected and distributed information. Much of Lord Burghley's work, like "The Execution of Justice," was meant to validate and protect England from critics.

Findings: Why did Cecil write the pamphlet?

- THE BLOODY QUESTION: "If the pope or any other by his appointment and authority do invade this realm, which part [side] would you take?" (O'Connell).
 - This question was important because it revealed a person's loyalty to either the pope or to country. If they did not choose their country, they could be tried for treason.
- In response to the execution of Edmund Campion, a Jesuit who taught sedition in England.
- To address his audience, who were other European leaders.
 - The pamphlet was a defensive strategy to explain to other European leaders the rationale for why they executed Catholics—it was not because they were Catholic, but because they were treasonous toward their Queen and country.
 - The pamphlet was also a strategy for unity: Lord Burghley sought unity and understanding between other countries for the sake of Britain's success during a turbulent era.
- Propaganda for their cause and a response to other religious propaganda that was published at the time.
 - Because of the different religious voices at the time, Lord Burghley used his position in government and his social standing to spin information in favor of the Elizabethan government and the Anglican Church.



Findings: The Rhetoric

Lord Burghley used logic to explain to his readers the dilemma. In this example, he explained that there were many Catholics with the intention to overthrow the crown:

"And though it is very well known, that both their intentions and manifest actions were bent, to have deposed the Queens Majestie from her Crowne, and to have traiterously let in her place some other whom they liked, where by if they had not bene speedily resisted, they would have committed great bloodsheddies and slaughters of her Majesties faithfull subjects, and ruined their native country. Yet by Gods power given unto her Majestie, they were so speedily vanquished, as some few of them suffered by order of Lawe according to their {deserts}, many and the greatest part upon confession of their faultes were pardoned."

Here we are able to see Lord Burghley's sense of urgency through words like "traiterously" and "bloodsheddies" which indicate a need for something to be done. This kind of language was meant to communicate the difficult nature of his dilemma. Still, Lord Burghley was sure to mention the mercy bestowed on those who confessed, which offered a tone of legitimacy and order to his writing.

Conclusions:

- To avoid a full-fledged civil war, Elizabeth I and Lord Burghley controlled the spread of information. They made everyone's business their business through huge networks for informants and the publishing of pamphlets like "The Execution of Justice". There was a constant filter of information—checks and balances—within Elizabeth's reign.
- The publication of the pamphlet was more about propaganda than attacking Catholics or a call to arms against Catholics. Burghley used the pamphlet as a presentation of his logic, not as a call to arms against Catholics. In fact, Burghley often mentions in the pamphlet a fear for peace that the Queen divinely maintained.

Application to Our World:

- The rhetoric found in Lord Burghley's pamphlet could be the start of nationalism. By presenting a black and white argument where loyalty to the pope meant betrayal to one's country, we see an instance where country must come before religion—it became more important to love one's country over ecclesiastical belief. Lord Burghley's rhetoric also suggests a separation of church and state, an idea that has since become the corner-stone of our own modern government.

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Images of Queen Elizabeth I and Lord William Cecil Burghley courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.