

**GEORGE GORDON, SIXTH EARL OF HUNTLY
AND THE
POLITICS OF THE COUNTER-REFORMATION
IN SCOTLAND, 1581-1595**

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This thesis is lovingly dedicated to my husband, Moray C. Grant.

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Over the years that it has taken me to research and to complete this thesis there have been numerous people who have contributed to its development in a wide variety of ways. Upon reflection, I am impressed and humbled by the kindness of spirit and generosity of support that has been bestowed upon me, but most of all I am eternally grateful to have had the privilege to have known and worked with such people. I have had the pleasure to interact with a range of scholars, from budding first years to postgraduates to established lecturers and professors, and have learned from them all and deeply appreciate the generous sharing of knowledge that takes place within the academic community. Amongst these people, however, there are several who have significantly contributed to this thesis and to my personal development. To them, I owe a distinct debt of gratitude.

I have perhaps been more fortunate than most postgraduates in that I have had three supervisors over the course of this thesis and have benefited greatly from each one. I have known Professor Michael Lynch since my third year at university when his Honours course on the Scottish Reformation instilled in me both an abiding interest in the period and an appreciation of the finer details of academic scholarship and research. He encouraged me when I first approached him about embarking on doctoral research and, upon becoming my supervisor, has been a constant support over the years. I am grateful to him not only for his supervision, but also for providing me with a number of opportunities to widen my horizons, most especially through undergraduate teaching for which I discovered a passion. Professor Lynch has also been most helpful in assisting me in securing funding for this thesis, without which research could not have been undertaken. When I began to encounter serious medical difficulties which threatened my ability to complete my research, his support and efforts on my behalf were unflagging thus obtaining for me the various suspensions, interruptions of study and extensions which have enabled me to finally complete.

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Dr Julian Goodare has since become my primary supervisor and has been the person principally responsible for seeing this thesis through to completion, but his interest and support began long before. There have been times over the past years when my medical condition deteriorated to the point that I was not sure whether I would be physically capable of finishing, but the desire and will to do so never wavered. Dr Goodare helped me turn this desire into a reality and my gratitude for his endeavours on my behalf knows no bounds. With Professor Lynch, he pursued various avenues to obtain from the university the time required for me to complete, despite my medical problems. And, just as importantly, he consistently expressed his belief in me, my research topic and my ability to complete. He has been a kind, compassionate supervisor who has generously shared his knowledge and skills, often above and beyond the call of duty. Without his support and unflinching assistance, this thesis would be a shadow of itself.

I met Dr Sharon Adams on my first day beginning research for this thesis and this acquaintance turned into a deep friendship, for which I consider myself truly privileged. Dr Adams is a person of remarkable intellect and equally remarkable generosity. Our long discussions over the years have played a formative part in my ideas and theories about sixteenth century Scotland. In addition to research, we have also shared our interests in teaching and I

happily recall the many hours we spent together developing tutorials, lectures, Open Learning and Summer School courses and, perhaps best of all, team-teaching. When I became seriously ill, her long visits in hospital and unswerving support helped make the unbearable bearable. Although her own research interests differ, she was always keen to discuss my research and kept alive the hope that I would complete even in the starkest of circumstances. I am thankful for her unstinting efforts on my behalf and for the time and care that she has taken in reading drafts of various chapters, discussing research or writing and providing a wealth of moral support.

Another academic colleague who has since become a true friend is Dr Kate Day, whom I met whilst undertaking part-time work in the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Assessment. In many ways, Dr Day became my mentor and I am very grateful for the many things which I have learned from her. My academic development, both in terms of research and teaching, would have been the poorer without her guidance. Dr Day has been a bastion of academic, physical and emotional support over the period since I became ill. Her visits to hospital and willingness to help me navigate the difficult path that lay ahead made the difference between success and failure for me. Her support and friendship were instrumental in the realisation of my goal of completion and I am deeply grateful for her assistance.

I would be remiss if I did not recognise the efforts on my behalf of the following physicians. Without their expertise, this thesis would never have been possible: Dr Graham S. Gordon, who is the epitome of a GP; Dr John Plevris, who persevered over five years until he reached a diagnosis; and Professor Ian Broom, who made my treatment conditional on completion of my thesis!

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I cannot finish without a personal note of acknowledgement to my husband, Moray C. Grant. From when we first met, he has been enthusiastic and encouraging about my interest in Scottish History and has done all that he possibly could to enable my research. When crisis touched our lives, he never lost sight of what my research meant to me and even under the most adverse circumstances did all within his power to help me realise my dream, nothing was too much or too little to ask of him. He has nursed me and loved me throughout the darkest of times and without him I would have lost the will to survive. Without him, I would never have completed. It is therefore to him that this thesis is dedicated.

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis has been composed by me, the work is entirely my own and that no part of this thesis has been published in its present form.

Signed.....

25 February 2010

ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of George Gordon, sixth earl of Huntly, from July 1581 to March 1595, analysing the role he played in the confessional politics of the period (both national and international) and how a strong Catholic magnate affected the balance of power and wider policy decisions in Scotland. The thesis is a narrative, with commentary on the political events of the reign of James VI, including the relationship Huntly had with James VI and the wider repercussions thereof. Huntly returned to Scotland from France in July 1581, becoming a courtier and an adherent of Esmé Stewart, duke of Lennox. He served a political apprenticeship to Lennox and was exposed to covert Catholic politicking, as well as to the nascent Jesuit mission in Scotland. After James was captured by the Ruthven Raiders in August 1582, Huntly entered politics in his own right, becoming influential in the opposition to the Ruthven Regime. Huntly assisted in enforcing the regime change when James escaped from the Ruthven lords in June 1583, his loyalty to the king winning James's trust and close friendship – the dividends of which he reaped throughout his life. Huntly initially supported the new administration under James Stewart, earl of Arran and assiduously attended to his duties in both the locality and the central government. Following Arran's fall in November 1585, Huntly deliberately distanced himself from the Court and the new Anglophile government. He opposed the Anglo-Scottish treaty which was concluded in July 1586 and worked hard to counter the rise of John Maitland of Thirlestane. For the first time, Huntly made contact with the European Counter-Reformation in April and May 1586. The period June 1587 to April 1589 was marked by faction fighting between Huntly and Maitland, who were both instrumental in James's pursuit of diametrically opposed policies. The discovery of Huntly's covert correspondence with Spain in February 1589 made his Catholic politicking public, subsequently colouring the conflict between Maitland and Huntly with confessional politics. Events escalated until Huntly mustered troops on the field of Brig o' Dee near Aberdeen. Although Huntly refused to meet the king on the field, Maitland's victory was only partial. Brig o' Dee was not the manifestation of

the politics of the Counter-Reformation in Scotland, but the product of years of faction fighting between Maitland and Huntly. The period of January 1590 to March 1595 was characterised by Huntly's continuing influence at Court with marked favour from James and his bloodfeud with James Stewart, second earl of Moray. Huntly used his twin centres of influence, the Court and power in the region, to fight a vicious and protracted bloodfeud with Moray and his faction. The interception of the Spanish Blanks at the end of 1592 brought confessional politics to bear on a purely secular bloodfeud. Political agitation from the Kirk and Stewarts caused James to commission an army under Archibald Campbell, seventh earl of Argyll to pursue Huntly in October 1594. The result was the battle of Glenlivet between Huntly and Argyll which came to represent the fight against Catholicism, although its root cause was Huntly's bloodfeud with Moray and the Stewarts. When James later raised his own army and marched north against Huntly, the earl refused to face James on the field and in March 1595 he voluntarily went into exile abroad. This ended the most active phase of Huntly's participation in national and international politics; after his political rehabilitation in 1597, he no longer played an influential role in the king's domestic or foreign policies. Overall, the thesis argues that Huntly needs to be understood as a political faction leader, whose Catholicism was a tool he employed to widen his political influence but not the determinant of all his actions.

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CONVENTIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Money: All sums of money are in pounds (£s) Scots unless otherwise stated. A merk was 13s. 4d., two-thirds of a £ Scots. In 1567, the English £ (Sterling) was equal to about £4.10s. Scots at par, and the French crown to £1.6s.8d. Scots; by 1601, they were worth £12 Scots and £3.6s.8d. Scots respectively. The Scottish currency was pegged to the English in 1603 and from then until 1625 there were no major fluctuations in currency values.

Dates: These are given in old style (i.e. Julian Calendar), but with the year beginning on 1 January.

Style: Contemporary documents are quoted in their original spelling. Contractions are expanded and modern capitalisation and punctuation are used. Quotations from *Calendar of State Papers* are from the text as it appears in print, with words in double inverted commas representing *ipissima verba* while the remainder are a précis (which are often word for word in *CSP Scot.*).

References: Titles of secondary works are given in full on their first citation, thereafter shortened. *RMS* is cited by document number, all other citations are to page numbers unless otherwise stated.

The following abbreviations are used:

Add. MS	Additional MS (British Library, London).
Adv. MS	Advocates' MS (National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh).
APS	<i>The Acts of Parliament of Scotland</i> , 12 vols., ed. T. Thomson and C. Innes, (Edinburgh, 1814-75).
BL	British Library, London

- Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland* K.M. Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland, 1573-1625: Violence, Justice and Politics in an Early Modern Society* (Edinburgh, 1986).
- BUK* *Booke of the Universall Kirk: Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Kirk of Scotland*, 3 vols., ed. T. Thomson (Bannatyne Club, 1839-45).
- Calderwood, *History* David Calderwood, *History of the Kirk of Scotland*, 8 vols., eds. T. Thomson and D. Laing (Wodrow Society, 1842-9).
- CBP* *Calendar of Letters and Papers Relating to the Affairs of the Borders of England and Scotland, 1560-1603*, 2 vols., ed. J. Bain (London, 1894-6).
- Colville, *Letters* *Letters of Mr John Colville, 1582-1603*, ed. D. Laing (Bannatyne Club, 1858).
- Cotton Cottonian Manuscripts (British Library, London).
- Courcelles, *Despatches* *Extracts from the Despatches of M. Courcelles, 1586-1587*, ed. R. Bell (Bannatyne Club, 1828).
- CSP Dom.* *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reigns of Edward VI, Mary, Elizabeth, and James I*, 12 vols., eds. R. Lemon and M.A. Everett Green (London, 1856-72).
- CSP For., Eliz.,* *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign Series, of the Reign of Elizabeth*, 23 vols., eds. J. Stevenson et al. (London, 1863-1950).
- CSP Ireland* *Calendar of State Papers Relating to Ireland*, 24 vols., eds. H.C. Hamilton et al. (London, 1860-1912).

- CSP Scot.* *Calendar of State Papers Relating to Scotland and Mary, Queen of Scots, 1547-1603*, 13 vols., eds. J. Bain et al. (Edinburgh, 1898-1969).
- CSP Spain* *Calendar of Letters and State Papers Relating to English Affairs, preserved principally in the Archives of Simancas*, 4 vols., ed. M.A.S. Hume (London, 1892-9).
- CSP Venice* *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts Relating to English Affairs, existing in the Archives and Collections of Venice, and in other libraries of Northern Italy*, 13 vols., ed. H.F. Brown et al. (London, 1864-1947).
- Forbes-Leith, *Narratives of Scottish Catholics* *Narratives of Scottish Catholics Under Mary Stuart and James VI*, ed. W. Forbes-Leith, S.J. (London, 1889).
- Gordon, *History of Sutherland* Sir R. Gordon, *A Genealogical History of the Earldom of Sutherland* (London, 1813).
- Gray, *Letters and Papers* *Letters and Papers Relating to Patrick, Master of Gray*, ed. T. Thomson (Bannatyne Club, 1835).
- Hamilton Papers* *The Hamilton Papers. Letters and Papers Illustrating the Political Relations of England and Scotland in the Sixteenth Century, formerly in the Possession of the Duke of Hamilton, now in the British Museum*, 2 vols., ed. J. Bain (Edinburgh, 1890-2).
- HKJVI* *The Historie and Life of King James the Sext: being an Account of the Affairs of Scotland, from the Year 1566, to the Year 1596, with a Short Continuation to the*

- HMC Historical Manuscripts Commission.
- IR *Innes Review*.
- Lee, John Maitland of Thirlestane M. Lee, Jr, *John Maitland of Thirlestane and the Foundation of Stewart Despotism in Scotland* (Princeton, 1959).
- Melville, *Memoirs* Sir James Melville of Halhill, *Memoirs of his Own Life*, ed. T. Thomson (Bannatyne Club, 1827).
- Moysie, *Memoirs* David Moysie, *Memoirs of the Affairs of Scotland, 1577-1603*, ed. J. Dennistoun (Maitland Club, 1830).
- NLS National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.
- NRA National Register of Archives, Edinburgh.
- NA National Archives, London.
- NAS National Archives of Scotland, Edinburgh.
- ODNB *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 60 vols., ed. Lawrence Goldman (Oxford, 2004).
- RMS *Registrum Magni Sigilli Regnum Scotorum (Register of the Great Seal of Scotland)*, 11 vols., eds. J.M. Thomson et al. (Edinburgh, 1882-1914).
- Rogers, *Estimate* C. Rogers (ed.) *Estimate of the Scottish Nobility During the Minority of James the Sixth* (London, 1873).
- Row, *History* John Row, *History of the Kirk of Scotland from the Year 1558 to August 1637*, ed. D. Laing (Wodrow Society, 1812).
- RPC *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland, First Series*, 14 vols., eds. J.H.

- Burton and D. Masson (Edinburgh, 1877-98).
- SCA Scottish Catholic Archives, Edinburgh.
- SHR *Scottish Historical Review*.
- SHS Scottish History Society.
- SP State Papers Collection, National Archives, London.
- Spalding Miscellany* *The Miscellany of the Spalding Club*, 5 vols. (Spalding Club, 1844-52).
- Spottiswoode, *History* John Spottiswoode, *History of the Church of Scotland*, 3 vols., eds. M. Russell and M. Napier (Spottiswoode Society, 1847-51).
- Teulet, *Relations* *Relations Politiques de la France et de l'Espagne avec l'Ecosse au XVI siècle: papiers d'etat, pièces et documents inédits*, 5 vols., ed. A. Teulet (Paris, 1862).
- Warrender Papers* *The Warrender Papers*, 2 vols., ed. A.I. Cameron (Scottish History Society, 1931-2).
- Wormald, *Lords and Men* J. Wormald, *Lords and Men in Scotland: Bonds of Manrent, 1442-1603* (Edinburgh, 1985).

INTRODUCTION

Born in 1562, the year in which his grandfather died on the battlefield of Corrichie, George Gordon became the sixth earl of Huntly in 1576. Huntly enjoyed a stable minority during which he was educated abroad. Upon his return in 1581, his alignment with the Lennox administration and the relationship he forged with the young King James VI would prove pivotal in shaping the remainder of his political career. Over a short period, Huntly consolidated his power in both the centre and the locality, with official titles that included Deputy Lord Chamberlain, Captain of the Guard and Lieutenant and Justiciar of the North. The overt and marked favour of the king garnered him not only enhanced position and power within Scotland, but this prominence, along with his open Catholicism, brought him to the forefront of Protestant attention – and suspicion. From 1587 onwards, Elizabethan officials and the Scottish Kirk identified him as the leader of the Scottish Catholics and the Counter-Reformation movement in Scotland. It is within this capacity as a powerful Catholic magnate and the king's favourite that Huntly has been most commonly identified by both contemporaries and modern historians alike.

Subsequent chapters will demonstrate that both contemporary and modern interpretations of the earl's role in the politics of the Counter-Reformation in Scotland have been limited. Contemporary bias does, however, provide valuable insights into the constraints of the political and ecclesiastical environment of the period and how the perceptions formed of Huntly by his contemporaries, accurate or otherwise, influenced not only their actions towards him, but, in turn, those taken by himself and James as well. Huntly's

actual objectives differed from what Protestants perceived his faith to entail. Once we move beyond the label of ‘Catholic lord’, highly revealing patterns regarding the exercise of noble power and the overlap between national and international politics begin to appear.

The primary objectives of the Counter-Reformation was to return Protestant nations to the Catholic fold. England, the most powerful Protestant state, was its foremost target. The politics of the Counter-Reformation, however, often coalesced with national politics and bids for power by individual factions. Catholic agents, ranging from mission priests to powerful Catholics such as the Guises in France to King Philip II of Spain and the Pope himself, were all intent to utilise whatever resources presented themselves to further the objectives of the Counter-Reformation. Scotland was ideally placed to further both their political and ecclesiastical aims (particularly in relation to England) and a powerful Catholic noble such as Huntly was seen by Catholics and Protestants alike as an important instrument in undermining the political and ecclesiastical establishments and returning both Scotland and England to Catholicism. Huntly would exploit these perceptions, but would not necessarily share them.

