That This Edict is Sacrilegious and Blasphemous against God

Now, to begin with, let me say first of all that this edict of the queen's is sacrilegious and blasphemous against God our Lord, for in it she urges her ecclesiastical subjects that there should be pious ministers in the churches, who by their teachings and the examples of their lives should preserve the people in the profession of the Gospel. I ask, what Gospel is this, in which the people of England are to be preserved? Is this the Gospel that Christ our Redeemer left us? The one the Holy Spirit inspired and dictated? The one the Evangelists wrote? The one the Apostles spread? The one the holy Doctors proclaimed? The one the faithful embraced? The one countless hosts of redoubtable martyrs defended with their blood? The one the Roman Church from Saint Peter to Clement viii, now living, has preserved and taught for nearly sixteen hundred years? Is it the Gospel kept by all nations, provinces, and kingdoms across the universe to bear the name of Catholic? Is it the Gospel that until Henry viii all the Christian princes and kings of England have followed with such devotion and piety? The one that has been confirmed by so many glorious miracles in every age and corner of the world? Is it that Gospel for which so many knights and lords have left royal palaces and cast aside pomp and luxury, abandoning the cities to fill the wastes and deserts, converting them into gardens, into Paradise itself? For which the monasteries have been stuffed, like beehives, with a numberless number of highborn maidens, infinite citizens of heaven, who have lived the life of the angels in a mortal body? Is it the Gospel that preaches to us the cross, penance, austerity of life, the mortification of our passions, disdain for the world, desire and care for eternity, obedience to God and his ministers, chastity, humility, patience, gentleness, and all other superlative, divine virtues that Jesus Christ taught us through his instruction and his example? This is the Gospel of Jesus Christ our Savior, this the one his masters teach us, these his fruits. But the one that now flourishes in England is the gospel of Calvin and of Satan his master, founded upon incest and the sensuality of King Henry, who, while his lawful wife yet lived, married his whore of a daughter, so filthy and sinful that the king himself had her beheaded by public judgment. It is a gospel taught in England by

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1 Ippolito Aldobrandini was elected Pope Clement viii (1592–1605) on February 2, 1592.
Bucer and Peter Martyr, two notorious apostates, and the dregs and disgraces of the religious orders, nurtured and supported by Bucer’s disciple John Calvin, a Picard by nation, a man without faith, without law, without God, exiled for his crimes, whose teaching was pestilential, his life abominable, and his death frightful and repugnant. The sect is flaming pitch and hellish wildfire, which in a few years has scorched and consumed so many provinces and kingdoms. It is a gospel that strips goodness from God, making him the author of our guilt and sin; free will from men; the sacraments from the Church; merit from good works; efficacy and virtue from divine grace. Blasphemous against our Redeemer, harmful to the redeemed, ignoring the pits of hell and opening the way to every sin and corruption. It is a gospel that has taken innumerable monks and nuns from the monasteries and stained them with hateful baseness and vice, teaching them to lie, perjure themselves, feign, and dissemble, and with a false sweetness and genteel hypocrisy to show themselves first as sheep, and afterwards, looking to their own interests, like bloodthirsty wolves to dismember, slay, drink the blood, and destroy the sheep and herd of the Lord. How many treasons and rebellions has this new gospel of yours raised up in the world since it began? How many cities has it desolated? How many provinces has it ruined? How many kingdoms has it set aflame? How much blood has it spilled?

2 Robert Persons described Martin Bucer and Peter Martyr as “degenerate apostates from monastic orders [sceleratissimi monachorum Apostatae].” Philopater, 48.

3 Though it might be stretching matters to call Calvin Bucer’s discipulo, Bruce Gordon does call the Alsatian reformer “Calvin’s model churchman, and the greatest influence on his formation as a minister and teacher.” Calvin was not, in point of fact, exiled from France, but rather chose to flee in late 1534, amid rising religious tensions. Calvin’s death (probably septic shock developed from kidney stones) was quite peaceful, a circumstance seized upon by his followers as a sign of having “died well.” Bruce Gordon, Calvin (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 42, 54, 333.

4 There was a long tradition of English Catholic attacks on Calvin, including allegations of a criminal past and an ignominious end: see Peter Marshall, “John Calvin and the English Catholics, c. 1565–1640,” HJ 53, no. 4 (December 2010): 849–70.

5 These are some of the favorite charges Catholic controversialists hurled against evangelical belief—charges not entirely without justice. In Alexandra Walsham’s felicitious phrase, Calvinists in particular were forced to “elaborate theological gymnastics” to escape the consequences of evangelical doctrines of predestination. Peter Martyr himself admitted that God was “after some sort [...] the cause of those things which afterward be naughtilie doone.” Walsham, Providence, 14.

6 In the 1593 and 1594 editions, these question marks were exclamation points; the passage thus originally read: “How many treasons and rebellions this new Gospel of yours has raised