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JAMES I AND GUNPOWDER TREASON DAY*

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Abstract:

The assumed source of the annual early-modern English commemoration of Gunpowder treason day on 5 November – and its modern legacy, ‘Guy Fawkes day’ or ‘Bonfire night’ – has been an act of parliament in 1606. This article reveals the existence of earlier orders, explains how these orders alter understandings of the origin and initial purposes of the anniversary, and provides edited transcriptions of their texts. The first order revises the accepted date for the earliest publication of the special church services used for the occasion. The second order establishes that the anniversary thanksgiving was initiated not by parliament, but by King James I; it also shows that, in a striking innovation, he issued instructions for regular mid-week commemorations throughout England and Wales, expecting the bishops to change the Church of England’s preaching practices. The annual thanksgivings were not just English, but ordered also in Scotland and observed in protestant churches in Ireland. The motives for these religious thanksgivings are placed in a Stuart dynastic context, with Scottish antecedents and a British scope, rather than in the English ‘national’ setting assigned to the anniversary by English preachers and writers and by recent historians. The parliamentary act is best explained as an outcome of tensions between the king and the house of commons.

The aftermath of the discovery of the Gunpowder plot on 5 November 1605 has attracted much research and publication over a considerable period, yet some interpretative issues remain unexamined. One aspect of this aftermath has a particularly long history: the creation of an annual thanksgiving to commemorate the ‘deliverance’ of King James I, his queen and eldest son, the lords spiritual and temporal, the house of commons and the chief judges from attempted assassination by a group of disaffected catholics.¹ As originally appointed, the anniversary was

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¹ Places of publication are London, unless otherwise stated; STC numbers are given for certain seventeenth-century publications in order to avoid ambiguity. For modern studies of the 5 November thanksgivings and celebrations, see particularly David Cressy, *Bonfires & bells. National memory and the protestant calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England* (1989; Stroud, 2004), chs 9–10; idem, ‘The fifth of November remembered’, in Roy Porter, ed., *The myths of the English* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 68–90; Ronald Hutton, *The rise and fall of merry England. The ritual year, 1400–1700* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 182–6, 212, 221–2, 252–7; idem, *Stations of the sun. A history of the ritual year in Britain* (Oxford, 1996), ch. 39; James Sharpe, *Remember, remember the fifth of November: Guy Fawkes and the*

to be marked by attendance at church services, conducted with the use of a special form of prayer. This text for the annual services was reissued at least twelve times up to 1640, and after the Restoration it was revised and ordered to be appended to all editions of the Book of Common Prayer (BCP).² From shortly after 1605 the date of the ‘Papists’ conspiracy’ was always listed as a ‘red-letter’ day of religious observance in the calendars of the BCP and in almanacs;³ more generally, it became known as ‘Gunpowder treason day’. For centuries, 5 November remained a focus for expressions of anti-papery, reinforced by the memorialization on the same date of the revolution of 1688 against a renewed catholic threat from James II, creating a double anniversary.⁴ From 1606 further customs gathered around the religious thanksgiving. Gunpowder treason day became an occasion for special sermons, with leading preachers commonly addressing the great ecclesiastical and political issues of their times. It was marked by court, government, civic, university, military and naval ceremonies and dinners, by gun salutes at garrisons, and by holidays in public offices and law courts. In its best-known manifestation, it was a day of popular festivities centred around bonfires, fireworks and the burning of effigies of popes or devils and, from the late eighteenth century, of Guy Fawkes. In some or all of these aspects, Gunpowder treason day was carried to the overseas colonies and outposts.⁵ Even after the religious anniversary and use of the form of prayer were revoked by parliament and royal warrant in 1859, numerous English churches still rang their bells on 5 November, in some cases probably until the First World War.⁶ What became popularly known as ‘bonfire night’ continues, as the sole survivor of a practice of lighting bonfires that was once common for all types of thanksgiving days.

All this, it has been assumed, began with an act of parliament introduced in January 1606.⁷ This *Act for a publique thankesgiuing to almightie God, euery yeere on the fift day of*

Gunpowder Plot (2005); Brenda Buchanan *et al.*, *Gunpowder plots* (2005); and Anne James, *Poets, players and preachers. Remembering the Gunpowder Plot in seventeenth-century England* (Toronto, 2016).

² *Prayers and thankesgiuing to be vsed by all the kings maiesties louing subiects, for the happy deliuerance of his maiestie, the queene, prince, and states of parliament, from the most traiterous and bloody intended massacre by gunpowder, the 5 of Nouember 1605* (no date; STC 16494). All the surviving reprints of this form to 1640 were issued as separate publications. Strictly the form was never, as is sometimes stated, part of or included in the prayer book. Although from 1662 the revised text was printed and bound with the BCP, it was not contained within the text of the prayer book as authorized by parliament in the Act of Uniformity. Instead, it was subsequently ‘annexed’ to the BCP by a royal warrant, together with the forms for the other royal anniversaries. Continued publication of all the anniversary forms with the BCP required the issue of a fresh warrant early in each new reign.

³ The first known appearances are as ‘Papists cons.’ in 1607: see *The Book of Common Prayer* (STC 16332), sig. A3r, and [Henry Alleyn], *A double almanacke & prognostication ... for this year ... 1607*, sig. A8r.

⁴ In 1690 the form of prayer annexed to the BCP was revised to include commemoration of the ‘happy arrival’ of William of Orange at Torbay on 5 November 1688 ‘for the deliverance of our church and nation’.

⁵ E.g., Cressy, *Bonfires & bells*, pp. 203–6; Brendan McConville, ‘Pope’s day revisited, “popular” culture reconsidered’, *Explorations in Early American Culture*, IV (2000), 258–80; Kevin Q. Doyle, “‘Rage and fury which only hell could inspire’: the rhetoric and the ritual of Gunpowder treason in early America” (PhD thesis, Brandeis University, 2013); *Records of Fort St George. Diary and consultation book of 1678–1679* (Madras, 1911), p. 135; *Sydney Free Press* [New South Wales], 6 Nov. 1841, *Natal Witness*, 27 Nov. 1863.

⁶ See H. T. Tilley and H. B. Walters, *The church bells of Warwickshire* (Birmingham, 1910), p. 90, and other volumes of the county ‘Church bells’ series.

⁷ E.g. Cressy, *Bonfires & bells*, pp. 141–2 (and 229n2), 145; Hutton, *Merry England*, pp. 182–3; Sharpe, *Remember, remember*, pp. 79, 84, 89.

*Nouember*⁸ was certainly important. It made provision for ensuring that the ‘great and infinite blessing’ from God that had led to discovery of the plot should ‘neuer be forgotten’ and would remain in ‘Perpetuall Remembrance’, in ‘all ages to come’. Each 5 November, ministers in every place of worship were to say morning prayer in thanksgiving for the ‘most happy deliverance’, and ‘all and every person or persons’ in the kingdom were to attend the service at their local church or chapel. Ministers were to ‘give warning’ of this obligation during morning service on the previous Sunday, and on 5 November itself to remind their congregations of the purpose of the thanksgiving by reading out the text of the act of parliament after the service or the sermon. These provisions were still nominally required in the 1850s.⁹ Yet this act alone cannot have been sufficient to create the religious thanksgivings. It did not mention the form of prayer used at the annual services, giving no orders or authorization for its composition, printing, distribution and use; and it referred only to morning prayer, yet the form also provided texts for the litany and, as an option, for communion. Who was responsible for this form of prayer, by what authority, and at what date?

The beginnings – and the initial purposes – of Gunpowder treason day are not as obvious or straightforward as they have seemed. Earlier orders were issued for thanksgivings, two months before the introduction of the parliamentary bill. These orders not only explain the origins of the form of prayer, and what is, on closer inspection, a puzzling feature of its early editions. They also reveal three further aspects of the religious commemoration of the Gunpowder treason. First, the anniversary thanksgiving was initiated not by parliament but by King James, acting on his own authority together with the archbishop of Canterbury. This accorded with long-established practice: orders and forms of prayer for special worship were matters for the sovereign and bishops, not for parliament.¹⁰ The act of parliament repeated an existing royal order, which the bishops had already distributed to every parish, reinforced by their own instructions to the clergy. Second, James understood the Gunpowder plot and the thanksgivings for its discovery in different senses to the English ‘national’ providentialism ascribed to them by later preachers and writers, and described by modern historians – as is also indicated by evidence that the thanksgiving was not appointed for and observed in England alone. As Jenny Wormald especially has insisted, a fundamental interpretative principle for

⁸ STC 9503, and 3 Jac. I. c. 1 in *Statutes of the realm* (12 vols, London, 1810–28), IV/2, 1067–8. The act was passed by the house of lords on 30 January 1606, and received royal assent on 27 May: *Journals of the House of Lords [LJ]*, II, 365, 445–6.

⁹ To assist ministers, the act appears in some cases to have been bound with (and after) the form of prayer (see 1620 and 1623 edns, STC 16496, 16496.5), before becoming integral to it in most printings from 1628 to 1640, placed between the title page and the text of the service: see e.g. STC 16497.1 (1628). The act was not republished after 1660, and the revised form of 1662 contained no reference to its terms; in consequence, reading the act during church services probably lapsed. But a new rubric added to the form from 1728 (for as yet unknown reasons) restated the statutory requirements to give notice of the anniversary and to read out the act of ‘the third year of King James the First’. This rubric was retained until 1859, though with, it appears, little and declining effect.