Huntly’s actions may have been taken from a purely domestic, secular or factional position, but because of his religion and the general awareness, as well as fear, of the objectives and activities of the Counter-Reformation, Huntly’s decisions were typically attributed to confessional politics and the wider European Catholic agenda rather than to national politics. Huntly’s overriding political objective was to increase his own power and influence, both regionally and nationally. In order to do so, he used whatever resource

was available. It was in 1586 when he realised that his current resources were insufficient to successfully oppose John Maitland of Thirlestane that he turned to Catholic politics and entered into negotiations with the duke of Guise and Philip II. For Huntly, Counter-Reformation politics provided him with additional financial resources and the foreign support which countered Maitland's pro-English policy. Huntly's contacts with European Catholic politics were primarily motivated by domestic factional politics: his desire to have Maitland replaced as Chancellor and to have greater influence in the formation of national and international policies. Huntly supported the wider European Catholic agenda and would have welcomed an ecclesiastical change in Scotland, but it was not his primary motivation in engaging with the powers behind the Counter-Reformation and he would not risk his national position in order to return Scotland to Catholicism. When forced to choose, Huntly would outwardly conform – as he did in 1588 and in 1597.

The final ingredient in the plot was provided by the king himself: the unique relationship that James had with Huntly and his wife, Henrietta Stewart (both jointly and individually), further muddied the waters and blurred the distinctions between factional politics and the politics of religion. The king's knowledge of Huntly's Catholic politicking, his protection of the earl and his own engagement in Catholic politics in an attempt to protect his realm from Spanish predation and to further his claim in the English succession further obscured the distinctions between religion and politics.

Huntly has often been described as a royal favourite by both contemporary and modern writers. The periods where royal favour was most commented upon by contemporaries were in 1589, especially following the discovery of

Huntly's Spanish correspondence, and in the early 1590s during the course of his bloodfeud with James Stewart, second earl of Moray and latterly his supporters. The king's overt favour to Huntly contributed to the earl's negative reputation in historiography, particularly following the lenience meted out to Huntly following the Brig o' Dee affair in 1589 and most especially in 1592 after the murder of Moray.¹ Coupled with the Kirk's belief in Huntly's militant Catholicism, he was portrayed as a powerful noble with a large armed retinue who high-handedly dealt with his opponents, secure in the king's favour and knowing there would be few repercussions from his actions.

The context of this royal favour, however, is key to understanding the relationship between James and Huntly. Although outwith these much remarked upon periods Huntly was a close companion to the king, it is important to note that when favour shown to Huntly became an issue worthy of note the end result was usually tangibly increased political influence for the earl and a decisive edge over his antagonists. Royal favour was not blindly bestowed upon him but was often a definite means to an end. Unlike some other 'favourites' like, for instance, Alexander Lindsay, Lord Spynie, there was more about Huntly that the king valued than his companionship. Not only had Huntly consistently earned the king's trust, beginning in 1583 when he assisted in James's escape from the Ruthven lords, but the earl provided the king with a valued means to pursue his Euro-Catholic policy in which James sought to capitalise on the concerns of the European Catholics regarding Philip II in securing his own succession to the English throne. The king rewarded his service with marked favour within the context of domestic

¹ See Chapters Five and Six below.

politics, but this too served James's own ends, for a strong Huntly acted as a decisive balance in both factional politics and ecclesiastical concerns. For James, Huntly was a trusted, personal friend who was also a valuable political player in both national and international politics and for this he was amply rewarded.

This thesis is not a conventional study of Huntly as a magnate, systematically documenting and analysing the diverse aspects of a Jacobean noble, comparing his role in the centre and the locality.² Instead, discussion of the locality is limited and incorporated only when it is relevant to the wider discussion.³ Moreover, this thesis analyses the role Huntly played in the confessional politics of the period, both national and international and how a strong Catholic magnate affected the balance of power and wider policy decisions, as well as his relationship with the king and the wider repercussions thereof. It is an attempt to understand the complex interplay between politics and religion and how secular motivations could be used to manipulate a religious ideal or how confessional politics could obscure secular objectives.

² For examples see R.G. Macpherson, 'Francis Stewart, Fifth Earl Bothwell, c.1562-1612: Lordship and Politics in Jacobean Scotland' (unpublished University of Edinburgh PhD thesis, 1998); J.E.A. Dawson, *The Politics of Religion in the Age of Mary, Queen of Scots: the Earl of Argyll and the Struggle for Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge, 2002); P.D. Anderson, *Robert Stewart, Earl of Orkney, Lord of Shetland, 1533-1593* (Edinburgh, 1982); P.D. Anderson, *Black Patie: the Life and Times of Patrick Stewart, Earl of Orkney, Lord of Shetland* (Edinburgh, 1992).

³ For discussions which include Huntly within the context of the locality see A. White, 'The Menzies era: sixteenth-century politics', in E.P. Dennison *et al.* (eds.), *Aberdeen before 1800: a New History* (East Linton, 2002), 224-37; B. McLennon, 'Presbyterianism Challenged: A Study of Catholicism and Episcopacy in the Northeast of Scotland, 1560-1650', 2 vols. (unpublished University of Aberdeen PhD thesis, 1977); A. White, 'Religion, Politics and Society in Aberdeen, 1543-1593' (unpublished University of Edinburgh PhD thesis, 1985).

Huntly's contact with the Counter-Reformation and his role in Catholic politics changed over time from passive observation to active participation and back again. He was a Catholic noble who in 1586 became active in the European Counter-Reformation, primarily hoping to use the resources of this movement to promote his domestic political ambitions. The king also sought to benefit from the earl's involvement in Counter-Reformation politics, using him as a means to promote both his own international agenda and as a balance in domestic Scottish factions. This is thus to a considerable extent a study of the relationship between James and Huntly, their political ambitions and how Catholic politics was used by both an earl and his king in order to promote their own political objectives in Scotland from 1581, when Huntly's and James's first contact with the Scottish mission occurred, to 1595, which was the effective end of Huntly's international politicking.

Following Huntly's return in 1596 from his exile on the Continent, there is no evidence during the remainder of his life of any involvement in European politics. Indeed, from 1596 to 1599 Huntly's main sphere of activity and place of residence was the north. In 1599 Huntly was elevated to a marquissate⁴ and appointed to the Privy Council but his role in national politics was minimal. His interest appears to have shifted to consolidating his northern powerbase and domains, with increasing architectural interests and a marked rise in land conveyancing. This is the period, for example, when extensive renovations and building works were undertaken at Huntly Castle. Although until his death in 1636 Huntly still periodically attended Privy Council and after 1603 promoted James's unionist position, he spent longer periods warded for his religion as the power of the Kirk grew and the king's favour

⁴ NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/13/2/4; NAS Gordon Muniments GD 44/13/2/8.

grew more distant. Huntly's return to Scotland in 1596, therefore, was the effective end of an active, influential national and international political career.

At the end of the sixteenth century, it is difficult to separate religion from politics for the two were inextricably intertwined, with religious adherences seemingly dictating political allegiances. Confessional politics often coloured interpretations of events and overly simplified contemporary accounts. There is even a certain laziness in secondary accounts, prone to adopt easy labels such as the 'Catholic earls' when referring to coalitions which encompassed more than religious aims. In closer examination of the evidence, it becomes clear that political motivations were much more complicated and that there was not a clear Protestant-Catholic dichotomy. Factional compositions were often cross-religious and it was unusual for men, either Protestant or Catholic, to be motivated to act from religious conviction alone.

Huntly was a Catholic who undoubtedly embraced his faith and supported the Scottish mission through sheltering priests, hampering the Kirk and enabling Catholicism to more than survive in his region. But he, and other Catholic nobles, were only prepared to support the mission in a limited capacity, unwilling to be put to any expenditure or to pursue political avenues on its behalf. The Scottish mission was predominantly evangelical; unlike Jesuits in England, the mission priests in Scotland rarely engaged in politics. The term 'Counter-Reformation' at the end of the sixteenth century is loaded, implying a concerted political and ecclesiastical effort to overturn both state

and religion. Employing this definition, it is indeed questionable as to whether there was a Counter-Reformation in Scotland.

Huntly had very little contact with the Counter-Reformation in this context and in 1586 when he entered the political spectrum of the Counter-Reformation it was once again within a very limited framework. However, Huntly was not adverse to using his religion to achieve a set political outcome. His contacts with Spain, for example, yielded pecuniary rewards which he did not hesitate to use in order to promote his political objectives within Scotland and advance his own position. James as well was not adverse to taking advantage of Catholic politics in attempts to persuade Elizabeth that he was not entirely dependent upon her, to protect his realm from Spanish predation or to counter an aggressive Kirk, but this does not imply that either man embraced the ethos of the Counter-Reformation. Huntly and James often used Catholicism to further their individual political objectives and it is important when analysing their actions and motivations not to discount this fact. This is not to deny that Huntly would not have been pleased with an outcome which also benefited his religion, but evidence indicating that his primary motivations were predominantly religious is elusive.

A significant strand running through this thesis is a commentary on the politics of the reign of James VI, in order to understand the nature of his relationship with Huntly and Catholic politics. Huntly's relationships with his king and his religion were defined by national and international politics; as there has been no modern systematic political study of the reign of James VI and little research on post-Reformation Catholicism in Scotland,⁵ a wider

⁵ Perhaps the most comprehensive political analysis of this part of James's reign is still by M. Lee, Jr, *John Maitland of Thirlestane and the Foundation of Stewart Despotism in Scotland*

discussion of both is therefore incorporated in order to elucidate Huntly's role in each sphere. When placed within the wider political context, the parallel political development of James and Huntly emerges, as well as a significant degree of co-dependency.

The primary sources consulted in the course of research for this thesis have been varied, the majority falling within the categories of diplomatic correspondence, family papers and various collections of letters, papers and narrative histories of the period. Perhaps the richest source of information has been Spanish, Venetian and English State Papers (Scotland, Borders, Foreign, Domestic and Ireland). The correspondence of English ambassadors, Border wardens and their informants provides valuable insights into the state of Scotland, from domestic politics to international relations. It also casts light on the relations between James and his nobles, the changing factions and their objectives, royal favour and the dominance of particular individuals, as well as the condition of the Kirk. Although gossip and erroneous information is also prevalent in the documents, the perspectives of the English correspondents and their allies are an important aspect of this source.

(Princeton, 1959). With regard to the international dimension, a much greater understanding of the nature of the relationship between Scotland and Spain has been contributed by C. Sáenz-Cambra, 'Scotland and Philip II, 1580-1598: Politics, Religion, Diplomacy and Lobbying' (unpublished University of Edinburgh PhD thesis, 2003) and the elusive role of the Jesuits in Scotland has been clarified by M. Yellowlees, '*So strange a monster as a Jesuiste*': *The Society of Jesus in Sixteenth-Century Scotland* (Isle of Colonsay, 2003). Other relatively recent and welcome contributions have been R.G. Macpherson, 'Francis Stewart, Fifth Earl Bothwell, c.1562-1612: Lordship and Politics in Jacobean Scotland' (unpublished University of Edinburgh PhD thesis, 1998); A. Juhala, 'The Household and Court of James VI of Scotland' (unpublished University of Edinburgh PhD thesis, 2000); J. Goodare and M. Lynch (eds.), *The Reign of James VI* (East Linton, 2000); K.M. Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland, 1573-1625: Violence, Justice and Politics in Early Modern Society* (Edinburgh, 1986). These citations are examples of recent leading books and theses; relevant journal articles will be cited within the thesis where relevant.

The English were keen to protect their amity with Scotland and the state of religion in Scotland for they were very much aware of the potential threat that the country could pose to English security. The interests of France and Spain in Scotland and James's overtures to European Catholic political leaders, such as the duke of Guise and Philip II of Spain, were carefully noted and not only watched, but action was often taken to precipitate anything which would threaten England. English security consciousness also meant that Scottish Catholics were closely observed, their actions being scrutinised and faithfully reported and suspicions regarding them and their relationships with James and Continental Catholics raised. The mission priests in Scotland, both Jesuit and secular, were also closely watched, the political implications of their presence in Scotland being made clear to the men reporting on Scotland for the English administration.

Huntly figures heavily in English State Papers because he fell within several categories perceived as a threat to English interests: a strong, influential noble who was consistently noted as hostile to England, firstly classified as conservative and Francophile, latterly as part of the Spanish faction; a leading Catholic who had a high profile at Court; he was overtly favoured by the king with little repercussions for seemingly rebellious activities; he was in active correspondence with Spain and, according to English intelligence, willing to facilitate Spanish action against England. English State Papers is an important source about Huntly's role in the dynamics of Scottish national politics and international relations, with the fears about Huntly revealing as much about his role as his actual actions. Spanish State Papers is an equally important source in that it documents the nature of Huntly's contact with

Spain and sheds light on both Huntly's and Spain's intentions and objectives in maintaining that contact.

Collections of family papers in the National Archives of Scotland were another valuable source. Collections such as Breadalbane (GD 112), Mackintosh (GD 176), Hamilton MSS (GD 406), Abercairny (GD 24), Leven and Melville (GD 26), Lothian (GD40) and Forbes (GD 52) were useful in ascertaining affairs on both a national and regional level. These papers covered diverse topics, ranging from royal letters and commissions, bonds and land agreements to miscellaneous correspondence. The Warrender Papers (GD 1/371) were a particularly valuable source, containing narratives and chronicles of events in the period important to Huntly and correspondence with interesting marginalia. Unfortunately, only limited access was granted to the privately held Moray Muniments.

The Gordon Castle Muniments (GD 44) contains a large collection of papers relevant to the period under research, the vast majority of these relating to land conveyancing (sasines, charters, tacks, teinds, wadsetts and patronages). These plentiful documents would be a treasure trove for a study of Huntly's regional land management. Unfortunately, later sixteenth century personal correspondence is missing from the collection; archivists have posited that it may have been lost when the family's seat was relocated to England. A collection of Huntly's bonds of friendship, manrent and maintenance proved to be an instrumental source for this thesis, although there appear to be gaps in the mid to later 1590s. Interspersed amongst the land conveyancing documents were assorted documents of interest, such as royal commissions of justiciary and lieutenancy, the appointment of Huntly as Vice-Chamberlain

for life, legal disputes that Huntly had with Moray, miscellaneous papers regarding the Spey fishings, a remission under the Great Seal for the battle of Glenlivet (2 April 1603), a £6,000 pension for Huntly's eldest son (12 August 1617), a request by James for Huntly to accompany Queen Anna to London (8 April 1603) and the marriage contract between Archibald Campbell, seventh earl of Argyll's daughter and Lord George Gordon (6 December 1609). The Gordon Muniments also contained several manuscript histories of the Gordons, for example a Latin history by Robert Gordon of Straloch covering 1588 to 1774.

The Scottish Catholic Archives, although housing a small collection of documents relevant to the 1580s and 1590s, contains a number of documents relating to the Scottish mission, including commentaries on the state of Scotland, evaluations of Scottish Catholics, discussion concerning the state of Catholicism in Scotland and mission politics. An important collection of papers concerning Colonel William Sempill shed light on Spanish interests in Scotland and James's contacts with Sempill and Spain. A wealth of documents in the British Library were of import to the research for this thesis. These documents were varied, covering a range of topics from narrative histories and chronicles, intelligence regarding Scotland, miscellaneous correspondence, commentaries on Scottish politics and events in Scotland to concerns regarding Scottish Catholics and European Catholic connections. Whilst the British Library was valuable concerning national and international aspects of the period, Aberdeen City and Grampian Regional Archives proved instrumental in providing documents which were useful in evaluating Huntly's regional activities and relationship with Aberdeen.

Aside from archival sources, a number of printed primary sources were also important to research. Fundamental to providing the wealth of detail regarding national politics and the king's relationships with his nobles, the Kirk and England were histories and memoirs such as those written by Calderwood, Spottiswoode, Row, Moysie, Melville and the anonymous author of the *Historie and Life of King James the Sext*. Of equal importance were the collections of letters and papers by men such as Patrick, master of Gray, John Colville and the French diplomat, Courcelles.

