

THE *DECLARATION OF SPORTS AS A VIA MEDIA*: POPULAR RECREATIONS
AND RELIGIOUS CONFLICT IN EARLY SEVENTEENTH CENTURY ENGLAND

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in History
to the Office of Graduate and Extended Studies of
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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

The conflict over popular recreations in early seventeenth century England arose out of the disorder caused by the social, economic, and demographic changes of the time. King James I and King Charles I issued the *Declaration of Sports* to protect recreations against attack from religious reformers. Most historians argue that the Stuart monarchs issued the declaration to assert their authority over the use of recreations. This thesis, through a close analysis of the *Declaration of Sports* and contemporary writings of the Stuart monarchs and their supporters, reveals that James I's and Charles I's recreational policies align with their ecclesiastical policies of creating a *via media* or middle way between Puritanism and Catholicism. The efforts to create a *via media* of sports reveal the conflict over popular recreations to include many of the religious, social, and cultural issues that led to the outbreak of civil war in the 1640s.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The decades of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries in England were some of the most contentious and divisive periods of that country's history. The political, religious, and social issues of this period led to the outbreak of civil war. One of the most contentious issues of the period was the conflict over sports and recreations in which popular communal activities like church ales and ball games came under attack. It was a conflict which cut across social, economic, and religious lines, and further divided the nation. The issue over Sunday pastimes created a vast amount of contemporary literature either defending or condemning recreations. The conflict was important enough to provoke the involvement of both King James I (reigned 1603-1625) and King Charles I (reigned 1625-1649), each making efforts to end the conflict. Both published the controversial *Declaration of Sports* (sometimes referred to as the *Book of Sports* by contemporaries), which sought to protect popular pastimes for use by the common people. But the declaration only became another divisive issue that led to the outbreak of civil war.

Historiography

Historians generally agree that the English Civil War came about when the king and Parliament's differences could not be solved in a peaceful manner, but there has been

much disagreement as to the specific causes of it. Late Victorian historians, most notably Samuel Rawson Gardiner, put emphasis on a variety of religious and ideological divisions which led to war.¹ After World War I, the Victorian view was challenged by Marxist and sociological historians. Marxist historians noted that the period of the civil war was characterized by fundamental changes to society through economic forces. One of the leading Marxist historians, Christopher Hill, argued the civil war was a stage in the class struggle in which the aristocracy's power was challenged by an emerging middle class. In *The English Revolution*, Hill argued the despotism of Charles I was opposed by Parliament, who appealed to the trading and industrial class.² Sociologists, such as R.H. Tawney and Wallace Notestein, added the importance of the gentry class's growing economic power. They argued the gentry were progressive radicals that were able to attack a weakened crown.³

Marxist interpretations were predominant until challenged by Revisionist historians in the 1970s. Conrad Russell was one of the leading Revisionists who laid out his argument in a series of articles and books. He argued the gentry in Parliament were conservative and did not gain as much lower-class support as previously thought.

¹ Gardiner's views were expressed in his multi-volume history of England before the Civil War, see Samuel Rawson Gardiner, *History of England from the Accession of James I to the Outbreak of the Civil War, 1603-1642*, 10 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, 1883-91).

² Christopher Hill, *The English Revolution, 1640* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1955).

³ Wallace Notestein, "The Winning of the Initiative by the House of Commons," *Proceedings of the British Academy* vol. 11 (1924-25); R.H. Tawney, "The Rise of the Gentry, 1558-1640," *Economic History Review* 11, No. 1 (1941): 1-38.

Parliament came under pressure from both the king and local needs and were unable to appease both.⁴ Revisionists often downplayed the role of ideology, instead focusing on factionalism and localism. They drew sharp distinctions between the causes of the civil war and the revolution which followed it. Opponents of the king wanted to protect a traditional constitution and church from supposed innovations of Charles I. Some Revisionists, such as Kevin Sharpe, emphasized the events directly leading up to the civil war, noting the mismanagement of Charles I and the short-term failure of his bridge-building efforts.⁵ Critics of Revisionism emerged in the 1990s claiming it ignores long term trends at the expense of a focus on the short-term failures of Charles I. However, Revisionism has largely overtaken most traditional interpretations but has not necessarily become orthodoxy.⁶

One of the key conflicts in the years leading up to the Civil War was the conflict over Sunday recreations. Looking at recreations incorporates both the traditional historiography focusing on ideological and social tensions and Revisionism's focus on religion and locality. This conflict pitted Puritans and other religious reformers against the public defenders of recreations. There is a fair amount of scholarship on the subject,

⁴ For some of Russell's works portraying these views see Conrad Russell, editor, *The Origins of the English Civil War* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1973); "Parliamentary History in Perspective, 1604-1629," *History* 61 (1976): 1-27; *Parliaments and English Politics, 1621-1629* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979); *The Causes of the English Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

⁵ Kevin Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992).

⁶ This historiography of the causes of the English Civil War is well summed up in Roger Lockyer, *The Early Stuarts: A Political History of England, 1603-1642*. 2nd ed. (New York: Addison Wesley Longman Inc., 1999), 354-59.

but very few full-length studies dealing exclusively with the conflict over recreations. Most scholars cover the subject as only a small part of the wider ideological and religious issues of the decades leading to the civil war. In general, scholars who have studied the controversy over Sunday recreations make one of three main arguments on why James I and Charles I supported recreations: to establish authority over the Church, to maintain social order and hierarchy, or to create social unity and harmony.

One of the key aspects that made this conflict possible was the increased politicization of Sunday pastimes. In one of the few book length studies on sports and recreations in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, historian Denis Brailsford argues that politics became intertwined with sports because of a loosening of the governmental structure which under the Tudor monarchs relied on harmony between national and regional interests and cooperation among central and local governments. The breakdown of parliamentary government also allowed the crown to intervene in the everyday life of the people out of concerns for social stability and well-being. The Tudors attempts at regulating sports were social in motive and military in pretext (like encouraging archery). The Stuart monarchs' encouragement of sports was not for the benefit of sports themselves, according to Brailsford, but for "social, religious or political motives, associated with the fact that those whom the crown increasingly recognized as its opponents had become identified with a negative, restrictive attitude toward games."

Encouragement of play by the government was basically a useful means of propaganda for the established order.⁷

Historian Alistair Dougall's book length study specifically looks at the history surrounding the two publications of the *Declaration of Sports* and their significance to the wider ideological conflict of the time. Dougall argues that the publication of the declaration and the controversy it created had a greater impact on the divisions which led to civil war than most historians thought. One of Dougall's main points was to show that a more radical form of Sabbatarianism developed in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Dougall notes that while Laudians often exaggerated Puritan beliefs, they were right to point out the radical and innovative nature of Puritan Sabbatarianism. The attempts to change society and ban all sports put Puritans in conflict with the Church and crown. Essentially, the battle over Sunday sports and recreations was not just cultural but was also a battle for authority and power.⁸

The idea that monarchical support of pastimes was a struggle for authority is one of the common themes among scholarly arguments, specifically focusing on the publication of the *Declaration of Sports* as a political move to establish authority.

Christopher Hill states that James wished to define the government's position on Sunday games before the Puritans and others in local governments established precedents. James

⁷ Denis Brailsford, *Sport and Society: Elizabeth to Anne* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), 100-101, 107.

⁸ Alistair Dougall, *The Devil's Book: Charles I, the Book of Sports and Puritanism in Tudor and Early Stuart England* (Exeter, UK: University of Exeter Press, 2011), 1-6.

I's government was also afraid of ale-house meetings that could occur without recreations because the meetings could lead to criticism of the government led by educated and independent men. Allowing Sunday recreations made these meetings less possible.⁹

Some historians point out that support for pastimes was about maintaining a specific social hierarchy in society. According to historian David Underdown, the debates over recreations were part of a larger cultural conflict. People in authority, especially during the 1630s when the supporters of the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud, called Laudians by historians, defended the old culture of rural recreations because it reflected their notion of what society ought to be. Underdown further notes that at the popular level this conflict placed many of the gentry, Puritan clergy, and their allies among "respectable parish nobles" against their social inferiors. There were two positions in the conflict that reflected two conceptions of society. The Laudians conception stressed tradition, custom, and the "co-operative, harmonious 'vertical' community." This "vertical" community meant that there was a defined hierarchy. To the Laudians recreations were a means of repairing the social structure and made the common people more content with their lot in life and the existing order. The other position in the cultural

⁹ Christopher Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England*, 2nd ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1967), 194-97. For a similar argument that the declaration was used to maintain authority in Church and State as well as enforcing religious conformity see Leah S. Marcus, *The Politics of Mirth: Jonson, Herrick, Milton, Marvell, and the Defense of Old Holiday Pastimes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 2-5.

conflict, represented by Puritans and other moral reformers, stressed moral reformation, individualism, work ethic, and personal responsibility.¹⁰

Peter Lake adds to the idea of maintaining hierarchy when he notes that it was significant that Laudian views on Sunday sports ensured that the clerically controlled hierarchy of the church interior was followed by a “more relaxed, festive and self-consciously profane version of social solidarity acted out on the village green.” The laity were “ritually schooled and disciplined” by the clergy in church, but normal social relations resumed with Sunday recreations. Sunday service and recreations were two different but complimentary means to achieving social unity. Service at church was a spiritual means, while sports was a profane means.¹¹

In general, scholars tend to assert that James I and Charles I supported pastimes to either establish their own authority over the Church, maintain social order and hierarchy, or create social unity and harmony. There is ample evidence for all of these, and this thesis will not seek to challenge these assessments in general. However, while there is some study of the Stuart monarchs’ recreation policies in the context of their ecclesiastical policies, there is minimal study on how their policies fit in with an important ecclesiastical concept of late sixteenth and early seventeenth century England,

¹⁰ David Underdown, *Revel, Riot, and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England, 1603-1660* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 63, 72. To some historians this also entailed protecting the Church of England and parish life in general which advocated for this hierarchy. See Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year, 1400-1700* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 197; Sharpe, 359.

¹¹ Peter Lake, “The Laudian Style: Order, Uniformity and the Pursuit of the Beauty of Holiness in the 1630s,” in *The Early Stuart Church, 1603-1642*, ed. Kenneth Fincham (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), 178.

the *via media*. Historian Ethan Shagan's recent work on the *via media* in early modern England (which will be covered below) has transformed the way historians think of the *via media*. Therefore, it is important to reexamine popular sports considering this new research on the concept.

The Via Media and Moderation

The concept of the *via media* dates to the Tudor origins of the Church of England. The Elizabethan religious settlement in the sixteenth century intended to be as inclusive as possible. The Tudors tried to control the Reformation impulse, allowing room for both conservatives and radicals. According to historian Peter White, the result of this was, "a Church that stood in an unmistakably intermediate position between the more 'precise' churches of the Continent and the Church of Rome." This settlement created a religion that was much different from other Protestant churches liturgically, doctrinally, and in the makeup of the polity.¹²

The intermediate position taken by the established Church of England required conformity from the people. The idea of conformity to the Church had precedent before the reigns of James I and Charles I. Many writers and political thinkers espoused the idea of a *via media* or "middle way" between two extreme positions. Achieving this middle way required moderation of the people. Contemporary understanding of moderation was different than our own today. Ethan Shagan argues that moderation to the English of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries meant government "with no clear boundary between inward and outward." Moderation was a way of controlling excesses and passions often

¹² Peter White, "The *via media* in the Early Stuart Church," in Fincham, 212-13.

of gentleman and servants. The result, according to Shagan was that debates over moderation and the middle way in early modern England often “bore powerful connotations of coercion and control.” The English Reformation was considered moderate, and the Church of England was defended as a *via media*. Moderation became an act of control enforced through governance.¹³

Early modern English writing viewed moderation as active compared to more modern conceptions stressing it as something passive. It was done to keep passions under control. According to Ethan Shagan, the condition of moderation was tranquil but also vigilant, stating, “being a moderate person both was the result of moderation and made further moderation possible.” However, there was a lot of disagreement among writers about the precise goal of moderation. The most significant debate, which had ancient precedents, was whether passions should be limited through reason (referring to Aristotelian philosophers), or if passions should be eliminated entirely (a position of Stoic philosophers).¹⁴

Moderation played a role in establishing a *via media*. The *via media* of the Protestant Church lied between Catholics and Puritans. Early opponents of Puritans were known as “conformists.” They preferred obedience to the Church to create an orderly society. According to Shagan, “the self-proclaimed moderation of the Church of England in its ethical, *internal* sense – a restrained and reasonable Church rather than an unbridled

¹³ Ethan H. Shagan, *The Rule of Moderation: Violence, Religion and the Politics of Restraint in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 8-10.

¹⁴ Shagan, 36-37.

and fanatical one... was utterly dependent upon the [Church's] external moderation of its subjects through state power and coercive restraint." Conformists thus favored increased government power to moderate the people. The Church was considered incapable of self-restraint due to "dangerous and ungodly elements," and thus needed external moderation from magistrates and the government, which would moderate the abuses. Conformists also wanted strong restraints to repress passions and keep the Church on a middle path.¹⁵

The ideas of a *via media* and social moderation were both present in the ecclesiastical policies of James I and Charles I. However, Charles I's policies appeared to be more active or aggressive in this regard. Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake argue that Charles I's ecclesiastical policies were pursued more aggressively but were not necessarily a radical departure from those of James I as some scholars have thought. Most of the ideas turned into policy under Charles I were not new, and the leading thinkers behind such policies enjoyed royal favor under James I. Charles I believed the monarchy and episcopacy were divinely ordained and presented his policy as a *via media* between Catholicism and Puritanism. But whereas James I created unity in the Church through mediation and compromise between different Puritan groups, Charles I believed this unity was illusory. Attempts at compromise only undermined uniformity of worship and doctrine. Thus, Charles I's policies were more active, and tried to impose order and obedience.¹⁶

¹⁵ Shagan, 111-13.

¹⁶ Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake, "The Ecclesiastical Policies of James I and Charles I," in Fincham, 23-24.

Under James I, a wide range of theological opinion was allowed in the Church of England. Upon Charles I's ascension, anti-Calvinist thinkers (such as William Laud) received more royal patronage, although there was no outright repression of Calvinist opinion at court in the first five years of Charles's reign. By the 1630s, Charles put policies in place that fit with his more anti-Calvinist views. His chosen clerical intimates of the 1630s were all opponents of Calvinism. Many more changes occurred specifically after William Lauds appointment as Archbishop of Canterbury in 1633. Fincham and Lake state that this was a dramatic shift from the "Jacobean balance of ecclesiastical power" created under James I.¹⁷

Individually, new reforms under Charles I had some precedent under James I. Taken together, however, they represented a "hostility to any form of ceremonial laxity, to Calvinist preaching, Sabbatarianism and the word-centered piety of the godly which was a world away from conformity as construed and enforced by James I." There were no more attempts to separate moderate from radical Puritans, and ideals of order and uniformity took precedence. Thus, Charles I's policy making took the form of proclamations, instructions, and orders in council. Charles sought to arbitrate disputes with his judgment as binding. No more consolation was granted to both sides, like under James I, but there were clear winners and losers.¹⁸

¹⁷ Fincham and Lake, 37-41.

¹⁸ Fincham and Lake, 41-43.

Ideal Communities in Early Modern England

In early modern England there existed an ideal vision of the village and social hierarchy. This vision came under threat in ways that will be described in the next section. In the idealized vision of the social hierarchy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the rural commoners were below the gentry class, and most were involved in some form of agricultural work. The top level of commoners consisted of yeomen, who had a perpetual right to the land they held and could pass it on to their heirs. Below the yeomen were husbandmen and cottagers, both of whom were essentially heirs of medieval serfs. Husbandmen worked their own landholding and had enough land to sustain their families. Cottagers' holdings were not enough to sustain themselves, so they often worked as laborers for others to make ends meet.¹⁹

An English village in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries had its own ideal hierarchy with gentry and other "parish notables" at the top and landless poor at the base. In the village community territorial identity was reinforced by shared values and "good neighborhood." People were generally aware of the differences in wealth but these differences, according to David Underdown, were overcome by kinship ties, neighborhood, and a "common experience of the stable certainties of the church calendar and agricultural year." Community harmony may have been more myth than reality, but

¹⁹ Jeffrey Forgeng, *Daily Life in Stuart England* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 21-22. Forgeng points out that country life changed over the course of the year following the cycle of the seasons. Work life followed the seasons from planting to harvest in the traditional cycle of three-field husbandry. For more on the agricultural year see Forgeng, 106-109.

it was a powerful myth. The ideal village community retained common fields with open-field husbandry. This situation required cooperation among villagers to raise crops and deal with other problems like controlling animal pests.²⁰

Village identity was institutionalized in both the manor courts and parish churches. Manor courts, despite a general decline in the seventeenth century, were essential to community self-government. This was where villagers enforced local customs and managed the day to day affairs of the community. The parish church was simultaneously the spiritual center of the community. It was the site of formal gatherings that reinforced village unity and hierarchy. The church, according to Underdown, was at “the heart of the community’s affirmations of both social and territorial identity.” This was reflected in the church’s seating arrangements which separated people according to their place in the hierarchy with the gentry sitting close to the altar and the poorer people seated further back.²¹

Villages were known for stubborn conservatism, reflected in their struggles to cope with changes in technology, the economy, and society. The people valued precedent and often protected their customs. Because of this, there were disagreements over decisions about enclosures, altering crop rotation, and introducing new technologies. These disputes led to action in the courts which undermined community harmony. Social relations were governed by ideals of neighborliness and custom. Any breaches of the standards of sexual and/or familial behavior were to be denounced to authorities. This is

²⁰ Underdown, 11-12.

²¹ Underdown, 12-14.

why eavesdropping and gossip were quite common in communities of the period. Villagers were essentially under great pressure to conform to community norms.²²

The Community Under Threat

The ideal image and structure of English communities came under threat in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. This was roughly the same time that the conflict over popular recreations became prominent. These issues came about at a time of considerable social, economic, and demographic changes in the British Isles. The population of England rose significantly from about 2.4 million in 1520 to almost 4 million people by the 1590s. This population growth was paralleled by price inflation which created economic opportunities and increased material wealth for many people.²³ The overall economic expansion of England also greatly increased agricultural output. The late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries saw an extension of cultivated areas and intensified cultivation to meet local consumption needs leading to increased specialization for specific markets and a trend toward more enclosures to promote the practice of arable husbandry. However, enclosures weakened communal and customary practices in agricultural organization.²⁴

²² Underdown, 14-15.

²³ Keith Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities: Economic Lives in Early Modern Britain* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 159. For population statistics see Table 3 on page 122. of Wrightson. For a discussion of potential causes of the population growth see Wrightson, 124-27.

²⁴ Wrightson, 160-63. Enclosures basically closed off certain tracts of land to create consolidated and individually managed farms. They were created through an agreement between landlords and tenants. Landlords favored enclosures because they usually commanded higher rents. See Wrightson 162-63.

Another key factor was significant urban growth throughout Britain beginning in the mid-sixteenth century. Increased integration of urban and rural markets for agricultural production led to a great rural-urban migration as people sought economic opportunities in urban areas because of expanding rural economies. Overall economic expansion created changes in occupational structures, distribution of wealth, and changes in economic and social attitudes. The benefits of these changes were poorly distributed increasing the economic insecurity for thousands of households.²⁵

Many of these changes supposedly created threats to social order and many elites responded with an imposition of a moral order. In the mid-sixteenth century there was not only a migration to urban areas but also a migration to forest-pasture regions of the kingdom which were outside the areas of magisterial and manorial control. The people bred there were considered uncivil and lawless. These wood pasture communities became even more lawless with the growing population. Thus, there was the rise of self-selected elites (usually the lesser gentry, yeomen, and tradesmen) to reimpose a social and moral order. The imposition of moral order had much in common with Puritan ideals of spiritual discipline and living. Parish priests with Puritan leanings were often supported by the local elites in an indoctrination of the population in godliness and good-living. Overall, traditional religious and social attitudes had greater strength in the arable lands than wood-pasture regions and big towns.²⁶

²⁵ Wrightson, 164-65, 221.

²⁶ Lockyer, 188-89.

Another of the societal issues during the Stuart period was the growing separation between the top and bottom strata of the social hierarchy in rural communities. The upper classes and rural aristocrats took more interest in privacy and separated themselves from the rural communities. The movement toward physical enclosures in farmland also contributed to a decline in rural hospitality between elites and commoners. Therefore, James I and Charles I both issued proclamations urging aristocrats to return to their county manors and maintain pastimes.²⁷

Increased separation between social classes was in part due to the rise in status, both economically and socially, of the gentry class. The gentry increased in numbers, gained more influence, and came to own more of the land. Underdown notes the division between the gentry and the rest of society was at the heart of the ideology of hierarchy. After the 1550s, the gentry class became increasingly obsessed with maintaining their own status which generated some outbursts of hostility. Many gentlemen expected deference from their tenants and often responded with violence if contempt was shown by inferiors. This certainly increased the social tensions and divisions within communities.²⁸

²⁷ Marcus, 18-19. For a few examples of proclamations of Charles I see James F. Larkin, ed., *Stuart Royal Proclamations, vol. II: Royal Proclamations of King Charles I, 1625-1646* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 112-13, 170-72, 350-53.

²⁸ Underdown, 20-22. Underdown also notes that yeomen became wealthier at this time and pursued individual profit at the expense of the harmonious cooperative community. See Underdown, 24.

Types of Recreations of the Common People

Sports and recreations were an important activity in most communities in England. The gentry and other upper classes usually did not take part in the same recreations as the commoners. Hunting was a popular leisure sport among landowners who were the only people who had the rights to do so. Martial sports were important because they had a practical application for defending oneself because of the amount of lawlessness in England. Jousting and fencing were popular among the aristocracy, while every commoner was required by law to practice archery. Tennis had been introduced from France, but because it required expensive equipment and a court it was only popular among the rich.²⁹

Rural commoners generally labored from dusk till dawn most days of the week. Therefore, time for leisure and recreation was limited to after church on Sundays and other holidays.³⁰ Many of the popular sports and recreations played in rural areas by the lower classes had precedents in Medieval England and were often played on Sundays and holy days.³¹ Rural and rustic folk games were usually simple without any expensive equipment. They did not require a special reserved area for playing and often involved many players. Often the outdoor games were ritualistic in origin. While Christmas was preeminent for indoor activities, outdoor activities were often associated with the

²⁹ Jeffrey L. Singman, *Daily Life in Elizabethan England* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), 153-56.

³⁰ Singman, 149.

³¹ For a discussion of Sunday sports and how they were viewed by the authorities and church during the Medieval period see Dougall, Chapter 1.

Shrovetide festivals (celebrated the seventh Sunday before Easter until the Tuesday after Easter), a celebration of the survival of the long winter.³²

One of the most popular recreations of the common people was the church ale, a large community event that regularly included people from neighboring parishes. These events including drinking, dancing, games, and music played by minstrels.³³ Sports, particularly ball games, were also popular among the commoners. Some common ball games included hand-ball, bandy-ball (an ancestor of field hockey), and stool-ball (an ancestor of cricket and baseball).³⁴ Perhaps the most popular sport among the lower classes was football. The football played in this period was like modern rugby and had few rules and an unlimited number of people on a team. Whole villages or districts challenged one another. The objective was usually to take the ball and place it within one's own village.³⁵

The Opposing Sides: Puritans

One of the key aspects of the cultural conflicts of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries was a desire to maintain order. The two main sides in the conflict over recreations both shared a desire for order in society. However, they each had

³² Brailsford, 52-53.