¹⁰ See *National prayers. Special worship since the Reformation, 1: special prayers, fasts and thanksgivings in the British Isles, 1533–1688*, ed. Natalie Mears, Alasdair Raffe, Stephen Taylor and Philip Williamson with Lucy Bates (Boydell/Church of England Record Society, 20, 2013), pp. xciv–xcv, c, ciii.

understanding James I of England is that he had been and remained James VI of Scotland.¹¹ Third, in a remarkable innovation that has escaped historical notice, the king ordered further and much more frequent thanksgivings in all places of worship in England and Wales.

The two orders are transcribed as documents A and B in the Appendix to this article. The main part of what follows begins by describing the earliest thanksgivings after the discovery of the Gunpowder plot, and the context, locations and character of the two orders. The chief features of the second order are then considered, including comments on the extension of the thanksgivings to Scotland and Ireland.

James VI and I liked anniversary thanksgivings. Two had already been appointed, one for his survival of an alleged assassination ‘conspiracy’ by the 3rd earl of Gowrie and his brother Alexander Ruthven (ordered for Scotland in 1600, and for England and Wales in 1603), and the other for the date of his English accession (for England and Wales, in 1604). For religious anniversaries to be ordered or encouraged by the sovereign was new – observance of Elizabeth I’s accession day had been initiated by the bishops¹² – and it was also new for any to be observed in both England and Scotland. Each of these anniversaries was appointed at important and opportune political moments for James. The overall argument is that the king’s orders for thanksgivings after the Gunpowder plot were further instances of his persistent assertion of divine sanction for his own authority and the Stuart dynasty, and as support for his favoured policies. In the sense that an anniversary thanksgiving had already been appointed, the act of parliament was superfluous. Its real significance lies elsewhere: as evidence of parliament’s assertiveness in matters that were causing tension between some of its members and the king, and in ensuring that observance of the anniversary would persist long after the king’s death.

I

Thanksgivings for deliverance from the Gunpowder plot began on the day of its discovery, with further occasions for thanksgiving arranged during the rest of the month. On 5 November itself bonfires were lit and church bells rung in and around London, almost certainly prompted by a ‘precept’ from the lord mayor, who ordered the City’s aldermen to have bonfires made ‘this present evening’ in the principal streets ‘whereto the Inhabitantes maye assemble themselues in testimony of there exceding Joye and thanckes giuinge to allmightie God for this great diliueraunce’.¹³ The following Sunday, 10 November, was observed in London as a day of

¹¹ See Jenny Wormald’s numerous articles and essays on the king, notably ‘James VI and I: two kings or one?’, *History*, 68 (1983), 187–209.

¹² Natalie Mears and Philip Williamson, ‘The “holy days” of Queen Elizabeth I’, *History*, 105 (2020), 201–28, which also notes (p. 209) that an episcopal synod in 1555–56 had ordered an anniversary commemoration of the Marian reconciliation with the papacy.

¹³ Undated entry in Journals of the Common Council of the Corporation of London, London Metropolitan Archives [LMA], COL/CC/01/01/28, fo. 4r. Reginald Sharpe, *London and the kingdom* (3 vols, 1894–5) II, 14–15, dated this entry as 8 November, presumably because it is located between copies of documents dated 7 and 8 November. But the entries and documents are not in strict date order, and further evidence supports a dating of 5 November. [Edmund Howes], *An abridgement or summarie of the English chronicle, by ... John Stowe, ... continued ... vnto this present yeare* (1607), pp. 582–3, reports a ‘proclamation’ concerning the treason on the afternoon of the 5th, resulting that night in as ‘many bonefires in and around London, as the streetes could permit’. *The letters of John*

‘solemn and general thanksgiving’, including a special sermon delivered at Paul’s Cross by William Barlow, bishop of Rochester.¹⁴

This thanksgiving day in London was the earliest outcome of orders issued by the bishops, which must have led to many further thanksgiving services throughout England and Wales. Survival of orders for occasions of special worship during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries is uneven,¹⁵ and in this case just one copy has been found. Dated 8 November, it was sent by Richard Vaughan, bishop of London, to John Bill, archdeacon of St Albans, and is located in the records of the archdeaconry at Hertfordshire Archives and Library Services. Versions of its text have already been published,¹⁶ but as its full significance can now be understood with the assistance of further evidence – particularly that given in the second order considered here – a new transcription is printed in the Appendix as Document A.

Vaughan’s order required the rapid distribution to all churches in the archdeaconry of a ‘booke’ (a form) of prayer which had been ‘Comaunded to be vsed in everie parishe Church through owte the whole Realme’ (Document A, lines 10, 7–9). As this form was described as published by public authority (line 7), and given the procedures followed for earlier appointments of special worship¹⁷ and set out in the second order (Document B), Vaughan was evidently communicating to his diocesan clergy an order that the archbishop of Canterbury, Richard Bancroft, had issued for all the bishops. Bancroft himself had acted very quickly: just three days after discovery of the plot, a special form of prayer was ‘nowe sett forthe’ (line 8), that is to say, it had already been composed and was now being printed and made available to parish churches.¹⁸ The reading of the form of prayer was to begin as soon as possible after its receipt; and as it was to be used ‘at all tymes of Common prayer’ (lines 9, 12) – which would have included the ‘litany days’ of Wednesday and Friday, as well as Sunday – the thanksgivings

Chamberlain, ed. Norman McClure (2 vols, Philadelphia, 1939), I, 213, describes ‘great ringing and ... great store of bonfires’ the same night. For bell ringing on this date, see also churchwardens’ accounts, St John the Baptist, Walbrook, LMA, P69/JNB/B/006/MS00577/001, fo. 22r; *The account book of St Bartholomew in the City of London 1596–1698*, ed. Edwin Freshfield (1895), p. 29; and Walcott McKenzie, *The history of the parish church of St Margaret’s Westminster* (1847), p. 62.

¹⁴ Hoby to Edmondes, 19 Nov. 1605, in [Thomas Birch], *The court and times of James the first* (2 vols, 1848), I, 40; Edward Jupp, *An historical account of the Worshipful Company of Carpenters in the City of London* (1877), p. 71, (where ‘fformes’ refers to purchase of seats) and John Sherwell, *A descriptive and historical account of the Guild of Saddlers of the City of London* (1889), p. 71, for attendance of livery companies at St Paul’s; William Barlow, *The sermon preached at Pavles Cross, the tenth day of Nouember being the Sunday after the discouerie of this late horrible treason* (1606).

¹⁵ Episcopal registers vary considerably in character and content, and few of them record orders for special prayers and services: see the documents and commentaries in *National prayers*, 1.

¹⁶ *Records of the old archdeaconry of St Albans. A calendar of papers 1575 to 1637*, ed. H. R. Wilton Hall (St Albans, 1908), p. 131 (a summary, misdating the order as 12 Nov.), and *National prayers*, 1, pp. 261–2 (incorrectly ascribing the order to Richard Bancroft, rather than Richard Vaughan).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. xcv, cv, 191–3, 193, 216, 220–1, and for an earlier anniversary thanksgiving (marking the Gowrie conspiracy), Whitgift to Bancroft (then bishop of London), 14 July 1603, in *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae*, ed. David Wilkins (4 vols, 1737), IV, 370.

¹⁸ For rapid production of such forms and the methods of distribution, see Natalie Mears, ‘Brought to book: purchases of special forms of prayer in English parishes, 1558–1640’, in Pete Langham, ed., *Negotiating the Jacobean printed book* (Farnham, 2011), pp. 35–40, and *National prayers*, 1, pp. xcix–civ.

were to continue for some days or weeks. Purchases of the form during late 1605 are recorded in churchwardens' accounts in various dioceses,¹⁹ and evidence exists for general celebrations as well as religious thanksgivings in November and December, as far afield as Pembrokeshire and an English garrison in Flanders.²⁰

Religious thanksgivings for the discovery of the Gunpowder plot had, then, been held two months before the introduction of the thanksgiving bill in parliament. But the larger importance of this first order is that it provides the original publication date for the form of prayer for Gunpowder treason day. Until the reprints issued from 1620 onwards, *Prayers and thanksgiving ... for the happy deliuerance of ... the 5 of Nouember 1605* did not bear a publication date; but in the belief that the anniversary was ordered by parliament, its first edition has conventionally been given the date of 1606. However, it can now be established that this edition was the 'booke of prayer and thanckes givinge' (lines 10–11) ordered on 8 November 1605 for immediate use. This can be implied not just from the similarity of title, but also from an unusual feature of the form. Unlike the forms of prayer published for other Elizabethan and Jacobean anniversary thanksgivings,²¹ it contained no instruction for its annual use, either in the title (as was usual) or in any rubric. This alone suggests that the authorities and the printers had re-purposed an existing and undated form of prayer.²² That this is exactly what they did is confirmed by the evidence of Document B, Bancroft's order of 29 November for the anniversary thanksgiving. This gave instructions (lines 54–7) that for each 5 November the clergy were to use the form of prayer and thanksgiving that was 'all redie printed' – which must mean the form described in Vaughan's order three weeks earlier – and that the bishops were to ensure that every parish possessed a copy.²³ Further correspondence in the St Albans archdeaconry provides an example of how this was implemented. Copies of the bishop's letter containing Bancroft's order were sent to each parish with the information that the bearer of the letter, the archdeacon's apparitor, could sell copies of the form (for four pence), evidently meaning that those which had not already obtained a copy after the first order of 8 November should do so now, or buy a second copy.²⁴

¹⁹ E.g. St Dunstan-in-the-West (London), LMA, P69/DUN2/B/011/MS02968/001, fo. 514r; *Account book of St Bartholomew, London*, ed. Freshfield, p. 29; St Peter (St Albans), Hertfordshire Archives and Library Services, Hertford [HALS], D/P93/5/1, fo. 66r; Edward Peacock, 'Extracts from the churchwardens' accounts of ... Leverton, in the county of Lincoln', *Archaeologia*, 41 (1868), p. 368, and Northill, Bedfordshire, in Cressy, *Bonfires & bells*, p. 145.