The period 1581 to 1595 was when Huntly was most active in national and international politics and was when confessional politics was most prominent, marked by the advent of the Scottish Jesuit mission, the Babington Plot and execution of Mary, the Spanish Armada, the Brig o' Dee affair and the battle of Glenlivet. The thesis is structured as a chronological narrative, commencing with Huntly's return to Scotland from France in July 1581. Much of the earl's minority was spent abroad, as was the short period of his exile from March 1595 to the summer of 1596, but there is no evidence to suggest that the connections he made whilst outwith Scotland were of import to when he was most politically active and influential in Scotland. Huntly played a pivotal role in Scottish politics from 1581 to 1595, during which time he devoted time and attention at different stages of his career to the two dynamics of Scottish politics, the Court and chamber and the Privy Council. In examining his impact on Scottish politics, various aspects of the Scottish reign of James VI, such as the changing nature of factional disputes and their effect on government, the development of the king's public and covert policies and James's reliance on select individuals such as Huntly and Maitland in policy formation and implementation, become clearer.

Chapter One encompasses the period of July 1581 to November 1585 and examines Huntly's role as a courtier during Esmé Stewart, first duke of Lennox's supremacy, likening Huntly's relationship with the duke to a political apprenticeship as his association with Lennox was influential in his political development. The sources are most reticent about the earl during the period of 1581 to 1582 with contemporary discussion about Huntly focused on his role as a young, Francophile courtier close to the king. The chapter then discusses Huntly's emergence into politics and his identification as a strong opponent to the Ruthven Regime in 1582 to 1583 and his role in assisting James's escape from the Ruthven lords. In what was a formative period for the monarch, Huntly rose to influence as a result of his actions and overt loyalty to the fledgling king. This period was also marked by the inception of the Jesuit mission to Scotland. Although this was the first time Jesuits approached the king and nobility thought to be sympathetic to the Catholic cause, Huntly was only included in the most peripheral sense. He had no involvement in the nascent Catholic politicking and was merely identified as a Catholic and a Francophile.

The second half of Chapter One analyses Huntly's development as a politician during the Arran government, from June 1583 to November 1585. This is a period when Huntly assiduously attended to his duties both in the locality and in the central government, developing his political profile and spheres of influence. For most of the Arran government, Huntly had one of the highest attendance rates at the Privy Council, which declined as Arran did and as Huntly began to distance himself from the failing Chancellor. Huntly retained his close relationship with James, cemented as the king continued (without informing Arran) the Catholic politics initiated under Lennox's

guidance. A pattern was developing which marked James's relationship with Huntly for the remainder of his reign: Huntly, deeply loyal to his king, was willing to allow James to utilise his Catholicism in his international intrigues. Yet at this point, for the earl himself, his faith was a matter of private exercise and he was not personally involved with confessional politics. His concerns and energy were directed at establishing himself within the domestic sphere, through his relationship with James, his role in the central government and through strengthening his position in the locality.

The period December 1585 to July 1586 is discussed in Chapter Two, with the emphasis on his developing role in national and international politics. Prior to September 1586, Huntly was rarely at Court. This was the first time since 1581 that Huntly deliberately distanced himself from both the Court and the central government and was in response to the king's new Anglophile administration, which replaced the Arran regime in December 1585. This was an important innovation in the earl's politics as he embarked on a course of politicking which was independent from that of the crown. He became a member of the widespread opposition to the Scottish administration and was identified as a Francophile who opposed the government's proposed alliance with England, which was concluded in July 1586. Huntly continued to consolidate his local position,⁶ but also implemented a far-reaching agenda to expand his spheres of influence in order to counter the rise of Maitland in the centre. In April and May 1586, Huntly made his first contacts with the European Counter-Reformation and initiated covert correspondence with France and Spain. He moved from passively supporting the Scottish mission

⁶ In conjunction with his position as Lieutenant of the North, Huntly's influence extended from the Mearns on the east coast to the west coast with its adjacent islands and included the whole of the northern hinterland.

through sheltering mission priests to becoming active in Counter-Reformation politics. Following the news regarding Babington, James became markedly more tolerant of Catholics, who assumed a high profile in Court. The politics in this period were largely defined by the revelation of the Babington Plot in August 1586, with Huntly's role markedly changing at that point.

Chapter Three examines the period of August 1586 to May 1587. Huntly returned to Court and was favoured by the king, who was aware of his foreign overtures. The English, wary of the change in climate in Scotland and the repercussions that could follow from the execution of Mary in February 1587, began to pay closer attention to high profile, influential Catholics such as Huntly. As a result, perceptions of his political role began to change and he was included in the identification of a Spanish faction in Scotland. This was a significant change from the image of a conservative Francophile, for to be linked with Spain was to be associated with the Counter-Reformation and its political ambition to destroy Protestant England. This association, however, was purely speculative and completely lacked evidence. Yet it was an important change in the perceptions of Huntly and coloured all future interpretations of his presence at Court, his relationship with James and his political actions.

Chapter Four analyses the period from June 1587 to February 1588, concentrating on the mounting rivalry and increasing friction between Huntly and Maitland. Both men were instrumental to the king's pursuit of diametrically opposed policies. Maitland represented his Protestant, Anglophile profile and Huntly his engagement with Euro-Catholic interests.

James overtly favoured the two men, elevating Maitland to Chancellor and Huntly to Chamberlain and Captain of the Royal Guard, but it was Maitland's policies to which the government adhered. Huntly's significant influence within the Court was augmented by his new power within the chamber, which, through his position as Chamberlain, he began to fill with his own adherents. Huntly became particularly adept at using his influence within the chamber to counter Maitland's influence within the Council and in the 1590s used it to his advantage in his feud with Moray and his faction. Mounting hostility between Maitland and Huntly resulted in Huntly repeatedly challenging Maitland's influence and the emergence of full-scale faction fighting, which the king barely controlled. James repeatedly compelled Maitland and Huntly to reconcile and retained both men at Court, with Huntly rarely suffering any consequences for his attempts to remove the Chancellor.

The impact of the discovery of Huntly's foreign contacts on Scottish politics and on his friction with Maitland in particular is the focus of Chapter Five. In January 1589, letters from Huntly, Maxwell and Lord Claud Hamilton to Spain were intercepted and Huntly's covert politicking became public. With fears from the Spanish Armada of the summer of 1588 still ripe, the response of the Kirk and of the English was one of outrage. Yet James's reaction was decidedly mild, with Huntly suffering few repercussions. In the immediate aftermath of the discovery, Huntly and Maitland resumed their conflict, but this time the king was unable to control it. Their faction fighting rapidly escalated, but it was now coloured by confessional politics. Huntly reacted to the perceived threat from Maitland by raising troops and James responded

likewise, but Huntly refused to meet his king on the field at Brig o' Dee near Aberdeen, maintaining that his quarrel was with Maitland.

Although the events following the discovery of Huntly's Spanish correspondence have a decided Catholic flavour to them largely due to the prevalence of confessional politics, Brig o' Dee was not a result of Huntly pursuing a domestic Catholic agenda or following the dictates of a foreign Catholic enterprise; more specifically, it was not the feared precursor to a Spanish invasion – indeed, Spain refused to commit to action in Scotland. Instead, Brig o' Dee was primarily the result of the faction fighting of the preceding years between Huntly and Maitland and each man's growing insecurity in terms of their inherent position with regards to the king, which James attempted to control and capitalise upon.

Following Brig o' Dee and a period marked by high profile activities, Huntly withdrew from international politicking and absented himself from Court until some time after James and his new wife, Anna, had returned from Denmark. Chapter Six covers a wider period than the preceding chapters, discussing Huntly's changed role in national politics from January 1590 to March 1595. This period is characterised by Huntly's continuing influence at Court, although he held no office, his devastating bloodfeud with the earl of Moray, the discovery of the Spanish Blanks at the end of 1592 and the battle of Glenlivet in October 1594. A detailed analysis of Huntly's feud with Moray from 1590 to 1594 has been undertaken by Keith Brown.⁷ Rather than a close reading of the bloodfeud, this chapter focuses on Huntly's deliberate cultivation of his influence at the centre and his relationship with James in

⁷ K.M. Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 144-82.

order to obtain a clear advantage over his opponents. He used his twin centres of influence, the Court and power in the region which extended outwith the bounds of his own earldom, to wage a vicious and protracted feud first with Moray, and, following his slaughter in January 1592, with the Stewart faction which took up his cause.

The discovery of the Spanish Blanks in December 1592, another well analysed event,⁸ is important within the context of this chapter for the coalition that resulted between Huntly's antagonists, the Stewart faction and the Kirk. A collection of innocuous letters and eight blanks signed by Huntly, William Douglas, ninth earl of Angus and Francis Hay, ninth earl of Erroll, the Spanish Blanks once again brought confessional politics to bear on what had been an otherwise purely secular bloodfeud. Despite the king's favour, the political agitation by both the Kirk and the Stewarts caused events to escalate until the king commissioned an army to pursue Huntly, Angus and Erroll. The result was the battle of Glenlivet in 1594, which came to represent the fight against Catholicism although the battle's root cause was Huntly's bloodfeud with Moray and the Stewarts.

Although Huntly defeated the king's lieutenant on the field of Glenlivet, the earl once again refused to face the king when James led an army north in person. He spent the next five months in Caithness and in the Aberdeen countryside, until in March 1595 he voluntarily went into exile abroad. This effectively ended Huntly's active participation in national and international politics, with his significant influence in the centre coming to an end. When

⁸ F. Shearman, 'The Spanish Blanks', *IR*, iii (1952); T.G. Law, 'The Spanish Blanks and the Catholic Earls' in P.H. Brown (ed.), *Collected Essays and Reviews of Thomas Graves Law, LL.D.* (Edinburgh, 1904); K.M. Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 162-8.

he returned to Scotland in the summer of 1596, Huntly embarked on another chapter of his career and, although he lived until 1636 and maintained his close relationship to James, he never resumed his position of prominence in Scottish politics and he no longer played a role in the king's Catholic politicking. Huntly's main interests from his return in 1596 until his death in 1636 were focused in the locality, no longer maintaining so much of a presence at Court. His relationship with the Kirk was fraught and he was consistently pursued for religious nonconformity, periodically being warded and excommunicated. In 1605, the Privy Council suspended an excommunication against him, pending the king's decision. Huntly, unwilling to wait, travelled to London where, to his humiliation, he was refused an audience with James.

Huntly's relationship with the king began to normalise when his eldest son, George Gordon, was requested to attend Prince Henry in 1606 and seven years later Huntly himself was received at Court in London, where his excommunication was relieved by the archbishop of Canterbury. Huntly's career was perhaps best summarised by the king himself, when sometime before 1625 Huntly was summoned to London and presented to Charles as 'the most faithful servant that ever served a prince, assuring Charles that so long as he would cherish and keep Huntly by his side, he needed not be very apprehensive of seditious or turbulent heads in Scotland'.⁹ The chapters that follow will illustrate this by discussing the close, mutually beneficial relationship that developed between James and Huntly and their evolving political sophistication which enabled both the earl and his king to utilise the politics of the Counter-Reformation to each of their advantages; Huntly to

⁹ J.M. Bulloch, *History of the Gordons*, ii (New Spalding Club, 1907), 129.

widen his spheres of influence and become an influential power broker in Scotland and James to promote the interests of crown and country in international politics, as well as to achieve a balance in national politics.

Chapter One:
FROM APPRENTICE TO POLITICIAN
JULY 1581 – NOVEMBER 1585

When George Gordon, sixth earl of Huntly returned to Scotland in July 1581 it was to a country under a different administration to that when he left in circa 1579, when it was reported in June of that year that Huntly ‘has escaped to Paris, having obtained leave through the Earl of Athole before that nobleman’s death’.¹ An anonymous, undated chronicle in Scots secretary hand states that ‘[i]n his youth he [Huntly] traveled into france, and having taryed there a certayne space, he Returned into Scotland’.² Although the nineteen year old Huntly’s arrival in Scotland, soon after James Douglas, fourth earl of Morton’s execution in June 1581, may therefore have marked the end of his formal education abroad, his political apprenticeship was only just beginning. He would spend the next year under the tutelage of the man who in a relatively short period had dramatically changed the face of Scottish politics: Esmé Stewart, first duke of Lennox.

Huntly slipped in through the back door of the national arena, slowly acclimatising himself to the environment at the centre of Scottish politics. In

¹ Forbes-Leith, *Narratives of Scottish Catholics*, 139. A document signed in his still childish hand granting the town and lands of ‘Culquoich’ to John Gordon of Cluny on 19 November 1578 is the last document indicating that he was still in Scotland, NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/6/10/1. Huntly’s time abroad was during Morton’s regency (November 1572 to March 1578, although no longer regent he remained in control of the government for a further two years); the earl returned after Morton’s eclipse by the Arran-Lennox faction in December 1580.

² BL Harleian 1423, f. 141r.. Huntly was also reported as being in France and ‘other kingdoms’ when his tutor, Adam Gordon of Auchindoun, died in 1580, Gordon, *History of Sutherland*, 175. Regarding Adam Gordon of Auchindoun see BL Cotton Caligula, C.ii.79, f. 96 and an undated document states ‘He commandeth all of Huntley’s Friends Servants and Tenants doubting the integritie of the Sherrifs, he is wise and ready to attempt great things he was in France...’, NAS Leven and Melville Muniments GD26/7/392/5, f. 43.

many ways, he was able to serve this apprenticeship unencumbered, leaving the management of his estates which he did not assume until 1583 in the able and experienced hands of his uncle and tutor, Sir Patrick Gordon of Auchindoun. The adept handling of the earl's affairs during his minority (which had begun with his father's sudden death in 1576) had maintained stability in the north-east and minimised the usual diminution of authority which traditionally accompanied a minority, whether royal or noble.³

The temporary resolution of minor disputes with the countess of Moray over the Spey fishings and of the Gordon-Forbes bloodfeud (which had begun in September 1572) in April 1580 by Adam Gordon of Auchindoun, his brother, Patrick and Sir John Gordon of Lochinvar meant that there was relatively little need for Huntly to consolidate his power in the locality.⁴ There is little or no evidence, of either local nature or otherwise, that is indicative of any activity by Huntly himself in the region until circa 1583 and serious personal attention was not paid to the locality until 1585. Instead, Huntly was able to focus on national politics, familiarise himself with the Court, and forge ties that would serve him a lifetime. One cannot underestimate the importance of this acclimatisation, when the earl was able to linger in the shadows, yet at the same time be exposed to the complex, personal, factional and

³ 'After the death of the Earle of Huntley, his brother, Adam Gordoun of Auchindoun, became tutor to his children, who guyded and governed the effairs of that house with great wisdome and manhead dureing his dayes', Gordon, *History of Sutherland*, 172, 175, 207.

⁴ For routine examples of estate management during Huntly's tutelage, see NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/6/8/26, NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/11/4/5, NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/15/1/7, NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/11/4/8, NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/6/10/1. For an example of the Spey fishings, see the NRA Moray Muniments TD94/25 (vol. i, box 15, no. 1095); NAS MacIntosh Muniments GD176/129. For the Gordon-Forbes feud over lands in Monymusk and Keig which had been 'given in Godbairn gift' to the fourth earl of Huntly from Cardinal Beaton, see *RPC*, iii, 261, 278, 280, 401; P.J. Anderson (ed.), *Illustrations of the Topography and Antiquities of the Shires of Aberdeen and Banff* (New Spalding Club, 1847), 763-70; *APS*, iii, 112-114, 164-5, 230-32; Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 110-12; the feud was settled by Decret Arbitral on 1 September 1582.

ecclesiastical cross-currents which marked both domestic and foreign policies. His immediate and continued association with Lennox may have marked him as a conservative, or, in the very least as a Francophile, but did not hamper his subsequent manoeuvrability. Indeed, in the eyes of the king, Huntly could not have made a better connection. Albeit relatively short, it was an apprenticeship at the highest level of Scottish politics which few could emulate and was a key factor in Huntly's future success.

Although this period was an integral component of Huntly's growing political maturity, the sources are reticent concerning the young earl. Active neither in the locality nor in the central administration, Huntly's role in the period 1581 to 1582, as the men of the period described him, was that of a young, aspiring courtier. The richest sources are diplomatic correspondence, but even in these the references are sparse and scattered. From these dispatches, however, it is possible to garner a sense of his affiliations and movements within the Court; they also provide the fullest details of his activities during the time in which the Ruthven Regime was in power (August 1582 to June 1583).

The standard histories, such as Calderwood, Spottiswoode, Moysie and Melville's *Memoirs* or the anonymous *Historie and Life of King James the Sext*, contain virtually no information about Huntly himself until after 1583 – the beginning of his political career. It is unfortunate that the sources for this period of Huntly's life are limited, yet the omission of his activities from such records is indicative of contemporary perceptions of his role in either the Court or government. Additionally, the invariable linkage of Huntly's name with that of Lennox by these same sources is demonstrative of the

sphere in which the earl moved. Therefore, the examination of both the political tides either created by Lennox or those surging against him is instructive in determining the political exposure, both foreign and domestic, of the novice Huntly.