³³ Richard Greaves, *Society and Religion in Elizabethan England* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), 466.

³⁴ Singman, 156-57.

³⁵ A.H. Dodd, *Life in Elizabethan England* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1961), 112-13.

differing strategies for producing it. The Puritans thought reducing or eliminating recreations would allow more time for devotion to God, making people less sinful and establishing better order. But many Conformists and Laudians believed maintaining recreations were important for an ordered society because they brought together peoples of different social strata in the community in better harmony.³⁶ It is also important to note that both Puritans and the other side of Conformists and Laudians believed in moderation, but each understood it quite differently.

Early Protestant reformers challenged the Catholic teaching about the Sabbath, claiming Sabbath observance was a Jewish creation and therefore Christians had no need to keep a separate holy day. Some reformers, most notably John Calvin, argued Sunday was the true Lord's Day, but Christians were not morally bound to have any specific day for worship. After the Reformation though, increasing numbers of reformers condemned recreations and idleness on Sundays for the day was to be devoted to the worship of God. Both Henry VIII and Edward VI condemned Sunday pastimes in statutes and injunctions. Henry VIII reduced the number of holy days and prohibited festivities on them. Because most people only had time for leisure and recreations on Sundays and holy days, the reduction in holy days made Sunday more important for partaking in pastimes than ever before. But statutes continued to ban certain recreations because they prevented the practice of archery. Only noblemen and gentlemen with a certain property value could

³⁶ It should be noted that the term Conformist here refers to the people who remained obedient to the authority of the Church of England. Laudian is a modern term to denote the supporters of the practices of Laudianism covered in a later section of this thesis. While Laudians could generally be described as Conformists, most Conformists were not Laudians.

play certain games. However, the statutes had little success in reducing the playing of games by the common people.³⁷

The most vocal critics of Sunday recreations were the Puritans.³⁸ Puritanism arose partially as a response to the disorder and social instability created by population growth, inflation, and the market economy of sixteenth century England. Puritans divided society between the “elect” and the un-godly, elevating the “distinctive virtue of the divinely predestined minority above the equal worth of all sinful Christians.” Parish elites were often attracted to Puritanism because they wanted to impose discipline and order upon people’s lives. Puritans wanted to elevate preaching and scripture above sacrament and rituals in the church. They also wanted to resist rising sin and disorder by creating a new community united by belief and mission. There were Puritans in all levels of society, even Parliament. They were inspired by participation in a “universal moral drama,” with every dispute reflecting a moral conflict about the nature of the community.³⁹ Because of these beliefs, Puritans attacked the old ways of life. They hoped to strip the old society of all traditional amusements and games to create a new society. Puritan leaders emphasized purging society of abuses to enhance holiness and physical well-being.⁴⁰

³⁷ Dougall, 25-31.

³⁸ For contemporaries the term “Puritan” had wide and vague meanings and had no narrow religious connotations. Often, it was used as an insult. By the seventeenth century, the word was often used to describe any opponent of the policies of the king’s court. For a full discussion of the definition of “Puritan,” see Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England*, 13-29.

³⁹ Underdown, 40-43.

⁴⁰ Greaves, 431-32.

Puritans could be divided into Separatists, who wished to separate from the Church of England and form a new church, and general non-Conformists who still opposed the authority of the Church but wished to gradually reform it from within.⁴¹ Despite these differences, the Puritans were helped in their quest for the purification of society by uniting with some Conformist members of the Church of England on certain issues. Certainly, Puritans and Conformists had their differences, particularly over spiritual authority. Puritans rejected the Conformist view that things not expressly prohibited in the Bible (termed *adiaphora*) were permissible. Instead, Puritans believed things that were *adiaphora* must not be offensive to anyone in the church and must be orderly and glorify God. However, many Conformists shared the Puritan belief in predestination, as well as the belief in using biblical principles to create a pattern for social conduct. Thus, Puritans and Conformists sometimes shared social views.⁴²

But how did Puritans hope to achieve their goals of reforming society? Puritans often rejected conformity and instead embraced an idea of continuous reformation, giving them a reputation of rejecting compromise. However, Puritans sought a middle way like Conformists and had a belief in moderation that was not about compromise or consensus. They argued for self-government of the Church. Moderation came from within, focusing on self-control and discipline rather than coming from any external authority. The Church moderated itself by reforming members and purging those without discipline. Puritans

⁴¹ Shagan, 150. While not all Puritans were Separatists, opponents of Puritanism sometimes smeared Puritans by claiming they were all Separatists.

⁴² Greaves, 8-9, 13-14.

believed that the godly were capable of self-control, but there were debates over how far internal moderation could go and how far collective discipline should go.⁴³

After the 1580s, an increasing number of Puritan writers advocated for a middle way between Separatism and Conformism. The general idea was to give obedience to the Church of England until it could be reformed from within. This was in response to all Puritans being depicted as radical Separatists. While Separatists argued that the Church was anti-Christian, advocates of a middle way argued the Church had just become corrupt and sinful. According to Ethan Shagan, the purpose of these anti-Separatist texts was “not to describe a perfect ecclesiastical polity but to delineate the parameters of obedience to a decidedly imperfect one.” They still believed in godly self-government with public discipline being the path to a moderate Church. These Puritans believed in a *via media* “between usurping a public role and acquiescing to a private one.”⁴⁴

The Opposing Sides: Laudians

Laudianism is the modern term given by historians for the ideas and ecclesiastical practices of the highly influential Archbishop of Canterbury William Laud and his supporters. Laudianism was in many ways a direct response to the practices and ideas of Puritanism. William Laud rose to prominence when he was promoted to Bishop of London in 1628. Laud became the face of the religious reforms under Charles I. Laud was educated during a changing religious background in England. Some theologians desired a return to the teachings of the early Church fathers of antiquity. They stressed

⁴³ Shagan, 150-52.

⁴⁴ Shagan, 159-64.

the unity of Christianity and hoped to bring back color and life to the Church by removing the recent errors and abuses of the Catholic Church. Laud was shaped by these teachings in his time spent at Oxford University as a student, fellow, and head of the College of St. John's. He developed a love of order and proper ritual, virtues that he extended to shaping the Church of England.⁴⁵

The term "Laudian" has been used for the general policies and religious temper of the Personal Rule of Charles I. Historians do not all agree on whether there can be such a set of ideas or ideology referred to as Laudianism. Peter Lake believes Laudianism existed as "a coherent, distinctive and polemically aggressive vision of the Church, the divine presence in the world and the appropriate ritual response to that presence." There was no set program or world-view, but many different opinions and preferences that sometimes overlapped. Most works laying out the "Laudian" view predate the 1630s. There is also no great work during the 1630s that lays out the position or ideal of Laudianism, just many minor works and authors who wrote pamphlets and gave sermons espousing a certain aspect.⁴⁶

After appointment as archbishop in 1633, Laud believed ecclesiastical discipline had become too relaxed and the Church was in danger of falling apart through internal descension. With Kings Charles I's support, Laud wanted to reimpose discipline, starting with restoring the clergy to a place as guides and councilors to the nation. Laud's desires to purify the Church paralleled that of Puritans, but Laud believed bishops should be

⁴⁵ E.R. Adair, "Laud and the Church of England," *Church History* 5, no. 2 (June 1936): 124-28, accessed July 14, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3160524>.

⁴⁶ Lake, 162-63.

responsible and not a godly elect. Laud insisted on conformity to minimum requirements of the Church of England. Clergy who did not conform could lose their livings, but this was a sanction rarely used. Laud and the bishops also wished to maintain a traditional social life in the rural communities. Therefore, they believed disputes about which pastimes were permissible should be decided by the king and his bishops rather than the godly elect.⁴⁷

Laud had great influence on the religious thought and reform in the Church of England, and thus it is important to understand his views on the Church. Laud stressed unity and the uniformity of worship in the Church. Kevin Sharpe points out that there is little discussion of theological disputes in Laud's writings and sermons. Instead there is much emphasis on uniformity not just in doctrine but in the manner people worshiped. Therefore, rather than theological disputes, it was the attachment to uniformity which led to Laud's distrust of Puritans. In Laud's mind, rejecting common forms of worship meant separating from the Church community.⁴⁸

And what were the common forms of worship? As mentioned above, Laud was influenced by the desire among theologians to return to the traditions of the early Church. Historian Julian Davies states that for Laudians, "the traditions of the early Church constituted the context in which both the Church and the Bible had origin and meaning." Therefore, Laud encouraged the study of the early Church fathers at universities. Davies notes that Laudians also had a different view on scripture than other church reformers.

⁴⁷ Lockyer, 220-23.

⁴⁸ Sharpe, 287-89.

Whereas the reformed view believed scripture was self-authenticating and self-interpreting, Laudians believed interpretation of scripture was subordinate to tradition. Laud, therefore, wanted to focus on works that stressed the importance of sacramental life and the historical Church. To Laudians, the physical church itself was an important house of prayer. Davies emphasizes that the Laudians focus on sacraments and the institutional Church were part of a “patristic reorientation and historical reinvestment of Anglicanism.”⁴⁹

One of the key aspects of Laudianism was the idea of the divine presence which meant that the physical church was the house of God. Because of God’s presence, conduct in the church had to be done with reverence and respect, leading many Laudians to oppose the use of the church for any secular purposes. Also, the material fabric of the church became more important along with creating uniform public worship through ceremonies. Ceremonies of the Church were “visible sermons” meant to teach feelings of reverence, humility, and worship to the laity. Ceremonies took a greater role in the life of the church and revealed the necessity of ceremonial conformity to achieve salvation.⁵⁰

Laudianism also increased the importance of public prayer in church, elevating it above preaching. It was important for the laity to take part in public prayer as it was a means to gain an audience with God. Preaching took on less significance, instead becoming a way to provide the laity with information on how to pray properly to prevent

⁴⁹ Julian Davies, *The Caroline Captivity of the Church: Charles I and the Remoulding of Anglicanism, 1625-1641* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992) 51-54.

⁵⁰ Lake, 164-67.

immorality and heresy. Thus, the Laudians radically redefined what preaching was. Preaching was simply a means to bring people together for prayer while also bringing them closer to the sacraments, which became the center of Christian piety and religion.⁵¹

William Laud and his followers believed Puritans were a threat to the Church because of Laudian views which constructed an image of Puritans as subversive. Laudians claimed Puritans confused the sacred and profane by allowing the use of church for secular services. They focused too much on the word of the Bible preached, and this allowed them to shut themselves out from the community with private devotions. Laudians believed the godly regarded themselves as holy objects and thus rejected ceremonies and holy days. More importantly for the reign of Charles I, Laudians believed even moderate Puritans who went through the motions of conformity were dangerous fifth-columnists intent on overthrowing the Church. This made them more dangerous in some ways than overt non-Conformists because they were much harder to root out.⁵²

One might wonder why the Laudians, who stressed the importance of worship and bringing the community closer to god, were against the ideals of Sabbatarianism. The campaign against Sabbatarianism essentially came down to the Laudian belief that they must set up specific holy times because of the importance of holy places. The Puritans based Sunday observance on the Jewish Sabbath which meant Sundays were a day of rest from business and recreation. The Sabbath was exalted above all other days and was supposed to be devoted *entirely* for worship. Therefore, Puritans denounced other holy

⁵¹ Lake, 168-71.

⁵² Lake, 179-80, 182.

days as human inventions and popish superstitions. Laudians in contrast believed the Fourth Commandment of the Bible was only partly moral and partly ceremonial. The day was not devoted entirely to worship, and it was up to human authorities and the magistrate to nominate specific days and times for worship. Therefore, Laudians did not believe the Sabbath was any more important than other holy days.⁵³

Because only part of the Sabbath was devoted to worship, the people were free to partake in pastimes for the rest of the day. Thus, sports and recreations could be viewed as an important element in the reforms of the Laudians. The Laudians emphasized that recreations were only to take place after divine worship and not on Church property. These views were greatly opposed to Puritan views of society divided between the godly and un-godly.⁵⁴

The Argument

Overall, the debates surrounding recreations were essentially about establishing order, with the Puritans and religious reformers arguing recreations were an impediment and Laudians and other supporters of pastimes arguing recreations helped create order. But the focus of this thesis will be on why both James I and Charles I became involved in the conflict over recreations. Other historians tend to focus on the issue of James and Charles imposing their authority through the publication of the *Declaration of Sports*. This thesis does not seek to overturn the scholarship on this issue but rather add to it by demonstrating how James's and Charles's recreational policies aligned with their

⁵³ Lake, 172.

⁵⁴ Lake, 178.

conceptions of the *via media*. Both monarchs involved themselves in the debate over popular pastimes to impose the idea that the monarch should be deciding issues concerning recreations. James and Charles supported recreations, generally taking the side of the defenders of popular pastimes. But what is different from past scholarly works is that this thesis demonstrates that both James I and Charles I published the *Declaration of Sports* as an attempt to end the conflict over Sunday pastimes and establish a *via media* of sports and recreations between the two supposed extreme positions of banning all recreations and unrestrained license to play sports. Their stance on recreations was portrayed as moderate and the declaration was meant to impose this moderation on the English people. The difference between James I and Charles I was that Charles was more assertive and aggressive in enforcing the *Declaration of Sports* by linking it with the practices of Laudianism which argued for the monarch's authority over such matters. Thus, Charles also shifted the *via media* to a place more in line with Catholic views.

Furthermore, this thesis will also reveal the conflict over recreations to contain many of the religious, societal, and economic issues that created divisions and led to civil war. It also brings the different historiographic views on the causes of the English Civil War together. The differences in the recreational policies of James I and Charles I demonstrate that there were long-term issues and trends which led to irreconcilable religious and societal divisions. But this thesis also highlights the importance of the recreational policies of Charles I and how they were part of his general mismanagement and failed short-term efforts to resolve the issues of the time. Charles's policies were not the sole cause of the Civil War, but they certainly exacerbated the divisions caused by long-term trends.

Chapter II of the thesis will focus on the debates surrounding recreations in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. It will look at the primary arguments of both the public supporters and critics of popular pastimes while also gleaning information on why recreations were so important to the common people. Chapter III will concentrate on how and why James I involved himself in the conflict over recreations. The discussion will involve James's ecclesiastical policies and his views on sports and the *via media*. The chapter will then discuss the importance of the *Declaration of Sports* and how James I linked it with his ecclesiastical policies to establish a *via media* of sports and recreations. Chapter IV will then focus on Charles I and his republication of the *Declaration of Sports*. It will show how Charles's recreation policies largely mirrored those of James to establish a middle ground on pastimes but were pursued more aggressively with stronger attempts at enforcing them. But the chapter will also demonstrate how Charles attempted to shift the *via media* by infusing his ecclesiastical policies with the ideals and practices of Laudianism.

CHAPTER II: THE CONFLICT OVER POPULAR RECREATIONS

Sometime in seventeenth century England at the town of Chirdlington in Hertfordshire on a Sunday, a group of men gathered near the local church to play a football match. One individual tolled the church bell to assemble the players. After the men had gathered inside the church and were preparing to play their game, a “black ball” came tumbling down a nearby hill. The ball crashed into the bell tower and killed the man who rang the bell. The mysterious black ball then “flustered about the church and hurted divers of them, and at last bursting, left a filthy stinke like to that of brimstone.”⁵⁵ The clergyman Henry Burton told this story and implied that it was a sign of God’s wrath on those who were about to forsake the Sabbath. Stories like this were quite common in sixteenth and seventeenth century England. The religious reformer Phillip Stubbes, for example, recounted a tale of spectators at a bear-baiting contest falling to their deaths after some scaffolding fell apart.⁵⁶ Puritans and other moral reformers used these stories to show that God was displeased with any form of recreation on Sundays.

⁵⁵ Henry Burton, *A Divine Tragedie Lately Acted* (London, 1641), 24. For this thesis all spellings will be as they appear in the original source.

⁵⁶ Phillip Stubbes, *Anatomy of the Abuses in England* (London, 1584), 115-16.

Sports and recreations of the common people had been tolerated for centuries. However, by the late sixteenth century, moral reformers began a concerted attack on popular recreations. According to historian Peter Burke, attacks on recreations, and popular culture in general, began with the Reformation and took on different forms from region to region across Europe. There were two main objections to popular culture. Recreations and popular traditions supposedly called back pagan rituals. Popular recreations were also considered a moral hazard leading to sin and violence and were a waste of time and money. Not all religious people had the same objections. Popular recreations proved quite resilient to government reforms for many years even before the Reformation. But, by the sixteenth century, there was a more concerted reform movement helped by the Protestant and Catholic Reformations.⁵⁷

Most opposition to recreations in England came from the Puritans and religious reformers. Historians have demonstrated that Puritan attitudes toward sports and physical recreation were generally unfriendly. They saw any type of sportive play as frivolous and a waste of time. Sports and recreations conflicted with the observance of the Sabbath and were an incentive to vice. They were also socially and personally damaging. For example, dancing was attacked for its carnality, football for its violence, and maypoles for their association with paganism. Puritans, though, attacked only the element of play, not any physical activity, like basic exercising, which could refresh and strengthen the

⁵⁷ Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (New York: New York University Press, 1978), 207-215, 218.

body.⁵⁸ Historian Christopher Hill argues that Puritans and other reformers particularly disliked disorder created by Sunday recreations. Many magistrates sought to prohibit recreations on Sundays. Puritan fears of disorder, and its anti-pagan enthusiasm, meant that attacks on recreations, according to Hill, were part of an attempt “to impose the ethos of an urban civilization on the whole realm, especially its dark corners.”⁵⁹

However, popular recreations did have support from some people in positions of authority and a minority of the gentry many decades before the first *Declaration of Sports*. These people believed popular recreations reflected their notion of a unified cooperative society.⁶⁰ While religious reformers scorned popular recreations on moral grounds, the supporters of recreations stressed the important role they played in community building. This chapter will address both sides of the conflict, highlighting some of the overlapping concerns of the supporters and critics. By looking at the writings of both sides, it is also possible to gain insight into why recreations were so popular and important to the common people. The common people did not participate in the debates

⁵⁸ Dennis Brailsford, *Sport and Society: Elizabeth to Anne* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), 127-133; Winston U. Solberg, *Redeem the Time: The Puritan Sabbath in Early America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), 48-51.

⁵⁹ Christopher Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England*, 2nd ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1967), 189-191. At this time, lay educational standards were on the rise in the populous and more urban areas of South and East England. The rural areas of Wales and the North of England, the “dark corners of the land,” were allegedly populated by ignorant and superstitious people. Puritan preachers attempted to bring Protestant Christian education and teachings to these areas. See Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England*, 57-60.

⁶⁰ David Underdown, *Revel, Riot and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England, 1603-1660* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 63.

conducted by the elites. For them, recreations served important social functions that were largely ignored or dismissed by Puritans and other religious reformers. Recreations for the people provided a sense of community and neighborliness, and helped the people improve their communities.

It is important to remember that these debates came about during the economic, sociological, and cultural changes that occurred in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The disruption to the social order manifested itself in the debate over recreations. Both sides were addressing these threats, but each had their own opposing views to how it should be done. The defenders of recreations (eventually including the Laudians in the 1630s) saw recreations as a positive means of solving the threats to order. On the other hand, the Puritans and moral reformers saw recreations as a cause of such disorder.

The Defenders of Recreations

Sunday recreations had their share of supporters and detractors. According to historian Christopher Hill, Sabbath rest was popular amongst the “industrious-sort” in towns, while the traditional recreations were more popular in the countryside.⁶¹ Recreations were especially popular in the arable regions of the countryside. This was because arable villages were nucleated and centered on the church and manor house. These villages were bound by neighborhood and custom. Pasture and woodland areas had

⁶¹ The development of commerce and industry in England helped establish an urban way of life on a national scale. Industrious people had possibilities of advancement in society and needed protection from overwork. Thus, they were sympathetic to Sabbatarianism and hostile to the traditional sports. See Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England*, 168, 208-209.

larger parishes with small hamlets and isolated farms where the people tended to be more individualistic. David Underdown notes that the economic and social changes around 1600 affected the communities in each area differently. In the areas of open-field agriculture generally the ideal of the harmonious community was maintained. But towns and pasture and woodland areas of the countryside, which were linked to an expanding market economy and industrialization the ideal of harmony was under threat.⁶²

Who were the people that defended recreations and why did they defend them? Authors of works in praise of popular recreations tended to be somebody living in the capital or a follower of the royal court. Some of these men were lawyers or “professional men of letters,” compared to the provincial gentry and ministers who were generally not among the defenders of recreations.⁶³ The authors who defended pastimes generally stressed the sense of community and the financial benefits recreations created for the people.

Some parishes maintained traditional pastimes during James I’s reign despite decline elsewhere. Some urban communities maintained revelry. Old celebrations and Whitsun ales continued in Oxford and around London, with these celebrations being highly visible to the nation. The volume of literature under James I celebrating pastimes exceeded that which criticized them.⁶⁴

⁶² Underdown, 5, 17-18.

⁶³ Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year, 1400-1700* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 167-68.

⁶⁴ Hutton, 163-64.

Robert Burton was an ardent defender of popular recreations. He wrote critically of those who opposed recreations such as dancing, singing, plays, and sports, stating, “whole volumes writ against [recreations], and some againe because they are now cold and wayward, past themselves, cavell at all such youthfull sports in others.” Opponents of recreations also “out of preposterous zeale object many times triviall arguments, and because of some abuse will quite take away the good use.” Burton believed these people were too stern in their judgements. Burton also agreed with King James I’s *Declaration of Sports*, and that May-games, wakes, and Whitsun ales should be allowed provided they were not held at unreasonable times.⁶⁵

One of the most popular and important recreations for rural peoples was the church ale. In *The Survey of Cornwall*, the antiquary and poet Richard Carew observed the importance of church ales to the local people, providing them with a sense of community and neighborliness.⁶⁶ Two “wardens” were appointed to divide the tasks of baking goods and brewing ales. They then collected these provisions provided by each parishioner. On holy days all met at the church house and there would “merily feed on their owne victuals, contributing some petty portion to the flock, which by many smalls, growth to a meetly greatnes.” Neighboring parishes visited one another and spent money together on food and ales. Any money made from these ales was used “to defray any

⁶⁵ Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (London: 1621), 348.

⁶⁶ For a further discussion of church ales and other feasts and their importance to the people, see Richard Greaves, *Society and Religion in Elizabethan England* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), 466-69.

extraordinary charges arising in the parish or imposed on them for the good of the Countrey, or the Princes service.”⁶⁷

Clearly, these church ales brought entire communities together in a spirit of friendship and neighborliness. These ales were also a benefit to the upkeep of the community. Richard Carew stressed these points further when he defended the ales against those who wished to suppress them. He claimed the ales promoted Christian love and conformed “mens behavior to a civil conversation.” The ales also allowed for a peaceful solving of any quarrels that arose in the community. The ales also raised the stores (or money) of the community which were used to help the poor, repair churches, and build bridges and highways.⁶⁸

The potential for church ales to be a place where quarrels could be solved is important considering the problems faced by communities at this time. As was briefly covered in the Introduction, disagreements over a variety of issues in the community were thought to undermine social harmony. People in towns and villages were concerned with the disruptive effects of litigation to solve disputes. People often asked the clergy or gentry to try to solve these disputes without litigation.⁶⁹ According to historian Tim Stretton, there was a rising number of litigations and lawsuits in late sixteenth and early seventeenth century England. Contemporaries lamented the loss of neighborliness and a weakening of personal and community relations as a result of lawsuits. Many lawsuits

⁶⁷ Richard Carew, *The Survey of Cornwall* (London: 1602), 68-69.