²⁰ Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Calendar of the manuscripts of ... the marquess of Salisbury* [HMC, *Salisbury*], XVII (1938), pp. 485, 553.

²¹ For the accession days of Elizabeth and James, and for James's escape from the Gowrie conspiracy.

²² See *National prayers*, I, p. 261.

²³ Bancroft also referred to the form of prayer for 5 August (Gowrie day) as already printed: this had been published in 1604. Additional evidence for early publication of the form of thanksgiving during late 1605 is that Barlow, *Sermon preached at Pavles Cross*, sig. E4r, reports its inclusion of a prayer of his own composition which he had recited at the end of his sermon on 10 November. Although copies of the *Sermon* are dated 1606, it was registered for publication on 11 December 1605: *A transcript of the registers of the company of stationers of London 1554–1640*, ed. Edward Arber (3 vols, 1875–7), III, 132.

²⁴ James Rolfe (archdeacon's official), to ministers and churchwardens of St Albans archdeaconry, 10 Dec. 1605, HALS, archdeaconry of St Albans records [ASA], 5/4/189, p. 833. Mears, 'Brought to book', pp. 38–40, explains

II

These first thanksgivings, observed during November 1605, may well have been ordered or encouraged by council members or the king, although no evidence of a formal order has survived.²⁵ According to the chronicler Edward Howes, early on 5 November the council notified the lord mayor of London of the discovery of a ‘plot of treason’, and it may also have been responsible for the ‘proclamation’ which made ‘the manner of the treason ... known vnto the people’ that afternoon.²⁶ James’s principal secretary of state, the earl of Salisbury, assisted Barlow with preparation of his sermon for the London thanksgiving on 10 November.²⁷ The king himself had experience, as James VI of Scotland, of widening appointments of thanksgivings after his earlier ‘deliverance’ from the Gowrie conspiracy: immediate thanksgivings in Edinburgh, then special thanksgiving days in all parishes, followed by annual thanksgivings throughout the kingdom.²⁸

James was certainly responsible for the order for the continuation of thanksgivings for the discovery of the Gunpowder plot. On 27 November he asked the archbishop of Canterbury to consider the matter²⁹ and, evidently after a discussion between them, on 29 November Bancroft issued an order that expressed ‘his maiesties pleasure and commandement’ (Document B, lines 28, 47–8). This was sent as a letter to Bishop Vaughan, who, as dean of the province of Canterbury, was responsible for communicating such matters to the bishops of the province,³⁰ while Bancroft himself undertook to notify the bishops of York province (lines 58–60). It was this royal instruction, not the act of parliament, that initiated the observance of Gunpowder treason day: it ordered the anniversary thanksgiving services, and provided authorization for annual use of the existing form of prayer. It also introduced into England and Wales a new type of thanksgiving, expressed in mid-week sermons and prayers.

Unusually, as many as four manuscript texts of Bancroft’s letter to Vaughan are known, all transcribed within letters which Vaughan sent out on 30 November. Two are the original letters, and two are copies of original letters. Strictly, these documents are not new archival discoveries: three have long been available for scholars, and two have appeared in print in some form. Rather, what is presented here is recognition and explanation of their historical importance,

that distribution of forms of prayer depended partly on the ability and willingness of parishes to purchase copies. For those with available funds, having two copies allowed the parish clerk to lead the congregation in singing psalms and in responses to prayers.

²⁵ The privy council registers 1602 to 1618 were destroyed in a fire in 1619 (*Acts of the privy council of England 1613–1614* (1921), pp. v–vi) and thanksgivings were not noted in contemporary abstracts, in British Library, Add. MSS. 11402. Nor do Bancroft’s and Vaughan’s episcopal registers provide evidence.

²⁶ [Howes], *English chronicle*, p. 582, and see note 13 above.

²⁷ Barlow, *Sermon preached at Pavles Cross*, sig. A4r.

²⁸ *National prayers*, 1, p. 233; *Records of the parliaments of Scotland to 1707*, www.rps.ac.uk, 1600/11/12, and see *National Prayers since the Reformation, volume 4: anniversary commemorations with appendices and indices 1533–2016*, ed. Philip Williamson, Natalie Mears, Alasdair Raffae and Stephen Taylor (Boydell/Church of England Record Society, forthcoming).

²⁹ Lake to Salisbury, 27 Nov. 1605, Hatfield House Archives, Hertfordshire [HH], CP 113/48.

³⁰ For this ancient duty of the bishop of London (which is still current), see also Whitgift to Bancroft, 14 July 1603, in *Concilia Magnae*, ed. Wilkins, IV, 370.

as none has attracted further comment. One of the original letters was sent by Vaughan as an instruction to clergy in his own diocese. Like his order of 8 November, the recipient was Archdeacon Bill at St Albans: it too survives among the archdeaconry records, and it was summarized in the calendar of these records published in 1908.³¹ The further letters were sent by Vaughan to other bishops. The text sent to John Jegon, bishop of Norwich, survives in two versions. The original letter was gathered into a collection of documents kept by Jegon's secretary, Anthony Harison, which is now in Norfolk Record Office.³² This text was transcribed in an edition of Harison's collection published in 1964,³³ and it provides the preferred base text for a new (and more accurate) transcription of Bancroft's order, given here as Document B. A copy of this letter to Jegon is in the Tanner manuscripts, located since 1736 in the Bodleian Library.³⁴ The fourth text of Vaughan's letter is a copy included in the register of William Chaderton, bishop of Lincoln, now in Lincolnshire Archives.³⁵

III

One striking feature of Bancroft's letter is that James did not place the Gunpowder plot within the widely accepted understanding of English history and national identity. As historians have long observed, English preachers, writers and print-makers trumpeted the discovery of the plot as yet further confirmation of God's special providential favour towards England, as revealed by numerous earlier deliverances, especially the destruction of the Spanish Armada. Gunpowder treason day quickly became integral to a calendar of English protestant, anti-catholic and patriotic anniversaries.³⁶ But this was not how James himself interpreted the plot and the purpose

³¹ HALS, ASA, 5/4/189, pp. 831–3, and *Records of the old archdeaconry of St Albans*, ed. Wilton Hall, pp. 131–3. After reciting the archbishop's letter, Vaughan ordered that instructions be sent to churches to ensure its 'execution in every particular poynte', the more so because the London diocese, as the nearest to the intended explosion, should set an example to the more remote dioceses.

³² 'Collectanea sive Registrum Vagum continenta fragmenta consuta tangentis episcopale negotium tempore reverend in Christo patria, domini Johannis Jegon, Episcopi Norwicensis, collecta par Anthonium Harison, notorium publicum, clericum', Norwich diocesan archives, Norfolk Record Office, DN/HAR 1, 141r–142r.

³³ *The Registrum vagum of Anthony Harison*, ed. Thomas Barton (2 vols, Norfolk Record Society, 32–3, 1963–4), II, 215–17. Barton (p. 17) describes the 'Registrum' as consisting largely of copies made by Harison, but Vaughan's letter is evidently the original document (even though Barton did not report it as being among the 'one or two original letters' in the collection). This can be established by how the paper was folded, and by the presence of four different hands: the text by a secretary, Vaughan's signature, and, on the outside, not a single endorsement as Barton stated (p. 217), but two elements: the address written by another secretary, and Jegon's record of receipt and his instructions (misdated as '17 of November', i.e. December).

³⁴ Tanner MSS 75/44. This copy was probably obtained by Thomas Tanner during his period as chancellor and archdeacon of Norwich, 1701–7. That it is a copy of the Registrum text seems clear from its shared features (recorded in the notes for Document B), notably its omission of a phrase that is included in all the other texts. The catalogue of the MSS describes Vaughan's letter as containing a 'circular letter' from Bancroft, without reference to the king's instructions: *Catalogi codicum manusccriptorum bibliothecae Bodleianae pars quarta codices viri admodum reverendi Thomae Tanneri*, ed. Alfred Hackman (Oxford, 1860), col. 388.

³⁵ Chaderton episcopal register, Reg. 30, fos. 205v–207r. Vaughan's letters to bishops ended differently to the letter sent to Archdeacon Bill, in exhorting them to implement the king's order rapidly, and explaining why they should do so (see below).

³⁶ See esp. Cressy, *Bonfires & bells*, pp. xii–xiii, 124–5, 128, 142–3, 145, 149–52; Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in early modern England* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 245–66, 288; James, *Poets, players*, pp. 18–19, 28, 69–70 and *passim*.

of the thanksgivings. As a Scottish as well as an English king, he could hardly regard divine favour as reserved for the English kingdom alone; for him the deliverance was personal and dynastic, and the thanksgivings had a Scottish antecedent and a British scope.