When Huntly returned to Scotland in July 1581 accompanied by David Lindsay, eleventh earl of Crawford, he immediately associated himself at Court with Lennox, a man who had faced significant opposition to both himself and his subsequent administration since his arrival in Scotland in September 1579.⁵ The entrance of the king's older cousin, Esmé Stewart, sieur d'Aubigny, into Scottish politics once again placed two potential threats to the established Anglo-Protestant policies firmly back on the agenda: French influence and Catholicism. As d'Aubigny's influence with his royal cousin grew, so did the anxieties of the Anglophiles and Protestants. Despite his protestations and demonstrations to the contrary, they refused to believe that this French, crypto-Catholic noble did not embody all that they objected to, and even, perhaps, feared. James's rapid promotion of d'Aubigny, bestowing the earldom of Lennox upon him in March 1580 (later elevated to a duchy in August 1581) and appointing him to the office of Chamberlain, 'quha sall continewally attend upoun his Hienes',⁶ in October 1580, created a

⁵ D'Aubigny had been personally invited to Scotland by the king. A descendant of James II, he saw this as an opportunity to promote his own claims to the Lennox estates over Lady Arabella Stewart and his place in the line of succession over Lord John and Lord Claud Hamilton. See *ODNB*, vol. 53, 146-7.

⁶ *RPC*, iii, 316, 322-3, 412-14. Alexander Erskine of Gogar, master of Mar and Captain of Edinburgh Castle, was appointed as Vice-Chamberlain. Additionally, twenty-four ordinary and six extraordinary gentlemen of the chamber were appointed (mostly younger sons of the nobility and lairds). Included amongst these was Captain James Stewart of Ochiltree, who was admitted to the Privy Council in February 1581 as the Tutor of Arran (the third earl of Arran was mentally ill), *RPC*, iii, 356; he was elevated to the earldom of Arran on 22 April 1581, *APS*, iii, 251; 'but he was only one of a phalanx of Stewart beneficiaries of royal patronage', M. Lynch, 'Court Ceremony and Ritual during the Personal Reign of James VI' in J. Goodare and M. Lynch (eds.), *The Reign of James VI* (East Linton, 2000), 79. Sir James Stewart of Doune is another example of a Stewart beneficiary. He was elevated to Lord

less than congenial atmosphere for the royal favourite, making 'him the maine obiecte of enway and vsuall discourse of the courte; quho daylie murmered that he was fauorer of the Guissies, and of the Roman religione'.⁷ Additionally, 'his enemies filled the country with rumours that he was sent from France only to pervert the king in his religion'.⁸ For the duration of his Scottish career, Lennox was never able to escape from opposition based upon these two beliefs.

Whether Lennox actually was guided by the Guises and was actively trying to convert James to Catholicism, has not been established, nor is it important in relation to Huntly. The significance, to Huntly, of Lennox's increasingly hostile reception by both the Kirk and those he displaced was twofold. Firstly, although associated with Lennox, Huntly himself was neither branded as Guisean nor 'papist schemer'. As late as 1583 Huntly was described as '[i]n religion doubted, and in affection Frenche' and 'slove to engage himself in any faction or quarell of state'.⁹ Secondly, when Huntly returned in 1581, he aligned himself against a sizeable and entrenched portion of the political spectrum. In doing so, he would learn three vital political lessons: the importance of a nexus of support both within the Court and the locality, the need for a means to maintain influence and status in the face of mounting opposition and the fact that the international dimension was never far from the nature of Scottish politics. His first taste of politics gave him not only the flavour of royal favour, but also the sense of how seeming deviance from ecclesiastical and political norms would be received

Doone in 1581 'specifically because he was, as the King said, "of our blood"' in G. Donaldson, *All The Queen's Men: Power and Politics in Mary Stewart's Scotland* (London, 1983), 135.

⁷ Sir J. Balfour of Denmilne, *Historical Works*, i (Edinburgh, 1824), 369.

⁸ Spottiswoode, *History*, i, 266.

⁹ Rogers, *Estimate*, 31.

by an insecure Kirk and, in the wake of James Douglas, fourth earl of Morton's execution, an apprehensive nobility.

As an incomer, Lennox lacked a local basis of support or kin network to rely upon; he, therefore, needed to create his own support structure relatively quickly. The support for Lennox 'had some foundation not only in opposition to Morton, personal greed and jealousies, or even a general conservatism, but an attachment or at least a leaning to the cause of Mary and perhaps to Rome'.¹⁰ The Gordons and men such as Thomas Kerr of Fernihurst, John, eighth Lord Maxwell, George, fifth Lord Seton and Alexander, master of Livingston were natural allies; they were encouraged at Court and patronised by Lennox in order to build his own faction and bolster his weak political network.

This, however, was ultimately Lennox's undoing. When cracks began to appear in this faction which was held together solely by patronage, rather than by a strongly identifiable cause or policy, the duke was not able to depend on the loyalty of either a local network developed over the course of several generations nor even upon the basic framework of his kin. This, however, was precisely Huntly's strength. Having learned firsthand from his mentor the importance of cultivating connections at Court in order to secure one's political survival, he also saw how fragile and unreliable that in and of itself could be. Huntly's careful attention to the locality was more than the fulfilment of his duties as a good overlord; he was also enhancing his own position, influence and power at the centre – for a lord marshalling the support of an entire region could never be discounted nor taken lightly.

¹⁰ G. Donaldson, *All the Queen's Men*, 136.

For Lennox, the assurance of Huntly, one of Scotland's most powerful magnates, with the added advantage of being young and potentially malleable, was an opportunity that he could ill afford to miss. It appears that the duke moved swiftly, using a rather traditional means to obtain Huntly's support. In August 1581, one month after his arrival, it was reported to Walsingham that 'Huntly was very well received by the King, and far better by his "good father" the Earl of Lennox. His contract of marriage was made since his coming home, with the Earl of Lennox's daughter, whom he had seen in France before his homecoming'.¹¹ Substantial inducement must have been offered to entice Huntly to contract a marriage with a nine year old child; the ceremony itself would not take place until 1588.

Of course, there would be immediate tangible benefits to Huntly as well as Lennox – although Lennox maintained his position for little more than a year hence, Huntly never ceased to reap favour from the king through his attachment to the Lennox Stewarts. It was a judicious alignment as far as both parties were concerned. For Huntly, it was a means to obtain direct access to the Court and the king. In a letter to James in 1608, the earl reminded James that he 'had from my yongest yeiris that good hap and honour, as to be acceptit in your most sacred maiestis seruis be the mediatioun of the last Duk of Lenox, your maiestis most fauorit cousing and seruiteur'.¹² For Lennox, the powerful earl was to be the foundation of his party and became one of Lennox's familiars.

¹¹ *CSP Scot.*, vi, 43; *CBP*, i, 71.

¹² J. Maidment (ed.), *Letters and State Papers during the Reign of King James the Sixth* (Edinburgh, 1838), 145-6.

Huntly's initial stay at Court was not long. Shortly after arriving, he journeyed north to his own estates in order 'to prepare himself and there remain a month or five weeks, and then to come to the Court again to wait upon the King'.¹³ The advent of Huntly's political apprenticeship under Lennox was initiated during the period of the duke's greatest influence. James himself was tentatively testing the waters of both overt and covert politics, beginning to flirt with opposing sides in foreign affairs. In April 1581 James had received a letter from the exiled James Beaton, archbishop of Glasgow and Mary's ambassador in France – the only other person being present at the audience was Lennox. Beaton was informed that James had a great liking for both his mother and her ambassador and that he 'is rather inclynit to France' than to Spain.¹⁴ On 19 April, James wrote to Mary asking her, 'to let me share your news as often as possible ... and that by your means I am assured of being assisted by France, if I have need, against your enemies and mine'.¹⁵ Perhaps this technique of cultivating powerful connections whilst actually doing very little in return was one taught by Lennox to both the young men he was mentoring – if so, it was a skill which both Huntly and James had mastered, to their incalculable profit, by the end of their respective careers.

What is certain, however, is that the Scottish king was beginning to raise his international profile; in August Philip II would remark that he was glad to hear that James 'was plucking up heart and making himself respected'.¹⁶ Over the next few months James gradually moved away from the exclusively

¹³ *CSP Scot.*, vi, 43.

¹⁴ NAS Airlie Muniments GD16/34/1.

¹⁵ *CSP Scot.*, vi, 9.

¹⁶ *CSP Spain*, iii, 159.

Anglo-Protestant policy of the preceding regencies, cultivating French as well as Spanish contacts. Notwithstanding the cautious nature of this political innovation, the shift from a single policy embracing the English amity gave rise to fears concerning Catholicism. In a period when the Counter-Reformation was gaining momentum, these phobias concerning Catholics, and particularly Jesuits, characterised not just Scotland, but the British Isles as a whole.

On 28 August 1581, Mary sent a commission to the Archbishop of Glasgow regarding implementing an association of the crowns between her and her son, whereby they would share sovereignty. Among those whom she commissioned to act on her behalf were 'our well beloved and faithful cousins George Earl of H[untly], Earl of Eglinton, our well beloved and faithful George Lord Seton'.¹⁷ Although there is no evidence that Huntly actually received or acted upon this commission, both seem unlikely. Neither is there evidence indicating a correspondence with Beaton at any point in the earl's career. First evidence of Huntly's contact with Mary was October 1583 when, in a lengthy letter to the queen, Jean Scot, lady Fernihurst presented him as 'very desirous to hear from your majesty ... and to command him with anything he is able to do for the advancement of your majesty's service'.¹⁸

¹⁷ *CSP Scot.*, vi, 45-6.

¹⁸ *CSP Scot.*, vi, 638. In February 1584, Lady Fernihurst gave refuge to four or five English Catholics, who intended to shelter in the north with Huntly, 'to whom ... they were commended by' Mary, *CSP Scot.*, vii, 24-5. For further details on Lady Fernihurst, see R. Grant, 'Politicking Jacobean Women: Lady Fernihurst, the Countess of Arran and the Countess of Huntly, c.1580-1603', in E. Ewan and M.M. Meikle (eds.), *Women in Scotland* (East Linton, 1999); M.M. Meikle, 'Victims, Viragos and Vamps: Women of the Sixteenth Century Anglo-Scottish Frontier' in J.C. Appleby and P. Dalton (eds.), *Government, Politics and Society in Northern England, 1000-1700* (Sutton, 1997).

The inclusion of Huntly at this point seems to have little significance beyond his identification as a Catholic, recently returned from France, and from a family traditionally loyal to the queen – an obvious choice on Mary’s part – but neither was this a new observation. In naming Seton, though, the queen did consciously select a noble who had been consistently active in both the Marian and the Catholic causes. From this point onwards, rumours concerning foreign Catholic or Marian plots or both became fairly commonplace. This does not mean, however, that they were taken any less seriously by either the Scots or the English. Moreover, these papist scares were directly linked to the onset of the duke of Lennox’s administration.

When James moved his Court to Glasgow at end of September 1581, it was noted that ‘[a]ll nobility of any credit have left the Court and gone to their own mansions, except Huntly, who is a great courtier’.¹⁹ Before returning to Edinburgh, Huntly was joined at Court by Seton, James, fifth Lord Ogilvy, Sir John Seton and ‘others of that faction’. This faction may be that of the Marians, which included Seton and Ogilvy, as well as Fernihurst, who were men noted for their loyalty and service to the exiled queen; Mary would later recommend the latter two men to the Spanish ambassador.²⁰ This would be certainly be consistent with remarks in March 1582 that ‘[t]he Duke continews fauorer of all thaim that bure airmes aganest the King’²¹ (referring to the Marian civil war, 1570 to 1573). Although these lords were ‘favourers of all the King of Spain’s actions, and suspected to be Papists in conscience and religion’, their reception by Lennox was favourable.²²

¹⁹ *CSP Scot.*, vi, 52.

²⁰ *CSP Spain*, iii, 258.

²¹ Colville, *Letters*, 4.

²² *CSP Scot.*, vi, 55.

The mention of Huntly is the first since July. The significance of the reference lies not only in the labelling of the earl as a courtier, which implies a fairly consistent attendance at Court, but also in the fact that Huntly was implicated with neither party, religious or political, and continued to operate and be identified within this neutral context for a substantial period of time. In this role as a courtier, Huntly was associated with both the king and Lennox. Rarely was the association extended in the public eye, however, to include the intrigues of either.

As a courtier especially close to Lennox, Huntly was exposed to wider political pressures, including both domestic and foreign intrigue. Having been directed by Philip II to watch Scottish affairs, Bernardino de Mendoza, Spain's resident ambassador in London, perceived the execution of Morton on 2 June 1581 as a positive indication that James could be persuaded to support the 'Catholic movement'. Indeed, the earl's execution was identified 'by all the Catholic agents in England, as a golden opportunity for renewed Catholic activity'.²³ The Lennox administration, a Court populated by Catholics and Marians and the young king's own forays into foreign affairs were all factors in Mendoza's decision to use mission priests in a direct approach to both Scottish Catholic nobles and James himself. Elizabeth's continued courtship with the French Duke of Alençon, negotiations for a French alliance and support of the Dutch rebels, propelled Mendoza to seek the support of Scottish and English Catholics.

In September 1581, Mendoza informed Philip II of his plans for taking England a step closer to a Counter-Reformation and a return to the Catholic

²³ J.R. Elder, *Spanish Influences in Scottish History* (Glasgow, 1920), 86.

fold. In meeting with six unnamed Catholic English lords, it was decided that the best way to achieve their English objectives was through Scotland: a reformed and converted James would raise the north of England, revive the Catholic church, liberate Mary and be proclaimed heir to the English crown. This British effort would hopefully be supported by both France and Spain.²⁴ This unwieldy plan effectively became the basic prototype, until roughly 1588, for all future strategies of the Counter-Reformers.

A leading English Jesuit and supporter of Spanish policy, Robert Persons, wrote that '[o]ur chief hope is in Scotland, on which depends the conversion not of England only, but of all the north of Europe' and, regarding James, that 'it is very desirable to take him in hand while he still professes obedience to his mother, to whom he is just now very much devoted'.²⁵ After 1588, the Catholic intriguers realised that the Scottish king's conversion was, at best, a remote possibility, and he ceased to function as a linch pin in their models for Catholic reform. The one static element present for the duration of James's reign, however, was that the Counter-Reformation in Scotland was always ultimately linked to, if not the vehicle for, that of England.

Both Spain and Rome believed that the key to the Counter-Reformation was England, Protestantism's main strength and the most serious threat to Catholic Europe, as evidenced by Elizabeth's interventions in France, the Netherlands and the Portuguese succession. The conversion of England would leave the Protestants in France and the Netherlands unsupported and the Nordic and German Protestant states would be isolated, ultimately

²⁴ *CSP Spain*, iii, 169.

²⁵ Forbes-Leith, *Narratives of Scottish Catholics*, 166-7.

unable to withstand the forces of Catholicism.²⁶ Unlike the other small Protestant nations, Scotland's return to the Catholic fold was not seen as an outcome of England's fall, but as a precursor to it. Scotland was seen as a means to solving the English problem, both through its geographical position – for example, its deep water ports and access to England's vulnerable, poorly defended northern borders (with a sizeable Catholic population) – and through its own potentially pliable monarch, with a strong claim to the English throne and Catholic nobles with a notable presence in Court and government. Whether it was as a means to destabilise England, to infiltrate the country with mission priests or to launch an invasion, Scotland was a consistent component of discussions by Counter-Reformers in their English strategising.

Huntly's first documented contact with the Counter-Reformation, along with seven other nobles, was in October 1581 when William Watts, a Welsh seminary priest,²⁷ was sent by Mendoza to Scotland in order to gauge the religious and political climate. After a hazardous crossing of the English borders, Watts made contact with several influential men, only two of whom knew that he was actually sent by the Spanish ambassador. He was introduced to Lennox, Hugh Montgomery, third earl of Eglinton, George Sinclair, fifth earl of Caithness, Seton and his eldest son, Patrick, master of Gray, Fernihurst and Huntly. He described Huntly as 'far from a state of

²⁶ Elder, *Spanish Influences in Scottish History*, 84.