⁶⁸ Carew, 69.

⁶⁹ Underdown, 16.

were debt related, but there was also a significant rise in the number of defamation lawsuits in church courts. Stretton argues the lawsuits were not the result of a decline in neighborly relations but certainly played a part in eroding such relations.⁷⁰ One can imagine the jovial atmosphere of a church ale as an excellent venue for solving such disputes without resorting to litigation.

Late-seventeenth century author John Aubrey also described a few celebrations that brought communities together. In a custom dating back to the primitive Christian church called Love Feasts, congregations met and feasted after communion. The rich brought food for themselves and the poor. The people ate together “for the encrease of mutuall love, and for the rich to shew their love and charity to the poor.” In the town of Danby Wisk in Yorkshire parishioners went to the local ale house after church service “and there drink together as a testimony of charity and friendship.” Another community celebration called Home Harvests were observed in most English counties. In South Wiltshire one was held after the first load of corn was brought home. This was done with “great joy and merriment.” A man rode in a cart accompanying the harvesters playing a fiddle, and upon returning to the village a barrel of beer was provided for the harvestmen. All of this was done with “some good Rustique Cheer.”⁷¹

⁷⁰ Tim Stretton, “Written Obligations, Litigation and Neighborliness, 1580-1680,” in *Remaking English Society: Social Relations and Social Change in Early Modern England* edited by Steve Hindle, Alexandra Shepard, and John Walter (Boydell and Brewer, 2013), 189-93, accessed July 21, 2019, <http://www.jstor.org.navigatoresu.passhe.edu/stable/10.7722/j.ctt2jbm0w.14>.

⁷¹ John Aubrey, “Remaines of Gentilisme and Judaisme,” in *John Aubrey Three Prose Works*, ed. John Buchanon-Brown (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1972), 141-43.

Other types of recreations, including what many contemporaries referred to as revels, benefited communities. In the latter decades of the seventeenth century, author Robert Plot described an annual revel that brought the town of Burford in Oxfordshire together in celebration. The town celebrated the victory of the Anglo-Saxon King Cuthbert over Ethelbald the Mercian around the year 750 A.D. in a battle fought near the town. Cuthbert captured Ethelbald's battle standard, which had a depiction of a golden dragon on it. Therefore, the people of Burford made a huge dragon each year and carried it "up down the Town in great jollity on Midsummer Eve."⁷²

Plot also described a revel that had been held for centuries in a place called Pagets Bromley in Staffordshire. This "sport" called the Hobby-horse dance was celebrated at Christmas or New Years. A man would place boards made into the image of a horse between his legs and dance to accompanying music. The man also had a pot which the local people would put cakes and ale into. The people hoped that "all people who had any kindness for the good intent of the Institution of the sport, giving pence a piece for themselves and families; and so forraigners too; that came to see it." Just like the case of the church ales, Plot claimed the money earned was used to repair the local church and help the poor.⁷³

These types of communal festivals were not limited to rural areas, for even urban festivals brought communities together. During festival days in June and July in London,

⁷² Robert Plot, *The Natural History of Oxfordshire* (Oxford: 1677), 348-49. Plot does not describe how or with what the dragon was made from.

⁷³ Robert Plot, *The Natural History of Staffordshire* (Oxford: 1686), 434.

bonfires were set up in the streets with every man from the community contributing wood. The “wealthier sort” set up tables, and provided “sweete bread, and good drinke.” The wealthy invited neighbors to sit and “be merry with them in greate familiarity.” These festivals created friendship between neighbors “that being before at controversie, ... reconciled, and made bitter enemies, loving friends.”⁷⁴ Even urban festivals, like their rural counterparts, were able to bring communities together and help solve differences.

Bringing urban communities together was important in the face of the economic and social changes in England around 1600. The towns were experiencing a “Crisis of Order” created by increasing numbers of landless poor. When people migrated to towns in search of industrial employment and were unable to gain such employment, they became vagrants and were considered a threat to public order. Vagrants were considered idle, dishonest, immoral, and lazy by propertied people in towns. Townspeople had fears of a “masterless” people. Society was supposed to be held together by the household where everyone had either a master or parent.⁷⁵ Recreations in urban areas, particularly the communal feasts, perhaps could ease such tensions created by these problems.

Efforts to bring communities together through recreations were further helped by the revival of an annual festival of recreations known as the Cotswold Games, held primarily in the Cotswold region in south-central and southwest England during the reign of James I. The games had a tradition stretching back to Saxon times. Robert Dover, an attorney and author, took over management of the games in 1612 and improved and

⁷⁴ John Stow, *Survey of London* (London: 1598), 74.

⁷⁵ Underdown, 33-36.

recreated them. The games were held on Thursday and Friday after Whitsun. Some of the recreations held included wrestling, leaping, dancing, pitching the bar, hammer throwing, foot races, hunting, and even card games and chess held in tents. Dover took over the games when they were of a rough, manly nature and were mostly for the lower classes. The games gained more popularity when Dover introduced hare-hunting, horse racing, and games of skill which attracted the participation of the gentry.⁷⁶

The games were such a success that after Dover's death a collection of poems titled *Annalia Dubrensia* was published in the 1630s to honor Dover's memory and the Cotswold Games. One poem by the poet and playwright Ben Jonson, praised the games for their positive impact on rural communities. He stated that the games in the 1630s renewed the glories of "our Blessed James," but also:

How they doe keepe alive his memorie,
With the Glad Country and Posteritie:
How they advance true love and neighborhood,
And doe both Church and Common-wealth the good,
In spite of Hipocrites who are the worst
Of Subjects. Let such envie till they burst!⁷⁷

The games were not only good for communities but were good for the whole country. Jonson also clearly dismissed the critics of popular recreations in his last few lines.

Church ales, revels, and festivals were not the only means of recreation that brought communities together. Even football matches provided opportunities for

⁷⁶ Christopher Whitfield, ed., *Robert Dover and the Cotswold Games and Annalia Dubrensia* (Ossining, NY: Salloch, 1962), 13-16, 19-21.

⁷⁷ Mattheue Walbancke, *Annalia Dubrensia, Upon the yeerely celebration of Mr. Robert Dovers Olimpick games upon Cotswold-hills* (London: 1636), Sig. D2.

community building. George Owen of Henllys described a version of football called knappen.⁷⁸ In what Owen called “standing knappens,” parishes would gather on a specific day and at a specific place every year for a match against a neighboring parish. For example, the parishes of Neuarne and Newport had a match every Shrove Tuesday (the Tuesday before Easter) and the parishes of Melyney and Eglosserow met every Easter Monday.⁷⁹ David Underdown states that these type of football matches were an expression of parochial loyalty against outsiders, in which the identity of the individual was submerged in that of the group. Football’s collective character made it suitable for communities that relied on close cooperation to tend shared fields.⁸⁰ This is interesting in the context of migration of peoples due to economic reasons. Football was perhaps a means of creating community solidarity against those who did not traditionally belong to that community. So, one can imagine the community pride on the line for these annual matches for each parish.

Football matches also benefitted the community for reasons other than pride. Much like the church ales, football matches, whether annual meetings or spontaneous games put together on a Sunday or holiday, could provide financial benefits. George

⁷⁸ There were many different forms of football played in the British Isles at the time under various names. Richard Carew describes a version called hurling played in Cornwall. Gervase Markham briefly describes a version called Balloone. See Carew, 73-75; Gervase Markham, *Countrey Contentments* (London: 1615), 109.

⁷⁹ George Owen, *The Description of Pembrokeshire*, ed. Henry Owen (1603; repr., London: Charles J. Clark, 1892), 271.

⁸⁰ Underdown, 75. Underdown also notes that these games were sort of a ritualized combat between communities.

Owen mentioned that many “victualers” would come to the matches with all sorts of meat and drink. Merchants set up stalls to “shewe and utter their wares, and for these causes some to playe, some to eate and drinke, some to buye, some to sell, others to see others to be seene.”⁸¹ Again, much like the church ales, these football matches brought various peoples together. Whether a person wanted to watch the football match or not, these matches allowed the people to eat, drink, and enjoy themselves. Local people also had ample opportunity to sell some of their goods for their own and perhaps the community’s benefit.

Undoubtedly, these football matches could be quite violent. Richard Carew in his description of hurling mentioned the rough play. The dangers to the players included “bloody pates,” broken bones, and bones out of joint, and it was sure to “shorten their days.”⁸² Many Puritans and social reformers railed against the violence of football and how it could lead to hatred and murder. However, George Owen attested to the fact that despite all the violence, a sense of neighborliness remained. Players often returned from games with injuries, bloody faces, and bruised bodies, but “laugheinge & merylie jestinge at their harmes, tellinge their adversaries how he brake his heade to an other that he strake him on the face, and howe he repaid the same to him againe, and all of this in good mirthe, without grudge or hatred.”⁸³ Even a later author mentioned the good that came from football. In the month of March, men played the sport and it “tryeth the legges

⁸¹ Owen, 272.

⁸² Carew, 75.

⁸³ Owen, 277.

of strength, and merry matches continue good fellowship.”⁸⁴ So, despite the violence football still had positive benefits for the community.

To be sure, there were some more individualistic reasons for playing sports, particularly for a sense of manhood and personal glory. Robert Plot described a bull-running custom dating back to the Medieval period in Staffordshire in which a group of minstrels were chased by a bull.⁸⁵ In Plot’s own time, he noted the minstrels were “assisted by the promiscuous multitude” who took part in the chase “sometimes through the emulation in point of manhood.”⁸⁶ Manhood and glory were particularly at stake in football. George Owen claimed the players did not play for money, but for glory, “first for the fame of their Country in generall, next every particular [individual], to winne praise for his actyvitie and prowes, which two considerations ardently enflameth the myndes of ye youthfull people to stryve to the death for the glorie and fame, which they esteeme deerer unto them then worldlye wealth.”⁸⁷

Many of the themes discussed above also appeared in the poetry of some of the passionate defenders of traditional pastimes. Poets such as Robert Herrick believed the controversy surrounding the *Book of Sports* was a struggle to preserve a vanishing way of life. There were complaints about a decline in neighborliness and that things were more

⁸⁴ Nicholas Breton, *Fantastickes* (London: 1626), Sig. C1.

⁸⁵ Plot stated this custom was brought over from Spain. For the origins and complete description of this see Plot, *Nat. Hist. of Staffordshire*, 436-39.

⁸⁶ Plot, *Nat. Hist. of Staffordshire*, 440.

⁸⁷ Owen, 273.

prosperous in the past. *Palinodia*, a collection of poems published under the pseudonym Pasquil, was one of the earliest defenses of the *Book of Sports*. It described the function of the May Day license in the larger community.⁸⁸

One poem in *Palinodia* focused on the importance of the maypole to the community, and echoes many of the arguments for church ales and other rural festivities. Pasquil called the maypole a sign of “harmlesse mirth and honest neighborhood.” Pasquil lamented the loss of the maypoles, and reminisced about the times they were still allowed:

Happy the age, and harmlesse were the dayes,
(For then true love and amity was found),
When every village did a May-pole raise,
And Whitson-ales, and May-games did abound;

Banquets were held that created friendship and “poore men far’d the better for their feasts.” Public feasts were “Courts of Conscience” in which people settled differences. Pasquil further claimed that maypoles were never “rebellious to the lawes” and the greatest crime committed was “harmlesse honest mirth.”⁸⁹

Another prominent poet who defended popular pastimes was Robert Herrick. His most notable work was a collection of poems titled *Hesperides*. Although not published until the 1640s, most of the poems were composed in the 1620s and 1630s. Historian

⁸⁸ Leah S. Marcus, *The Politics of Mirth: Jonson, Herrick, Milton, Marvell, and the Defense of Old Holiday Pastimes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 144, 146, 152. Marcus states that *Palinodia* is attributed to either Nicholas Breton or William Fenor.

⁸⁹ Pasquil, *Pasquil’s Palinodia, and his Progress to the Taverne* (London: 1619), Sig. B3.

Leah Marcus, notes that Herrick steeped pastimes in paganism to affirm their “primordial indigenous nature.” Herrick often used the motif that pastimes had a “magical efficacy” against economic and other misfortunes.⁹⁰

Herrick’s poem titled “The Hock-cart” is an invitation to merriment for a rural community after days of hard work, that displays the merits of good neighborliness. The speaker invites a Lord to see the cart “Drest up with all the Country Art.” References are made to many people including “Harvest swains,” “Wenches,” and “Rural Younglings” coming to see the cart travel on its rout. The speaker also invites people to go to “your Lords Hearth” to feast on beef, cheese, pie, and beer. The poem ends with a reminder of the importance of the feasts:

And you must know, your Lords word’s true,
Feed him ye must, whose food fils you.
And that this pleasure is like raine,
Not sent ye for to drowne your paine,
But for to make it spring againe.⁹¹

The poem essentially espouses the importance of bringing people together from different social strata in community harmony. Herrick is also alluding to the importance of these feasts to literally bring the season of spring to fruition.⁹²

Herrick also defended parish wakes against charges of disorder in the poem “The Wake.” Wakes and Whitsun ales in the seventeenth century tended to coincide with May

⁹⁰ Marcus, 141-42.

⁹¹ Robert Herrick, *Hesperides* (London: 1648), 113-15.

⁹² Leah Marcus notes that the speaker of the poem takes the same stance as a Laudian village priest who acts as a go-between to bring everyone from the social hierarchy together for good neighborliness. See Marcus, 146-47.

Day and other feasts. The “Maying Season” began on May 1st and ended in late June around the Feast of St. John the Baptist. May Day was an official festival of the Church of England.⁹³ Herrick’s poem references the coming together of many peoples at the wakes, “Unto which the tribes resort.” The people play sports with many players being “Base in action as in clothes.” The day ended with “Cudgell-play” where the speaker states “a *Coxcombe* will be broke, Ere a good *word* can be spoke.” Despite this sport being potentially violent, the speaker makes the case that it has no ill effects to the community:

But the anger ends all here,
Drencht in Ale, or drown’d in Beere.
Happy Rusticks, best content,
With the cheapest Merriment:
And possesse no other feare,
Then to want the Wake next Yeare.⁹⁴

Much like the violent sport of football, the people did not hold grudges after the “Cudgell play.” No harm was done to social harmony, and the people looked forward to the Wake again the next year.

Clearly, the defenders of recreations saw them as important for the well-being of communities. They gave communities pride and financial benefits. Many of these authors stress the social harmony created by recreations. The idea that communities were under threat and conflict increased by significant social and economic changes was a powerful incentive for these men to defend pastimes. Recreations could bring commoners closer in

⁹³ Marcus, 151.

⁹⁴ Herrick, 300-301.

harmony with their social superiors and end the rising hostility and alienation between the two in rural areas. However, recreations were not just a solution to rural community problems, but possibly urban communities as well. In urban settings, recreations could ease the tensions brought about by the rise in unemployed migrants. Essentially the supporters of pastimes believed recreations were a defense against the disorder caused by changes to the social order. In a way the defense against a breakdown in social harmony brought some defenders in line with Laudian ideas of keeping the people content with the existing order. This is in sharp contrast to those who attacked recreations as something that contributed to the disorder and problems of the period.

The Attack on Recreations

One of the key movements in the attack on recreations was Sabbatarianism, characterized by efforts to enforce proper Sabbath observance. While Sabbatarianism became crucial to Puritan beliefs in general, it is important to note that not all Sabbatarians were Puritans. In October of 1582 a group of pastors from across the country met at a conference in the town of Dedham, England. Over the course of the next seven years these pastors would meet regularly to confer about the scriptures and practical problems within their parishes. One of the key issues that came up was the proper use of the Sabbath. A topic of frequent discussion and debate was the matter of which activities should be allowed on Sundays. These debates would be published years later and became known as the *Dedham Papers*. Historian John H. Primus notes that the *Dedham Papers* demonstrate the Sabbath issue was becoming a topic of discussion in the Church of England by the 1580s. He also states that there was a shift in emphasis from

Sabbath observance to Sabbath theology, in which passages from the Bible were used to justify suppression of recreations.⁹⁵

Historian Alistair Dougall emphasizes that the 1580s and 1590s saw the development of a new, more fundamental Sabbatarianism. Many doctrinal and polemical works using complex theological arguments appeared that went beyond any previous established stances of the Church of England. These works argued against holy days, ultimately challenging the authority of the Church. Thus, popular recreations came under attack on religious and secular grounds like never before. This was further exacerbated by increased poverty levels due to rising inflation and a growing population, which led to calls to control the way people lived their lives.⁹⁶

When examining the books, treatises, and other writings of the moral reformers it becomes clear that these men had a variety of arguments for why recreations were bad. There are basic arguments that recreations prevented the proper worship of God and led to sin. Others were worried about the supposed disorder they caused in the community, with some men stressing the upheaval caused to the social hierarchy. But some reformers noted that certain kinds of recreations were acceptable, provided they were conducted in moderation. Certainly, not all the Puritan and Sabbatarian reformers could agree on why recreations were harmful and what kinds were acceptable.

⁹⁵ John H. Primus, "The Dedham Sabbath Debate: More Light on English Sabbatarianism," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 17, no. 1 (Spring 1986): 87-102, accessed August 31, 2015, <http://jstor.org/stable/2541357>.

⁹⁶ Alistair Dougall, *The Devil's Book: Charles I, the Book of Sports and Puritanism in Tudor and Early Stuart England* (Exeter, UK: University of Exeter Press, 2011), 39-40.

Even before the Dedham debates there were treatises published about the sanctity of the Sabbath, which condemned recreations on it. In a sermon given in January of 1571, preacher William Kethe complained that the Sabbath was being broken by people who referred to it as their “reveling day.” Kethe stated that another minister in Dorset County told the people of his church not to assemble for any church ales on the Sabbath because of the great disorder they caused. Despite the warning, the people still gathered that same day and profaned the Sabbath by drinking and dancing, “in so much as men could not keepe their servauntes from lyinge out of their own houses ... at night.”⁹⁷ Here is a reference to a threat to the social order of society. If servants drank excessively their masters could not control them properly. Masters losing the obedience of their servants was a major threat to the hierarchy.

Some authors spoke against any kind of gaming that could involve gambling. In 1577, John Northbrooke published a treatise against dice playing, dancing, and theater. The treatise took the form of a conversation between characters named “Youth” and “Age.” In a section against idleness on the Sabbath, Age says the Sabbath is a day for finding Christ, not for recreation. “Where did Joseph and Marie finde Christ, when as they sought after him? It was in no Taverne or playing place, but it was in the Temple.” Northbrooke, however, supported some forms of recreation, if they did not take place on the Sabbath. The character Age allowed for moderate and lawful exercises and for “recreations quickning of our dull minds.” But, Age warned that if used “unmeasurably” they could lead to abuse and become a hindrance to hearing God’s word. He went on to

⁹⁷ William Kethe, *A Sermon Made at Blanford Forum* (London: 1571), 8, 15-16.

claim recreations are good for maintaining health, vigor, and recovering strength to go about the tasks God has called the people to do with more cheer.⁹⁸

In a sermon preached at Paules Cross in August of 1578, John Stockwood echoed some of the sentiments of Northbrooke. At one point in the sermon Stockwood preached that God must punish people for the sin of Sabbath-breaking. He asked why there was bull-baiting, bear-baiting, “baudie” plays, dicing, card-playing, dancing, and drinking on the Sabbath.⁹⁹ Stockwood wondered why these acts were not punished. “I dare boldelye stande to announce it, that there is no daye in the weeke, wherin God is so much dishonoured, as on the daye when he should be best served.”¹⁰⁰

The 1580s and 1590s saw a great increase in literature attacking Sunday recreations. These attacks were against many of the recreations, such as church ales, often defended by the men discussed in the previous section. These works called for an even stricter adherence of the holy day, arguing they should be devoted entirely to spiritual needs. The authors focused on abuses and attacked the legitimacy of recreations and pastimes. They also attacked the concept that the Church of England had the right to

⁹⁸ John Northbrooke, *A Treatise Wherein Dicing, Dauncing, vaine plaies or enterludes with other idle pastimes, etc. commonly used on the Sabbath day...* (London, 1577), 2, 23-30.

⁹⁹ Bear and bull-baiting was a popular spectator sport enjoyed by rich and poor alike. It involved angering a bear or bull and unleashing dogs to attack the animal. The object was to place bets on whether the bear or bull could survive or not. See Marcia Vale, *The Gentlemen's Recreations: Accomplishments and Pastimes of the English Gentlemen, 1580-1630* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Littlefield, 1977), 132; Jeffrey L. Singman, *Daily Life in Elizabethan England* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), 153-54.

¹⁰⁰ John Stockwood, *A Sermon Preached at Paules Cross on Barthelmew Day* (London, 1578), 48-51.

appoint holy days and move the Sabbath.¹⁰¹ In particular, Sabbath-breaking, drinking, and playing of “unlawful games” attracted the attention of moral reformers who denounced such activities.¹⁰²

Some reformers attacked certain activities for creating bad morals. Phillip Stubbes in his popular treatise *Anatomy of the Abuses in England*, denounced dancing and music. Stubbes declared dancing “an introduction to whoredome, a preparative to wantonnesse, a provocative to uncleannesse, and an [invitation] to all kinde of leaudnesse.” Dancing was a pleasure only to those who delighted in vanities and was corrosive to the morals of good Christians. Music was particularly bad for young people. It lured them to “effeminacie, pusillanimitie, and lothsomnesse of life.” Music was a gift of God and must only be played in the service of God. According to Stubbes, music was especially dangerous when it was played in public and combined with dancing. He claimed it stirred up lust, “womanisheth the mynde,” ravished the heart, and brought general uncleanliness.¹⁰³

Stubbes also attacked other popular recreations such as church ales and football. Stubbes claimed people spent church ales drinking all night until they were “as dronke as Rattes and as blockishe as beatles.” When answering those who claimed the money from

¹⁰¹ Dougall, 49-50.

¹⁰² Underdown, 51.