As Peter McCullough, Mary Morrissey and Anne James have noted, James went to considerable lengths to ensure that an earlier 'deliverance' which he had experienced as king of Scotland should also be commemorated in England.³⁷ Immediately after his accession to the English throne in 1603, he created English versions of the anniversary thanksgivings that had been appointed in Scotland during 1600 for his preservation from the Gowrie conspiracy – special sermons at court, special services in all churches, a public holiday from work and encouragement of 'lawful signs and demonstrations of joy and gladness'.³⁸ It seems evident that James intended to insert the Gowrie episode into the existing account of English national deliverances, amplified by the introduction into England of an official holiday, which exceeded the provisions that had existed for Queen Elizabeth's accession day.³⁹

Yet this was not James's main purpose, as his reactions to the Gunpowder plot make clear: his references were to Stuart and Scottish, not Elizabethan or English, deliverances. In his much publicized address when proroguing parliament on 9 November 1605, he compared the plot with the Gowrie conspiracy, and even with a threat 'while I was yet in my mothers belly', meaning the murderous plot against Mary Queen of Scots' secretary, David Rizzio. For James, God's mercies on 5 August 1600 and 5 November 1605 were personal to himself, as confirmed by a coincidence of the days of these events (both on the 5th day of the month, and both on Tuesdays): the two deliverances had been granted to 'mee'; it 'was the same deuill that ... persecuted mee', and the 'same God that ... delivered mee'.⁴⁰ The English parliament and realm were the fortunate but secondary beneficiaries of God's favour towards their king. The personal point and the Scottish precursor were still more emphatic in the king's instructions for the thanksgivings for 5 November, as reported and distributed in Bancroft's letter. These begin with an extended restatement of James's escape from the 'traiterous plott' of Gowrie and Ruthven (lines 1–9), and his part in the discovery of the Gunpowder plot was presented as a close parallel with this earlier deliverance (lines 19–26). The English thanksgivings ordered for the Gowrie anniversary were to be repeated almost exactly for what became Gunpowder treason day (lines 28–31, 55–7), with one exception: for unknown reasons, no new holiday was appointed.

³⁷ Peter McCullough, *Sermons at court. Politics and religion in Elizabethan and Jacobean preaching* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 117–22; Mary Morrissey, 'Presenting James VI and I to the public: preaching on political anniversaries at Paul's Cross', in Ralph Houlbrooke, ed., *James VI and I* (Aldershot, 2006), pp. 109, 115–21, and idem, *Politics and the Paul's Cross sermons, 1558–1642* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 145–7; James, *Poets, players*, pp. 28, 29, 33–6, 47–8, 53–4.

³⁸ Privy council to Whitgift, 12 July 1603, in *Concilia Magnae*, ed. Wilkins, IV, 370–1.

³⁹ Accession day had been described as a 'holiday' only in the sense of a 'holy day', meaning a day for special church services, not a day without work, although the services were commonly accompanied by civic and popular festivities in the evenings: see Mears and Williamson, 'Holy days of Queen Elizabeth', 220–1.

⁴⁰ *His maiesties speach in this last session of parliament* (1605), reprinted in *King James VI and I. Political writings*, ed. Johann P. Sommerville (Cambridge, 1994), p. 157, and see James, *Poets, players*, p. 59.

There were further ways in which James's interpretation of the Gunpowder plot differed from the common English understanding of the kingdom's protestant past. He did not share its comprehensive anti-catholicism. This was in part because he wanted to strengthen domestic political stability by soothing religious divisions and to obtain international security by preserving the recent peace with Spain, which were both integral to his grandiose ambition of achieving a reunion of Christendom.⁴¹ But it also derived from his interpretation of the character of the threat. Although the Gunpowder plot was the work of a number of catholics, the equivalence he drew was not with previous catholic plots against Elizabeth nor with the Spanish Armada and other attempted foreign catholic interventions, but with a conspiracy undertaken in Scotland by two presbyterians. For James, the double deliverances were from traitors, irrespective of religious distinctions. As has frequently been noted, his proclamation for the apprehension of the conspirators two days after discovery of the plot and his speech to parliament on 9 November appealed for tolerance towards loyal catholics, and denied involvement by the catholic kingdoms.⁴² While Bancroft's order did describe the plot as seeking to overthrow the true worship of God and to make the kingdom a prey to foreigners and warned against the continued 'malice of the Romishe brood' (lines 18–19, 44), it was presented as the work of only 'certain gentlemen recusants and popish priests' (lines 11–12), not of all or most catholics.

For James, the benefits of his own deliverances extended to all his realms. The council order for the English thanksgivings for his escape from the Gowrie conspiracy had justified them with the argument that by his succession to the English throne, England had become 'partakers of the same blessings, and of the benefit thereof proceeding equally with his subjects of the Scottish nation'.⁴³ Bancroft's statement of the king's wishes in November 1605 similarly presented God's mercies during the Gunpowder plot as applying to 'the whole Island of great Britainne', and more widely to 'this Iland with the rest of his maiesties dominions' (lines 28, 43–4). Gunpowder treason day was not an occasion for thanksgiving in England alone. According to an order issued by the council of Scotland on Charles I's instructions in 1628, James had given 'ordour and directioun that the ... fyft day of November sould be solemnelie kepted yeerlie thairafter throughout his kingdomes'.⁴⁴ The absence of government records for Scotland and for Ireland during this period creates problems with strictly contemporary evidence: the Scottish

⁴¹ Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake, 'The ecclesiastical policy of King James I', *Journal of British Studies*, 24 (1985), 182–7; W. B. Patterson, *King James VI and I and the reunion of Christendom* (Cambridge, 1997).

⁴² *Stuart royal proclamations*, ed. James Larkin and Paul Hughes (2 vols, Oxford, 1973, 1983), I, 124–6; *King James. Political writings*, ed. Sommerville, pp. 152–3, and see e.g. Mark Nicholls, *Investigating Gunpowder Plot* (Manchester, 1991), pp. 25, 47–8, 62; Lori Anne Ferrell, *Government by polemic. James I, the king's preachers, and the rhetoric of conformity 1603–1625* (Stanford, CA, 1998), pp. 67–9; A. W. R. E. Okines, 'Why was there so little government reaction to Gunpowder plot?', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 55 (2004), 275–92; Morrissey, *Politics and the Paul's Cross sermons*, p. 149.

⁴³ Privy council to Whitgift, 12 July 1603, in *Concilia Magnae*, ed. Wilkins, IV, 370.

⁴⁴ Order of 30 Oct. 1628, reciting a letter from Charles I, 10 Oct. 1628, in *The register of the privy council of Scotland*, 2nd ser., ed. D. Masson and P. Hume Brown (8 vols, Edinburgh, 1899–1908), II, 473–4.

privy council records for 1603 to 1606 have been lost,⁴⁵ and most of the public archives of Ireland were destroyed in 1922. Nevertheless, it is clear that Scotland was expected to share in thanksgiving for the king's deliverance in England, just as England had earlier been expected to join in thanksgiving for the king's deliverance in Scotland. According to the recollections of John Spottiswoode, who had been archbishop of Glasgow and a privy council member in 1605, after news of the Gunpowder plot reached Edinburgh the council immediately commanded public thanksgivings in all Scottish churches,⁴⁶ and thanksgivings are recorded in burghs during the next few days.⁴⁷ Orders were evidently also issued for anniversary thanksgivings. These were observed in various towns during the following years;⁴⁸ in 1616–17 a prayer for 5 November (and for 5 August) was included in a draft for a Scottish prayer book,⁴⁹ and the anniversary was (again with 5 August) a point of reference in the long debates about James's efforts to restore holy days in the Five Articles of Perth in 1618.⁵⁰ Following reports that observance of the day had declined after James's death, the aim of Charles's order in 1628 was to revive and perpetuate the anniversary, and it was included ('Powder-treason') in the calendar of the Book of Common Prayer that Charles tried to impose on the Church of Scotland in 1637.⁵¹

For Ireland the evidence is less certain. In 1614 the government in London refused to approve an Irish parliamentary act for an annual thanksgiving similar to that of the English act of 1606. This was later claimed to have expressed James's general desire not to 'sour and alienate' the kingdom's Roman catholic majority,⁵² and avoiding an attempt to impose a statutory requirement for all Irish churches, including catholic churches, is consistent with his broad tolerance towards peace-minded catholics in Scotland and England. But it is likely that the

⁴⁵ *The register of the privy council of Scotland*, 1st ser., ed. John H. Burton *et al.* (14 vols, Edinburgh, 1877–98), VI, iv.

⁴⁶ John Spottiswoode, *The history of the Church of Scotland*, ed. Michael Russell and Mark Napier (3 vols, Edinburgh, 1847–51), III, 174, and see David Calderwood, *The history of the kirk of Scotland* [1640s], ed. Thomas Thomson and David Laing (6 vols, Edinburgh, 1842–9), VI, 367.

⁴⁷ *Extracts from the records of the burgh of Edinburgh, 1604–1626*, ed. Marguerite Wood (Edinburgh, 1931), p. 18 (12 Nov. 1605); Joseph Irving, *The history of Dumbartonshire* (Dumbarton, 1860), p. 172 (12 Nov.); Ebenezer Henderson, *Annals of Dunfermline* (Glasgow, 1879), p. 263 (13 Nov.); presbytery of Paisley minutes, 14 Nov. 1605, National Records of Scotland [NRS], CH2/291/1/124; *Extracts from the council register of the burgh of Aberdeen*, ed. John Stuart (2 vols, Aberdeen, 1844–8) II, 278–9 (15 Nov.).