²⁷ William Watts who, according to Parsons, 'seemed to excel others in prudence, charity and knowledge', was first sent from the English seminary at Rheims to England in August 1578. In 1580 to 1581, sent by Persons, Watts spent ten months in the English Borders and at the beginning of the summer in 1581 he reported that it was not difficult to enter Scotland. The most common means of access by English Catholics was through the West March, P.H. Brown (ed.), *Collected Essays and Reviews of Thomas Graves Law, LLD* (Edinburgh, 1904), 221-2.

grace'.²⁸ The reaction of the Scots to preliminary details regarding the proposed mission was, overall, quite favourable. Providing that the mission was entirely self-funding, these nobles would willingly admit priests and friars and arrange access to the king. In addition, a public disputation with the Kirk could be organised. They also undertook to obtain Parliament's permission to grant English Catholics sanctuary in Scotland, seeing it as an important exercise in public relations in securing the support of Anglo-Catholics for James's succession to the English crown.²⁹

Lennox, 'now avowedly schismatic', at least according to the Spanish ambassador, revealed the full implications of the plan to Seton, presenting it as the only means for James to increase his power and unite England, Ireland and Scotland behind a common cause. It was also a means to renew the leagues between Scotland and Spain, 'which were the solid foundation for the maintenance of the three kingdoms'. They would be unable to reap any tangible benefits solely from an alliance with France, which was currently in the process of negotiating a marriage alliance with Elizabeth; the key factor in this play for power, therefore, would be a closer alliance with Spain.

Seton, convinced on both ecclesiastical and political terms, agreed to inform James of these developments when they were next on a hunting trip and

²⁸ Forbes-Leith, *Narratives of Scottish Catholics*, 171-2. In some accounts Argyll is also mentioned, but this appears unlikely. Argyll's adherence to the reformed Kirk was never questioned; moreover, it is doubtful whether this sickly, elder statesman would engage in intrigue such as this. For accounts of the early Scottish mission from 1581 to 1582, see M. Yellowlees, *'So strange a monster as a Jesuiste': The Society of Jesus in Sixteenth-Century Scotland* (Isle of Colonsay, 2003), 78-89; T.M. McCoog, S.J., *The Society of Jesus in Ireland, Scotland, and England, 1541-1588: 'Our Way of Proceeding?'* (Leiden, 1996), 178-90; M.L. Carrafiello, 'English Catholicism and the Jesuit Mission of 1580-81', *Historical Journal*, 37 (1994), 761-74; C. Sáenz-Cambra, 'Scotland and Philip II, 1580-1598: Politics, Religion, Diplomacy and Lobbying' (unpublished University of Edinburgh PhD thesis, 2003), 32-63.

²⁹ Forbes-Leith, *Narratives of Scottish Catholics*, 171-2; *CSP Spain*, iii, 194-5.

would convey James's response when Watts next returned with mission priests.³⁰ Seton did not have long to wait – two Jesuits, the English William Holt and the Scottish William Crichton, arrived in December. They too were 'extremely well received'. In an audience arranged by Fernihurst, they gave James himself details of their mission. James 'accepted it extremely well, and said that although for certain reasons it was advisable for him to appear publicly in favour of the French, he assured him that in his heart he would rather be Spanish'.³¹ Shortly thereafter, Philip II sent a credit of 2,000 crowns to Mendoza to be used by the priests on the Scottish mission.³²

As well as Huntly, this is the first documented instance of James's involvement with either the Counter-Reformation or Spain.³³ It is also the first firm indication of the king's future covert political course, embarking upon a policy in which he employed his Catholic contacts to learn more about

³⁰ *CSP Spain*, iii, 195-6.

³¹ *CSP Spain*, iii, 235; for further details regarding Parsons, see P.J. Morris, 'Robert Parsons, S.J. (1546-1610) and the Counter-Reformation in England: A Study of his Actions within the Context of the Political' (unpublished University of Notre Dame PhD thesis, 1984); M.L. Carrafiello, *Robert Parsons and English Catholicism, 1580-1610* (London, 1998). Crichton and Edmund Hay were the Scottish guides to Nicholas de Gouda, S.J., the papal envoy sent to Scotland in 1562. When de Gouda returned to Rome, he was accompanied by Edmund Hay, James Tyrie, John Hay, Robert Abercromby and William Murdoch, who all subsequently became Jesuits. Between 1581 and 1584, thirty-six Scots went to L'Université de Pont-à-Mousson, supported by Mary and the Pope, P.H. Brown (ed.), *Collected Essays and Reviews of Thomas Graves Law*, xii, xvi.

³² *CSP Spain*, iii, 238.

³³ The first mission to Scotland following Nicholas de Gouda's in 1562 and the first of James's reign, was by Edmund Hay, SJ from January to October 1579. Whilst he had a number of disputations with Protestant ministers, he had little contact with high-ranking officials or the Catholic nobility, other than his kinsmen, George Hay, eighth earl of Erroll and Alexander Hay of Easter Kennet, the clerk register. He complied with the Privy Council's order to depart from Scotland by 1 October. Hay had no documented meetings with either Esmé Stewart or the young king. Hay's mission was followed by that of Robert Abercromby, SJ from April to August 1580. Abercromby remained mostly in Perthshire and his contacts were predominantly with local Catholics, including John Stewart, fifth earl of Atholl. There is no evidence of contact with the king or those in his entourage. Abercromby's report of the condition of Scotland 'was highly influential and subsequently relied upon by Robert Persons', Michael Yellowlees, *'So strange a monster as a Jesuiste': The Society of Jesus in Sixteenth Century Scotland* (Isle of Colonsay, 2003), 73; for a succinct account of these missions, see 67-74.

European Catholic politics and plans and to cultivate foreign Catholics. James's foreign policy was built upon episodes such as this, covertly encouraging what he publicly condemned – in effect, relatively successfully pandering to two diametrically opposed elements. Unlike Huntly, however, the king's role was more than tangential; James's well chosen words fed the aspirations of the Counter-Reformers. This, in conjunction with his later leniency to both Jesuits and Catholics as a whole, only served to encourage the Counter-Reformers in their plans to have James act as the ultimate spearhead of the movement in the British Isles. The king's apparent involvement in the nascent activities of the Counter-Reformation in Scotland was one of the sparks which generated the movement's ability to implement its programme. Without the king's cooperation, or, in the very least, his willingness to overlook and refrain from prosecution, the Scottish mission could not have been as efficient as it ultimately was.

It is perhaps significant that Huntly was involved in the inception of the quasi-international movement in Scotland, but his participation was limited to that of a bystander. Until 1586, he remained aloof from the politics of the Counter-Reformation and his contacts extended only to the religious side of the mission. The importance of Huntly's contacts with the Jesuits was twofold: not only did his patronage extend the influence of the mission, but it also, just as importantly, catered to his own spiritual needs. The missionaries, in return for shelter or protection, would provide the earl and his household with their services as priests.

Briefly stated, in 1581 and 1582, when he again was part of the reception committee for William Holt, S.J. and William Crichton, S.J.,³⁴ his was far from a pivotal role in determining the course of the Scottish mission. When the mission was under way, arriving priests were directed to land at Leith and proceed to Seton's house, where they would receive their orders, perhaps moving on to safer areas.³⁵ Although they may have moved north afterwards, it is significant to note that it was Seton who was entrusted with directing the mission, not Huntly. The earl's participation in the reception of these early missionaries, therefore, is easily overstated; in this instance, he was solicited merely on the basis of his religious sympathies, not because of any active or known counter-reforming tendencies.

By the end of November 1581, reports concerning the state of Scotland and Lennox's influence in determining policy increasingly unnerved the politicians across the Border. Informed that '[t]he State was seen running headlong to alteration of religion and order of government', Lennox was naturally considered to be the cause. Reported as 'devoted to be friend and familiar only with Papists, while trusting and depending on Marians',³⁶ Lennox was also said to be cultivating an association with the northern lords, 'to advance such course as they would have forwards'³⁷ – perhaps not such an odd assumption when one considers that Huntly and Caithness were fixtures at Court. In addition, John, sixth Lord Fleming, Sir James Balfour and Sir Thomas Kerr of Fernihurst were all restored from their forfeitures by the means of Lennox.

³⁴ *CSP Spain*, iii, 286-7.

³⁵ *CSP Spain*, iii, 289; Forbes-Leith, *Narratives of Scottish Catholics*, 178.

³⁶ *CSP Scot.*, vi, 93.

³⁷ *CSP Scot.*, vi, 94.

The objections raised against Catholic courtiers such as Fernihurst, however, rapidly fade into insignificance when compared to the nervous excitement aroused by the belief that '[m]any known Papists and Jesuits are returned to Scotland, showing themselves boldly there without fear ... and amongst others Mr James Chene, principal of the seminary in Paris, is come to the King, and well received by the Duke'.³⁸ Two other incomers, George Norton and John Merkinfield, were 'favourably entertained by Lord Seton at the commandment of the Duke', and had 'given forth many hallowed hosts and such like trash to sundry of that nation'.³⁹

The significance of these priests lies not in their actual mission, but in what they foreshadowed. The pronounced presence at Court of a number of Catholics, actual or perceived as such, not only facilitated the return of the secular priests who worked wholly within a religious sphere, rather than political, but, more importantly, it also placed Catholicism on the political agenda. When practising Catholics entered the political spectrum either as members of the government or as mere courtiers, they were also perceived as slipping out of the Kirk's grasp. If influential men tolerated, or even welcomed, public acceptance of practising Catholics, then the next logical step would be the arrival of an organised Jesuit mission. Unlike their secular counterparts, however, the Jesuit missionaries had an aura of political intrigue about them – usually emanating from Spain. To both the Scotland watchers and the Kirk, therefore, Catholic courtiers and secular priests in Scotland transcended the religious aspect. They heralded, in the view of the

³⁸ *CSP Scot.*, vi, 93.

³⁹ *CSP Scot.*, vi, 93.

Scotland watchers at least, the commencement of the struggle for political hegemony in the British Isles.

By the spring of 1582, therefore, Lennox had become entangled with not only one religious element, but he had also managed increasingly to alienate another. Lennox's appointment of an archbishop of Glasgow in opposition to the Kirk's desired Presbyterian settlement was the first direct challenge to the Kirk's authority by either Lennox or the king. The incident was important for more than its doctrinal implications, for it was also the first time that Lennox gave the Kirk a tangible reason for their objection to him – they now finally had proof that he was trying to subvert the true religion and lead the Kirk along a popish path.⁴⁰ Their suspicions about Lennox were further confirmed by the men who were at Court: Huntly, Hugh Montgomery, third earl of Eglinton, Alexander, sixth Lord Home, Seton, Ogilvy and Thomas Lyon, master of Glamis. With the exception of the Master of Glamis, Lennox's associates were Catholic, Francophile or suspected Marians.

By May 1582, James Stewart, earl of Arran and William Ruthven first earl of Gowrie were the only nobles reported at Court, with Mark Kerr, commendator of Newbattle, Mr David Macgill, Lord Advocate and John Maitland, commendator of Coldingham reported as Lennox's chief advisors.⁴¹ By the end of the month, they were joined by Huntly, Seton, Alexander Seton, commendator of Pluscarden, Balfour and Sir Robert Melville of Murdocairny, 'all Papists. These guide the King, the Duke, and the country'.⁴²

⁴⁰ G. Donaldson, *All the Queen's Men*, 139.

⁴¹ *CSP Scot.*, vi, 120-21; Colville, *Letters*, 6.

⁴² *CSP Scot.*, vi, 129. Balfour and Melville were Protestants.

The faction opposed to Lennox appeared to encompass everybody outwith the duke's own party, which was "grittamly" hated by the rest of the nobility, and especially the Kirk, the commons, and the barons of Scotland'.⁴³ Giving reasons such as planning the overthrow of religion, the imperilling of the English amity, perversion of the laws, judgements, and customs of Scotland, 'for the wreck of the nobility, the ministry', as well as others, a large group of nobles drew up a bond against Lennox. These men, acting 'in his majesty's obedience', pledged to seek the 'redress and reformation of these enormities'.⁴⁴ Opposition was, therefore, founded upon fairly traditional complaints, attempting to legitimise what would otherwise be interpreted as rebellion. The nobility, the Kirk and the merchants made common cause.⁴⁵ One chronicler commented that it was 'rather for advancement of thair awin particulers than for any gude zeale that thay bure to the commonweill'.⁴⁶

On 12 July 1582, James issued a proclamation from Perth denying their allegations, making it clear that Lennox's opponents had adopted 'the forme of speitche and wordis usit in all aiges to induce and provoke gude subjectis to contempt and rebellion'.⁴⁷ The opposition's response was to exhibit the contempt for the government of which they were accused. Religious and political dissension culminated in the seizure of the young king by Gowrie, John Erskine, seventh earl of Mar, James Cunningham, sixth earl of Glencairn, the Master of Glamis and Patrick, sixth Lord Lindsay, amongst

⁴³ *CSP Scot.*, vi, 129.

⁴⁴ *CSP Scot.*, vi, 144-5.

⁴⁵ *CSP Scot.*, vi, 137; *HKJVI*, 188. It is perhaps appropriate that the publication of Buchanan's "infamous invective" should have coincided with the Ruthven Raid of August 1582', R.A. Mason, *Kingship and the Commonweal: Political Thought in Renaissance and Reformation Scotland* (East Linton, 1998), 205.

⁴⁶ *HKJVI*, 188.

⁴⁷ *RPC*, iii, 492-3.

others, on 23 August 1582. Having ‘pat all the gentilmen of his garde violentlie fra him’, they conveyed James to Ruthven Castle, and from thence to Stirling seven days later.⁴⁸

The Ruthven Raiders justified their actions in a bond subscribed by forty-nine men; in light of the danger to both the Kirk and individual believers, the ‘peril’ of the king’s estate and to those obedient to his authority and ‘the abuse and confusion of the commoun wealth’, they were ‘of necessitie moved to come, and remaine with his Majestie, untill the time that remeid and reformation’.⁴⁹ Both the Kirk and England unhesitatingly supported the new regime – the only compunction on Elizabeth’s part was the manner in which they executed the alteration of state.⁵⁰

In spite of a proclamation by James declaring his acceptance and approval of the Ruthven Raid,⁵¹ neither Lennox nor foreign opinion found this easy to accept, ‘but everyone believes that this step was a result of force rather than of free will’.⁵² Two months later it was written that James ‘could hardly be called a prisoner, but he is not altogether free’.⁵³ Lennox’s party, now in opposition, rallied round the duke, who declared that the king was being held captive. The Ruthven Raiders’ ability to form a functioning administration, however, was by no means a foregone conclusion.

⁴⁸ *HKJVI*, 188-9; Sir J. Balfour of Denmilne, *Historical Works*, i, 376; Calderwood, *History*, iii, 637-646ff; *CSP Scot.*, vi, 153; Birrel remarked that ‘this wes a verey grate presumtione in a subiecte to hes Prince’, ‘The Diarey of Robert Birrel, Burges of Edinburgh’ in Sir J.H. Dalryell (ed.), *Fragments of Scottish History* (Edinburgh, 1798), 22; G. Donaldson, *James V – James VII*, 178-180; G. Donaldson, *All the Queen’s Men*, 140-4; M. Lee, Jr, *Great Britain’s Solomon: James VI and I in His Three Kingdoms* (Urbana, 1990), 47-8.

⁴⁹ Calderwood, *History*, iii, 644-5; NAS Warrender Papers, vol. B, GD1/371/3 fos. 292v.-r.; Melville, *Memoirs*, 276.

⁵⁰ *CSP Scot.*, vi, 154.

⁵¹ *RPC*, iii, 508-09.

⁵² *CSP Venice*, 1581-91, 44.

⁵³ *CSP Venice*, 1581-91, 45.

Lennox's party was still a substantial force: Huntly, Maxwell, Crawford, Alexander Gordon, twelfth earl of Sutherland, Patrick Stewart, second earl of Orkney, Eglinton, Seton, William, fifth Lord Herries, Alexander, seventh Lord Livingston, Ogilvy, Andrew Stewart, second Lord Ochiltree, Fernihurst, Balfour, Maitland and Kerr were all willing to liberate the king under Lennox's leadership. James's unabating affection for Lennox added to the instability, causing 'many to stand the more fast to the Duke, and also threateneth the longer continuance and more peril in these troubles begun'.⁵⁴ Lennox's unexpected capitulation and agreement to leave Scotland, however, forestalled any further action. It also rendered the opposition leaderless.

Still at Dumbarton in mid-September, the duke requested permission to postpone his departure on the basis that Huntly had been granted a licence to accompany him to France, but would not be ready to leave by 20 September. His departure was delayed a further five days, so that Lennox 'may in the meyntyme understand the said Erlis mynd tuitching his departing or remaining, as salbe thocht best'. Huntly, who began to demonstrate an interest in politics for the first time and perhaps unwilling to abandon James, was 'not minded to pass thither'.⁵⁵ Others, such as Ogilvy and Maxwell, were refused permission to accompany Lennox. It was, perhaps, because the Anglo-Protestants had yet to politicise Huntly's position, perceiving him still as a courtier rather than as an intriguer, that the earl's proposed journey abroad was permissible.