¹⁰³ Stubbes, 98-99, 109-10. Stubbes’s views became widespread among Puritans. He traveled throughout England for several years before writing this book. The book was popular enough that it went through five editions in thirteen years. See Solberg, 49.

church ales was used to repair churches, Stubbes questioned whether God would “have his house builded with Drunkenesse, Gluttonie, and suche like abomination?”¹⁰⁴ In an attack on football, Stubbes stated, “it maie rather bee called a friendly kynde of fight, than a plaie or recreation. A bloudie and Murtherying practice, then a fellowlie sporte or pastyme.” Stubbes also described the violence of the sport and the terrible injuries that occurred. He stated football led to envy, malice, and hatred and sometimes fights, brawls, and murders. Stubbes questioned whether it was a Christian deed to maim and hurt one another by playing the sport.¹⁰⁵

Many of the attacks against recreations came at a time when seasonal pastimes were in decline during the reign of Elizabeth I. This decline began in the 1560s, and by the 1570s church ales had vanished from East Anglia, Kent, and Sussex. By the end of Elizabeth’s reign, ales were confined to the west country and the valley of the Thames river and its tributaries.¹⁰⁶ The decline in communal festivities gave way to a “fragmented sociability” of ale houses and private houses. This coincided with idea that churches were empty on Sundays and other places such as taverns, ale houses, and other places of entertainment were better attended. Bishops and preachers often complained about low attendances in church but ale houses being full.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Stubbes, 94-96.

¹⁰⁵ Stubbes, 119.

¹⁰⁶ Hutton, 118.

¹⁰⁷ Patrick Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society, 1559-1625* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 222, 203.

Many Sabbatarians were not satisfied with the idea that it was sufficient that people should satisfy the minimum of the law requiring church attendance.¹⁰⁸ John Field wrote in the 1580s, that even those who came to church were sinners for taking part in recreations, asking what should be made of those who did not attend church at all, “who through conctousnes and prophanation dispise these holy assemblies.” These people followed their “worldy [affair] and busines, or else thinking that the sabbath in well ynough kept, they give God some little peece thereof othersome in they bee idle, following their pleasures, and wicked pastimes with all greediness.” People also took advantage of holy days and wished to keep them to “follow their vayn delights” and did not know how to keep a Sabbath to honor God. Field also complained that ale houses, gaming houses, and bowling alleys were never empty, and “trumpets that are blown to gather such company, will sooner prevaile to such places” easier than the “preaching of the holy worde of God” could fill the church.¹⁰⁹

Some attacks on recreations focused on the fact that they took away valuable time from serving God. A minister from Portsmouth, named George Widley, wrote that most recreations, even if allowed during the week, were forbidden on the Sabbath, because they violated the Sabbath rest. There was more danger in recreations on the Sabbath than work because they took people’s minds away from God. Recreations should be done only during the week. Widley wrote that some recreations were allowed on the Sabbath, but

¹⁰⁸ Collinson, 199.

¹⁰⁹ John Field, *A godly exhortation, by the late judgement of God...* (London: 1601), sig, B4r.

only if it was necessary for the preservation of health or helped in the service of God.

Widley acknowledged that some would abuse this liberty and “if they take it, their blood bee upon their owne heads, if they bring themselves by their libertie to be the sonnes of bondage.” Widley argued that all sports or pastimes were forbidden on the Sabbath. Sports became sinful through excessive use and prevented the people from their Sabbath duties.¹¹⁰

Some Sabbatarians stressed the main problem with Sunday recreations was the disorder they caused. Thomas Beard, a preacher from Huntington, writing under the pseudonym of Edmund Rudiard, dedicated one of his books to several Justices of the Peace. Beard complained about “the horrible profanation of the Lord’s Sabbath and such like sins,” which needed to be suppressed by those “whom the Lord hath put in place and authoritie to punish such grievous sinnes.” Beard hoped the Justices would read his book and act to suppress Sabbath abuses, and by the Justices’ “good means much good might come to many a poore soule.” The people who committed these abuses were unable to feel the burden of their sins because of the “palpable ignorance and senselesse blindnesse that it is them,” which Beard believed many ministers of magistrates were also guilty.¹¹¹

Many years later, after the publication of the first *Declaration of Sports*, Samuel Bachiler, the preacher for the English Army, complained about the disorder caused by recreations. Bachiler hoped governors and magistrates would maintain order in the towns

¹¹⁰ George Widley, *The Doctrine of the Sabbath* (London: 1604), 99-102.

¹¹¹ Edmund Rudierd, *The Thunderbolt of God’s Wrath* (London: 1618), Epistle Dedicatory.

and cities by not allowing people to break the Sabbath or frequent “riotous places, for heathenish May-games, and Whitson-ales (as they call their mad sports).” Bachiler wrote that people at home should be ashamed of the recreations and brothel houses, “shamefully connived at under the nose of Authority, by those whom God will charge, for having so little heart, and zeale, and courage, and conscience to suppress them.” Like Beard a decade before, Bachiler was clearly disappointed with many magistrates’ unwillingness to suppress Sunday recreations.¹¹²

Although resistance to sports on the Sabbath was fierce among many Sabbatarian elites, this did not mean all were against recreation in their entirety.¹¹³ Some Sabbatarian thinkers allowed for sports if they were done in moderation. Future governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, John Winthrop, noted that he became melancholic when he cut himself off from “worldly delights.” He observed, “Needful to recreate my minde with some outward recreation, I yielded unto it, and by a moderate exercise herein was much refreshed.” Winthrop also noted, however, that although God allowed these “outward comforts” they “must be in sobriety.”¹¹⁴ John Downname stated people must serve God in all their actions. This entailed not just religious acts, but also in “the meanest duties of the basest callings” in eating, drinking, and lawful sports and recreations. However, these activities had to be done in the service of God, not for

¹¹² Samuel Bachiler, *The Camp Royall* (London: 1629), Letter to the Reader.

¹¹³ Nancy Struna, “Puritans and Sport: The Irrecoverable Tide of Change,” *Journal of Sport History* 4, no. 1 (Spring 1977): 6-7.

¹¹⁴ John Winthrop, *Winthrop Papers* vol. 1, 1498-1628 (Boston: The Massachusetts Historical Society, 1929), 201-202.

necessity, praise, profit, fear of punishment, nor hope of reward.¹¹⁵ In a later treatise, *The Christian Warfare*, Downname argued that joining “honest” labors with lawful recreations was a means to refreshing hearts and spirits. If the people remained in idleness it would lead to melancholy. Of course, all recreations had to be practiced with moderation.¹¹⁶

Overall, attempts at subverting popular recreations achieved mixed success. It met stubborn resistance in some areas of England and was more successful in firmly Protestant regions. By the late sixteenth century, some church ales were disappearing, with signs of reluctance to participate in places where they were still held.¹¹⁷ Thomas Fuller, who wrote a history of the Church of England that was published in the mid-seventeenth century, even noted there was a more strict observance of the Sabbath in the late sixteenth century. He exclaimed how incredible it was that many people were able to forbear recreations on Sundays. “On this day the stoutest fencer laid down the buckler; the most skillful archer unbent his bow, counting all shooting beside the mark; May-games and morris-dances grew out of request.”¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ John Downname, *Guide to Godlynesse* (London: 1622), 164.

¹¹⁶ John Downname, *The Christian Warfare* (London: 1634), 988-90.

¹¹⁷ Underdown, 49-50.

¹¹⁸ J.R. Tanner, ed., *Constitutional Documents from the Reign of James I, 1603-1625* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), 53. Fencing was a popular aristocratic sport. Archery was practiced by the commoners, which was required by law. Morris dancing was a ritual dance in which men wore bells, ribbons, and extravagant attire. See Jeffrey L. Singman, *Daily Life in Elizabethan England* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), 152-55.

Not only did some people give up Sunday recreations voluntarily, but local laws were made in some counties to prevent participation in recreations. By the 1590s there was evidence of increasing levels of unacceptable behavior at church ales. Local justices in some counties prohibited the ales due the alleged disorder they caused.¹¹⁹ Whether there was a significant increase in disorder his hard to verify, but the elites did grow more concerned for the potential for disorder. William Prynne, a lawyer and critic of recreations, provided an example of a prohibition from the early decades of the seventeenth century. A July 1615 order from local justices in Exeter stated that revels, church ales, and bull-baitings were to be suppressed because of “inconveniencies” that took place. Local justices were tasked with punishing those who took part, using their own discretion.¹²⁰

Even after the publication of the *Declaration of Sports* by both James I and Charles I, attacks on recreations continued, with many critics bringing up similar arguments to their predecessors. Many opponents gave examples of how God punished those who took part in sports on the Sabbath, whether playing or just watching. Thomas Beard referred back to the sixteenth century to describe an incident in 1583 in London where “great multitudes of prophane people” gathered to watch a bear-baiting contest.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Greaves, 467.

¹²⁰ William Prynne, *Canterburies Doome* (London: 1646), 153. Prynne noted this same law was reissued in 1627 in direct defiance of the *Declaration of Sports*. See Prynne, 154.

¹²¹ It is probable that Beard got this story from Phillip Stubbes, he recounted the tale in his *Anatomy of Abuses*. See Stubbes, 115-16.

Beard claimed God caused the scaffolds holding a group of spectators to break, and eight men and women fell to their deaths with many others injured.¹²² Other moral reformers followed Beard in the same vein, recounting stories of God punishing those who took part in recreations or who celebrated the *Book of Sports*. Henry Burton lamented the proliferation of the *Book of Sports* and cited numerous examples of divine punishment for playing on the Sabbath. In January of 1634, some young men playing football on top of a frozen River Trent fell through the ice and all were supposedly drowned. Men were even punished for openly praising the *Book of Sports*. A man who celebrated the suspension of a minister who refused to read from the *Book of Sports* was struck with “a dead Palsey” and became blind and dumb, dying days later.¹²³

Burton also warned of the negative consequences these activities would have on the structure of society by allowing social inferiors to feel the equal of their superiors. He claimed these activities would teach inferiors to rebel against their superiors “and in a word hasten the pulling down of vengeance from heaven upon the Land.” Burton argued the publishing of the *Book of Sports* inhibited the magistrates’ abilities to punish youth for taking part in Sunday sports. Because these activities could go on, Burton claimed, “Inferior persons exalt themselves in high contempt against their superiors as the common vulgar against the Magistrate and Minister, servants against their masters, children against their parents, and wanton wives against their husbands.” Burton

¹²² Thomas Beard, *The Theatre of Gods Judgments* (London, 1648), 150.

¹²³ Henry Burton, 6-8. For other examples of punishment see pp. 3-25 of Henry Burton.

concluded that if the *Book of Sports* was not banned and a speedy reformation made, “how can we look for a stay of the plague until the Land be consumed?”¹²⁴

Clearly, not all Puritans were against Sunday recreations for the same reasons. Some viewed them as wastes of time which took away from the worship of God. Others believed they were inherently sinful. Other writers were mostly concerned about the disorder they caused, both physical and societal. But what connected these arguments was the overall Puritan belief in moral reform through self-restraint and moderation. Proper devotion to God was important to individual moral reform and recreations, particularly on Sundays, only took important time away from such duties. Pastimes such as church ales made self-moderation difficult because of all the temptations of excessive drinking and merriment. Recreations simply opened too many opportunities for the people to lose their self-control and indulge in vices.

Whatever their reasoning, most of the above writers were concerned about recreations of the common people. Some were willing to allow recreations on other days of the week, but not Sundays. These writers seem to have no sympathy for the fact that common people lacked the time for recreations during the rest of the week. It is also striking that many Sabbatarians did not directly blame the common people for recreations, claiming the people were often ignorant, implying they didn't know any better. Therefore, some writers blamed authorities and some ministers for not properly informing the people of their sinful ways and thus suppressing Sunday recreations.

¹²⁴ Henry Burton, 28-29.

The Importance of Recreations to the People

The question at hand is why were recreations so important to the common people? One problem in answering this question is that there are virtually no direct accounts by lower class people that survive. The only accounts of the recreations themselves come from learned men of higher classes. Writers on both sides of the debate also had their own agendas and perhaps they too easily dismissed the arguments of the other side. But some reasons for why recreations were important to the common people can be gleaned from the primary source accounts of both the defenders and critics of popular recreations.¹²⁵

It is most likely true that recreations did provide the positive benefits to the community that their defenders claimed. The large gatherings of people at church ales would no doubt have created a familiarity and neighborliness between the people of the community. The various activities and sports described by the writers must have provided some fun entertainment for the people to refresh themselves after a long week of labor. The general merriment described by some of the poets would have created a positive environment for people to even solve their differences peacefully. However, the claims of the moral reformers cannot be completely dismissed either. No doubt, there was some truth to the accounts of many people getting seriously drunk. Even if some of the accounts are exaggerated, with the copious amounts of alcohol available at church ales,

¹²⁵ For example, it is interesting to speculate whether the common people thought Sabbath issues were important. While it is impossible to find any concrete evidence for either view, the great popularity of Sunday recreations and the enthusiasm in which people took them up again after the Declaration of Sports would indicate the possibility that common people were not as concerned with Sabbath issues as the elites.

some people inevitably enjoyed drinking excessively to get drunk. Clearly, some people enjoyed the rougher recreations like football. Even the defenders of football admitted to the violent nature of the sport. Some men would undoubtedly have enjoyed the violence and competitiveness of it for its own sake and had little care for the other benefits that came with it.

In summation, Puritans and other moral reformers attacked popular recreations throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries for a variety of reasons, most notably for opening a gateway to sin and vice and causing general disorder. Recreations were clearly important to the lower-class people of sixteenth and seventeenth century England. Recreations gave the people of seventeenth century England a sense of community and neighborliness which brought people together from different social groups. This was important, according to the public defenders of recreations, for maintaining communal harmony which was under threat by the social and economic changes at the end of the sixteenth century and early seventeenth century. The financial benefits provided by recreations cannot be overlooked and were said to help the entire community. Also, people took part for pure fun and entertainment, and in the case of football, personal glory.

There is, however, a common idea that emerges from both the defenders and critics of popular pastimes, the theme of moderation. Even if the term “moderation” was not used explicitly, there was a statement that could imply moderation. While the Puritans were generally against recreations, not all were for banning them entirely, just banning them on Sundays. Those who allowed for some recreations argued that they must be done in moderation. Even the upper-class defenders of recreations sometimes stressed

that the pastimes and sports must not cause disorder and be done at the proper time. Both had differing ideas of moderation and when sports could be played. The other overlapping issue was concerns over the social order. The defenders of popular pastimes stressed the importance recreations played in maintaining societal harmony between the classes under the threat of the supposed loss of neighborliness. Some Puritans and moral reformers, however, thought pastimes were a threat to social order because they upended the hierarchy, allowing social inferiors to feel equal to their superiors. The pro-recreation people believed pastimes were a solution to the problems facing society at the time, whereas anti-recreation people believed they were the cause of such problems.

The role of Sunday recreations in society was clearly a divisive issue. But what role did the government, and specifically the crown, play in this debate? The publication of the *Declaration of Sports* was a key moment in the controversy over Sunday recreations. However, while it defended Sunday recreations, it also attempted to find a middle ground and allow the government to play moderating role with both the critics of recreations and the people who took part in them.

CHAPTER III: JAMES I AND THE *DECLARATION OF SPORTS*

By the start of the seventeenth century it appeared the Puritans and other opponents of recreations had gained the upper hand in their efforts to suppress Sunday recreations. Popular pastimes were in decline and laws were established in some places banning certain recreations, particularly church ales. Despite the divisive nature of the debates, the crown had yet to fully involve itself. However, popular recreations gained an important advocate with the ascension of James I to the English throne in 1603. James I was sympathetic to the views espoused by the defenders of popular recreations and believed they should be protected. James I's publication of the *Declaration of Sports* in 1618, which decreed that Sunday recreations should be allowed and protected, was a turning point in the conflict over popular pastimes.

But why did James I support Sunday recreations? There are a variety of reasons that have been put forward by many historians, with most arguing it was about asserting royal authority, gaining religious conformity, or maintaining public order and hierarchy. There is merit to these arguments. James certainly wished to establish his own authority to decide issues concerning recreations and, in the process, maintain social order in communities. However, an examination of James's personal views on recreations along with a close reading of the *Declaration of Sports* reveals another element that has been

overlooked by most historians. James I's policies on recreations essentially reflected his ecclesiastical policies in the creation of a *via media*. The *Declaration of Sports* not only sought a middle way, but also contained elements of the idea of a coercive social moderation that has been argued for by the historian Ethan Shagan. The declaration was intended to end the conflict over recreations by creating a *via media* with popular pastimes. However, it was an attempt that ultimately failed and contributed to the polarization of society. It also increased tensions between James I and Parliament putting more members of Parliament in direct opposition to his ecclesiastical agenda and making it harder to create a *via media*.

The Idea of Moderation in the time of James I

Moderation was an important part of James's view on sports and the *via media*. But what did moderation mean to Englishmen during the reign of James I? As stated in Chapter One, moderation was considered more active than passive and meant different things to different people. There were also different aspects to contemporary understanding of it. The idea of social moderation in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century was often a political marker referring to people not corrupted by wealth but were not too poor either. These people are sometimes called a "middle sort." It was often appropriated for the landed elite, because they were part of a moderate estate that was neither rich nor poor. Yeomen, tradesmen, and commercial subjects were included in this category, implying they deserved participation in the commonwealth. The idea of a "middle sort" thus evolved in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, opening debates about what sort of people were citizens with rights and responsibilities.

It also led to debates over what extent England was “governed from within rather than from above.”¹²⁶

Social moderation was something that allowed the middle sort to control their own passions and participate in the public life in the commonwealth. The idea was also advocated as something that made England superior to other nations. England was superior because it was moderate in wealth and not dominated by nobles and peasants as other European nations were.¹²⁷ The soldier and historian Thomas Gainsford particularly praised London as a place of moderation. For example, he claimed London was superior to the wealthy city of Venice. In London, he stated “neither are the Noble-men permitted the eminency of other nations, nor patible of such degrees, as our greatnesse looketh upon one another withall.” He also claimed there were more merchants in London and were wealthier. Gainsford also suggested that London was superior because it allowed the people to have recreations and entertainment. Venice lacked “houses of entertainment for travellers and strangers such as our Tavernes and Inns.” He also asked why Venice had no “fields and pleasant walkes” and no “exercises and heroike pastimes.”¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Ethan H. Shagan, *The Rule of Moderation: Violence, Religion and the Politics of Restraint in Early Modern England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 222-23. The term “middle sort” was in common use by the 1640s but was rarely used in a sociological context in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. For a full discussion on this “language of sorts” see, Keith Wrightson, “‘Sorts of People’ in Tudor and Stuart England,” in *The Middling Sort of People: Culture, Society, and Politics in England, 1550-1800*, ed. Jonathan Barry and Christopher Brooks (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994), 28-50.

¹²⁷ Shagan, 236-39.

¹²⁸ Thomas Gainsford, *The Glory of England* (London: 1618), 268-69.

Here is an example that recreations could play a role in moderation of the people, something James I eventually advocated. James would take the concept of moderation through external forces, in this case the Church and government, and combine it with recreations. Recreations would be a means of moderating the people by keeping them content and controlling their passions so as not to be enticed to immoderate behavior.

The Religious Policies of James I and the *Via Media*

Before examining James's policies on recreations, it is important to examine his church policies and how the *via media* was established during his reign. James was doctrinally sympathetic to the Puritans but was hostile to their interference with his authority over the Church of England. He often clashed with Puritans over church reform. This conflict soured his relationship with Parliament, which was influenced by Puritan thinking.¹²⁹ As the supreme governor of the Church of England, James was primarily interested in promoting unity, loyalty, and conformity in religious matters. He was aware of the dangers posed by both Puritans and Catholics. The Puritans were difficult to target because they were still within the Church of England. Catholics, on the other hand, were considered traitors since the Papal Bull of 1570, which excommunicated Queen Elizabeth I.¹³⁰

But why was there such a fear of Catholicism in England during the period?

According to Debora Shuger, Protestantism and Roman Catholicism had different models

¹²⁹ Jeffrey Forgeng, *Daily Life in Stuart England* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 3-4.

¹³⁰ Irene Carrier, *James VI and I, King of Great Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 49-50.

of the relation between popular and elite religion. The Catholic Church kept the common people involved with the church through elaborate ceremonies. One writer, named Edwin Sandys, went on a six-year continental tour of Europe at the end of the sixteenth century to see how the Roman Catholic Church worked. He analyzed Catholicism as a popular religion that used lavish rituals to appeal to the common people.¹³¹ In his treatise on the subject written in 1599, Sandys claimed the Catholic Church maintained its glory by keeping the lay people ignorant. When Catholic leadership could no longer keep the people completely ignorant, they led the people into a second kind of ignorance, “that being not content to see utterly nothing, at least wise [the people] may be perswaded to resigne up their own eyesight and look through such spectacles as they temper for them.” To accomplish this, Catholics used ceremonies and “Mayes” to “Ravish all affections and to fit each humor.” Sandys further claimed there was “no vertue nor vice almost, no things of how contrary condition soever; which they make not some sort to serve that turne.”¹³²

Essentially, Catholicism used ceremonies and even recreations to keep the common people obedient to the Church. Sandys believed the Protestant Reformation was a failure because the Protestant Church failed to have any ceremonies or rituals to reach the people. Catholics on the other hand succeeded because they spared no expense adorning the churches or “to set out [their] service with the greatest pompe and

¹³¹ Debora Shuger, “‘Societie Supernaturall’: The Imagined Community of Hooker’s Lawes,” in *Richard Hooker and the Construction of Christian Community*, ed. Arthur Steven McGrade (Tempe, AZ: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1997), 312-13.

¹³² Edwin Sandys, *Europae Speculum* (London: 1637), 34-35.

magnificency that can be devised,” and further wished “that some discreeter men” were “the contrivers and Masters of their Ceremonies, to have affected in them more stateliness, reverence and devotion, and to have avoyded that Fryerly busie basenesse and childishnesse which is now in them praedominant.”¹³³ Protestantism basically struggled to create dignified, important ceremonies that would keep the people invested in the Church. The church ceremonies of Protestantism were instead too base or simple to awe the people.

Sandys further suggested that the ways of worshipping and doing service to God should not be measured by a rule of “mere necessity,” but there should be “no rule of expence” and do it “to the utmost pompe.” God did not put many beautiful and glorious things on earth to only serve “to the pampering up of mortall man in his pride.” When serving God not only “simpler, baser, cheaper, less noble, less beautifull, less glorious things” should be employed. For Sandys the “outward state and glory” of the service “doth engender, quicken, increase and nourish the inward reverence and respectful devotion which is due unto so sovereign Majestie and power.”¹³⁴ Essentially the more glorious the services are, the better chance of keeping the people devoted to the Church.

The fears of Catholicism probably played a role in James I’s mission to promote unity within the Church of England, which began upon his ascension after the death of Elizabeth I. Sir Francis Bacon witnessed James I entering the kingdom, and praised him for acting “excellently well.” James promised not to remove ministers who served under

¹³³ Sandys, 8-9.

¹³⁴ Sandys, 9-10.

Elizabeth. Bacon commented on the desire to find a balance between the new and the old. Bacon noted that there were “two extremes,” with some “few who would have no change, no not reformation,” and some “many would have much change, even with perturbation.” Bacon hoped that God would “direct this wise king to hold a mean between reputation enough and no terrors.”¹³⁵ Here is evidence that even at the start of James’s reign there was a desire from others to create some sort of middle ground.