⁴⁸ E.g. *Edinburgh records 1604–1626*, pp. 46, 332, 394 (1608, 1619, 1625): Robert Pitcairn, *Criminal trials in Scotland* (3 vols, Edinburgh, 1833), II, 243 (Perth burgh council in 1608, on the day being 'perpetualie kept heireftir', as the king desired); *The records of Elgin*, ed. William Cramond (2 vols, Aberdeen, 1903, 1908), II, 152, 161, 167 (1617, 1619, 1622), and see Margo Todd, *The culture of protestantism in early modern Scotland* (New Haven, 2002), pp. 225, 344.

⁴⁹ 'A Scottish liturgy of the reign of James VI', ed. Gordon Donaldson, in *Miscellany of the Scottish History Society*, X (Edinburgh, 1965), p. 102.

⁵⁰ *The life and death of ... William Cowper, bishop of Galloway* (1619), sigs. C4r–D2r; David Lindsay, *A true narration of all the passages of the proceedings in the general assembly ... holden at Perth* (1621), pp. 24, 30–1, 69, 89.

⁵¹ *The booke of common prayer ... for the use of the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh, [1637]), sig. b7r.

⁵² *Journals of the House of Commons of Ireland* (19 vols, Dublin, 1796–1800), I, 20, 25; Thomas Carte, *An history of the life of James, duke of Ormonde* (3 vols, 1735–6), I, 22; and see James McConnel, 'Remembering the 1605 gunpowder plot in Ireland, 1605–1920', *Journal of British Studies*, 50 (2011), 867.

thanksgiving was observed by the protestant government of Ireland⁵³ and in at least some churches of the Church of Ireland, and that services were read from the English form of prayer. The anniversary would have been evident in the calendar of English editions of the BCP which were commonly used in these churches, and it was included in the calendars of Dublin editions of the BCP published in 1621 and 1637.⁵⁴ So far, however, the first published evidence of religious observance is for 1623.⁵⁵ Gunpowder treason day was certainly observed in Ireland and Scotland after the Restoration, as a revival of what had ostensibly been an established practice before the civil wars and the Interregnum. In Ireland the form of prayer for the day was annexed to the BCP in 1666, and the observance continued officially until the same measures of abolition as those for England in 1859. In the Scottish Kirk, all religious observances for royal anniversaries ended with the re-establishment of presbyterianism in 1690, but for some time it remained as a secular government commemoration.⁵⁶

IV

The most remarkable aspect of James's 'commandement' is the order that, in addition to the annual thanksgivings, there should be prayers, thanksgivings and sermons every Tuesday in English and Welsh cathedrals, parish churches and collegiate chapels (lines 33–44). Peter McCullough showed that James appointed Tuesday sermons and prayers at his English court shortly after his accession in 1603 in thanksgiving for his escape from Gowrie and Ruthven; and he asked whether the king had also planned to extend these to the rest of the kingdom, before concluding that 'we may never know'.⁵⁷ Bancroft's letter shows that a wider introduction of Tuesday thanksgivings had indeed been James's long-standing ambition – 'his maiestie hath hether toe and soe still is resolved' (lines 32–3) – which discovery of the Gunpowder plot gave him the opportunity to accomplish.

Tuesday thanksgivings were, like anniversaries for royal deliverances, innovations which James brought from Scotland. In the aftermath of the Gowrie conspiracy in August 1600, and even before the appointment of the Scottish anniversary thanksgiving, he had ordered that 'everie Tuisday heerafter sall be a day of ordinarie preaching, within everie burgh within the bounds of the synods'.⁵⁸ As an evangelical Calvinist, James gave particular emphasis to preaching, and mid-week sermons in towns had been strongly recommended in the Church of Scotland's *First Book of Discipline* (1560) and become a widespread practice, on varying days of the week in

⁵³ For the date of the 'delivery' from the gunpowder treason as a ceremonial day, see *Calendar of state papers relating to Ireland, 1615–1625* (1880), p. 246.

⁵⁴ STC 16358, sig. A7r, and STC 16407, sig. A7r.

⁵⁵ *The vestry records of the parish of St John the evangelist, Dublin, 1595–1658*, ed. Raymond Gillespie (Dublin, 2002), p. 38.

⁵⁶ For details, see *National prayers*, 4.

⁵⁷ McCullough, *Sermons at court*, p. 117. Anthony Rudd's comment on Tuesday thanksgivings in June 1603 which prompted this question evidently referred to court sermons and possibly to the king's earlier orders for Scotland (see below), although he was conceivably aware of the king's desires for England.

⁵⁸ James's order was issued with the concurrence of the commission of the general assembly of the Church: Calderwood, *History of the kirk of Scotland*, VI, 76.

different towns. In Scotland, the king's order could often be easily implemented, by ministers and burgh councils substituting Tuesday for their existing preaching day.⁵⁹ But in England church services were conducted by set liturgies and the BCP prescribed services on Wednesdays and Fridays ('litany days'); and, as was evident in a sharp exchange between James and Bancroft at the Hampton Court conference in January 1604, some bishops were wary of preaching without good regulation, because sermons were the principal means by which radical forms of puritanism were spread.⁶⁰ If James had asked in 1603 for Tuesday thanksgivings to become a general English practice, presumably Whitgift and council members had persuaded him that these would cause practical difficulties, and risked encouraging sermons critical of the established authorities – particularly as it was known in England that some Scottish preachers and writers were sceptical of the king's account of the Gowrie conspiracy.⁶¹ Consequently only annual thanksgivings had been ordered, with the archbishops arranging the texts for the special services.

The discovery of the Gunpowder plot on another Tuesday made that day of the week still more special for James. He emphasized this coincidence of week day in his speech to parliament on 9 November, and explicitly selected a Tuesday as a propitious day for the start of the next parliamentary session, in January 1606.⁶² As reported in Bancroft's letter on 29 November, James evidently considered that general preaching, prayer and thanksgiving every Tuesday was now justified for three reasons. Another deliverance on the same weekday marked out that day even more as one for special thanksgivings; midweek prayer and preaching would help to guard against further treasons (lines 43–7); and both the extent of the thanksgiving due from the whole kingdom and the importance of defence against further subversion justified changes in the Church's practices. Tuesday thanksgivings, more than a new anniversary, had been the chief issue that James had wanted to raise with Bancroft,⁶³ and evidently the archbishop and other bishops were now convinced, setting aside – at least in the immediate aftermath of the plot – their earlier doubts about sanctioning more frequent sermons. One difficulty was that any weekday sermons in towns were usually delivered when people gathered for market days, which were settled by charter or custom and could not easily be changed.⁶⁴ No solution was offered for this. Another problem was that in addition to Sundays, the days on which the clergy were most likely to preach were the litany days of Wednesday and (or) Friday, the observance of which had

⁵⁹ William McMillan, *The worship of the Scottish reformed church, 1550–1638* (Dunfermline, 1931), pp. 146–8; Todd, *Culture of protestantism*, p. 30.

⁶⁰ Roland Usher, *The reconstruction of the English church* (2 vols, 1910), II, 347. Midweek sermons were delivered in London and other English town parishes through lay-funded lectureships, but with sometimes uneasy relationships with the ecclesiastical authorities: H. Gareth Owen, 'Lecturers and lectureships in Tudor London', *Quarterly Review*, 162 (1961), 63–76.

⁶¹ For the difficulties of presentation, see Morrissey, 'Presenting James', pp. 115–18; idem, *Politics and the Paul's Cross Sermons*, pp. 145–7; James, *Poets, players*, pp. 52–4

⁶² *King James. Political writings*, ed. Sommerville, p. 157.

⁶³ Lake to Salisbury, 27 Nov. 1605, HH, CP113/48 (also in HMC, *Salisbury*, XVII, 516).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* Sometimes even dates of special fast days were altered to avoid market days: for cases in 1625, see *National prayers*, I, p. 310.

been reaffirmed only the year before, in new church canons.⁶⁵ They could not be expected to preach an extra sermon as well, on another day of the week. On this, the king and the archbishop compromised by removing an expectation of additional preaching: existing midweek sermons would be transferred to Tuesdays, though without changing the provision for reading the litany on Wednesdays and Fridays (lines 35–9, 51–5).