The period from August 1582 to June 1583 is marked by the emergence of Huntly into the political arena as a force in his own right. In the intervening

⁵⁴ *CSP Scot.*, vi, 162.

months between Lennox's fall and his final departure, Huntly would gradually find his political feet and become an active member of the faction of Francophiles, Marians, Catholics and conservatives abandoned by the duke. This was a loosely knit group of men who were opposed to a straight Anglo-Protestant policy and linkage to England, preferring to maintain Scotland's independence in foreign policy and ability to manoeuvre. His apprenticeship had come to an abrupt end, but the earl had been an apt pupil and had acquired the necessary political acumen to emerge successfully from a position in which he faced seemingly insurmountable odds.

Huntly's overall political success, however, was not wholly due to innate ability or lessons learned well, but can be partially attributed to the king himself. The earl's unwavering loyalty to both James and his cousin during his imprisonment was no trivial point to James. He not only amply rewarded Huntly for his steadfast service, most notably on the occasion of his marriage, but also placed a resounding trust in the earl. Both rewards and trust, culminating in a marquissate in 1599, would continue for the duration of James's reign. The episode of the Ruthven Raid, from which the king had been rescued by a coalition of Catholic, Marian and *politique* nobility and courtiers, had caused the political distinction between Catholic and Protestant to hold little sway with James. It was the latter who had not only betrayed his trust, but had undermined the basic premise of monarchy as

⁵⁵ *RPC*, iii, 511; *CSP Scot.*, vi, 168.

well.⁵⁶ Confident in his faithfulness and zeal for service, James bestowed upon Huntly something much more substantial than material wealth: he became a close, personal friend. It was this friendship and confidence in the earl's fidelity that stood Huntly in greatest political stead.

From Lennox's initial deposition onwards, Huntly's name was in the forefront, being consistently identified as a member of the opposition to the Ruthven Regime. A summons was supposedly published by Huntly, Archibald Campbell, sixth earl of Argyll, John Stewart, fifth earl of Atholl, Crawford, Seton and others, calling upon the Provost and baillies of Edinburgh to 'put yourselves in armour and receive his grace's body into your keeping', by rescuing James from his imprisonment in Holyrood.⁵⁷ On the same day, rumours circulated that Huntly, John Graham, third earl of Montrose, Crawford, Maxwell, Seton, Ogilvy, the Master of Gray and others were to convene at Dumbarton where the duke had taken refuge.⁵⁸ Lennox, however, was no longer one of the main players; both the duke and Arran (who was imprisoned in Kinneil) were physically removed from the political jostling. Yet, the fall of Lennox had neither diminished nor permanently disabled his party; instead, new opportunities were created by the shedding of its albatross, namely, Lennox himself. Scottish nobles, like Huntly and Seton, had an appeal which Lennox, as a foreigner, had never been able to acquire and they were thus able to attract support from the pool of waverers created by the abrupt seizure of James by the Ruthven Raiders.

⁵⁶ James's own publications, *Basilikon Doron* and *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies*, provide further insights into his attitudes towards Protestant zealots (Presbyterian or Puritan). See, for example, C.H. McIlwain (ed.), *The Political Works of James I* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1918), 23, 24, 39, 60.

⁵⁷ *CSP Scot.*, vi, 177-8; Calderwood, *History*, iii, 699. This is dated as 28 January 1583 by Calderwood, but as 20 September 1582 in *CSP Scot.*; September 1582 seems more plausible, considering that James had recently moved to Holyrood and that the opposition had not yet shed their militant posturing.

⁵⁸ *CSP Scot.*, vi, 179.

As with all coalitions, the Anglo-Protestant faction's unity in opposition was shattered when the small group at the extreme right of the party had seized government. Consequently, both factions, Ruthven's as well as Huntly's, were scrambling to bind as many men as possible to their cause. The balance of power, however, decidedly shifted to the Anglo-Protestants when Elizabeth, motivated by the fact that the success of the Ruthven Regime 'tendis na les to the tranquillitie of hir estait nor to the preservation af our Soueregne',⁵⁹ assumed payment for the King's Guard that autumn.⁶⁰ Although English aid was welcomed by the new government, it proved insufficient to maintain more than the basic necessities in order to retain control. When Robert Bowes, English ambassador in Scotland and Treasurer of Berwick, advised the following February that '[t]he sudden discharge of the guard in this evil condition of times will hazard hasty alteration in this government', the Ruthven Regime had yet to consolidate its position despite having the scales tipped in its favour.⁶¹

Bowes was careful to warn Burghley in December 1582 that 'albeit the Duke is departed in person, he has left a strong party behind, who, if they shall see her majesty's hand once taken from this work, will soon be encouraged to "welter" this Court'.⁶² The departure of Lennox and Fernihurst (who sought leave to remain in England) the following month did not interrupt plans for

⁵⁹ Colville, *Letters*, 10.

⁶⁰ 'The English at last funded a guard in September with at least one payment of £1,000 sterling (£9,000 Scots), apparently doled out gradually over the next few months by the English ambassador', J. Goodare, *State and Society in Early Modern Scotland* (Oxford, 1999), 146.

⁶¹ *CSP Scot.*, vi, 295; K.M. Brown, 'The Price of Friendship: The "Well Affected" and the English Economic Clientage in Scotland before 1603' in R.A. Mason (ed.), *Scotland and England, 1296-1815* (Edinburgh, 1987), 143, 149. Gowrie, Mar, Robert, fifth Lord Boyd and Lindsay hired the companies of Captain Alexander Ruthven, Robert Boyd of Badinhath and Livingston of Dunnypace, beginning 6 October 1582 at the cost of £984, NAS Warrender Papers, vol. A, GD1/371/1, f. 160.

⁶² *CSP Scot.*, vi, 230.

action by the opposition to the Ruthven Regime. At the beginning of 1583, Guise referred to plans by Huntly and Crawford to liberate Arran.⁶³ There is no other evidence to corroborate this. If correct, however, it can be interpreted as the opposition beginning prudently to consolidate its position. Huntly's situating of himself at the centre and reports of his subsequent actions indicates that the opposition faction was evaluating how to proceed, with Huntly's role being monitoring and judging developments within the new government.

In the first week of February it was noted that Huntly and Eglinton were the only 'principal of the suspected lords' remaining in Edinburgh and by the end of the month Huntly actually attended Court itself.⁶⁴ When the French ambassador, Mothe-Fénelon, departed in February 1583, he was advised by Huntly 'that the best way [to proceed] was to act in France without saying anything about it to the King [James]'.⁶⁵ By 12 February 1583, if not before, Huntly had moved into a position of influence. Determining that the moment was not yet ripe, a premature enterprise 'intended to have been attempted for the change of this Court and State' was 'defeated by the means of some of Huntly's friends, who had no liking thereof. But the matter is not left without resolution of a new device to be enterprised as opportunity shall serve'.⁶⁶

Although refusing to be baited into a premature move, especially when any unsuccessful raid taken to remove James from the hands of the Ruthven

⁶³ *CSP For., Eliz.*, January-June 1583, 11.

⁶⁴ *CSP Scot.*, vi, 289, 296; *CSP For., Eliz.*, January-June 1583, 142.

⁶⁵ *CSP Spain*, iii, 450.

⁶⁶ *CSP Scot.*, vi, 296.

government could be declared treasonable, Huntly certainly manifested his opposition in an unmistakable manner. His refusal to sign a general bond to support the present government unless ‘the King shall command him thereto, and for his warrant he will have the King’s hand in writing testifying his commandment’, left nobody in doubt as to where his loyalties lay.⁶⁷ By the end of March, amidst reports of a conspiracy involving the Pope, Henry III and Philip II to invade England next summer and informed of yet another plan for a Catholic offensive in Ireland,⁶⁸ it was said that the English ambassador ‘was earnest to persuade Huntly to come confederate with the rest of the other faction, which he says will be impossible to do. He says it will not go as you who are here think it shall’.⁶⁹ Huntly was therefore recognised outside his own faction, as well as within it, as an influential member of the opposition. The death of Lennox in May 1583, and appointment of Huntly, as well as Eglinton and Maxwell, as tutors to his children, reinforced Huntly’s position. It also motivated James to participate in the plans for his liberation.⁷⁰

The Ruthven administration’s dependence on English money as a means to maintain their government had not diminished by May 1583. In asking for payment of the King’s Guard, it was asserted that ‘the lyif of our cause consistis in thame’.⁷¹ The English ambassador warily noted meetings of the opposition, rumoured as well as actual, and once again branded it as the

⁶⁷ *CSP Scot.*, vi, 296.

⁶⁸ For the condition of Ireland, see C. Falls, *Elizabeth’s Irish Wars* (London, 1950) and T.W. Moody *et al.* (eds.), *A New History of Ireland*, iii (Oxford, 1991), chapters 3 and 4.

⁶⁹ *CSP Scot.*, vi, 342.

⁷⁰ Calderwood, *History*, iii, 715.

⁷¹ *CSP Scot.*, vi, 444; Colville, *Letters*, 27-8; K.M. Brown, ‘The Price of Friendship’, 146-7. The Ruthven Regime ‘received a loan of £1,000 to pay the guard, and in May 1583 a regular subsidy of 10,000 crowns (£3,000) was decided – but never paid as the Ruthven regime collapsed in the following month’, J. Goodare, ‘James VI’s English Subsidy’ in J. Goodare and M. Lynch (eds), *The Reign of James VI* (East Linton, 2000), 112.

‘papist faction’. The English ambassador in France noted that their French counterparts were meeting frequently as well, planning new practices.⁷² His reports of the movements and associations of Scots such as the Master of Gordon (Huntly’s younger brother),⁷³ David Graham of Fintry, Sir John Seton and Maxwell in France increased English anxieties.

At the end of May 1583, Bowes hurried to Falkland on the suspicion that Huntly, Atholl, Montrose and others were to ‘persuade the King to welter this course and State’.⁷⁴ The return of the Master of Livingston from Dieppe, accompanied by Huntly's brother, coincided with James’s dismissal of his Council and retirement to Falkland Palace, which according to Bowes, ‘greatly increases the fear and suspicion generally conceived here of some sudden alteration to be wrought in this Court and realm’.⁷⁵ The same sudden alteration was suspected, according to Bowes, as the outcome of a Convention of Estates supposedly called for the beginning of July at St. Andrews since Huntly and other discontented lords or favourers of the French were to attend.⁷⁶

Bowes had the timing correct, but not the means used to wreak the fall of the Ruthven Regime. On 27 June 1583, James, a day earlier than had been planned with his guardians, ‘read suddanly from Falkland to St Androis’, accompanied by Colonel William Stewart (whom Walsingham had thought

⁷² *CSP For., Eliz.*, January-June 1583, 381.

⁷³ This may be his brother, William, who studied at the Scots College at Douai and later entered Franciscan orders; he returned to Scotland in July 1587; *CBP*, i, 264; P.J. Anderson (ed.), *Records of the Scots Colleges at Douai, Rome, Madrid, Valladolid and Ratisbon* (New Spalding Club, 1906).

⁷⁴ *CSP Scot.*, vi, 477.

⁷⁵ *CSP Scot.*, vi, 482.

⁷⁶ *CSP Scot.*, vi, 508.

was an Anglophile). Once there, he leisurely retired to the castle, which ‘wes straitlie keipit, and na erles nor lordis sufferit to come in thereat’ except those whom James summoned.⁷⁷ The following day, Huntly, Crawford, Montrose and Argyll arrived in St. Andrews ‘privie, as appeared, to the interprise’.⁷⁸

James, his guard bolstered with Crawford’s and Huntly’s men, appointed a new Council and proclaimed that he had been held against his will by the Ruthven Regime: the fall of the Ruthven Regime was smoothly orchestrated, perfectly timed and carried through without a hint of armed resistance.⁷⁹ Huntly remained in St. Andrews with his king and in July escorted James back to Falkland, having not only ended his apprenticeship, but, in a sense, having successfully blooded himself in the political arena as well. The position of Huntly had substantially changed in the space of less than two years since his return to Scotland, having moved from an obscure courtier to a man of influence. By August 1583, he assumed his seat in Council, the transition from courtier to politician complete.

The young King James VI’s sudden departure from the confinement inflicted upon him by the Ruthven Regime was not mere opportunism, a young man taking advantage of a moment of escape suddenly presented to him, but a carefully planned, well-considered event. Colonel Stewart was credited as ‘the principal author and instrument of the execution of this course’.⁸⁰ The

⁷⁷ Moysie, *Memoirs*, 45; Calderwood, *History*, iii, 715-16; *HKJVI*, 197-8; Spottiswoode, *History*, i, 300-01; *CSP Scot.*, vi, 520, 521-2; *CSP Spain*, iii, 491; *CSP Venice*, 1581-91, 64, 69-70, 73; Colville, *Letters*, 27-8.

⁷⁸ Calderwood, *History*, iii, 715.

⁷⁹ *RPC*, iii, 585-6; Calderwood, *History*, iii, 719-21.

⁸⁰ *CSP Scot.*, vi, 534. Stewart would also be involved in the covert Spanish politicking of the late 1580s, see Chapters Four and Five below.

prompt arrival of Huntly, Crawford, Montrose and Argyll with their troops at his refuge in St Andrews Castle the very next day, 28 June 1583,⁸¹ belied the apparent spontaneity of the action taken by the king, testament to a well organised manoeuvre in which the earls' forces were carefully situated to uphold the king's new position. The weeks following his escape and the slow establishment of his new government showed equal consideration for a well-planned change of power, a change which was designed to ensure a minimal amount of disruption and to prevent a violent power struggle between the now defensive – and governmentally powerless – Ruthven Regime and the newly liberated king.

Significantly, James's first priority was to clear the name of his late mentor, Lennox, in a declaration made at Perth on 27 July 1583, which emphasised Lennox's loyalty to the Scottish crown and prohibited all speech or pasquils defaming him.⁸² It was only subsequent to this, on 30 July, that a proclamation was issued regarding the late Ruthven Raid and the seventeen-year-old king's assumption of independent authority. But, like his escape from his erstwhile captors, the proclamation was mild, unprovocative and designed to prevent the late regime from panicking and catapulting into violence to defend their actions. The proclamation merely described the Ruthven Raid and subsequent forcible detention of the king as 'that quhilk fell out the last yeir, sa far to his Hienes offence and to the mislyking of his mynd'. Providing proper contrition was shown for past transgressions, the

⁸¹ Calderwood, *History*, iii, 715-16; *CSP Scot.*, vi, 520, 521-2. Moysie, *Memoirs*, 46; *HKJVI*, 199-201.

⁸² *RPC*, iii, 583-4; Moysie, *Memoirs*, 46; *HKJVI*, 199-201.

Ruthven lords would be forgiven without prejudice and past factions 'hes and vil have buriit in oblivoun'.⁸³

Although James's proclamation regarding the defamation of his friend and mentor may seem to be a relatively insignificant personal farewell, it did articulate two important aspects of James's developing political thinking. Firstly, James's final act on behalf of Esmé Stewart tacitly acknowledged that James, despite being king, was unable to protect his head of government and had been powerless in the face of the factions at work in his kingdom. Secondly, and most importantly, within a month of his escape from the Ruthven Raiders, James was indicating that he was no longer willing to be king in name only. In order to achieve this, James desired a more civilised and controlled way of resolving political differences. This would not mean an end to political factions, but the way in which they had traditionally been expressed and an end to the violent swings in government. James was determined to prevent factional politics from dictating the running of the Scottish state or appointments within it, which he intended to direct himself. The king thus began to embrace publicly a political ideology that would mature in both expression and application, but would be retained for the remainder of his reign.⁸⁴

⁸³ *RPC*, iii, 585-6; Calderwood, *History*, iii, 719-21; *Warrender Papers*, i, 157-8.

⁸⁴ For further analysis and discussion of James's overall political ideologies, see, for example, J.P. Sommerville (ed.), *King James VI and I: Political Writings* (Cambridge, 1994); J.H. Burns, 'Free Monarchy: James VI' in J.H. Burns, *The True Law of Kingship: Concepts of Monarchy in Early-Modern Scotland* (Oxford, 1996); R.A. Mason, 'James VI, George Buchanan, and *The Trew Lawe of Free Monarchies*' in R.A. Mason, *Kingship and the Commonweal: Political Thought in Renaissance and Reformation Scotland* (East Linton, 1998); L. Levy Peck (ed.), *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court* (Cambridge, 1991); C.H. McIlwain (ed.), *The Political Works of James I*; M. Lee, Jr, *Great Britain's Solomon*, chapter 3.