Part of James I’s policy of promoting Church unity was to appeal to moderate Catholics. James believed the Catholic Church erred only in some beliefs and practices with some of these being acceptable to Protestants. The Catholic Church was a true church, but James was only against the Pope’s claims to supremacy and the power to depose secular rulers. James’s Oath of Allegiance of 1606 required citizens to deny the Pope had any authority over the king. The oath was in response to the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, a failed attempt by a group of English Catholics to blow up Parliament and assassinate James I, which increased fears of Catholicism. The oath was the main tool, according to Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake, to gain conformity and loyalty of moderate Catholics. James hoped to gain their civil obedience and the rejection of the Pope’s power to depose rulers.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ Francis Bacon, *The Letters and Life of Francis Bacon*, vol. iii, ed. James Spedding (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1868), 73-74.

¹³⁶ Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake, “The Ecclesiastical Policies of James I and Charles I,” in *The Early Stuart Church, 1603-1642*, ed. Kenneth Fincham (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), 28-30.

James expressed his desire for uniformity of religion in his opening speech to Parliament on March 19, 1603. James found one religion “publikely allowed” but also found “another sort of Religion, besides a private Sect, lurking within the bowels of this Nation.” The first was the “true Religion” or Protestant religion. The second was the Catholics, considered “truly Papists.” The third which James called a “sect rather than Religion” was the “*Puritanes and Novelists*” whom James stated did not “so farre differ from us in points of Religion.” However, James claimed the Puritans had a “confused forme of Policie and Partie,” and were “being ever discontented with the present government, & impatient to suffer any superiority,” which ultimately made “their sect unable to be suffred in any wel governed Common-wealth.”¹³⁷

James I was intent on removing the influence of both Puritans and Catholics. But in another speech to Parliament on March 22, 1603, James was willing to find common ground with Catholics and reunify under one faith. James stated that if Catholic clerics remained steadfast in certain doctrines they would be “no way sufferable to remain in this Kingdom.” However, James wished “that it would please God to make Me One of the Members of such a general Christian Union in Religion, as, laying Wilfulness aside on both Hands, we might meet in the Midst, which is the Center and Perfection of all Things.” James also offered that if Catholics were willing to renounce “new and gross Corruptions of theirs, as themselves cannot maintaine, nor denie to bee worthy of reformation,” James would “be content to meete them in the mid-way, so that all

¹³⁷ James I, *The Political Works of James I*, ed. Charles Howard McIlwaine (Harvard Political Classics. New York: Russell & Russell, 1965), 274. The term “Novelist” in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries referred to someone who was an innovator in thought or beliefs.

Novelties might be renounced on either side.”¹³⁸ Here, James was already pronouncing his intentions of creating a middle ground in the Church of England using the language of a *via media*.

The foundations of a Jacobean *via media* were created at the Hampton Court Conference in January of 1604. The conference was meant to solve the issues and abuses in the Church of England. According to contemporaries, the main disagreement was between “prelates,” who wanted no reforms, and “Puritans,” who wanted to imitate foreign churches. Most contemporary accounts of the conference suggest that moderation was the goal and ultimate outcome. James I expressed his opinion that there was too much emphasis on preaching in the Church. One of the most important outcomes of the conference was the agreement to create a new translation of the Bible. The most popular English translation at the time was the Geneva Bible, created in the early reign of Elizabeth I. James I thought the Geneva Bible was the worst of the English translations, and thus agreed to a new translation. The new Bible was a work of collaboration among the best linguistic scholars regardless of their church views.¹³⁹

The collaborative effort on the Bible among many different Protestants is an example that James I allowed for a wide range of theological opinions in his established church. Many differences of opinion existed amongst the people working on royal

¹³⁸ *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. 1, 1547-1629 (London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1802), 144, accessed October 11, 2015, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/commons-jrnl/vol1>.

¹³⁹ Peter White, “The *via media* in the early Stuart Church,” in Fincham, 217-220.

projects. James I believed in Christian unity in which most theological thinkers agreed on many essential pillars of Christian doctrine. Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake state that royal projects like the Oath of Allegiance and the translation of the Bible show “the king can be seen organizing divines of divergent opinions around his position as a reforming Christian prince invested with a divine authority to govern the Church, supported by the apostolic order of bishops.” James allowed for divergent opinions on what he viewed as secondary issues (such as the theology of grace or predestination) provided the priests supported him as a Christian Prince with divine authority and disagreements did not lead to disorderly public altercations. James did not believe opinions on secondary issues (including his own) were important to salvation.¹⁴⁰

James’s willingness to allow for disagreements demonstrates that he was willing to reconcile two opposing sides of theological disagreements and create a middle ground. This included reconciliation with the Catholic Church not just in England but abroad as well. James called for an ecumenical council summoned by the Pope to achieve a union. James however also believed in the true catholicity of the English Church and that the Protestant religion was not new but had precedents with the original Church fathers. James, along with many theologians, defended the orthodoxy of the Church of England, arguing it followed a middle way.¹⁴¹

James wrote a defense of the Church of England and an apology for the Oath of Allegiance in a “Premonition” addressed to other European heads of state in 1609. James

¹⁴⁰ Fincham and Lake, 30-31.

¹⁴¹ White, 221-23.

called for a return of General Councils and blamed the lack of them on the Pope and his electors. A General Council was the only way of “reducing all Christians to a unifomitie of Religion.” The meeting should include all Christian Princes and churchmen who believed in “all the ancient grounds of the trew, ancient, Catholike, and Apostolike Faith.” James also wanted to debar all “incendiaries and Novelist fire-brands on either side” which included Jesuits and Puritans. James called on all Christians to unite and follow only Jesus “and not [follow] the vaine, corrupt and changeable traditions of men.” He finally urged Christians to keep a unity of faith and to not allow “the foolish heate of your Preachers for idle Controversies or indifferent things, teare asunder that Mystical Body.”¹⁴² Once again, James argued it was the opinions of extreme believers of both Protestants and Catholics that threatened a unity of religion. These opinions had to be left out of the councils to find middle ground and achieve reconciliation.

James I also saw himself as a Christian prince with divine authority which signaled that the king had authority as a conformist moderator. Supporters of Elizabethan Conformist moderation wanted strong authority over the Church, but during the Stuart monarchy, Conformist moderation was connected to absolutism. In the writings of Elizabethan Conformists there was ambiguity on whether the monarch should be an agent of moderation on the Church or if bishops should have the power. During the reign of James I, several writers, most not directly connected to the monarch, advocated for an absolute monarchy as a means to protect against Puritanism and Catholicism.¹⁴³

¹⁴² James I, *The Political Works of James I*, 151, 158-59.

¹⁴³ Shagan, 130-31.

One of the concepts of the absolute monarchy was that the civil magistrate should appoint and elect ministers. The Protestant polemicist Thomas Bell wrote in a treatise from 1606 that only the civil magistrate had the authority to do this.¹⁴⁴ The magistrate either chose the ministers himself or appointed someone else to do so. Bell argued that there was no evidence in the scriptures that “annuall unpriested Elders, had the rule of the Church with the Pastors or Bishops.” Bell also argued that it was the monarch who had the power for moderation, particularly regarding excommunication. This power was not given to the “common vulgar sort” who lacked judgment and were “often carried away with affections” and were ultimately unfit for such a jurisdiction. Overall, Bell believed excommunication was not any essential part of the Church and, “the moderation and chief power of disposing and committing, resteth principally in the Christian Magistrate, where the church receiveth such a blessing.”¹⁴⁵

The monarch also had the power to make ecclesiastical laws or delegate that power to the bishops. Gabriel Powel, a polemical divine and domestic chaplain to the Bishop of London, argued for this position. The “Lay sort” had to assent to the decrees of the bishops. The power to make church laws was not democratic but “Aristocraticall.” It

¹⁴⁴ Bell was originally a Catholic priest who believed Catholics should remain loyal to the crown. He also stated Catholics could attend Protestant services if they openly confessed their faith and conformed to maintain political loyalty. He eventually helped Protestant authorities by revealing information on the Catholic mission to England. In the 1590s he published anti-Catholic tracts and defended the Church of England. See H.C.G. Matthew, Brian Harrison, and the British Academy, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, In Association with the British Academy, From the Earliest times to the Year 2000* vol. 4 (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 972.

¹⁴⁵ Thomas Bell, *The Regiment of the Church* (London: 1606), 143, 156-57.

was not democratic, “wherby every man promiscuously should have license to crie out, to move doubts, to propose doctrine, to ordaine ceremonies.” That power belonged to bishops and Princes who had to also be “the keepers, maintainers, and defenders of the externall Discipline.” Powel further explained why the bishops should also be obeyed, stating that the monarch had too many other important tasks to create policy. If the bishop’s policies were not followed, “there would follow tyrannies, barbarismes and infinite vastness; because both Kings, and Princes, which do govern worldly Empires, are very often times busied in other affaires, little regarding the Ecclesiasticall businesses.”¹⁴⁶

John Tichborne, a Doctor of Divinity at Cambridge, also wrote about the monarch’s right to make ecclesiastical laws in a 1609 treatise called *A Triple Antidote*, which became the “apotheosis of royal authority over Church discipline,” according to Ethan Shagan. Tichborne argued that the bishops and churchmen had control over ecclesiastical excommunication, which dealt with spiritual matters. The king or monarch had control over civil excommunication, which dealt with the physical government of the Church. The king had authority over the membership of the physical church, which Shagan states was “a power framed as a middle way between the opposite errors of clerical control over civil excommunication and lay control over spiritual excommunication.”¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ Gabriel Powel, *De Adiaphoris: Theological and Scholastic Positions Concerning the Nature and Use of Things Indifferent* (London: 1607), 14,19.

¹⁴⁷ Shagan, 134.

The argument for the monarch's control over the physical Church extended to the debate over what types of ceremonies were appropriate for the Church. In this case, Tichborne argued for a broad conception of things that were *adiaphora*, or things considered "indifferent" and not specifically condoned nor condemned in the Bible. He argued that the Church, and by extent the monarch, had a right to decide what ceremonies were appropriate, stating, "And for things doubtful and controverted ... either for doctrine or practice, the Decrees of every speciall Church for their times ought to prevaile with every well minded and affected person to God & his Church." In response to those who felt it was unlawful to use ceremonies in church invented by man, Tichborne believed their arguments were on shaky ground. Many things invented by men were neither good nor bad but indifferent "so that if he do them, or do them not, use them or use them not, more or less, no conscience of sinne ... can arise from them." This included eating certain foods or drink, certain recreations, and taking part in church ceremonies.¹⁴⁸

In summation, the monarch was supposed to play a vital role in the establishment of the *via media* in the Church of England. Moderation required an outside force and it was the role of the monarch to provide this. James I had absolute authority to appoint officials and bishops and make decisions on the government of the Church. The king required this power to maintain a middle way and protect the Church from extreme Puritan and Catholic ideas. James I ultimately believed he had the power to do this to end the conflict over popular recreations.

¹⁴⁸ John Tichborne, *A Triple Antidote, against certaine very Common Scandals of this Time* (London: 1609), 66, 85-86.

James I and Popular Recreations

This leads to the question of what types of recreation were allowed by the Church under James I, and what were his policies concerning them. To answer this, we will first look at James's own personal views on sports and recreation. James favored moderate recreation and had no objections to most Sunday pastimes. He often took part in revels, masques, and plays at his court. He was also an avid huntsman, and enjoyed attending horse races.¹⁴⁹ The *Basilikon Doron*, a treatise written by James I as a guide for the crown prince Henry on how to rule, is the best source for some of James's views on sports. Recreations were considered among things that were "indifferent." Recreations, pastimes, and other exercises were considered unnecessary but lawful and "verie commendable, as well for banishing of Idelnesse (the mother of all vices)." James encouraged bodily exercise which "further habilitie and maintaine health," but discouraged "rumling violente exercises" like football. Activities like running, leaping, wrestling, fencing, and dancing were acceptable "although but moderatly, not making a craft of them."¹⁵⁰

Much like the writers who advocated for moderation and a "middle-way" in Church governance, James I believed in moderate use of recreations which should be allowed by the church along with special ceremonies. James not only took this moderate approach with outdoor recreations, but with card and dice games played indoors. Though he considered "house pastimes" as unprofitable for exercise of body and mind, he did not

¹⁴⁹ Alistair Dougall, *The Devil's Book: Charles I, the Book of Sports and Puritanism in Tudor and Early Stuart England* (Exeter, UK: University of Exeter Press, 2011), 77.

¹⁵⁰ James I, *Basilikon Doron* (London: 1599), 123, 142-45.

condemn them. James believed critics were mistaken in their belief that cards and dice were a casting of lots and unlawful. However, James would not defend “vain Carders & Dicers” who wasted their money and time. Therefore, James had three rules to keep while playing such games. First, card and dice games were to be played only for one’s own recreation and should “resolve to hazard the loss of al that ye play.” Second, one should play “no more nor ye care to cast among Pages.” And third, people should always play fairly (no lying or tricks) and abstain from games entirely if one cannot play without trickery.¹⁵¹

Overall, James believed most pastimes were harmless distractions and a way to alleviate social tensions, a belief which fell in line with many of the public defenders of recreations covered in the previous chapter.¹⁵² But James also believed pastimes were a means to keep the people happy with their ruler. James wrote that it was common of people to “judge and speake rashelie of their Prince.” To prevent this, James suggested setting aside certain days “for delighting the people with publicke spectacles of all honest games and exercise of armes.” These days could also help with social tensions, as they were used for “conveening of neighbors for enterteyning of friendship and hartlinesse, by honest feasting & merrines.” James could not see “what greater superstition can be in making playes and lawfull games in Maie, and good cheere at Christmas, then in eating

¹⁵¹ James I, *Basilikon Doron*, 146-49.

¹⁵² Dougall, 79-80.

fish in Lent, and upon Fridayes.” This was a “forme of contenting the peoples mindes,” according to James, used in “all well governed Republicks.”¹⁵³

The fact that James I referred to this as a “forme of contenting the peoples mindes” shows the importance of sports and recreations as a means of control and social moderation for the populace. Much like James believed in a *via media* between Catholics and Puritans he also believed in a *via media* for pastimes. James I certainly took a moderate view on the use of sports and recreations, professing that the people should be allowed some recreations in moderation. James’s views show the potential for recreations as a socially moderating influence on the people, a further means of keeping the people content. These views were further expressed in the *Declaration of Sports*, published in 1618. A close examination of this document reveals that social moderation and the *via media* were a potential part of James’s policy on sports and recreation.

The Declaration of Sports

To end the conflict over recreations, James I gave his support to advocates of Sunday recreations by issuing his *Declaration of Sports* in 1618. The events surrounding this were centered on the county of Lancashire, which had been the scene of Sabbatarian conflict over recreations since the late sixteenth century. Puritan Justices of the Peace sought to ban many recreations, but Sunday pastimes remained popular despite such orders. The justices issued orders for stricter Sabbath observance in August of 1616,

¹⁵³ James I, *Basilikon Doron*, 62-64.

much stricter than ever before. Magistrates went much further by trying to ban recreations altogether.¹⁵⁴

Despite his earlier writings about the importance of recreations it is interesting that it took James I until 1618 to issue a declaration supporting recreations. While returning from a trip to Scotland in 1617, James and his retinue passed through Lancashire where “with Our owne Eares Wee heard the generall complaint of Our people, that they were barred from all lawfull Recreations on Sundays.”¹⁵⁵ James was petitioned by a group of tradesmen, servants, and peasants to revoke the orders banning recreations.¹⁵⁶ One can assume that this was the first time James became aware of the determined efforts by local authorities to suppress recreations. What was different this time was the fact that the orders were made to ban *all* recreations on Sundays not just those that caused disorder. James must have realized it was imperative to make a declaration that recreations should be allowed on Sundays, otherwise local authorities would continue to make laws restricting pastimes. The following year James published the *Declaration of Sports* for the entire country.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ Dougall, 69-73.

¹⁵⁵ James I, *The Kings Majesties Declaration to his Subjects Concerning Lawfull Sports to be Used* (London: 1618), 3-4.

¹⁵⁶ Dougall, 73.

¹⁵⁷ For a full discussion of the events in Lancashire that led to the *Declaration of Sports* see James Tait, “The Declaration of Sports for Lancashire (1617),” in *The English Historical Review* 32, no. 128 (October 1917), 561-68, accessed October 3, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/550860>.

Conformist writers wished for the Church of England to be a middle way between Puritanism and Catholicism. In the *Declaration of Sports*, there is specific reference to these two groups of people. The county of Lancashire, where the events that led to the creation of the declaration, was described as “infected” with “Papists” and Puritans. The claim is also made that Lancashire had more “Popish Recusants” (people who did not deny the authority of the Pope) than any other county. If the people were denied their recreations after church service it would hinder “the conversion of many, whom their Priests will take occasion hereby to vex, perswading them that no honest mirth or recreation is lawfull or tolerable in Our Religion,” which would only “breed a great discontentment in Our peoples hearts, especially of such as are peradventure upon the point of turning.”¹⁵⁸ This statement implies that Catholic recusants would convert many people to the Catholic faith, enticing them with the idea that they would not be denied their recreations like they would under the Church of England. It reveals the fear among the Stuart monarchy, whether real or imagined, that the debate over recreations could lead to many choosing the Catholic Church over the Church of England.

The warning against the influence of Catholics in the *Declaration of Sports* indicates James I may have feared Catholicism had an advantage over Protestantism in popular appeal much like Edwin Sandys argued. It’s possible that James I intended to replace ceremonies with recreations as a means of keeping the people engaged with the Church. The advocacy of the people’s right to have their recreations on Sundays was perhaps a means to keep the people loyal to not only the Church but to the crown as well.

¹⁵⁸ James I, *The Declaration of Sports*, 2-4.

Church ales could have been the specific recreation to keep the people connected to their local church and clergy. As stated in Chapter Two, church ales brought together many different people of varying social strata within the community while promoting good neighborliness and friendship. A happy joyous event spent feasting and making merriment centered around the local church could have been significant in nullifying the supposed advantage of Catholicism in popular appeal of the people.

Simply keeping the people happy and content with the ruling monarch was a strong incentive for protecting recreations. According to one scholar, James I may have issued the declaration because he viewed attempts to suppress Sunday recreations as a challenge to his royal prerogative and authority. He then linked support of any kind of revelry with the maintenance of royal authority.¹⁵⁹ In fact, the *Declaration of Sports* states that a challenge to royal authority could come directly from the people if they were denied their recreations. Abolishing recreations prevented the “common and meaner sort” from being ready for war and would breed discontent. Without any recreations, the people would instead take part in “filthy tipplings and drunkenness” and would breed “a number of idle and discontented speeches in their ale-houses.”¹⁶⁰ This indicates that there was a basic fear that without recreations, people would spend their time getting drunk in ale houses (something moderate individuals should not do) and causing trouble by potentially speaking out against the government.

¹⁵⁹ Dougall, 78-79.

¹⁶⁰ James I, *The Declaration of Sports*, 5.

It was important for James I to keep the people from frequently going to ale houses. Ale houses were often seen as places of drunkenness and general disorder. The author and social commentator Richard Brathwaite wrote after the reign of James I that drinking and carousing were a major recreation of the city and country on the Sabbath. Ale houses were made a “Temple, which gives harbour to theeves.” Brathwaite labeled them as “Devils Boothes, where all enormities are acted, all impieties hatched, all mischievous practices plotted and contrived.” Ale houses were filled with uncleanness and pollution “where fearful oathes and prophanation rageth, whence all sensuall libertie ariseth.”¹⁶¹

Even before the *Declaration of Sports*, James I was concerned with an excessive number of ale houses in England, and therefore issued a proclamation respecting ale house licensing in 1609. The proclamation demonstrates James’s moderation because it limited the number of licensed ale houses in the kingdom but made no intentions to eliminate them entirely. He stated that there should be “noe more then a number Competent for receipt of Travellers and for supply of wants to poore people not able to [provide] for anie quantiety of victuals for themselves.” James did not want ale houses to become “the Receptacles of drunkards fellons and loose and idle p’sons.” All ale house keepers were bound to not have unlawful games and had to keep good order.¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ Richard Brathwaite, *The English Gentleman* (London: 1630), 177-79.

¹⁶² J.H.E Bennett and J.C. Dewhurst, ed., *Quarter Sessions Records with other Records of the Justices of the Peace for the County Palatine of Chester, 1559-1760* (The Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 1940), 62-65.

Certainly, James I believed recreations could keep the people out of trouble and away from the influences of discontented people, essentially maintaining public order at the same time. But James I also thought England was under a dual threat from Puritans (who wanted to ban recreations altogether) and Catholics (who supposedly used recreations as means of influence). Indeed, the *Declaration of Sports* hinted at a form of social moderation to conform people to a middle way, specifically targeting those who wanted to suppress Sunday recreations. The wish was for the Bishop, churchmen, and churchwardens to “instruct the ignorant, and convince & reforme them that are misled in religion, presenting them that will not conforme themselves, but obstinately stand out to Our Judges and Justices.” The bishop of the diocese was also encouraged to deal directly with “the Puritans and Precisians” by “either constraining them to conforme themselves, or to leave the Country according to the Lawes of Our Kingdome, and Canons of Our Church.” The bishop was expected to deal harshly with these “contemners of our Authoritie, and adversaries of Our Church.”¹⁶³ In a way, James made an implicit threat to remove the extreme elements that would entice people to immoderate behavior. Those who did not allow recreations on Sundays were essentially challenging the king’s authority.

Much like the Conformist writers of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the *Declaration of Sports* advocated a *via media* to be enforced through coercion by the Church. As in church governance, the Stuart monarchy sought some sort of middle way for recreations. The declaration allowed for Sunday recreations, but not

¹⁶³ James I, *The Declaration of Sports*, 5-6.

for any kind of unrestrained revelry at any time of day that could disrupt order. There were specific conditions that Sunday recreations were to be used. Recreations are only allowed after the end of church service. The people could take part in certain physical exercises along with May games, Whitsun ales, Morris dances, maypoles, “and other sports therewith used, so as the same be had in due convenient time, without impediment or neglect of divine service.” However, the declaration also banned bear and bull-baitings, Interludes, and bowling. Also, attendance at the church service was required to take part in recreations, as those who did not attend were to be punished if they still participated.¹⁶⁴

James I perhaps believed that the declaration contributed to social order. His support of church ales was a desire to have people drink communally and under the supervision of the priest rather than the uncontrolled environment of the ale house. He banned bear and bull-baitings, which were roundly condemned by Puritans and other social reformers, but also never fully endorsed by the defenders of recreations. These may also have been banned because they were violent activities that could cause disorder and often involved gambling.¹⁶⁵ He also made sure to allow only those who had attended church service to participate in recreations *after* the service had ended. This was an endorsement of the Laudian position on the Sabbath in which part of the day should still be set aside for worship.

¹⁶⁴ James I, *The Declaration of Sports*, 6-9.

¹⁶⁵ James said that any “casting of lot” was unlawful and “used for tryall of the truth in any obscure thing that otherwaies could not be gotten cleared.” All “wageours upon uncertenties must likewaies be condemned.” See James I, *Basilkon Doron*, 147.

However, James perhaps felt that with the limitations on recreations he was making some sort of compromise between the two sides of the conflict. This was his *via media* of Sunday recreations. The people could have their recreations on Sundays provided they did not disrupt church service and did not get out of hand causing general disorder. If this position was still not enough to satisfy the anti-recreation people, then they were to be dealt with harshly by the bishops or they could simply leave the kingdom.