This instruction for Tuesday sermons explains why the king's order was issued immediately, rather than left until a date closer to the first anniversary in 1606. It was to be acted upon 'forthwith' (line 48), and Vaughan in his covering letter to the bishops gave a further justification for 'the speedie putting' of the order 'in execucion in all pointes': 'it is our speciall dutie in regarde of our place and callinge to shewe our selues most forward in this action of thanksgiving that by our example all the people of the land may be incited to have a sensible feeleinge of the incomparable goodnes of all mightie god in soe miraculouse a deliuerance of the whole Realme from such a feare full calamitie'.⁶⁶ One churchwarden was so impressed by the novelty of the midweek thanksgiving that he failed to comment on the anniversary: 'To ye Parriter for bringing notice of prayers to be kept [on] Twesdaies'.⁶⁷ But the extent to which this part of the order was implemented during the following years is unclear. Very few references to Tuesday observances have survived. Visitation articles issued for the archdeaconry of Norwich in 1606 expected the clergy every Tuesday to provide a sermon and to read out the litany, suffrages and prayers 'appointed by authority, for his Maiesties happie deliuerance', in addition to providing services on the Wednesday and Friday litany days.⁶⁸ During the 1660s, Archbishop Laud's biographer, Peter Heylyn, stated that 'most corporations, and many other market towns in all parts of the kingdom' had appointed Tuesday sermons, and the Oxford antiquary Anthony Wood recorded them in much of the university, continuing until the 1640s.⁶⁹ Comments in some Jacobean printed sermons may refer to such wider observances, not just to the court sermons.⁷⁰ But lack of further evidence – this for a large change in preaching practices, which might have been expected to attract much comment⁷¹ – suggests that Heylyn over-stated the number of

⁶⁵ See canon 15 in the church canons, given royal assent on 6 Sept. 1604, in *The Anglican canons 1529–1947*, ed. Gerald Bray (Church of England Record Society, 6; Woodbridge, 1998), pp. 284–5.

⁶⁶ Vaughan to Chaderton, 30 Nov. 1605, Chaderton episcopal register, Reg. 30, fo. 207r, and similarly to Jegon, Tanner MSS 75/40, fo. 223r, and *Registrum vagum*, II, 217.

⁶⁷ Churchwardens' accounts for St Peter, St Albans, Apr. 1605–Apr. 1606, HALS, D/P93/5/1, fo. 67r.

⁶⁸ *Articles to be enquired of within the archdeaconrie of Norwich, by the church-wardens* (1606), sigs. A3r–A3v. The archdeacon was Bishop Jegon's brother, Thomas. The implication, which exceeded the instructions of the king and archbishop, was that the form of prayer issued by the order of 8 November 1605 (document A) was to continue in regular use, with parts read out in an additional weekly service. However, while other printed archdeacons' articles for this period (e.g. for Nottingham, Colchester, Worcester) contained the standard enquiry about use of the litany on Wednesdays and Fridays, no mention was made of observances on Tuesdays.

⁶⁹ Peter Heylyn, *Cyprianus anglicus* (1668), p. 333; Anthony Wood, *The history and antiquities of the University of Oxford* [1660s], ed. John Gutch (3 vols, Oxford, 1792–6), II, 283–4. Both were unaware of Bancroft's order of November 1605, and ascribed the Tuesday sermons to the example of the court sermons for the Gowrie episode.

⁷⁰ E.g. John Rawlinson, *The Romish Juda, A sermon preached ... the Fifth of Nouember 1610* (1611), p. 25; Lancelot Andrewes, 1618, in McCullough, *Sermons at court*, p. 118.

⁷¹ The chief source for parish arrangements, the accounts of churchwardens, cannot help as they do not record activities which were part of a minister's normal duties. Kenneth Fincham's impression from his examination of many diocesan act books is that references to Tuesday observances are at best scarce.

Tuesday observances, and that their adoption was patchy and where introduced did not last long. Certainly the readiness of the bishops in 1605 to promote Tuesday sermons appears to have waned in later years. While an increasing number of episcopal visitation articles asked whether parishes observed the anniversary thanksgivings or possessed the special forms of prayer for these occasions, none enquired about services or sermons on Tuesdays.⁷² It had probably become obvious, even to the king, that these were simply too burdensome for many clergy in the Church of England. Two years after Tuesday sermons had first been ordered in Scotland, James persuaded the Church's general assembly to remind ministers and burgh councils of the required observances;⁷³ but he does not appear to have asked anything similar from the bishops in England and Wales.

V

James VI and I was an innovator in occasions of worship. In Scotland, 'Gowrie day' was entirely novel, as the first religious anniversary created throughout the kingdom for a royal event, and this for a church which had even discouraged observance of the anniversary festivals in the Christian calendar.⁷⁴ In England, three anniversaries as well as weekly thanksgivings were appointed within the first three years of James's reign. Two were striking exercises of the royal supremacy over the Church of England, by the privy council for Gowrie day and by the king for Gunpowder treason day and Tuesday sermons. The third, for James's accession day, was not, as commonly assumed, an automatic transfer of the thanksgiving for Queen Elizabeth's accession. That anniversary had been created by the bishops to commemorate a specific accession, which had restored a protestant monarchy and a protestant church. Appointment of annual thanksgivings for James's accession, which had different connotations, was a deliberate act which may well have involved the king and council.⁷⁵

Why was James so keen to create and proliferate anniversaries? He did genuinely believe that in 1600 and 1605 he had been saved by divine intervention. But this does not explain why he went beyond the earlier practice in both Scotland and England, of particular thanksgivings observed once or for a short period shortly after the defeat of the plots or the end of other crises, and not repeated in later years.⁷⁶ James's purpose in introducing 'perpetual' annual and weekly thanksgivings was to create regular and enduring reminders of a set of ideas, as part of his strategies for more effective rule. They presented the king and his dynasty as extraordinary in the extent of God's favour, and they provided occasions for services and sermons to inculcate this belief among all his subjects. While all early modern monarchs claimed divine sanction, James

⁷² See *Visitation articles and injunctions of the early Stuart church*, ed. Kenneth Fincham (2 vols, 1994, 1998).

⁷³ Act of 6 Nov. 1602, in Calderwood, *History of the kirk of Scotland*, VI, 184–5.

⁷⁴ McMillan, *Worship of the Scottish reformed church*, pp. 299–305.

⁷⁵ The form of prayer for this occasion, first published in 1604, was a substantial revision of the form that had been used for Elizabeth's accession day. Lack of council registers for this period and patchy records in episcopal registers make it impossible to establish who ordered the composition and use of this new form.

⁷⁶ Morrissey, 'Presenting James', pp. 108–10; James, *Poets, players*, pp. 30–6, and see *National prayers 1*, especially the English precedents, following plots against Elizabeth from 1585 to 1601, pp. 153–6, 167–72, 206–12, 226–30, 234–8.

had more reasons than most to emphasize the point. Both the Gowrie conspiracy and the Gunpowder plot brought him close to assassination, more directly so than any of the threats against Elizabeth: James had ample cause to order reiterations of the religious duty of obedience to established authorities, and of divine as well as secular punishments for treason. In England, the thanksgivings also publicized the blessings of a new stability that he brought to the kingdom, after the long uncertainties and anxieties about the royal succession during Elizabeth's reign. All forms of prayer for the English anniversaries appointed from 1603 to 1605 contained prayers not only for the new king but also for the new royal family, including the names of the heir to the throne and other 'royal progeny', just as in 1604 similar prayers were added to the BCP and ordered to be included in the bidding prayers before all sermons.⁷⁷

James was also adept at turning events into opportunities to promote his more political aims. Each anniversary was appointed at moments when it was useful for the king to assert a special authority, indeed a divine right. The Gowrie thanksgivings were ordered in Scotland at a critical time in his prolonged efforts to impose royal authority over the Church of Scotland.⁷⁸ In England and Wales the anniversary was appointed during the delicate early months after accession to his new throne, with the first observance falling eleven days after his coronation.⁷⁹ Thanksgivings and a public holiday in every community were an impressive and popular means of introducing his new subjects to a ruler from a foreign kingdom. Together with the appointment of thanksgivings for a new accession day, it declared James's claim to a place equal to that of Elizabeth in the providential order, and might gather the good will to assist his novel and ambitious policies, of union of the English and Scottish kingdoms, peace with Spain and the catholic powers, reduction in domestic religious tensions, and reunion of Christendom.

It seems likely that the king's orders for Gunpowder treason day and for Tuesday thanksgivings had similarly opportunistic elements. Parliament had been summoned for 5 November 1605 principally to consider the recommendations of an Anglo-Scottish commission which had been appointed to consider the creation of a united Great Britain. James's scheme had encountered considerable criticism in both England and Scotland, and it is possible that, as the Venetian ambassador reported on 12 October, the king came close to thinking that parliamentary discussion of the commission's report might have to be postponed.⁸⁰ Whether or not this was so, it probably seemed to James that discovery of the Gunpowder plot had rallied general support for the government to such an extent that opposition to the union scheme could now be overcome,⁸¹

⁷⁷ See the 1604 edition of the BCP, STC 16327, sig. B5r, and canon 55 in *The Anglican canons 1529–1947*, ed. Bray, pp. 342–3.

⁷⁸ Alan MacDonald, *The Jacobean kirk, 1567–1625* (Aldershot, 1995), ch. 4.

⁷⁹ For the nervousness of these months and efforts to counteract it, see Judith Richards, 'The English accession of James VI: "national" identity, gender and the personal monarchy of England', *English Historical Review*, 117 (2002), 514–24.

⁸⁰ *Calendar of state papers Venetian, 1603–1607* (1900), p. 258, and see Bruce Galloway, *The union of England and Scotland 1603–1608* (Edinburgh, 1986), esp. ch. 4 and pp. 79–81, and Jenny Wormald, 'James VI, James I and the identity of Britain', in Brendan Bradshaw and John Morrill, eds, *The British problem, c. 1534–1707* (Basingstoke, 1996), pp. 148–71.