James reiterated this political thinking to three different audiences in the summer of 1583. Firstly in the proclamation regarding the Ruthven Raid, which stated that

he had it always in thocht, sa sone as God sould offir propir tyme and occasioun, to tak unto himself his awin place and stait, to schaw him a King indifferent to all his nobilitie and gude subjectis, and not to be led or careit away be ony speciall surnames and races, or be particular men in ony degrie.⁸⁵

Next, Bowes intimated to Walsingham on 3 July that James had informed him that his actions of late stemmed from ‘having long desired to draw his nobility to unity and concord, and to be known to be a universal King, indifferent to them all’.⁸⁶ And finally, the king once again iterated his political ideology on 18 July 1583 when a deputation of ministers was sent to him by the Edinburgh Presbytery to advise James to ‘beware of alterations’. James replied that ‘there was no king in Europe would have suffered the things that he hath suffered’. He further informed them that ‘I am a catholik King of Scotland ... and may choose anie that I like best to be in companie with me; and I like them best that are with me for the present’.⁸⁷ Thus began the move to establishing a transitional regime which would facilitate James’s full assumption of personal power.

James did not have complete *carte blanche* in choosing the members of his government or Court as a stable government required a broad representation of the nobility and to respect the hereditary posts held by nobles, as well as to recognise the factions at work in Scottish politics and to acknowledge the role

⁸⁵ *RPC*, iii, 585-6.

⁸⁶ *CSP Scot.*, vi, 523.

⁸⁷ Calderwood, *History*, iii, 718. The ministers sent were Mr Robert Pont, Mr David Lindsay and Mr John Davidson.

of the Kirk. He needed to conciliate and appease in order to create a functioning government. But the king could and did exert his right to choose his immediate company and order the disposition of his Court and government rather than have it imposed on him by a faction such as Ruthven seizing control of both him and government. In short, James was attempting to exert his own influence and to begin to exert control as best he could.

The men that James, as he phrased it, chose to be in company with, were, according to Bowes, Huntly, Crawford and Montrose, 'who now find such favour in the Court that the trust for the safety of the King's person is, next the guard, committed to them, their friends and dependers'. Others at Court included Argyll, March, George Keith, fifth Earl Marischal, Andrew Leslie, fifth earl of Rothes and, surprisingly, Gowrie.⁸⁸ The latter is not so remarkable, however, when seen within the context of James's desire to place himself above all factions (as well as the political expediency of monitoring a leader of the now defunct regime); but men such as Angus, Mar and the Master of Glamis were declined the pleasure of sharing the king's company. According to Spottiswoode, James 'made the choice of the earls of March, Argyll, Gowrie, Marischal, Montrose, and Rothes, to remain with him, as noblemen held of best judgment, most indifferent and freest of faction', an exceedingly important point to James.⁸⁹

At first glance, this appears to be a demonstration of James refuting his own declarations and supporting one faction – the majority mentioned being men who had previously supported the Lennox regime or were former Marians or

⁸⁸ *CSP Scot.*, vi, 524; Calderwood, *History*, iv, appendix, 419.

⁸⁹ Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 301.

both. However, if examined more closely, it is clear that James was not choosing his associates on the basis of their previous affiliation, but was surrounding himself with men who had opposed the Ruthven lords' violent seizure of power by physically and unlawfully detaining the person of the monarch. Further, these men had worked assiduously to restore the king to his rightful place in the hierarchy. To James, this loyalty to the very premise of kingship and, secondly, to himself personally, was more important than whether they had supported any particular faction or to which religion they adhered.

In choosing men such as Huntly, James was choosing the men whom he believed to have risen above faction to restore the rightful order of the Scottish polity. This was an exceedingly important point to James, for his reign was brought about by a small faction forcing his mother to abdicate in his favour in 1567. Furthermore, his minority had been repeatedly marked by various factions using him as a piece in a political game, with physical possession of the young king as the key to power. The series of coups from 1578 to 1585, all involving the struggle for control of the king's person – and thereby the government – made James well aware of where he stood in the game of politics. This must have been pivotal in the formation of his political philosophy regarding kingship and the monarch's relations with his nobility.

The Ruthven Raid, which received accolades from both the Kirk and England, was perhaps the most telling and traumatic for the king, now a young man at an age when several of his predecessors had been ruling in their own right. James learned from Lennox's downfall that the only way to survive and rule for himself was to limit the power of any particular faction

and to surround himself with men whose loyalties lay primarily to their king. The fact that Huntly had potentially risked all to restore his king from the Ruthven Regime's power cemented a relationship already based on mutual loyalty and trust; a trust which extended to Huntly's dependants and personal supporters, who were latterly awarded with positions closest to the king in the late 1580s and early 1590s.⁹⁰

The Scotland watchers, however, did not understand the subtleties of the new politics at work in Court. Bowes was becoming increasingly nervous at the continued presence of Huntly, Montrose and Crawford, as well as the fact that 'many others known to be great favourers of the French course and of the King's mother receive good countenance and grace in Court'. The fact that the elder statesman and Chancellor – as well as Anglophile – Argyll supported James in 'this new course'⁹¹ did not appear to help matters from the English perspective. Bowes once again warned that James 'has called to him, and entertains with especial favour, Huntly, Crawford, Montrose, and many others lately thought to have intended another course with Lennox, and for the French'. Clearly, he also distrusted the king's protestations

that he will perform all things promised to the Queen of England and at home, without alteration, otherwise than to declare himself indifferent to his nobility and subjects, and not to be indirectly led away or governed by any private party of person, trusting thereby to reconcile his nobility into concord, and to establish all

⁹⁰ See Chapter Six below; A. Juhala, 'The Household and Court of King James VI of Scotland, 1567-1603' (unpublished University of Edinburgh PhD thesis, 2000), Appendix I.

⁹¹ *CSP Scot.*, vi, 528. Argyll's disposition was of particular concern to the Elizabethan government because of the number of his clansmen who were active as mercenaries in the employ of the Irish in the recurring skirmishes between the Irish and the English government in northern Ireland. Argyll, however, assured Bowes that he would 'stay the resort of any of his people under him into Ireland, who trouble her majesty's service and subjects', 528. See C. Falls, *Elizabeth's Irish Wars*, especially chapter 5 for further discussion of the Scottish mercenary involvement in Ireland; J.E.A. Dawson, *The Politics of Religion in the Age of Mary, Queen of Scots: The Earl of Argyll and the Struggle for Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge, 2002).

inquietness with effectual progress in the loving course and amity with her majesty.

Neither did he seem to trust the 'good speeches' he received directly from Huntly, Montrose 'and other lords who pretend to bear great goodwill to her majesty and the amity'.⁹² In mid-July when James felt secure enough to leave the fortress of St Andrews and return to Falkland, he was accompanied by Huntly, Montrose, Crawford, Gowrie, Doune, Alexander, master of Livingston and 'many others holden to be favourers of the French and the King's mother. These lords and this company shall be continued about the King – chiefly the earls, who are purposed to be small time absent from him'.⁹³

Walsingham apparently concurred with Bowes's distrust of the changes in Scotland and directed him to 'underhand nourish in such as are well affected to the crown of England an assured hope that they shall lack no assistance', such as the earl of March who in mid-July offered his services to the English ambassador for the preservation of the amity with England.⁹⁴ The English government's nervousness regarding the change in government in Scotland seems to have been bolstered by additional reports from their agents on the Continent. Reports immediately prior to the alteration of state in Scotland suggested connections between Scots abroad, such as Maxwell, Sir John Seton (the former Master of the Horse) and David Graham of Fintry, with the duke of Guise, the Pope and Spain. Cobham, the English ambassador to France, informed Walsingham that Seton

⁹² *CSP Scot.*, vi, 529, 531.

⁹³ *CSP Scot.*, vi, 538. Similar reports continued with high regularity throughout July and early August, often pointing out that those loyal to the former Ruthven Regime were being left out of state affairs or denied access on an increasing basis, see *CSP Scot.*, vi, 552, 568, 575.

⁹⁴ *CSP Scot.*, vi, 535, 538.

has order from the Scottish king to inform King Philip that his subjects held him prisoner and to demand his counsel and aid. Morton is to deliver the like commission to the French king; and Seton gives out withal that before St Michael's Day the Scottish king will have all the lords' heads who are now about him. They say that he has sent for the Earls of Argyle, Huntley, Egleton, and others, and that parliament will not hold in Scotland.⁹⁵

The arrival of Fintry and the Master of Livingston in Scotland in July – supposedly with artillery and reported to have instructions from Guise – only further alarmed the Elizabethan government. Fintry was especially bad news since he was

a party well acquainted with all such devices or practices and the conspirators which have been or are to come within the realms of England and Scotland, so as his stay or taking might prevail for her Majesty's service and quietness. His intelligence has been great with her Majesty's evil indisposed subjects; besides this, the Pope and King of Spain's ministers have committed to his trust many causes.⁹⁶

At the end of July, it was even reported that forty armed men, intending to join James's guard, had departed to Scotland. Perhaps worse, however, was the information that 'there is gone in their company a disguised Jesuit or two'.⁹⁷ Walsingham had apparently heard enough and on 1 July wrote to Bowes in Scotland that Elizabeth was furious with the changes in the composition of the Scottish government and Court, perceiving a threat to the Anglo-Scottish amity. He instructed Bowes that 'all the world, by that speedy

⁹⁵ *CSP For., Eliz.*, July 1583-July 1584, 405, 419.

⁹⁶ *CSP For., Eliz.*, July 1583-July 1584, 15; *CSP Scot.*, vi, 558. James 'favourably embraced' Fintry and had a long discussion with him but dispatched him from Court because of his Catholicism, 'yet in the meantime he is familiar and welcome to sundry of the noblemen here'. Fears were also expressed that Catholics were 'lurking' in the north, biding their time.

⁹⁷ *CSP For., Eliz.*, July 1583-July 1584, 37. Worse perhaps, for the small force of armed men reported to be assembling around James posed no threat to the English military machine. However few the Jesuits, it still posed a fight for the minds and souls of men which they felt ill-equipped to contest.

revoking of Huntly and Crawford, may note a very great partiality in the manner of proceeding ... when such as are known to stand affected to her are continued still separated from the King'.⁹⁸ Elizabeth also wrote separately to Bowes that

the speedy calling back again to the King's presence of Huntly and Crawford, without calling the others [i.e. Angus and Mar], manifestly shows that there was not so much as that respect to be had to as to continue the said colour, but rather that there was a plain intent to make it appear to the world how little account was made of her.⁹⁹

It was decided early in August that the situation was sufficiently serious to merit the despatch of an ambassador of high rank to Scotland: Walsingham. Walsingham resented being sent to Scotland and was consistently hostile to Arran, whom he refused to recognise and to meet. The English were suspicious of Arran because of his past associations with Lennox, pro-Catholic Francophiles and Marians. He also succeeded a regime sympathetic to England, the Ruthven Regime, which, very importantly, had posed no threat to England's security. Arran was viewed as the complete antithesis of this.

Thus, fact, liberally sprinkled with rumours and gossip, about the alteration of state in Scotland to the detriment of England accumulated within the English intelligence network. For the next two years Arran became the scapegoat for all of James's covert policies.¹⁰⁰ The collected accounts of supposed connections with England's enemies (for example, with Spain, the

⁹⁸ *CSP Scot.*, vi, 547.

⁹⁹ *CSP Scot.*, vi, 545.

¹⁰⁰ G. Donaldson, *James V – James VII*, 180. Arran was restored to the Privy Council in 1583 and appointed Chancellor in 1584.

Pope and the French Catholic League led by Guise) were dramatised out of all proportion and assumed an inflated importance without any direct relevance as to what was actually happening in Scotland. What the English forgot, in their rush to note who was where in relation to James, was that no real action was taken against the Ruthven lords, with the exception of barring nobles such as Angus, Mar and the Master of Glamis from Court. Gowrie, however uncomfortable he may have been about his future prospects, was still at Court and the only proclamation at this point in force against the defunct regime was the original mild statement of the king's 'mislyking' of the late events issued in July 1583.¹⁰¹

Magnates such as Huntly, Crawford and Montrose, whom the English had dismissed as young courtiers during the Lennox regime, had received very little attention from the Scotland watchers previous to the Ruthven Regime. Now, because they had been key in enforcing the regime change,¹⁰² they became the focus of English attention. It was repeatedly noted that they had aligned themselves with the late duke of Lennox, were Francophiles and many were Catholic. Even so, the Lennox administration had achieved very little of substance of which the English needed to be wary. Yet, despite the preoccupation of the primary sources with men such as Huntly, Montrose and Crawford, secondary sources make little comment about this.¹⁰³ In the

¹⁰¹ *RPC*, iii, 585-6.

¹⁰² At one point, in July, it was noted that Huntly had sent for fifty more horsemen supposedly to relieve those who had long attended the king, 'but some think that all his companies shall tarry still with him', *CSP Scot.*, vi, 559.

¹⁰³ For example, J. Fergusson, *The Man Behind MacBeth and Other Studies* (London, 1969), this contains the only concentrated study of Arran, although short and dated in its perspective with limited analytical historical argument; G. Donaldson, *James V – James VII*, concisely states that '[m]agnates like Huntly, Crawford, Argyll, Montrose, Rothes and Marischal – mostly northerners of conservative preferences – rallied to him, but the leading figure in the administration was soon James Stewart, Earl of Arran', 180; Lee, *John Maitland of Thirlestane*, 45, 50, where he firstly pairs Huntly with Montrose during the regime change and then latterly during the Arran government describes Huntly as 'too

primary sources, commentary on James's new Court and his supporters identifies Huntly as one of the key men omnipresent with the king.¹⁰⁴

In playing a key role in James's escape from the Ruthven Regime by providing the necessary troops to support Colonel Stewart's strategy and, equally importantly, enabling the king to maintain his independence afterwards, the mature Huntly had been exerting political pressure at a national level for the first time. In a sense, Huntly's tangible support helped James obtain not just his personal liberty but the political freedom to set up the new Arran government as well. This is the first instance of Huntly using his physical strength, the ability to marshal large numbers of armed men, to implement his political objectives. It would become a feature of his politicking, both on a national and local scale, which, coupled with the king's overt favour, invariably led to success – as well as a brutish reputation in both primary and secondary literature.

The king's gratitude for Huntly's support was expressed in numerous ways later in his reign, not the least by repaying the favour in kind and thus enabling Huntly to assume enhanced positions over his antagonists.¹⁰⁵ For

powerful a man and too instrumental in James's escape from the Ruthven raiders, to be summarily accused of disloyalty'. Many secondary sources make little comment regarding the short period between the collapse of the Ruthven Regime and the start of the Arran government.

¹⁰⁴ The only time Huntly was absent was when he was extremely ill with the 'bloody flux', unable even to be moved in a litter to accompany the king, *CSP Scot.*, vi, 552, 556.

¹⁰⁵ One example of this was the feud between the Gordons and the Forbeses during Huntly's minority (began 1 September 1572 and resolved on 1 November 1580, *RPC*, iii, 279-80), see Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 110-12. When Huntly was appointed Lieutenant of the North, the Forbeses petitioned for exemption, not trusting Huntly to remain impartial. This petition was refused, Calderwood, *History*, iv, 433-4. Further, it was interpreted as a strategy for restoring Mary, one of the steps being the erection of Huntly's supremacy in the north through the office of lieutenant, thereby enabling Huntly to sit in judgment (presumably not impartially because his father had been a staunch Marian) upon Marischal, Lord Forbes, the lairds of Buchan, Drum and their associates in the north, 'that had best served his Majesty in his youth', Calderwood, *History*, iv, 435. In August 1584 Marischal

Huntly, his position as a royal favourite, an intimate and trusted friend, was one that he had earned and had developed from the earliest days of the two men's association. At the very basis of this relationship was the unequivocal acceptance by Huntly of James as his king and of James's right to rule without impediment and Huntly's willingness to protect James's prerogatives.

Secure in his position at Court with the demise of the Ruthven Regime and more than secure in his personal relationship with James, Huntly embarked upon securing his position in the Council and the wider national government. He also began to turn his attention to the locality, which hitherto he had been content to leave under the more than capable management of his uncle, Sir Patrick Gordon of Auchindoun. He formally assumed the management of his estates in 1583, began to sit regularly on the Aberdeen sheriff courts in 1584 and began taking bonds of manrent in 1585.¹⁰⁶ Thus, the period marked by the Arran government was one in which Huntly began to diversify his power base and one in which he emerged from the role of courtier to be a serious player in the nation's politics and a regional magnate of increasing influence.

also sought exemption from Huntly's jurisdiction: apparently the king had granted Marischal relief for a servant of his who was put to the horn; the next day Huntly persuaded James to countermand this and pursued the matter. Marischal left Court without any hope of redress because of Huntly's influence, *CSP Scot.*, vii, 253-4. A more concrete example would be the advantages James granted Huntly during the height of his feud with James Stewart, second earl of Moray in the 1590s, see Chapter Six below.