But, how did James I hope to gain acceptance of the *Declaration of Sports* and settle the debate over recreations? Not only did James implore local justices to enforce it, but he also received indirect help from the clergy. Early seventeenth century clergy often emphasized obedience to established authority in their writings and sermons. They rejected the ideas of popular sovereignty. Many of these sermons were preached at assize courts in front of judges, lawyers, and Justices of the Peace.¹⁶⁶ Because the *Declaration of Sports* came directly from the king, the people and the Justices of the Peace were expected to obey it. In some of the sermons of clergy who preached obedience there are allusions to some of the ideas of the *via media* and moderation. One can imagine these same ideas being employed to gain acceptance of the *Declaration of Sports*.

For example, in a sermon preached at the assize court at Sarum in Wiltshire in March of 1614, clergyman Bartholomew Parsons criticized the notion of some clergy that the Magistrate was chosen by God but also had to be confirmed by the people. Some clergy believed an “infidel King” could have his power taken by the people. Thus, people

¹⁶⁶ Christopher Brooks, “Professions, Ideology and the Middling Sort in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries,” in Barry and Brooks, 128.

believed they had “the power to pull off [Magistrates’] crownes, and cast them out of their Thrones, which yet are not theirs, but God’s.” Parsons believed the King’s power was attacked by “factious Statists, who very unnaturally divide his power betweene God and the people.” Distinctions that gave power to the people were “perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth.” Essentially, Parsons argued the King’s power only came from God.¹⁶⁷

Parsons also stated that the Magistrate was directly influenced and inspired by God. Magistrates were “Gods then, not by nature, but by name.” God put his spirit upon the Magistrates and gave them “another heart... and turnisheth them with worthy and peculiar gifts of Regiment and Government.” Kings were also described as God’s lieutenants who represented him, judged in his name, and executed his judgment. Parsons also argued that since the Magistrate was a minister to God, all people were subject to the magistrate and his laws. “And as *every soule*, so every ordinance of man, must this subjection bee for the Lords sake, not only to *Kings* the highest, but to *Governors* and *Rulers* also that are sent of them, yea, *every soule*, to every power, at all times.” The people had to obey the Magistrates even when they commanded evil things, “in bearing their scourges patiently, for that which we cannot doe lawfully.” Parsons basically argued that the people must obey the king and his direct subordinates because they were appointed by God. Thus, any laws or commands from the king were also to be obeyed.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ Bartholomew Parsons, *The Magistrates Charter Examined* (London: 1616), 8-9, 13-14.

¹⁶⁸ Parsons, 14-20.

Another clergyman and preacher, Samuel Barton, echoed many of the same sentiments and arguments of Parsons. In a sermon at the general assizes in Warwickshire in March of 1619, Barton preached that Christ had not come to eliminate “temporall kingdoms.” The doctrine of Christ taught obedience to authority, and those who taught otherwise taught their own “false and foolish fancies.” The Magistrate was the “Minister of God.” His duty was to reward “well-doing” and punish sin. He also had to protect the “just and innocent” and coerce the “lewd and wicked.” Barton also claimed that God made the Magistrates “a little lower than Angels, and crowned them with glorie, and worship.” God gave them his own powers and “covered them with his owne Garment and Robe of Estate.” The people could live their lives peacefully, have their own houses, and profit from their trade because of these “Ministers” appointed by God. Burton made these claims not to exalt the Magistrates, but to humble them and “make them feare and tremble at their calling.” Burton believed that God expected the Magistrates to serve him more strictly than ordinary men.¹⁶⁹

Barton was essentially in line with Parsons on the belief that everyone had to obey the Magistrate because of the fact he was the “Minister of God.” The people should not hate or despise the king but “carry a reverent conceit and estimation of him.” Obedience to human laws was under certain conditions and limitations, however. If laws were not against a duty to God, then they had to be obeyed. If the Magistrate commanded something unlawful, the people “must not be obedient then, but even then we must bee subject.” The people had to obey and subject themselves to laws that were good or

¹⁶⁹ Samuel Barton, *A Sermon Preached at the General Assizes in Warwicke* (London: 1620), 1-5.

concerned “indifferent” things (not commanded nor forbidden by God). The people were not to judge what was good and should “submit our owne judgement to the judgment of our Governours.” Barton basically argued that the Magistrate and his subordinates knew what was best for the people.¹⁷⁰

Barton specifically addressed people who ignored or broke certain laws. He hoped that all would acknowledge “that the fift commandment bindeth the conscience, by force whereof wee are bound to yeeld obedience to the Magistrate commanding lawfull things, and things profitable for the Commonwealth.” The people had Christian liberty in things indifferent, but this liberty was limited by the four bounds of piety, loyalty, charity, and temperance and sobriety. In reference to indifferent things, Barton thought certain preachers spent too much time trying to convince people to avoid maypoles, Morris dances, and other recreations. He pointed out the hypocrisy of these preachers who obeyed the King’s summons on when to feast and fast. These men could “never be sufficiently distinguished from Papists, nor freed from superstition.” Overall, the first duty the people owed to the magistrate was to obey his laws.¹⁷¹

This idea is reflected in the final section of the *Declaration of Sports* which ended with a brief instruction: “And Our pleasure is, That this Our Declaration shalbe published by order from the Bishop of the Diocesse, through all Parish Churches, and that both Our Judges of Our Circuit, and Our Justices of Our Peace be informed thereof.”¹⁷² Only the

¹⁷⁰ Barton, 7-10.

¹⁷¹ Barton, 13-14.

¹⁷² James I, *The Declaration of Sports*, 9.

Bishops are mentioned as having any role in publication. Judges and Justices are only to be informed of the declaration. No commands were issued giving them any specific role in the publication and enforcement. The phrase “Our pleasure is” reflects the general belief that James I expected these instructions to be obeyed simply because it came directly from him. Perhaps James did not feel the need to draw out any specific punishments or means of enforcement because of this belief.

Opposition to the *Declaration of Sports*

If James I expected all people to obey the *Declaration of Sports* simply because it came directly from him, he was probably disappointed. In the end, the declaration’s attempt to create a *via media* backfired. Rather than ending the conflict over recreations, the *Declaration of Sports* only widened the differences between the Church of England and the Puritans. In some ways it united Puritans, who often had divergent opinions, around a specific cause. By blaming the Puritans for causing trouble through their opposition to recreations, James had associated them exclusively with Sabbatarianism, basically libeling them. James did not consider that many Conformists and civil magistrates also wished to eliminate Sabbath abuses. Thus, the declaration only inspired increased opposition from Puritans, who made more insistent demands.¹⁷³

¹⁷³ Winston Solberg, *Redeem the Time: The Puritan Sabbath in Early America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), 73.

Some of the opposition to the *Declaration of Sports* came from clergy members who openly preached against it.¹⁷⁴ Sometime in 1618 after the publication, a group of people made a series of depositions against a Mr. Turnell, the vicar of Horninghold. Turnell had quoted passages from scripture in opposition to the king's backing of Sunday recreations. Some had claimed they were "dulled by Mr. Turnell's long sermons," and after leaving the church had been cursed by Turnell from the pulpit. Turnell supposedly even claimed that people who deposed against him broke the ninth commandment.¹⁷⁵

In 1619 Gerard Prior was suspended from his church position after parishioners in Eldersfield accused him of speaking against dancing on Sundays and praying for "God to turn the King's heart from profaneness." Prior's adversaries supposedly accused him in response to Prior informing local authorities about their drunkenness. The following year, people accused William Clough, the vicar of Bramham, of unseemly conduct in church. Clough said the *Book of Sports* was contrary to God's law and he railed against the ceremonies of the church.¹⁷⁶

It was not just local magistrates and clergy who objected to the *Book of Sports*, but even members of Parliament were opposed to James and his policies on Sunday

¹⁷⁴ For a discussion of clerical opposition to the *Book of Sports* see Christopher Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England*, 2nd ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1967), 199-202.

¹⁷⁵ Great Britain and Mary Anne Everett Green, *Calendar of State Papers: Domestic Series of the Reign of James I, 1611-1618* (London: Public Record Office, 1858, repr., Nendeln, Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint Ltd., 1967), 608-609. The ninth commandment is, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." See Exod. 20:16 (New Revised Standard Version).

¹⁷⁶ *CSPD, James I, 1619-1623*, 72, 128-129.

recreations. James I had long regarded Parliament as convenient. He believed the function of Parliament was to serve the king, and any privileges it had were granted by him. James was irritated whenever the House of Commons set their own agenda and ignored the agenda outlined by him and his ministers. As his reign went on, James had growing convictions that Commons procedures were deliberately designed to frustrate his ambitions.¹⁷⁷

Parliament attempted to pass laws against Sunday recreations. A bill on the Sabbath was introduced in the House of Commons in February 1621.¹⁷⁸ The bill prohibited several unlawful recreations. Several days after the bill was introduced, a Mr. Shepard objected to many parts of the bill including a prohibition of dancing. He made references to King David dancing in the Bible and compared them to people dancing around maypoles. Other members of the Commons took exception to this, and Shepard was ordered to leave the House. Sir Edward Coke particularly disliked Shepard's speech and stated, "that whatsoever hindereth the sanctifying of the Sabbath, is against the Law of God." Shepard was ultimately expelled from the House for his offensive speech. The bill on the Sabbath passed the House of Commons and was sent to the House of Lords. No objections were made to the body of the bill, but some objected to the word

¹⁷⁷ Roger Lockyer, *The Early Stuarts: A Political History of England, 1603-1642*. 2nd ed. (New York: Addison Wesley Longman Inc., 1999), 75-76.

¹⁷⁸ This was not the first time the House of Commons put forward a Sabbath bill. The 1590s saw an increased number of Parliamentary bills aimed at enforcing Sabbath observance. In 1606, for example, a bill passed the Commons but failed in the House of Lords. See David Underdown, *Revel, Riot, and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England, 1603-1660* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 48.

“Sabbath” and it was eventually replaced with “Lords-day.” The bill, however, failed to get the royal assent from James I.¹⁷⁹

Despite their initial failure, Parliament continued to promote bills for the Sabbath. In May 1624, James I visited the Upper House of Parliament. Another bill putting restrictions on Sabbath recreations was brought up, but James declined to pass it. He claimed it would contradict “his allowance of lawful recreations, and ... give Puritans their way, who think religion consists of two sermons a day.”¹⁸⁰ A member of Parliament who was present, Sir Simonds D’Ewes, gave a slightly more detailed account of James’s response to the bill. James claimed he was “careful of the due sanctification of this day as any can be,” but he believed the act would forbid “all lawful recreation on that day at any time.” James did not want people to think that bull and bear-baiting, shooting, bowling “and the like” were “fit to be used after divine service is past, let abuse of these things be restrained.” James argued that passing the act “which denies [recreations] altogether on the Lord’s day is no more but giving the puritans their way to take away all recreations.”¹⁸¹ Here, James I statement clearly recalls the *Declaration of Sports* and its banning of bear-baitings, and bowling, and limiting recreations to after church service.

Some scholars are correct in the assessment that the *Declaration of Sports* was meant as a reassertion of James’s royal authority. It was also seen as an attack on

¹⁷⁹ *Journal of the House of Commons* vol. 1, 511, 514, 521-22, 524-25, 628, 630.

¹⁸⁰ *CSPD, James I, 1623-1624*, 260.

¹⁸¹ "29th May 1624," in *Proceedings in Parliament 1624: The House of Commons*, ed. Philip Baker (British History Online, 2015-18), accessed December 31, 2018, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/proceedings-1624-parl/may-29>.

Puritans, who were associated with strict Sabbatarianism. The alliance of the crown with traditional pastimes politicized the question of Sabbath observance like never before.¹⁸² But the *Declaration of Sports* and the overall debate over recreations was important because it saw the convergence of both religious and social moderation and the *via media*. It touched on many social issues by establishing recreations as a social control by moderating the people and keeping them under control and content. It also worked as a tool to gain religious conformity. The declaration ultimately linked the middle position on moderate use of recreations with the middle position of the Church of England between Catholicism and Puritanism. Moderately partaking in lawful recreations could be a demonstration of loyalty to the Church of England.

No doubt, the *Declaration of Sports* contained the basic understanding of the people's need for general entertainment to break the monotony of work stated within the declaration. Also, banning recreations could breed discontent and force the people into spending their free time gathering in ale-houses and getting drunk. But, the *Declaration of Sports* and James's personal views on recreations are also in line with the Stuart monarchy's general church policies. The focus on social moderation and conformity to a *via media* or middle way are present within the crown's policies on traditional pastimes and Sunday observance. Much like the Church of England, the *Declaration of Sports* appeared to create a middle path between the extremes of total abstinence from all recreations and the alleged debauchery and disorder of uncontrolled recreations. The declaration also falls in line with James's general attempts at reconciliation with Puritans.

¹⁸² Dougall, 80-81.

Offering conditions and restrictions on recreations was an attempt to appease the opponents of pastimes even if the offer was not accepted.

However, one interesting aspect to this is that James I made no serious efforts to completely enforce his declaration among the clergy. The impact on village life was limited as most ministers did not print it so there was no wide distribution. It was not fully understood by Justices of the Peace who were unsure if it pertained to all counties.¹⁸³ Also, only a few bishops during James's reign supported Puritan Sabbatarianism or condemned Sunday recreations. Most of the bishops were concerned with church attendance and whether unlawful games were being played. Most bishops allowed for some use of lawful recreations after church.¹⁸⁴

Perhaps James failed to understand that the *via media* he was supposedly creating was inherently coercive. It is possible that James did not feel the need to carry out strong enforcement of the declaration because of the belief that the *Declaration of Sports* had resolved the issue of Sunday recreations. If so, it shows James either failed to understand that moderation required some coercion to work or had a different understanding of what made moderation effective. But the declaration clearly did not resolve the issue, failing in its intended purpose. Under the reign of James's son suppression of recreations continued. Would Charles I continue with his father's policies on recreations? The next chapter will discuss the more hardline approach taken by Charles I.

¹⁸³ Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year, 1400-1700* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 170.

¹⁸⁴ Dougall, 92-93.

CHAPTER IV: CHARLES I AND THE *DECLARATION OF SPORTS*

Following in the footsteps of his father James I, Charles I's policies on Sunday recreations attempted to end the conflict over Sunday recreations once and for all. But his policies ultimately contributed to the divisions that led to civil war. His views on sports and recreations fell very much in line with those of James I. Charles's recreation policies mirrored those of James's policies but were pursued more aggressively. But, while James I perhaps did not understand the coercive aspects of the *via media*, Charles I and William Laud apparently did understand the coercive aspects. This is reflected in Charles I's hard-liner approach, despite some early efforts to placate the opponents of recreations, shown in his reissue of the *Declaration of Sports* in 1633. Charles's new approach was made easier by his dissolution of Parliament in 1629 and the beginning of the Personal Rule.

This chapter will demonstrate that Charles I portrayed his views on recreations as moderate and attempted to fit his policies into the idea of a *via media*. However, in some ways Charles attempted to establish a new religious *via media* resulting in his ecclesiastical policies being substantially different to his father's. Charles's policies were less compromising and had a strong connection to the practices of Laudianism. His policies on sports and recreations were part of a larger pattern of more coercive enforcement of his religious policies. The methods used to establish the new *via media* on

sports demonstrate that Charles and his supporters did not care so much about the recreations in and of themselves. Rather, the *Declaration of Sports* was tool for achieving more political aims.

The Ecclesiastical Policies of Charles I

The ecclesiastical reforms of Charles I, influenced by Laudian practices, were implemented throughout his reign, but the full impact of the religious changes did not begin until after William Laud became archbishop in 1633. Laud and Charles I attempted to reverse the process of increased Sabbatarianism during the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. This period also saw the remodeling of communion practice introduced at the parish level throughout England. There was also a tightening of press censorship, something that would have an effect over the reactions to the reissue of the *Declaration of Sports*.¹⁸⁵

One of Charles I's motivations for partnering with William Laud was his concern over threats to order in Church and State. He sought to reform the commonwealth to remove subversive elements.¹⁸⁶ Charles, along with many churchmen, believed the threats to order came from many sides. Many churchmen since the reign of James I took what they believed was a moderate approach to religion. They were aware of the special

¹⁸⁵ Nicholas Tyacke, "Archbishop Laud," in *The Early Stuart Church, 1603-1642*, ed. Kenneth Fincham (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), 68-69.

¹⁸⁶ Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake, "The Ecclesiastical Policies of James I and Charles I," in Fincham, 47-48.

character of the Church of England and their loyalties were to the polity and liturgy established by law.¹⁸⁷

One such churchman was Arthur Lake, the bishop of Bath and Wells. In a sermon delivered at Paul's Cross in 1623, Lake believed there were two main threats to the Church of England, Catholics and Separatists. "The Papists they breed up the people in an ignorant Devotion, and care not how little they know the true grounds of Conscience, but bid them rest contented with an *Implicite Faith*, and rest their Soules upon the Authoritie of the Church." On the other side Lake stated, "Seperatists runne into the other extreme...attribute too little to the Church, and exceed in knowledge, or fancies which they suppose to be Divine knowledge." When these Seperatists did not follow the guides of the Church of England, "they commit themselves unto obscure Guides, that either lurke in corners, or flie their Countrie." Lake essentially believed the Catholics and Separatists (maybe even all Puritans) were two opposite extremes that sought to steer people away from the true Church.¹⁸⁸

The perceived threat from both Catholics and Puritans was a fundamental part of the need for the Church of England to be a *via media* in the reign of James I. This continued under Charles I. One of Charles I's own chaplains, Richard Montague, believed in a middle-way for the Church. Charles I attempted to settle disputes in the Church with the 1626 *Proclamation for Peace and Quiet in the Church of England*. The

¹⁸⁷ Peter White, "The *via media* in the early Stuart Church," in Fincham, 214-15.

¹⁸⁸ Arthur Lake, *Sermons with Some Religious and Divine Meditations* (London: 1629), 91. It is important to remember that some Laudians and Conformists conflated Separatists with Puritans, even though not all Puritans were Separatists.

proclamation attempted to heal divisions and enforcement of this proclamation was even-handed under William Laud.¹⁸⁹

The *Proclamation for Peace and Quiet in the Church of England* contained elements of the *via media* and expressed the need to protect the Church from disruptive threats. The proclamation addressed questions and opinions brought up on doctrine that caused controversy and gave “much offense to the sober and well grounded Readers, and Hearers” of Richard Montagues books. The fear was that the controversy would “raise some hopes in the professed enemies of our Religion, the Romish Catholickes, that by degrees, the professors of our Religion may be drawn first to Schisme and after to plain popery.” By the advice of his Bishops, Charles I wanted to declare and publish his “utter dislike” to people, “who to shew the subtilty of their wits, or to please their owne humours, or vent their owne passions” to advocate new “Opinions” contrary to the “Orthodoxall grounds of the true Religion” established by the Church of England.¹⁹⁰ The Church of England needed to end the controversies to protect itself from the influence of Catholics. Also, the theme of controlling the passions, a fundamental tenet of the idea of English moderation, appears in Charles I’s expression of dislike for those who “vent their owne passions.”

The remedy for this was the declaration that not in matters of doctrine, discipline of Church nor government would Charles “admit of the least innovation.” He would also

¹⁸⁹ White, 225-27.

¹⁹⁰ Charles I, “A Proclamation for Peace and Quiet in the Church of England,” in *Stuart Royal Proclamations, vol. II: Royal Proclamations of King Charles I, 1625-1646*, ed. James F. Larkin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 90-91.

give comfort to his “sober, religious and well affected Subjects” while suppressing “the insolencies” of those who wished to disturb the peace of the Church or State. Charles commanded all subjects, especially churchmen, to be guides to others “to cary themselves so wisely, warily, and conscionably” and not write, print, or preach any innovation concerning religion. If anyone broke this “Rule of Sobrietie,” he commanded archbishops and bishops “speedily to reclaim and repressse all such spirits.” Those who neglected this “admonition” for the “satisfying of their unquiet and restlesse spirits, or to expresse their rash or undutiful insolencies, shall willfully breake that circle of Order” which could not be broken without danger to the Church and State.¹⁹¹ So, this proclamation was focused on banning innovations to maintain the order of Church and State.

This proclamation commanded total obedience to the authority of the Church and crown. This was still in accordance with the *via media* because the *via media* was not about compromise, instead it was about coercion. The proclamation was enforcing a supposedly moderate position between extreme opinions. Using Ethan Shagan’s understanding of the *via media*, we see these are not necessarily in contradiction of each other. What was different about the *via media* under Charles I, according to Peter White, was the vigor of the policies enforcing it. Previous church laws were more systematically enforced. A balance between clerical and lay interests under Charles I was one way the *via media* was significantly different from how it was understood under Elizabeth and

¹⁹¹ Charles I, “A Proclamation for Peace and Quiet in the Church of England,” 91-93.

James I. James I was suspicious of William Laud's ideas for the Reformation, but Charles was more open to them. Charles himself openly promoted the cause of the Church.¹⁹²

Certainly, William Laud supported the *via media* in Charles I's government and the Church of England. Laud expressed this during the controversy created by the publication of some of Richard Montague's books in the early days of Charles's reign. Montague had many critics including Puritans and members of Parliament. Charles tried to satisfy Montague's critics by not fully endorsing all his works but did not abandon the *via media*.¹⁹³ Laud discussed the controversy in a letter to the Duke of Buckingham in early 1625. Laud's focus was to preserve the truth and keep the peace in the Church of England. To preserve that peace he wrote that Charles I "shall do most graciously to prohibit all parties, members of the Church of England, any further controverting of these questions by public preaching or writing, or any other way, for the disturbance of the peace of this Church for time to come."¹⁹⁴ Here, Laud is referencing different "parties" (potentially including Puritans and Separatists) within the Church that could cause trouble, echoing Charles's fears that the Church was under attack from many sides. But he is also advocating that the way to protect the Church was by banning such opinions which did not coincide with the Charles's and his own idea of the *via media*.

¹⁹² White, 229-30.

¹⁹³ White, 229.

¹⁹⁴ William Laud, *The Works of William Laud*, vol. VI, ed. J. Bliss and W. Scott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1847-1860), 249.

Indeed, Laud alluded to the threat from Puritans (although in this case referred to as “Seperatists”) and Catholics in a letter in the 1630s. Laud defended himself against recent accusations that he was responsible for “the miseries of the Church.” Instead, Laud claimed the miseries “proceeded from the Seperatists, and from such as for the private at least, if not for worse ends, have countenanced them and their strange proceedings against the government and governors of the Church.” Laud labored to keep the Church safe from that threat and claimed troubles had befallen him “through the malice of two parties, the Papists and the Sectaries,” which both afflicted the Church. Laud even addressed accusations that some claimed he was too harsh on Catholics and others who believed he was too generous toward them:

Shall I be accounted a deadly enemy to the Papist, as I am reputed by them both at home and abroad; and in the meantime, accused of no less than treason for favoring and complying with them? Well, if I do suffer, ‘tis but because truth usually lies between two sides, and is beaten on both sides (as the poor Church of England is at this day by these factions).¹⁹⁵

This demonstrates Lauds shared belief with Charles I that the Church was under threat from multiple sides, and that a middle path was the true path for the Church to take.