⁸¹ As is also suggested in James, *Poets, players*, pp. 14–15, 25, 70.

that an immediate beginning of Tuesday thanksgivings would ease its progress, and that the anniversary thanksgivings would help to underpin the consolidation of Great Britain. If so, James had miscalculated: his appeals for tolerance towards most of the catholic community could not restrain the determination of MPs and peers to take new measures against catholics in general, as well as the actual and suspected conspirators. The preparation of further penalties for catholics dominated the new parliamentary session once it began on 21 January. Consideration of the union proposals had to be postponed until a further session in November 1606, by which time the immediate benefits of the Gunpowder plot for James's political authority had subsided, and the main scheme had eventually to be abandoned.

VI

Once it is understood that annual thanksgivings for the discovery of the Gunpowder plot had been ordered by the king in November 1605, the act of parliament in 1606 for the same purpose becomes a puzzle. Why was this act introduced and passed? Was it not redundant? Although the earlier orders by the king and archbishop were not published and may not yet have become widely known beyond the clergy and churchwardens, members of parliament cannot have been unaware of them; Bancroft, Vaughan and the 23 other bishops present in the house of lords could have enlightened the peers and MPs.⁸² (It is not known why the act contained no reference to the Tuesday prayers and sermons, nor why, as with the order of the king and Bancroft, the example of a public holiday for Gowrie day was not followed.)

Personal interests may have had some part. Sir Edward Montagu, the MP who drafted the parliamentary bill and introduced it in the house of commons on 23 January 1606, had angered the king early in 1605 by taking a leading part in the 'Northamptonshire petition' on behalf of 'godly' clergymen facing suspension or deprivation for refusing to subscribe to the new church canons. Montagu might have wanted to consolidate his recent recovery of royal favour.⁸³ In a 'learned and religious speech' introducing the bill, he used the same comparison of the discovery of the plot with God's mercies towards Noah that the king had made when addressing parliament on 9 November.⁸⁴ But as the subject of the petition indicates, his motives were certainly broader: he was a zealous puritan and anti-catholic, as were many of his allies and the bill's keenest supporters in the commons. Sir Francis Hastings, a veteran campaigner against catholics as well as the organizer of the Northamptonshire petition, for which he had entirely lost the king's confidence, was particularly prominent.⁸⁵ For these MPs, a parliamentary act for an anniversary thanksgiving would have seemed integral to their efforts to obtain firmer enforcement of existing

⁸² *LJ*, II, 362–3 (25, 28 Jan. 1606).

⁸³ Diana Newton, *The making of the Jacobean regime. James VI and I and the government of England, 1603–1605* (Woodbridge, 2005), ch. 4; Esher S. Cope, *The life of a public man. Edward, first baron Montagu of Boughton, 1562–1644* (Philadelphia, 1981), pp. 40–6.

⁸⁴ *CJ*, I, 258; *The parliamentary diary of Robert Bowyer, 1606–1607*, ed. David Harris Willson (Minneapolis, 1931), p. 4; *King James. Political writings*, ed. Sommerville, p. 148.

⁸⁵ Ten of the 20 members of the committee to consider Montagu's draft (listed in *CJ*, I, 258) were obvious puritans: see their biographies in *The history of parliament: the House of Commons 1604–1629*, ed. Andrew Thrush and John Ferris (6 vols, Cambridge, 2010), III; and for Hastings, see also Newton, *Making of the Jacobean regime*, pp. 80–97.

legislation and the passage of new measures against catholic recusants, which they had wanted since James's accession but which he had avoided, and which now, in the aftermath of a spectacular catholic plot, they had the opportunity to obtain, and to do so in ostentatious loyalty to the king. During the previous two days, several had been active in initiating anti-catholic bills or been appointed to a committee to consider both the 'better execution of penal statutes' and 'the preservation of the King's Majesty's person'.⁸⁶ In accordance with their aims, the act for the thanksgivings spread the blame for the plot beyond the 'certain' recusants and priests in Bancroft's letter to 'many malignant and deuilish Papists, Jesuits and Seminary Priestes'.⁸⁷ The requirement that the act was to be read out during the annual services would assert a stronger anti-catholic presentation of the plot than the king's milder and narrower interpretation. Yet notwithstanding these puritan initiatives, the bill was not treated as 'partisan' or troublesome by other MPs: they received it with 'great applause', and the speaker expedited its second reading and referral to a committee.⁸⁸ After all, the two houses of parliament had also been targets for the conspirators, and the act presented the plot as aimed as much against parliament as it was against the king and his family, more particularly because of its earlier anti-catholic legislation – as the place where 'sundry necessary and Religious Lawes for preseruauon of the Church and State were made, which [the plotters] falsly and slanderously terme, Cruel Lawes, enacted against them and their Religion'.⁸⁹ A further outcome of the act would be a firm public understanding that the thanksgiving services were established (or endorsed) by parliament, rather than by (or just by) the king and the bishops. The introduction and passage of the act of parliament are best regarded as an expression of disagreements over religious policies, and even about the appropriate authority in religious matters.

The king and his ministers evidently judged it best to accept the principle of the bill and to be accommodating towards its supporters, rather than risk irritation by explaining that the king's existing order made it unnecessary. Once accepted in this sense, they probably welcomed the effect of the bill, in making attendance at thanksgiving services a matter of statute law as well as royal order and ecclesiastical injunction, and so enforceable in the secular courts. The Commons committee that recommended support for the bill included a privy councillor, John Herbert (the second secretary of state) and the solicitor-general, Sir John Doderidge, with two further associates of the royal court – and after a vote, the commons resolved that Herbert rather than Montagu should lead the submission of the bill to the house of lords, in effect making it an 'official' measure.⁹⁰ But the bill did not pass without some hitches: the committee sat for longer than expected, and on 24 January it reported that the text had been amended 'not only in

⁸⁶ *CJ*, I, 257–8.

⁸⁷ *Act for a publique thankesgiuing*, p. 2.

⁸⁸ Hoby to Edwardes, 10 Feb. 1606, in [Birch], *Court and times of James the first*, I, 46; *CJ*, I, 258; *Parliamentary diary of Bowyer*, p. 4.

⁸⁹ *Act for a publique thankesgiuing*, pp. 2–3.

⁹⁰ *Parliamentary diary of Bowyer*, p. 8; Cope, *Life of a public man*, p. 46.

Circumstance, but in Substance’, although why and how is not known.⁹¹ This may have been a matter of pruning Montagu’s unduly verbose draft. It might have related to some proposed content for the church services or to their authorization, which the council would have discouraged, as a matter which came within the royal prerogative. Or it may have been concerned with statements about the king, which the council would have desired. The final text included extravagant praise of James and his production of children as bringing stability to the realm,⁹² and it followed the official accounts of the plot in attributing its discovery to the king being inspired with ‘a divine spirit’.

The addition of the act of parliament to the order by James and Bancroft did have one important effect: it helped to secure the persistence of Gunpowder treason day. The thanksgivings on Gowrie day, no doubt assisted by the provision of a holiday, were initially popular in England, judging by the rapid purchases of the form of prayer and the extent of annual bell-ringing recorded in churchwardens’ accounts. Yet even though this thanksgiving day was, like that on 5 November, ordered ‘for all posterity’ – as a perpetual observance – it ceased with James’s death in 1625, in both England and Scotland.⁹³ One reason for the continuation of Gunpowder treason day is that unlike Gowrie day, it had been established by statute in England and Wales.⁹⁴ Other reasons, and further contrasts with Gowrie day, are that parliament and not just the king were the intended victims, and especially that it was an anti-catholic occasion, and so had wide, enduring, and renewable significance. The English parliament’s participation in ordering the observance gained renewed significance after 1618, when war between catholic and protestant powers broke out in continental Europe; during the early 1620s when the king’s son sought a marriage alliance with a catholic princess; through the 1630s, when Laudian leaders of the Church were accused of popish tendencies, and once again after the catholic rebellion in Ireland in 1641. Gunpowder treason day repeatedly acquired new momentum as an occasion for many to express criticism of royal policies, and for others to demonstrate loyalty to the king. It continued under the parliamentary, Commonwealth and Cromwellian regimes – as a day for special sermons, without use of the form of prayer – despite their disapproval of other anniversaries, even those in the Christian calendar. As it also remained a royalist occasion,⁹⁵ a

⁹¹ *CJ*, I, 258, 259, 260; *Parliamentary diary of Bowyer*, pp. 4–5, 7, 8; Cope, *Life of a public man*, pp. 45–6. The bill was sent on 25 January to the house of lords, which gave it formal readings (without changes) on the 28th and 30th: *LJ*, II, 363, 364, 365.

⁹² ‘[T]he most great, learned and Religious King that euer raigned ..., enriched with a most hopefull and plentiful Progenie, proceeding out of his Royal loynes, promising continuance of [the kingdom’s] happiness and [its religious] profession to all posteritie’: *Act for a publique thankesgiuing*, pp. 1–2.

⁹³ This is clear from the disappearance of the thanksgiving from English churchwardens’ accounts and episcopal visitation enquiries, and from Scottish burgh and church records. No orders for its discontinuance seem to have been issued; it was evidently regarded as personal to James, not as a celebration of the Stuart dynasty.

⁹⁴ In Scotland, the Gowrie anniversary had been established by an act of parliament, but Charles I issued no Scottish order for its continuance; in contrast, although Gunpowder treason day had not been ordered by the Scottish parliament, he did in 1628 order its continuance. The difference may have been a strong awareness of the English act at the court in London, connected with renewed efforts to achieve greater consistency between the English and Scottish churches.