As covered in the Chapter One, the Puritans were one of the sides deemed a threat by Charles and the Laudians. But, Charles and the government’s views on Catholicism and the threat it posed remained much more ambiguous. Charles I married a French Catholic princess. He gave a formal promise that this would not lead to concessions for English Catholics but a secret clause in the marriage treaty committed him to relax penal laws against Catholics. Catholicism became fashionable at the court of Charles I in the

¹⁹⁵ Laud, vol. VI, 84-85.

1630s. Charles was attracted to certain aspects of Catholicism and its worship. He approved of a hierarchy in the Church and State. He also valued ceremonies and wanted order and ritual in private life. Charles made no efforts to rid the government and court of Catholics.¹⁹⁶

Charles often agreed with the doctrine and discipline of the Catholic Church. He believed confession was important for the moral discipline of men and had sympathy for the cult of relics while also favoring the veneration of images. He believed in saints and miracles, though also felt the many fables surrounding the saints and the cult of the Virgin Mary were excessive. Interestingly, Charles also spoke positively about the Roman Inquisition and wished “it were in all places of Christendom to bridle men’s tongues,” a reference to the idea of coercive moderation to conform people.¹⁹⁷

Charles I’s more tolerant view toward Catholicism is an example of how there was a shift to a new *via media*. This new middle way was further from Puritanism and closer to Catholicism. This shift is a departure from the policies of James I even though Charles and James shared a broad concept of the *via media*. The extreme anti-Puritan sentiments of many Laudians combined with their support of ritual and ceremony in church life, which was like Catholic practices, provided the opportunity for this shift. This was made easier by Charles own tacit support of certain aspects of Catholic worship.

¹⁹⁶ Roger Lockyer, *The Early Stuarts: A Political History of England, 1603-1642*. 2nd ed. (New York: Addison Wesley Longman Inc., 1999), 205-206.

¹⁹⁷ Arnold Oskar Meyer, “Charles I and Rome,” *American Historical Review* vol. 19, no. 1 (October 1913), 18. The statement by Charles I on the Inquisition is quoted in Michael Questier, “Arminianism, Catholicism, and Puritanism in England during the 1630s,” *The Historical Journal* vol. 49, no. 1 (March 2006), 70.

Charles I and Sunday Receptions

Charles's desire for order and ritual in public life sheds light on his support for Sunday recreations. Many issues, including the alleged disloyalty of Puritans and the need for a *via media* in the Church of England, came to a head with Charles's defense of popular recreations. Charles I supported the use of recreations on Sundays after worship, much like his father James I. While Charles was against banning Sunday recreations, he nevertheless attempted to placate those who denounced them. He accepted a Sabbath bill early in his reign because he thought it prudent to appease Parliament, who long desired a bill.¹⁹⁸ In 1625 a Sabbath Bill was put into law entitled "An Act for punishing of divers abuses committed on the Lords day called Sunday." It banned all people from assembling or meeting to play sports outside their own parishes on Sundays. The law also banned bull and bear-baitings, any form of theater, and other recreations even within one's own parish. Punishment for breaking this law consisted of being placed in stocks or a fine.¹⁹⁹ It is significant that the Sabbath Bill prevented the people from playing sports outside their own parish. It reveals the importance of maintaining close bonds within the community. It was okay to play sports in one's own community, but the government didn't want people leaving their community to do so.

¹⁹⁸ Winston U. Solberg, *Redeem the Time: The Puritan Sabbath in Early America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), 75-76.

¹⁹⁹ Charles I, "An Acte for punishing of divers abuses committed on the Lords day called Sunday", 1625, in *Statutes of the Realm*, vol. 5, 1628-1680, ed. John Raithby (London: Great Britain Record Commission, 1819), 1, accessed October 2, 2015, <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/statutes-realm/vol5/p1a>.

The Sabbath bill, however, failed to end the attacks on Sunday recreations eventually leading to the controversial reissue of James I's *Declaration of Sports* in October of 1633. It is no coincidence that Charles reissued the declaration during the years of the Personal Rule. Charles was no longer constrained by Puritan and Sabbatarian demands in Parliament after its dissolution in 1629. This shows that the interest in sports was minimal and was more of a tool for the larger ecclesiastical policies of Charles's government. Julian Davies believes that the republication was the central initiative that destroyed the ecclesiastical peace created by James I. While many contemporaries viewed William Laud as the architect of the second *Book of Sports*, Davies notes that the *Book of Sports* was entirely Charles I's policy. Critics of the book blamed Laud for its publication to implicate royal responsibility without accusing Charles I personally.²⁰⁰

Disputes over church ales and wakes in the county of Somerset played a major role in convincing Charles I to republish.²⁰¹ Traditional revelry was popular in Somerset. Religiously, Somerset was considered moderate and most orders to suppress recreations were concerned primarily with disorder. In Devonshire by comparison, judges who issued orders suppressing recreations were influenced by zealous Puritans. The orders in Devonshire stated that their intention was to prevent the profanation of the Sabbath. Orders issued in 1628 in Somerset by the Chief Justice, John Denham, made no mentions

²⁰⁰ Julian Davies, *The Caroline Captivity of the Church: Charles I and the Remoulding of Anglicanism, 1625-1641* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 174.

²⁰¹ Somerset was made up mostly of pastureland and woodland that had dairy farming and cloth production. The settlement pattern included some areas of nucleated villages and more scattered types while the central part had extensive fenland. See David Underdown, *Revel, Riot and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England, 1603-1660* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 7-8.

of profanation of the Sabbath, however. Historian Alistair Dougall notes that it is ironic that Somerset orders were what led to the reissue of the *Book of Sports*, considering the non-Sabbatarian nature of the orders compared to the orders in Devonshire.²⁰²

In March of 1628, word reached Laud and Charles I in the form of a petition from several ministers to Sir John Denham, the Baron of the Exchequer and Justice of Assize for Somerset. The petition noted that at the last assizes for the county of Dorset an order was made for the suppression of church ales. The ministers wished for a similar order to be made in Somerset, and even included a copy of an order made in September of 1594 for the suppression of ales in Somersetshire.²⁰³ Things came to a head in 1632 when Chief Justice John Denham reissued a ban on church ales and wakes that had initially been issued in 1615. Charles I, however, gave instructions for the orders to be revoked. He also wished to know whether other assize judges gave similar orders without warrant from the bishop. Many of the judges were concerned about disorder caused by the ales. Charles I assured these judges that revels and ales could still be held without chaos and disorder.²⁰⁴

²⁰² Alistair Dougall, *The Devil's Book: Charles I, the Book of Sports and Puritanism in Tudor and Early Stuart England* (Exeter, UK: University of Exeter Press, 2011), 110-12.

²⁰³ Great Britain and John Bruce, *Calendar of State Papers: Domestic Series of the Reign of Charles I, Preserved in the Public Record Office* (London: Public Record Office, 1963, repr., Nendeln, Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint Ltd., 1967), 20.

²⁰⁴ Kevin Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 353-54.

Some of Charles's reasons for protecting church ales and other feasts echo some of the sentiments of the defenders of Sunday recreations discussed in Chapter Two. In a letter from William Laud to Bishop Piers of Bath and Wells, Laud mentioned that Charles was displeased with the orders to suppress the feasts. Charles believed disorders could be prevented by the Justices, "and let leave the feasts to be kept for the neighbourly meetings and recreations of the people." Laud also noted that Charles was aware "that Humourists increase much in those parts, and unite themselves by banding against these feasts, which [Charles] no way likes." Laud required that Bishop Piers gather all his clergy and learn how the feasts were conducted and whether they caused disorder.²⁰⁵

Piers responded in November 1633 after he got answers from 72 beneficed ministers who claimed the feasts were kept without disorders. The ministers claimed on feast days "the service of the church has been more solemnly performed," and the churches saw better attendance than any other Sundays. All the ministers believed the feasts should be continued to memorialize the dedication of the churches, "for the civilizing of people, for their lawful recreations, for composing differences by meeting of friends, for increase of love and amity as being feasts of charity, for the relief of the poor, the richer sort keeping then open house, and for many other reasons." Some of the ministers warned "if the people should not have their honest and lawfull Recreations upon Sundayes after evening Prayer, they would go either into tipling houses, and there upon their Ale-benches talke of matters of Church or State, or else into Conventicles." Upon hearing that the Justices wished to suppress the feasts, the people responded the

²⁰⁵ *CSPD, Charles I, 1633-34, 231.*

feasts allowed them to entertain friends, praise God, and “pray for the King under whose happy government they enjoyed peace and quietness.”²⁰⁶ The reasons for keeping the feasts echo those of writers such as Richard Carew and Robert Herrick.

This letter also highlights a difference in the Laudian concept of order from that of the Puritans. The fear expressed that people would go into ale houses and “talke matters of Church or State” was a concern over order. Whereas the Puritans wanted people to openly discuss matters of the Church, Laudians believed open discussion could lead to disorder. If people discussed religious or political issues they could be informed on the problems and inequalities of contemporary life in England. In an environment of heavy drinking some people could be susceptible to radical ideas and perhaps wish to rebel in some way. Allowing people their recreations would prevent this and leave them content with their lot in life and place within the social hierarchy.

The Second *Declaration of Sports*

Charles I and many church ministers clearly understood the importance of recreations and feasts to rural communities. But why did Charles I believe it necessary to reissue the *Book of Sports*? Charles I was an avid hunter, and he also enjoyed playing tennis. However, he did not share the same appreciation for traditional recreations as his father. But Charles disliked and distrusted Puritans and believed their strict Sabbatarianism was dangerous.²⁰⁷ This shows that Charles’s defense of sports was

²⁰⁶ *CSPD, Charles I, 1633-34, 275-76*. The letter also mentions the feasts raising funds to repair the churches.

²⁰⁷ Dougall, 121.

political and religious rather than personal and may also shed light on why he was far less compromising than James I. Ronald Hutton believes Charles and William Laud defended “traditional secular revelry in order to protect a Church which embodied hierarchy, ceremony, and dignity, and the ritual calendar of that body was central to their vision.”²⁰⁸ Similar to Hutton, Kevin Sharpe argues that Charles I’s intention was to preserve “the rhythms and rituals of parish life which were central to his perception of the *ecclesia Anglicana*.” But, Sharpe notes, the *Book of Sports* also raised opponents against him who were not natural enemies of the Church.²⁰⁹ In fact, publishing the *Book of Sports* provided fuel against Puritanism. The book essentially stigmatized and isolated Puritans. Anyone would be able to label and smear those who wished to stop recreations as Puritan non-Conformists.²¹⁰

Laudian views on Sunday recreations closely reflected the views of many of the higher-class defenders such as Richard Carew and Robert Herrick, that sports were a social unifier that brought communities together in greater harmony. But much like James I and his publication of the first *Book of Sports*, Charles I’s reissue of it was meant to re-establish the government’s position on recreations as a *via media*. Although Charles’s religious policies differed from James’s policies, his policies on recreations were a continuation of his father’s. This was indicated by the fact that the *Book of Sports*

²⁰⁸ Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year, 1400-1700* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 197.

²⁰⁹ Sharpe, 359.

²¹⁰ Davies, 175-76.

was reissued with the identical language of James's version. Charles I gave orders to William Laud, who was by then Archbishop of Canterbury, to reprint it "word for word, as it had issued from the Press in the time of his late Royal Father."²¹¹ What is also important is that unlike James I, Charles I and his government made much greater efforts to publish and enforce the declaration. The fact that some churchmen were punished for refusal to publish or read the declaration indicate a far less compromising approach.

Charles's own version, while identical in most respects, also added some additional information at the end. First, Charles gave his reasons for the reissue. It was published because some counties "under pretence of taking away abuses" were forbidding "ordinary meetings" and church dedication feasts "commonly called wakes." Charles hoped that the feasts would be observed and that the Justices of the Peace would "looke to it, both that all disorders there be prevented and punished, and that all neighborhood and freedome, with manlike and lawfull Exercises bee used."²¹² Here, Charles alludes to the importance of these recreations to reinforce hierarchical and ordered communities. These statements are basically an endorsement of the Laudian ideas of the community.

Charles I also added additional instructions at the end of his version. He specifically commanded the Justices of Assizes "to see that no man do trouble or molest any of our loyall and duetifull people, in their lawfull Recreations, having first done their

²¹¹ Peter Heylyn, *Cyprianus Anglicus* (London: 1671), 243-44.

²¹² Charles I, *The Kings Majesties Declaration to his Subjects Concerning Lawfull Sports to be Used* (London: 1633), 15-16.

duetie to God, and continuing in obedience to Us and Our Lawes.” Charles also commanded judges, justices of the peace, mayors, bailiffs, constables, and other officers “to take notice of, and be observed, as they tender Our displeasure.” Finally, Charles asked that “publication of Our command bee made by order from the Bishops through all Parish Churches of their severall Diocesse respectively.”²¹³ Here is a specific instruction that all justices ensure the people are allowed their recreations if they attended church service. Plus, Charles also specifically instructed the bishops to publish the declaration.

William Laud also played a role in ordering the publication of the declaration shortly after it was issued. In a letter from Laud to the bishops of his province dated October 28, 1633, Laud gave instructions for the printing of Charles’s *Book of Sports*. Every bishop had to ensure the book was distributed to all the parishes in their diocese, “and there published to the people, to the end they may know his Majesty’s princely care over them; and to the effectual performance of this, I make no doubt, but your Lordship will use all diligence.” The bishop’s officers were also instructed to order the books.²¹⁴

Laud’s instructions only indicate that the book be published but contained no indications on how to publish or enforce it. Indeed, there was much confusion among churchmen as to how the *Book of Sports* was to be enforced and what they themselves were required to do. In other instructions, Charles I required that the book be read to the congregations in church and a list of names of those who refused to read it be returned. However, the *Book of Sports* gave no clear indication as to who should read it. Some

²¹³ Charles I, *The Declaration of Sports*, 16-17.

²¹⁴ Laud, vol. VI, 329-30.

churchmen refused to read it with the understanding it contained no command that clergy should read it. *The Book of Sports* was not a proclamation, so it did not proscribe any penalties for those who refused to read.²¹⁵

Reading the *Book of Sports*, however, essentially became a test of loyalty to Charles I. Unlike James I, Charles eventually ordered censures in ecclesiastical courts of those who would not read it, but, according to Julian Davies, overall censures for refusal to read the book were infrequent. In fact, censures for not reading the book decreased after 1636. William Laud was quite lenient in his requirements. He required that churchwardens or their incumbents certify that the book was published but not that it was read. This confusion led some churchmen to have a neighboring minister or a surrogate read the book instead.²¹⁶

William Laud was also involved in the enforcement of the *Book of Sports* and a reconstruction of his policy in his diocese of Canterbury is possible. Laud became more personally involved in the publication of the book in May 1634. Laud's commissary (basically a deputy) called in ministers to make sure the book was read. However, Laud only censured four ministers for refusal. He gave the ministers time to reform, and only suspended them *ab officio* when they still refused to read it.²¹⁷ One can see how he dealt directly with recalcitrant ministers when Laud defended himself during his trial for

²¹⁵ Davies, 182-83; Dougall, 126-27.

²¹⁶ Davies, 183-85.

²¹⁷ Davies, 185-86.

treason in 1644. Four witnesses were brought before him claiming they were punished for not reading the book. Three men had asked for more time to reform but Laud denied this because he felt they were only delaying. Laud also noted that in other dioceses bishops punished more than three, and their punishments were much greater. A Mr. Snelling was also censured, but not just for refusal to read the *Book of Sports* but other things as well.²¹⁸

Laud, in fact, censured no more ministers after 1635.²¹⁹ While some clergy enforced the book strictly, Laud did not, often instructing his ministers to be lenient.²²⁰ One can see this leniency in the case of Sir John Lambe, Commissary of Archdeaconries (essentially a deputy to the archdeacons) of Leicestershire and Buckinghamshire. In 1636, Lambe brought in a vicar before him who had tried to suppress dancing on Sundays after prayer. The vicar was against the *Book of Sports*, and Lambe admonished him to read it, but the vicar refused. Lambe sent the vicar to Bishop Williams of Lincoln, and the vicar returned promising to reform. The vicar read the book in November but admitted that he had not reformed and only read it to obey Bishop Williams. After much “altercation” Lambe told the vicar to declare to his people that he had read the book and that the vicar approved of it and it should be obeyed.²²¹ Indeed, Laud himself appeared

²¹⁸ Laud, vol. IV, 253-55. To suspend a minister *ab officio* was to remove him from his specific office or position but still allow him to maintain his salary and lodging.

²¹⁹ Davies, 186.

²²⁰ Sharpe, 356.

²²¹ *CSPD, Charles I, 1636-37*, 182.

quite lenient when he dealt with recalcitrant clergy after 1635, lifting the suspensions of two churchmen after they better informed themselves and did not show any opposition to the *Book of Sports*.²²²

These examples indicate Laud was not a strict enforcer of the *Book of Sports*. It is evidence that the *Declaration of Sports* had more of a political aim than specifically protecting Sunday recreations. The government of Charles I and Laud's position on recreations was just one part of their overall efforts to enforce conformity. Laud allowed plenty of time for these clergymen to reform their views on the book, and even allowed for someone else to read it if the clergyman could not bring himself to do it. By 1639, Laud absolved all clergy from refusal to read the *Book of Sports*. Julian Davies observes that "Laud's clerical censures were infrequent, exemplary, and moderate, with the aim of achieving a wider canonical obedience and stemming non-conformist inclinations." Reading the *Book of Sports* was more of a test for conformity in some cases rather than an aim to directly support recreations.²²³ Essentially, the lenient enforcement shows Laud was more concerned with conforming people to the *via media* and the *Book of Sports* was just one tool in achieving that.

Overall, there was an almost universal episcopal attempt to introduce the *Book of Sports* under Charles I, something which did not take place under James I with his *Book of Sports*. Most ministers sent to the High Commission who had refused to read the book

²²² For these examples see *CSPD, Charles I, 1637-38*, 377; *CSPD, Charles I, 1637-38*, 560.

²²³ Davies, 187.

were sent for general non-conformity. Refusal to read the book was just one of many charges. There are no examples of a minister prosecuted solely for refusing to read the book. Julian Davies notes that it is difficult to estimate the total number of suspensions in the whole country. It is only easy to know that some places saw higher numbers of suspensions than others. For instance, suspensions in the counties of Norwich and Bath/Wells outnumbered suspensions in other places.²²⁴ Because enforcement of the *Book of Sports* was infrequent and was usually not the only charge levelled against an offender, it shows Charles I was not as concerned about defending sports but asserting his authority. This allowed Charles to enforce the *Declaration of Sports* more aggressively than James I and perhaps enforce the via media more broadly.

Laudianism and Recreations

Although William Laud did not strictly enforce the reading of the *Book of Sports*, he did see the importance of lawful recreations to the people. What is interesting is that Laud did not take part in recreations much himself. In a letter to Lord Viscount Wentworth, Laud mentioned “a fair pair of cards” along with other documents he received from Wentworth, stating, “I think your Lordship is of the opinion that I have some leisure in the evenings to refresh myself after the labours of the day.” But Laud claimed he did not play cards, “For ever since old Prosser’s project we pay dearer for worse cards. But I care not for that, so I may win enough at Loadam to pay for them.”²²⁵

²²⁴ Davies, 195-97.

²²⁵ Laud, vol. VII, 378. “Prosser’s project” refers to a proclamation issued in 1637, meant to help English dice and card makers and protect them from better quality imports. See Larkin, 559. Loadam, often referred to as Losing Lodam, was a penalty-trick card game that was an ancestor to the modern game of Hearts.

In fact, some bishops did take part in recreations, and others allowed activities that were banned by Sabbatarian statutes. Although Laud did not partake in recreations himself, and strictly observed the Sabbath, he allowed for lawful sports to be played.²²⁶

During his trial, Laud defended the publishing of the *Book of Sports*, and argued that it did not take away from preaching, as some had argued, because the book did not allow recreations during service. Laud did not deny that disorders took place, but this was a reason to regulate recreations not take them away. Laud was also critical of strict Sabbath morality stating, “I pray God keep us in the mean, in this business of the Sabbath, as well as in other things, that we run not into a Jewish superstition, while we seek to shun profaneness.”²²⁷ Here, Laud is trying to establish a rhetorical middle ground on Sunday observance. He believed people needed to avoid profaneness, but it was also important to avoid Puritan Judaizing, attacking the strict morality of Puritans and making them appear more extreme.

Indeed, it is possible that Laud supported recreations that created unity and neighborliness in communities, particularly church feasts and ales. Laud stressed that the unity of the Church was not based on dogma but on community and uniformity of worship. The church ceremonies were necessary for keeping order.²²⁸ Laud defended the ceremonies against those who believed they were idolatrous and too close to Catholic ceremonies. Laud stated that these men were, “afraid to testify to their duty to God, even

²²⁶ Davies, 203-204.

²²⁷ Laud, vol. IV, 251-52, 255.

²²⁸ Sharpe, 287-88.

in His own house, by any outward gesture at all; insomuch that those very ceremonies which, by the judgment of godly and learned men, have now long continued in the practice of this Church, suffer hard measure for the Romish superstition's sake." Laud further argued that "ceremonies do not hurt the people, but profit them, so there be a mean kept, and the bye be not put for the main; that is, so we place not the principle part of our piety in them."²²⁹

Laud was a supporter of recreations if they were done in moderation. His statement on Sabbath morality stressed the importance of a middle ground between unrestrained debauchery involving recreations and strict observance which allowed no room for recreation. Church ceremonies were good for the people because they helped promote unity and kept them involved with the church. Laud saw "that the public neglect of God's service in the outward face of it, and the nasty lying of many places dedicated to that service, had almost cast a damp upon the true and inward worship of God; which while we live in body, needs external helps." Laud further claimed he kept ceremonies "according to both law and canon, and with the consent and liking of the people."²³⁰ Ceremonies were meant to help the people with their own inward relationship with God, but also allowed for a middle ground so that their lives were not entirely centered on the church. Laud, perhaps similarly to James I, approved of church ales and other feasts as other "ceremonies" that kept the people involved with the church, especially since they were favored by the people.

²²⁹ Laud, vol. II, 312.

²³⁰ Laud, vol. IV, 60.

The Public Debate over the Declaration

Another area where Charles I defended traditional sports and recreations, was in the print world. After the second *Book of Sports*, the “literary warfare” over the Sabbath intensified. Many theologians addressed complex Sabbath issues in “dense polemical tomes,” while many defenders of the king and Church published apologias.²³¹ What emerges from the arguments of the defenders of recreations is that most wanted an ordered society. Recreations were a part of maintaining a social, political, and religious hierarchy. Many of the arguments made echoed those of the defenders of recreations covered in Chapter Two, only now many of these men had the full support or endorsement of the crown.

According to historian Alistair Dougall, the supposed “battle of the pens,” which took place after the publication of the 1633 *Book of Sports*, was rather one-sided. Mostly pro-*Book of Sports* and anti-Sabbatarian works were legally published. Under Charles I, religious books were under great scrutiny with very tight censorship. Many Sabbatarian tracts were censored or not published. Most Sabbatarian writers knew it would be dangerous to publish their works. Sabbatarian literature attacking the *Book of Sports* did not come out until after 1641, when the crown lost control of the presses.²³²

Although there were few, if any, publications against the *Book of Sports* in the 1630s, there was opposition from some of the clergy, especially since all parishes had to

²³¹ Solberg, 77-79.