⁹⁵ For divergent interpretations of the anniversary yet shared commitment to its observance from 1618 to the 1660s, see Cressy, *Bonfires & bells*, pp. 150–70, 173–4.

full revival of the thanksgiving, with a revised form of prayer, was part of the Restoration settlement of the Church of England and the Church of Ireland, and it remained available as an occasion for new expressions of anti-catholic agitation during the Exclusion crisis, after the 1688 revolution, and as late as the ‘papal aggression’ in 1850.

APPENDIX

Editorial conventions: The transcriptions retain the spelling, capitalization and punctuation of the original text. For Document B, an interpolation derived from other copies is made. Further variations in these other texts (except for minor differences in spelling) are given in footnotes. Line numbers have been added, in order to assist the discussion in the main text of the article; <brackets> indicate material that is crossed out.

Document A

Richard Vaughan, bishop of London, to John Bill, archdeacon of St Albans, 8 November 1605, Hertfordshire Archives and Library Services, ASA 5/4/189, p. 825.

lines

1 After my hartie Comendaciones. It hath pleased god to worke soe mercifully for our
moste gracious Soueraigne Kinge and the whole State of Parliament in discoveringe the
moste barbarous and trecherous practize that ever was devised to have destroyed both our
kinge and the estates of this Realme assembled in parliament for the which we can
5 never shewe any sufficient dutifull thanckfulnes vnto our heavenly Father but onely by
prostratinge our selves in prayer & thanckes givinge for this his blessed discoverie and
preventinge of the same. There beinge Certayne prayers by publicke authoritie nowe sett
forthe to that end and Comaunded to be vsed in everie parishe Churche through owte the
whole Realme at all tymes of Common prayer. Theis are to requiere you that forth
10 with you Cawse with all the speede you Can the said booke of prayer and thanckes
givinge to be sent to everie particuler Churche to be vsed by the minister thereat with in
your Jurisdiction at all tymes of Common prayer. And thereof requiringe you not to fayle
I bidd you farewell From my Pallace at London this viiith of November 1605
Your lovinge freind/ Ric: London:

Document B

Richard Bancroft, archbishop of Canterbury, to Richard Vaughan, bishop of London, 29 November 1605, as communicated in Vaughan to John Jegon, bishop of Norwich, 30 November 1605, in ‘Collectanea sive Registrum Vagum continenta fragmenta consuta tangentis episcopale negotium tempore reverend in Christo patria, domini Johannis Jegon, Episcopi Norwicensis, collecta par Anthonium Harison, notorium publicum, clericum’, Norwich diocesan archives, Norfolk Record Office, DN/HAR 1, fos. 141r–142r.

lines

1 Salutem in Christo. It is not vnknowne vnto your Lordship what a trayterous plott [for
the murtheringe of his maiestie⁹⁶] was laide by the Earle of Gowry and his brethren to
haue byn put in execution vpon a tuesday the vth of August whilist his Maiestie was in
Scotland and howe miraculously (his highness beinge trayned craftilie to the said Earle
5 his house throughlie prouided for such a mischiefe)⁹⁷ vpon the said tuisdaye it pleased
Almightie God of his infinite mercie, not onelie to deliuer his sacred person from this
danger but (as an argument of godes wrathe against all traytors) to caste bothe the Earle
and his Brethren that daye into the same Gulfe of destruction<s> which they had
barbarously prepared against their Soueraigne./ Alsoe I am well assured that your
10 Lordship hath heard of the neuer before heard of villanie amongst the moste savage
miscreantes that <the> euer the earth did beare⁹⁸ contrived by certaine gentlemen
Recusantes and popishe preistes, to haue bynn putt in execution vpon the tuisdaye beinge
the vth daye of this instante moneth of November, by gunpowder, which they had laid
secretlie vnder the vpper house of Parliament, to haue blowne vpp at one blast the Kinge
15 the⁹⁹ Queene the Prince the Lordes and the¹⁰⁰ cheife gentlemen of England Knightes &
Burgesses of the lower house of Parliament, all appointed to waite that daye vponn his
Maiestie in the said vpper house, and consequentlie by that one vnspeakeable bloudie¹⁰¹
acte to haue overthrowne the true worshipp of god in this kingdome, and to haue made
the whole land a praye to forreyners and strangers. And how the holie Ghost did soe
20 illuminate his Maiesties hart and vnderstandinge in the expoundinge of certaine darke
speeches in a letter written to a noble man, as that, by his direction, the gunpowder,
prepared as is aforesaid, was discovered vponn the said Tuisdaye betwixt the houres of
one and two¹⁰² of the clocke in the morning at what time alsoe a cheife traytor one Faulx,
(that should haue sett the gunpowder on fyer) was taken, vponn whose examination some
25 of the principall Traytors beinge discouered, God hath deliuered manie of them together
with their Complices and a bettors into his Maiesties handes. In remembrance of all
which infinite mercies of the Allmightie extended soe plentifullye both towardes his
Church, the kinges Maiestie and this whole Iland of great Britayne, it is his maiesties
pleasure and commandement that as vponn the vth¹⁰³ of August euerie yeare (which is

⁹⁶ This phrase is included in the letter to Archdeacon Bill in HALS (initially omitted, but added, by the same hand, above the line), and in the copy in the Chaderton register. The copy in the Tanner MSS follows the Registrum text in not having the phrase.

⁹⁷ Brackets also given in the Tanner copy (though beginning at 'beinge'), but not in the HALS letter or Chaderton copy.

⁹⁸ The copy in the Tanner MSS has 'dyd beare'; the Chaderton copy omits 'did' and has 'bare'.

⁹⁹ The Tanner copy omits 'the'.

¹⁰⁰ The Tanner copy omits 'the'.

¹⁰¹ The Chaderton copy omits 'bloudie'.

¹⁰² Barton, *Registrum Vagum*, I, 215, misread 'two' as 'sixe'.

¹⁰³ The Chaderton copy has the word 'day' written and crossed out here.

30 still to be continued) soe vpon the vth of November there shalbe yearelie thanksgivinge to
our heavenlie father the mightie God of our salvation for these most wonderfull
deliuerances and mercies aforesaid, and not that onelie, but in like manner as his maiestie
hath hitherto, and soe <th> still is resolved to sanctifie the remembraunce of such the
35 Lordes most extraordinarie benefittes and mercies everie Tuisday with prayers¹⁰⁴ &
thanksgiving in the publike congregacion: soe it is his highneses will & immutable
direction that all those Sermones, which hitherto vsuallie haue byn accustomed to be
preached in anie Cathedrall, Collegiate or parochiall Churches through out this Realme
either vponn the wednesdayes Frydayes or other dayes in the weeke shall from hence
40 forwardes be preached vponn the tuisdayes, and that the preachers in such their sermons
shall from tyme to tyme still move the people to prayse & magnifie the name of god for
all his said most infinite mercies, blessinges graces and benefittes beseeching him
through Jesus Christ to continue the same not onelie towards his maiestie for his safetie,
but for the preseruacion of the ghospell amongst vs, and good estate of this Iland with
the rest of his Maiesties dominions, Considering that the inveterated malice of the
45 Romishe brood is not yet asswaged, but that they are verie likelie still to perseuer in their
mischevous, wicked, desperate, most irreligious & traiterous enterprizes, which wee both
by prayer and all other good meanes are carefullie and diligentlie as we are able to
prevente:

Accordinglie¹⁰⁵ therefore to this¹⁰⁶ his maiesties direction, pleasure and
commaundement, I doe require your Lordship forthwith to give order throughout your
50 whole Diocess for the observacion of the premisses not doubtinge of your diligence
therein and likewise advertizinge you, that it is not his maiesties will, that the translatinge
of the sermons aforesaid to the tuisdayes should preiudice or hinder the ordinarie and
publike service of god weeklie vponn the wednesdayes or fridayes but that the same
should be diligentlie continued and obserued accordinge to the orders of the Church and
55 the lawes of the Realme in that behalfe provided. There are two formes of prayeres and
thanksgivinge to be vsed yearelie vponn the vth of August and the vth of November as is
aforesaid that are alreadye printed and which your Lordship is to take order for that everie
parishe maye haue one of them. What I write to¹⁰⁷ your Lordship herein I desire that
accordinge to the dutie of your place <doe> you doe forthwith impart vnto the rest of the
60 Bishopes of my Prouince as I my selfe will take the¹⁰⁸ like order for the aduertizinge in
manner & forme aboue specified of the Bishops of the Prouince of Yorke. And soe with
my hartie commendationes vnto your good¹⁰⁹ Lordship. I comitt you vnto the tuition of

¹⁰⁴ The HALS text has 'prayer'.

¹⁰⁵ A new paragraph begins here in this text and in the Tanner copy, but not in the HALS letter or Chaderton copy.

¹⁰⁶ Barton, *Registrum Vagum*, I, 216, omitted 'this' in his transcription.

¹⁰⁷ The Chaderton text has 'vnto'.

¹⁰⁸ The Chaderton text omits 'the'.

¹⁰⁹ This word was initially omitted by the clerk, and then squeezed in.

all Allmightie God. At Lambehith¹¹⁰ the xxixth of November 1605. Your Lordships
louinge brother R: Cant:

¹¹⁰ The HALS letter and Chaderton copy have 'Lambeth'.