²³² Dougall, 138-39, 146-47.

publish the declaration.²³³ In April 1634 the parson of Sutton Mandeville, Gabriel Sangar, preached that those who took part in recreations or allowed sports to be played on the Sabbath “were not children of God.” According to witnesses, Sangar also claimed that these types of Sabbath breakers, called “carnal protestants and papists” by Sangar, would “shake hands in hell together.”²³⁴ Other evidence to the declaration came from people who sent letters and petitions to Archbishop Laud, claiming clergy were not following the law. In May 1634, churchwardens of the Holy Trinity in Shaftesbury, County Dorset, wrote that minister Edward Williams preached against the *Book of Sports* and said it was a damnable thing to use recreations on the Sabbath.²³⁵ Even in July 1635, Archbishop Laud while on a tour of the many dioceses, mentioned there were many in Surrey who refused to read from the *Book of Sports* along with those who had already been suspended.²³⁶

One of the most vocal critics of the *Book of Sports* was the lawyer and Sabbatarian William Prynne. Prynne was a staunch opponent of William Laud and called episcopal authority into question during Laud’s tenure. Prynne, the physician John Bastwick, and the clergyman Henry Burton were all punished in 1637 for questioning church authority and making claims that Laudian innovations were clearing the way to

²³³ Solberg, 76.

²³⁴ *CSPD, Charles I, 1633-1634*, 540.

²³⁵ *CSPD, Charles I, 1634-1635*, 2.

²³⁶ *CSPD, Charles I, 1635*, xliv.

introduce popery. All three were sentenced to lose their ears, pay heavy fines, and spend life in prison.²³⁷ Prynne later claimed in the 1640s that the publication of the *Declaration of Sports* was just a means for Laud to suppress preaching. He also claimed Laud suspended hundreds of ministers for refusing to publish the declaration and for not encouraging their people to take part in recreations.²³⁸

Even if Sabbatarian and anti-*Book of Sports* literature was not published at this time, there was still enough opposition to the *Book of Sports* from clergy and opposition to church authority in general to convince Charles I that it was necessary to publicly defend the publication and Sunday recreations in general. But this defense was less about debating the opposition and more about explaining why they were carrying out such policies. It also shows an attempt at shifting the *via media* to a new position more than having a conventional debate.

Charles thus commissioned Bishop Francis White of Ely to write a theological defense and Peter Heylyn, who was a personal chaplain to Charles, to write a historical defense of the *Book of Sports*. Other works also appeared in the late 1630s justifying Charles I's views on recreations. Many of these works argued Sunday was not a Sabbath and not of a divine institution. They also proclaimed Sabbatarianism was a distinctly Puritan doctrine. Royal sponsorship of these arguments meant those who disagreed were reluctant to express their opinions.²³⁹ Many of the works defending recreations were in

²³⁷ Lockyer, 221.

²³⁸ William Prynne, *Canterburies Doome* (London: 1646), 153-54.

²³⁹ Davies, 178-79.

response to Puritan works on the Sabbath. In arguing that Sunday was a perpetual Sabbath, Puritans often distorted teachings and past practices of the Church. In turn, supporters of Charles I often exaggerated their case and distorted earlier works to link Puritanism to Sabbatarianism.²⁴⁰ This was simply using misrepresentation to create a shift (in an intellectual sense) in the middle ground.

Peter Heylyn was the most prominent figure in the attacks against Puritans after 1633. In 1634 Heylyn wrote the preface to a new publication of the preacher John Prideaux's *Doctrine of the Sabbath*, which was based off a lecture given by Prideaux in 1622. Prideaux was a professor in divinity at Oxford University and a personal chaplain to James I. In the preface, Heylyn presented it as a defense of the *Book of Sports*, even though Prideaux made few references to recreations in the original publication.²⁴¹ Prideaux wrote that there was no direct evidence in the Fourth Commandment or Gospels "which can affixe the Rest of the Jewish Sabbath to the Lords day now celebrated," people were only to abstain from work on the Sabbath. However, people were still to meet in congregation and take part in church service. Prideaux added, "those things are all commanded, which doe advance GODS publicke service; and those permitted which are no hindrance thereunto." The people were permitted any recreations "which serve lawfully to refresh our spirits, and nourish mutual neighborhood amongst us." Finally, Prideaux wrote that there were four properties of "all solemne Festivals": sanctity, rest from labor, cheerfulness, and liberality. He further noted that it was up to the religious

²⁴⁰ Dougall, 141.

²⁴¹ Dougall, 141.

magistrates to “proscribe bounds and limits” regarding recreations, entertainments, and feasting.²⁴²

Peter Heylyn’s own book, *History of the Sabbath* (the work commissioned by Charles I as an apologia for the *Book of Sports*), distorted the history of Sabbatarianism to portray the whole movement as unorthodox.²⁴³ Heylyn defended recreations as something which had been allowed on Sundays going back to the ancient Church. The purpose of Charles I’s *Book of Sports* was to allow people their proper liberties on Sundays, “which all Christian States and Churches, in all times before, had never questioned.” He also described the book as a “pious and Princely Act” comparable to the acts of Constantine and other early Christian rulers. Heylyn also struck a note of moderation in his defense of the *Book of Sports*. He wrote that the point of the book was no less pious “to keepe the holy-dayes free from superstition, than to preserve them from prophanesesse; especially considering, that permission of lawfull Pleasures is no less proper to a Festivall, than restraint from labour.”²⁴⁴ So, Heylyn believed the *Book of Sports* was meant to strike a moderate balance between “superstition” and “prophanesesse.”

The other most prolific advocate of Sunday recreations commissioned by Charles I was Francis White, who wrote *A Treatise of the Sabbath-Day*. In concern to recreations on holy days, White wrote there were two kinds of recreations: “Honest and Lawfull” and “Vitious and Unlawfull.” Honest and lawful recreations were not vicious in matter and

²⁴² John Prideaux, *Doctrine of the Sabbath* (London:1634), 38-41.

²⁴³ Dougall, 142.

²⁴⁴ Peter Heylyn, *The History of the Sabbath* (London: 1636), Book Two, 268-69.

quality and not “accompanied with any evill circumstances.” Any recreations of an “evil quality” were unlawful. This included excessive drinking, fraudulent playing or gaming, and anything disobedient to laws and superior authority. White wrote of honest and moderate recreations that were lawfully permitted, could be used on some part of holy days. These recreations were “prohibited by no just Law: either Divine, Ecclesiasticall, or Politick” and were thus not sins. Only if someone could prove a recreation had violated some “just Law” could it be prohibited, otherwise it could be permitted by superiors on a holy day.²⁴⁵

Francis White also responded to rigid Sabbatarians who believed labor and recreations were prohibited on any part of the Sabbath. Much like John Prideaux, White found no formal or express prohibition in the Bible or any of “Moses Law.” Even if old Sabbath law prohibited all civil recreation, it did not mean recreations were prohibited on all the Christian holy days. White wrote that old Sabbath law was temporary until the time of the Gospel, then ceased. Under the new covenant, not all twenty-four hours were subject to the Sabbath rest. Some Sabbatarians believed any recreation on the Sabbath was a sin comparable to murder, adultery, or theft. White’s response was that any recreation permitted by the law of the Church or State was not a sin.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁵ Francis White, *A Treatise of the Sabbath-Day* (London: 1635), 229-30.

²⁴⁶ White, 235-41. Another personal chaplain to Charles I, Thomas Turner, also argued recreations should be allowed on the Sabbath. Turner stated it was still a duty to attend church, but recreations acted as a necessary “mercy” to the people by refreshing themselves. See Thomas Turner, *A Sermon Preached before the King at Whitehall* (London: 1635), 6-7, 18-21.

Another defender of recreations, Christopher Dow, was also careful to note that duties of service to God were so important that they required time for their preparation beforehand. It was important that till the end of church service, “men intangle not themselves with unnecessary businesses, or give themselves to *sportings* or *recreations*, whereby their mindes should be hindered from the right preparing of themselves, or due performance of those holy dutyes.” Dow wrote that it was good and commendable if one spent the rest of the day meditating, reading or thinking about what they heard at service. But Dow again saw no reason, provided they did not hinder service to God, the people could not use “honest and seemly recreations” after the “publicke dutyes of the Day” were finished. Dow wrote further that there was no set time of day for actions of worship to be performed, and it was not necessary to spend the entire day in piety and devotion. He noted there were those who were not capable of such devotion, “as namely those who by reason of their meane education or naturall parts are not fitted for long meditation.” Because of their hard work and labor on week days, the common people must be permitted some bodily recreation.²⁴⁷

Christopher Dow basically argued recreations were more important for the lower classes of people to use them. His argument that not all people could devote the entire day to God was reinforcing the Laudian views of social hierarchy and that these people were still valuable to the community. He went a little further, writing when ordinary labors and all bodily recreations were unlawful on the Sabbath, but not sinful, they could

²⁴⁷ Christopher Dow, *A Discourse of the Sabbath and the Lords Day* (London: 1636), 52-55.

not be so on the Christian Sunday. Dow saw no reason “why honest recreations, moderate feasting, and such like expressions of rejoicing, may not fitly be counted a part of external observance and sanctification of this day; in as much as it is solemnized in memory of the Resurrection of our Blessed Savior.” All were acts of cheerfulness and were “most agreeable to the solemnity of that Day.” Dow believed that moderate recreations and feasting should be a welcome part of the Sabbath. He bolstered this argument by writing about the old Jewish Sabbath, and how the Jews celebrated the day with feasting, singing, and dancing. Dow clearly wanted this to be a part of the Christian Sunday.²⁴⁸

One of the more interesting defenders of recreations who was associated with Charles I was Robert Sanderson the one-time Bishop of Lincoln. Sanderson often promoted neighborliness during parochial service and mediated disputes between landlords and tenants. He became chaplain to Charles I in 1631 at the encouragement of William Laud. He supported the reformation of manners, showing he had much in common with the Puritans. However, throughout his career he rejected Puritan arguments against ceremonies. He wanted to maintain Protestant unity against Rome thus he was anti-Puritan or, at least, anti-Separatist.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁸ Dow, 68-70; For more examples of churchmen who made similar arguments to Dow and believed that Sunday was not a true Sabbath see David Primrose, *A Treatise of the Sabbath* (London: 1636), 281-82, and John Pocklington, *Sunday No Sabbath* (London: 1636), 15, 17-19, 36.

²⁴⁹ H. C. G. Matthew, Brian Harrison, and the British Academy, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography: In Association with the British Academy, From the Earliest times to the Year 2000*, vol. 48 (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 878-79.

Sanderson was largely pro-recreations in a similar vein as Laudians. He believed recreations should be used in moderation, expressing his views in a sermon in London in 1621. Sanderson discussed what could be considered a “lawful calling.” Some lawful things were good for private use but not meant to be a calling. Sanderson could not deny the lawfulness of many sports and recreations, but they were not meant to be a calling. Callings were a gift from God. Recreations came about “not so much from any special ability received from God, which should be exercised therein, as from common necessity of our weak nature, which is to be refreshed thereby.” God permitted recreations, “not to employ our strength and time in them,” but as a refreshment. Sanderson was very critical of those who tried to make recreations a calling.²⁵⁰

Sanderson expounded on his ideas of moderation in a sermon in London in 1632. The sermon focused on the right use of Christian liberty and how it could be used “for a cloak of maliciousness.” Many men could be persuaded something was lawful, but then “think they have free liberty to use it in what manner and measure they please: never considering what caution and moderation is required” for lawful things. Wine, music, and “delicate fare” were things created by God for peoples’ own comfort, but people who used them “intemperately, or unseasonably, or vainly, or wastefully, abuseth both them and himself.” Many of these things became unlawful only when they were used in excess. Sanderson advocated in regards to “indifferent things” that people should be “indulgent to others, but strict to ourselves, in allowing them their liberty with the most, but taking

²⁵⁰ Robert Sanderson, *The Works of Robert Sanderson, D.D.*, vol. 3, ed. William Jacobsen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1854), 116-19.

our own liberty ever with the least.”²⁵¹ Sanderson appears to advocate that it was up to the individual to stay moderate and worry about their own liberty while allowing others to find their own level of moderation, evidence that some of his views were in line some Puritan beliefs on moderation.

Sanderson gave his full view on the use of recreations in a treatise published in 1636. He believed that Charles I’s *Declaration of Sports* had “put it past Disputation” about recreations. No man could condemn the moderate use of recreations on the Lord’s Day “as simply & *de toto genere* unlawfull.” As to the kind of recreations allowed it had to be left to private discretion. Walking and Discoursing were pleasant recreations but were “in no way delightsome to the ruder sort of people, who scarce account anything a sport which is not loud and boisterous.” Sanderson wrote that shooting, leaping, and stoolball were preferable to dice and card games. People should use recreations on the Sabbath in a godly and commendable way. They should be used at “seasonable times” and not during church service. If one did not trust his own judgment whether he could use recreations lawfully without sin, then they should not participate in said recreation. It was equally important that a person not make one’s “owne opinion or practice, a Rule to their Brethren.”²⁵²

The churchmen discussed above who defended the *Book of Sports* and Sunday recreations had common themes to their arguments. Many of these men wanted an ordered society with a social, political, and religious hierarchy. Much like past defenders

²⁵¹ Sanderson, *The Works of Robert Sanderson*, vol. 3, 296-98.

²⁵² Robert Sanderson, *A Sovereign Antidote against Sabbatarian Errors* (London: 1636), 23-27.

of recreations, these writers argued that recreations helped in maintaining an orderly society. They also echoed the sentiments of defenders who wrote during the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I that recreations were good for bodily health and refreshment. But what is new about the arguments of those supported by Charles I is how they used religion to make their case. They all argued in some form that the Sabbath did not have to be entirely devoted to God. The Bible did not expressly forbid recreations and God wanted people to practice recreations to refresh their spirits. More importantly, some argued recreations such as church feasts were in celebration of God. These men also expressed that the people could partake in recreations only after doing their service to God which reflected the statement at the end of the *Declaration of Sports* requiring church attendance before playing any sports.

What was most different from the arguments of the defenders of the second *Declaration of Sports* compared to earlier writers was their use of the language of moderation to portray themselves as holding moderate positions on the subject. Much like the Puritans, the crown sponsored defenders of Sunday recreations essentially created a straw-man of unrestricted license. Whereas the Puritans used it to bolster their arguments for suppressing recreations, pro-recreation writers used it to create an extreme position totally opposite of the Puritans. These churchmen also created a straw-man of Sabbatarianism by distorting Puritan views. This allowed them to appear that they were advocating a middle ground between two extreme positions. Thus, they were able to portray themselves as reasonable and label their opponents extremists. In reality no one ever advocated unrestrained license with recreations. Even the upper-class defenders of recreations covered in Chapter Two called for some restraint of their use.

The fact that many of these men were associated in some way with Charles I (some dedicating their work to Charles himself) indicates their views were shared by and had the approval of the crown. They all believed recreations were vital to maintaining the Laudian ideals of the community, especially for those lower-class members of society who were not fit to devote an entire day to God. The literary campaign under Charles I was all part of his stronger efforts to establish his *via media* concerning recreations. The vast amount of literature concerning the *Book of Sports* after its republication, was as discussed above, pro-recreations. This was made possible by Charles's strict censorship of any work that posed a contrary view to his position on recreations.

Overall, there was a stronger effort to enforce the crown's position on Sunday recreations under Charles I than James I. After the failure of James's *Declaration of Sports* to end the conflict over recreations, Charles I reissued the declaration with added instructions of how it was to be enforced. Charles's declaration had more a political and religious aim than just simply protecting recreations. The efforts of some bishops to punish clergymen for not publishing or reading the declaration demonstrates that Charles I was less compromising than his father in his efforts to create uniformity in the Church and State. More importantly, Charles, along with Laudian churchmen, believed recreations were essential to maintaining social and communal harmony and hierarchy. Their views were largely in line with the defenders of popular recreations who wrote during the reign of James I. However, Charles I went further in establishing his position on recreations as a *via media* by commissioning churchmen to defend the *Declaration of Sports* and Sunday recreations. But the second *Declaration of Sports* and the campaign to defend and enforce it paralleled Charles's more coercive religious policies. The policy

was meant to settle the disputes over recreations and silence opposition to them just like his efforts to create a new *via media* closer to Catholicism was meant to create unity within the Church of England. However, the fall of Charles's regime was the result of longstanding divisions in religion and society and Charles's aggressive policies on recreations and religion only made those divisions worse.

CONCLUSION

The publication of the second *Declaration of Sports* may have led to a revival of traditional festivity. It gave people the courage to partake in revels again. Some counties began to erect maypoles again after a long absence and ales were revived in some counties in the late 1630s.²⁵³ However, the second *Declaration of Sports* undoubtedly failed in its ultimate purpose of ending the conflict over recreations and gaining political loyalty to Charles I. The societal and religious differences of the 1630s gave way to armed conflict in the English Civil War. The seventeenth century historian of the Church of England, Thomas Fuller, claimed some moderate contemporaries thought the *Declaration of Sports* was a principle cause of the civil war.²⁵⁴

The *Declaration of Sports* did not last during the Civil War. Beginning in 1640 and during the early years of the war, members of Parliament voiced their displeasure with the *Declaration of Sports*, raising both religious and political concerns. Puritan MPs pushed for strict Sabbatarianism to be enforced. In May 1643, Parliament ordered all

²⁵³ Alistair Dougall, *The Devil's Book: Charles I, the Book of Sports and Puritanism in Tudor and Early Stuart England* (Exeter, UK: University of Exeter Press, 2011), 136-37.

²⁵⁴ Christopher Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England*, 2nd ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1967), 201.

copies of the *Book of Sports* to be burnt. Although popular recreations were banned on Sundays, some were used as symbols of defiance. The maypole became a symbol of the Royalist cause and a symbol of opposition to Parliamentarians. Maypoles became a rallying point for popular Royalist uprisings after the war.²⁵⁵ In the post-civil war years riots were touched off by suppression of popular recreations. In some instances, authorities feared that football matches were used as staging grounds for Royalist plotters.²⁵⁶

But the people had to wait until the reign of Charles II in the 1660s before the ban on popular recreations was lifted. Rural recreations were practiced more freely than ever in the century after the Restoration. Traditional sports were revived with football still providing a boisterous outlet for local solidarity.²⁵⁷

Even if recreations reappeared in the 1660s, James I's and Charles I's attempts to create a *via media* of sports in the first half of the seventeenth century failed. As has been demonstrated in this thesis and by other scholars, the *Declaration of Sports* caused further divisions in English society and in some ways intensified the debate over recreations. As to why the *via media* failed in sports is another matter. James I's attempts perhaps backfired because he failed to understand the coercive aspects of the *via media* and therefore did not put enough effort in to making a case for it. Charles I was engaged in a

²⁵⁵ Dougall, 148-50, 157.

²⁵⁶ David Underdown, *Revel, Riot, and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England, 1603-1660* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 261.

²⁵⁷ Underdown, 281.

fundamentally different project with more aggressive enforcement of the *via media*. His efforts to push the *via media* closer to Catholicism by linking his ecclesiastical policies with Laudianism only created more determined opposition from Puritans. His recreational policies simply followed the same pattern of more coercive enforcement that only further divided the country. The campaign to label opponents of recreations as extremists made reconciliation almost impossible. This leads to the possibility that the religious and societal differences between the two sides were simply too deep. The split between Laudians and Puritans may have been irrevocable as each side was unwilling to compromise or give ground on just about any issue. The Stuart kings' attempts to solve the conflict over recreations with the *Declaration of Sports* only split the sides further apart.

Fully understanding the reasons for the failure of the *via media* of sports is beyond the scope of this paper. However, it is undeniable that the conflict over recreations was a significant issue that contributed to the divisions in English society that led to civil war. What is important about the conflict over popular pastimes and Sunday recreations is that it was a confluence of societal, cultural, and religious issues. The conflicts over whether recreations should be allowed at all on Sundays and what kinds should be allowed involved people who argued for or against them on societal, cultural, or religious grounds. There were debates over the importance of recreations to village communities and whether they contributed to a harmonious and ordered society. Religious leaders argued over whether it was proper for good Christians to partake in them, culminating in Conformists and Laudians arguing their importance in bringing

people closer to church and therefore God. There are few if any other conflicts in pre-Civil War England that bring all these issues together.

What is also important about popular pastimes in this period is they allow us see points from multiple aspects of the pre-Civil War historiography. Like the Traditionalist arguments for the outbreak of the Civil War, there were long term social changes which created a perceived breakdown of society. Two distinct ideologies (Puritans and Laudians) each tried to address this breakdown by identifying the role recreations played in it. Puritans argued recreations contributed to the breakdown and Laudians argued recreations were a solution to the breakdown. Like the Revisionist position which focused on the importance of differing localities, the importance of recreations and how much threat they were under differed from place to place. This paper also demonstrates that Charles I mismanaged the recreations conflict, a common theme that the Revisionists emphasize as a reason for the Civil War. But there was also no revolutionary ideology at the heart of the debates over recreations (which goes against the Traditional approach). Each side had elements in their arguments with precedents from earlier eras of English and Christian history.

Overall, the conflict over popular pastimes came at a time of great change in England. The general rise in the English population in the sixteenth century to the early seventeenth century coincided with significant demographic changes which had profound economic, societal, and cultural effects. These changes led to a supposed breakdown in the social structure with fears of encroaching disorder and a loss of neighborliness. Both Puritans and the public defenders of recreations were concerned over threats to order. The Puritans believed recreations were a cause of the disorder. Many argued that pastimes

only distracted the people from their duties to God and could lead to social upheaval. The defenders of recreations believed pastimes could solve the problems of disorder by bringing communities closer together in harmony and protecting the social structure provided they were done in moderation.

James I became the first monarch to truly insert himself into the middle of the conflict over recreations and solve it. He wished to protect popular pastimes and all the benefits they provided the common people. By issuing the *Declaration of Sports* James attempted to establish his authority to decide the issues surrounding Sunday recreations. However, the *Declaration of Sports* was also in line with James's ecclesiastical policies of establishing a *via media*. The declaration was meant to establish a middle ground on recreations between two supposed extreme positions of total elimination of recreations and unrestrained disorderly use of recreations. James's policy on recreations also included elements of coercive moderation to enforce his *via media* of sports.

James I's efforts ultimately failed to appease the opponents of recreations leading his son and successor Charles I to reissue the *Declaration of Sports*. Charles I's policies on recreations largely mirrored those of James I but were pursued more aggressively. Charles's government made greater efforts to prosecute churchmen who refused to publish or read the *Declaration of Sports*, even if these efforts were infrequent and uneven from place to place. Charles also made a greater effort to publicly defend the declaration through a literary campaign. Many writers and churchmen not only wrote defenses of recreations and the *Book of Sports* but exaggerated and smeared the Puritan position to make them seem more extreme while also creating a false position of unrestrained license to make their position appear moderate. Perhaps most importantly,

Charles I attempted to shift the ecclesiastical *via media* by combining it with the practices and ideals of Laudianism, a policy which only further emboldened his enemies and further divided the country on the road to civil war.

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