¹⁰⁶ In 1581 to 1582, forty-one landed clients of Huntly were made honorary burgesses of the merchant guild of Aberdeen, Aberdeen City and Grampian Regional Archives, Guildry Accounts, 1453-1650, i, Michaelmas 1581-1582 (no folio numbers); *Spalding Miscellany*, v, 52-3; A. White, 'The Menzies Era: Sixteenth-Century Politics' in E.P. Dennison *et al.* (eds.), *Aberdeen Before 1800: A New History* (East Linton, 2002), 191; Gordon, *A History of Sutherland*, 207; Aberdeen City and Grampian Regional Archives, Aberdeen Sheriff Court Book, i (Diet Books, vol. iv), 309; NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/13/8/38; NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/13/7/27; NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/13/8/37; NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/13/7/25.

The next phase of Huntly's political development began with his membership of the Privy Council, which he attended for the first time on 27 August 1583. Huntly's admission to the Council, along with men such as Crawford and Montrose, was part of James's first attempt to control the composition of his Privy Council and thus his government, becoming more than just a titular head but an active promoter of policy. The composition of the new Privy Council is telling. Arran, Maitland, Doune and Sir Robert Melville of Murdocairny – all denizens of the Lennox administration – returned to the Council, replacing the remaining Ruthven lords.¹⁰⁷ Gowrie, for example, had continued to sit on the Council until August 1583. His power having been eclipsed for more than a year by the Ruthven Regime, Arran made his return to national politics and reassumed his position on the Privy Council on 23 August. Eighteen days previously, he had finally left his enforced seclusion in his house at Kinneil and, accompanied by fifty armed men, rode to James in Falkland 'and was weill accepted, and within few dayes beganne to looke braid'.¹⁰⁸ Arran's return signalled a gradual hardening of both attitude and action towards the late Ruthven Regime until he was firmly in control of the government.

James Stewart was born in circa 1545 and was the second son of Lord Ochiltree.¹⁰⁹ He had an affair with elderly grand-uncle's, Robert Stewart, sixth earl of Lennox, younger wife, Elizabeth Stewart, and conceived a child with her. For her part, she sued her husband for divorce on the grounds of

¹⁰⁷ *RPC*, iii, 590; G. Donaldson, *James V – James VII*, 180; J. Fergusson, *The Man Behind MacBeth*, 41. Notably, James Cunningham, sixth earl of Glencairn continued to attend Council on a very regular basis through to November 1585, thereafter he attended less frequently but still fairly regularly.

¹⁰⁸ Calderwood, *History*, iii, 722; *CSP Scot.*, vi, 578-9.

¹⁰⁹ His sister, Margaret, was the second wife to John Knox, whom she married at the age of fourteen.

his impotency in the spring of 1580; they were legally divorced in May 1581 and she married Stewart, now the earl of Arran, on 6 July 1581.¹¹⁰ Appointed tutor to the mentally ill James Hamilton, third earl of Arran, Stewart was elevated to the peerage (unusually assuming his ward's title and acquiring the forfeited lands of his two brothers, Lords John and Claud Hamilton) only three months prior to his marriage to Elizabeth.¹¹¹

It is possible that Elizabeth Stewart as daughter of John Stewart, fourth earl of Atholl, the widow of Lord Lovat and the ex-wife of Lennox (latterly March), and in that role the principal lady at Court, may have been instrumental in his success and rapid elevation. Four months before his marriage he was appointed Captain of the King's Guard and by the following October, Stewart was made a gentleman of the king's chamber. According to Spottiswoode, he was 'a man eager to win credit by what means soever'.¹¹² It was, for example, Stewart who had accused Morton of complicity in Darnley's murder and Calderwood asserted that by July 1581, 'he and Lennox ruled the King and Council as they pleased'.¹¹³

Although a breach had developed between Lennox and Arran in the winter of 1581 (most likely over a rivalry concerning access to the king's person), it was ostensibly healed when Arran resigned as Captain of the Guard in February 1582. When the Ruthven Raid occurred, Arran had been caught unprepared

¹¹⁰ Moysie, *Memoirs*, 34; Calderwood, *History*, iv, 484-8; J. Fergusson, *The Man Behind MacBeth*, 34-5. For Elizabeth Stewart, see R. Grant, 'Politicking Jacobean Women: Lady Ferniehirst, the Countess of Arran and the Countess of Huntly, c.1580-1603' in E. Ewan & M.M. Meikle (eds.), *Women in Scotland*, 95-104.

¹¹¹ See, for example, G. Donaldson, *James V – James VII*, 170-80 for a detailed narrative of events for the Lennox years; Stewart was appointed Tutor to Arran, *RPC*, iii, 356; assumed the title by charter on 22 April 1581, *APS*, iii, 251.

¹¹² Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 271.

¹¹³ Calderwood, *History*, iii, 556.

and alone at his house, Kinneil. Although he rode to the young king's aid, his small band of men were no match for the Ruthven lords. He was treated leniently by the Ruthven Regime, albeit kept carefully isolated from James, and spent most of the ensuing ten months at Kinneil. Arran's return to politics, therefore, signalled that a definite regime change had taken place, a change that would not be as lenient to the deposed Ruthven lords as they had been to Arran. James was implementing more than a factional change, but beginning an improvisation in government based upon his own developing political theories concerning factions and universal monarchy.

Arran re-entered national politics on 23 August 1583, supported by Huntly, Argyll, Crawford, Montrose and Rothes.¹¹⁴ It was from this point onwards that the fortunes of the late Ruthven Raiders began to decline seriously. Not surprisingly, the new Privy Councillors were veterans either of the previous administration (Lennox's) or unreserved Marianists in political sympathy or both. Both alignments made sense from James's perspective. Firstly, he had trusted Lennox and it follows that James would therefore trust the men he had chosen for government position. Secondly, continued support for his deposed mother, whom few could credit as having any realistic chance of reassuming her throne, also implied the support for the inherent rights of monarchy which was important to James's political *modus operandi*. He sought to establish a government that would implement his desires to rise above faction, to be the universal king that he first articulated to the English ambassador in July 1583.

In addition to Arran and Huntly, described at this time as 'slowe to engage himself in any faction or quarell of state, but at the king's pleasure, to whose

¹¹⁴ *RPC*, iii, 590, plus note; Calderwood, *History*, iii, 722.

humor and favor he dothe wholly bende and apply himself,¹¹⁵ the men who appeared on the Privy Council with regularity from August 1583 included Colonel William Stewart, commendator of Pittenweem and Captain of the King's Guard; Sir Robert Melville of Murdocairny, another staunch Marian, captured at the surrender of Edinburgh Castle in 1573; John Maitland, the brother of Mary's secretary, William Maitland of Lethington, had been commendator of Coldingham, a Privy Councillor and Lord Privy Seal during the Moray Regency until he was deprived for being a Marian. He was restored to favour under the Lennox regime and raised to the bench in April 1581 as a Senator of the College of Justice.¹¹⁶

The other peers on the Council were Montrose, who was thirty years old in 1583 and described as 'his power is not greate; in affection Frenche, and in religion doubted'. He was also at odds with Angus, 'whose wyef he is charged to have dishonoured' but despite that, 'the man is, for courage and spirite, a principall man amonge the nobilitie'.¹¹⁷ Crawford, described as a Francophile and 'in religion unsettled' with 'his living and estate mucche ruined', was also at feud with the Master of Glamis.¹¹⁸ Rothes, would be identified as one of those earls who would not act outright against Arran in 1584 but would support any action taken against him. In 1585 Walsingham classified him as neutral.¹¹⁹ Glencairn, a Ruthven Raider, was also thirty and his reputation had suffered when Lennox was overthrown, 'wherein he was suspected not to have delte sincerely' but 'his power is reasonable great ... and in religion thought to be well-affected'. He was also classified as neutral by Walsingham

¹¹⁵ Rogers, *Estimate*, 31.

¹¹⁶ For a detailed study of Maitland's career, see Lee, *John Maitland of Thirlestane*.

¹¹⁷ Rogers, *Estimate*, 32.

¹¹⁸ Rogers, *Estimate*, 32.

¹¹⁹ Rogers, *Estimate*, 42-3.

in 1585.¹²⁰ Argyll, Chancellor and Justice-General, attended irregularly due to his ill-health.

Maxwell was a Catholic and Francophile, 'but of no greate governement or iudgement'.¹²¹ Doune was an example of Lennox's royal patronage as he was elevated to the peerage in 1581, specifically because he was a Stewart.¹²² Seton was described as having a 'reasonable living', was a Catholic and former Marian, 'a principall instrument [of the] Scottish Quene' and a 'harbourer of Jesuitis'.¹²³ Among the lairds were William Cunningham of Caprinton (one of Arran's Ayrshire connections), John Meldrum of Seggy, Mark Kerr, commendator of Newbattle and Walter Stewart, commendator of Blantyre. Later additions were Sir John Gordon of Lochinvar in April 1584 and, from October 1584, Patrick, master of Gray.

Huntly took his appointment as a Privy Councillor seriously, attending every meeting of the Council from his appointment on 27 August through to 31 January 1584.¹²⁴ Between 11 February 1584 and 3 April 1584, his kinsman (and former tutor) Sir John Gordon of Lochinvar attended Council in Huntly's absence for it was far too early in the setting of the policies of the new government for Huntly's interests not to be represented. Huntly's absences in early 1584 were primarily due to his attending to business in the locality, such as attending sittings of the sheriff court at Aberdeen, demonstrating that Huntly was also growing into his role as a regional

¹²⁰ Rogers, *Estimate*, 33, 43.

¹²¹ Rogers, *Estimate*, 34.

¹²² G. Donaldson, *All the Queen's Men*, 135.

¹²³ Rogers, *Estimate*, 39.

¹²⁴ A document endorsed, 'January 1583. Copie of the general bond subscribed by the King and nobility', which promised obedience to James, the furthering of the true religion, keeping the general peace and defence of Scotland, the settlement of feuds and free access to James by all and signed by James, Angus, Huntly and Gowrie appears in *CSP Scot.*, vii, 20-21.

magnate. For example, in February 1584 he sat on the Candlemas court in Aberdeen, retiring to Strathbogie afterwards.¹²⁵ Huntly returned to Court from the north, where he reputedly had been entertaining two Jesuits, by 24 March 1584.¹²⁶ With Lochinvar sitting on Council, Huntly was enabled to tend his interests in another medium and network with an entirely different, but equally important, set of people.

By the end of March, Bowes indicated that both Huntly and Crawford sought leave to return to their own homes, but ‘they are constrained to stay and abide awhile. Howbeit, Huntly neither likes to lie in Court nor hath the inward credit there was before he had’.¹²⁷ This may be the point where Huntly and Arran began to drift away from one another, with Huntly’s initial support for Arran beginning to decline as the policies of his new government became clearer and were perceived as threatening to Huntly’s – and the nobility’s in general – influence in government, his rights and privileges. Arran’s pursuit of policies which sought to elevate institutions of government was seen as eroding the position of the nobility, especially as more nobles became increasingly alienated from Arran and from Court. Equally, as Arran’s Anglophile foreign policy became apparent, Huntly’s disaffection only grew. It would only intensify as Arran himself grew in power, securing both the government and control of key fortifications, with his wife controlling the Court.

¹²⁵ £11.4s. was spent on wine (eight gallons) and ‘schorteiss’ (three ‘boistis’) for Huntly whilst he sat on the court, whilst only 6s. was spent on Auchindoun’s wine consumption, Aberdeen City and Grampian Regional Archives, Guildry Accounts, 1453-1650, i (unnumbered folios).

¹²⁶ *CSP Scot.*, vii, 24-5, 27, 36, 52.

¹²⁷ *CSP Scot.*, vii, 53.

Once he had secured his position within the new government, Huntly's attendance at Privy Council meetings became somewhat more sporadic; yet there was a pattern to them and it is likely that he may have been dividing his time between his responsibilities at Court, on the Council and in the locality. There were also reports that he was attending to international, Catholic interests, including receiving and sheltering Jesuits.¹²⁸ Sometimes national events intervened with his Council attendance, such as in April 1584 when Huntly was in the vanguard of the king's rapidly assembled forces which defeated the coup attempt at Stirling by, among others, some of the deposed Ruthven lords.¹²⁹ Huntly returned to Court on 19 April 1584 after the crisis was over when Bowes wrote that, 'the Court continues in great joy and quietness without any guard or watch or great number of noblemen, other than Huntly, Montrose, and the ordinary courtiers'.¹³⁰ Considering all of these factors, Huntly had an excellent attendance record in a period marked by the reluctance of the higher nobility to attend the routine bodies of government.

Huntly resumed his regular pattern of Privy Council attendance on 17 April 1584 until 28 May 1584. At the riding of Parliament on 18 May 1584, Huntly bore the sceptre, whilst Esmé Stewart's son, the young Ludovic, second duke of Lennox carried the crown.¹³¹ Between June and December 1584, Huntly failed to attend any Council meetings. In June 1584, Bowes reported that Huntly and Crawford were at odds with Arran, which could explain Huntly's

¹²⁸ See below.

¹²⁹ Crawford, Montrose, Arran and Rothes joined Huntly in the vanguard of the 6,000 troops under James and an additional advance force of 1,000 led by Colonel Stewart, *CSP Scot.*, vii, 93-4.

¹³⁰ *CSP Scot.*, vii, 66.

¹³¹ *CSP Scot.*, vii, 148.

absence from Council, although by 23 June Huntly was reported to be in Edinburgh at Court.¹³² But by the beginning of July the situation had changed when the English ambassador in France, Sir Edward Stafford, wrote to Walsingham that Huntly and Crawford had left the Court, ‘because of the evil usage of [Lord] Lindsay, for whom they had given their words’ and further reports indicated that there were protests against Colonel Stewart and Arran, ‘that their government of the king will bring him in danger, whose life they fear greatly, and mislike greatly the retiring of Huntly, and think them two to be the cause of it by their so much ruling the King, which the others envy greatly’.¹³³

Huntly had withdrawn once again to north, where he continued to carry out his duties in the Aberdeen courts from 15 to 23 July 1584. Bowes noticed that Huntly was also taking his role as Lieutenant of the North seriously and subsequently alienating Marischal, who brought suit to the king to be removed from under Huntly’s jurisdiction; the suit was unsuccessful due to Huntly’s high favour in Court.¹³⁴ By the end of the month, Huntly had once again returned to Court when it was reported that James was at St Andrews with Colonel Stewart and Argyll, strengthened by Huntly, Crawford ‘and others which are papists’.¹³⁵

Following Parliament on 19 August, James rode for Falkland on 24 August, leaving behind in Edinburgh Arran, Huntly, Crawford and Maitland,

¹³² *CSP Scot.*, vii, 204-05, 207.

¹³³ *CSP For., Eliz.*, July 1583-July 1584, 585.

¹³⁴ Aberdeen City and Grampian Regional Archives, Guildry Accounts, 1453-1650, i (unnumbered folios); *CSP Scot.*, vii, 252-3.

¹³⁵ *CSP For., Eliz.*, July 1583-July 1584, 37.

amongst others, to examine church ministers for ‘their bold speeches’.¹³⁶ By the end of the month, Huntly had joined the king at Falkland.¹³⁷ The earl was once again in Aberdeen in September for the Michaelmas courts, remaining in the north in October when he sat on the bench of the Sheriff court.¹³⁸

On 11 December 1584 Huntly was once again listed in the Council’s sederunt and continued to attend punctiliously until 30 April 1585.¹³⁹ His attendance may have been affected by his worsening relations with Arran. The entire Court was deserted in May with only Lady Arran, Lady Montrose, Maitland, Sir Robert Melville of Murdocairny (treasurer depute, with control of revenues) and the Master of Gray in attendance. Huntly, Crawford, Francis, fifth earl of Bothwell and Atholl were reported to be offended with Arran, but on good terms with the Master of Gray (who would be the instrument of Arran’s ultimate undoing).¹⁴⁰

On 30 May 1585, Sir John Selby reported the rumour that ‘there is now presently a great assembly of noblemen at Aberdene to the number of viij earles, besides lardes and barrons, as the Earles of Huntley, Atholl, Crawford, Cateness, Sunderland, Rotheis, Marshall and Erroll, who as it is thought intende some great alteration – purposing in all the north partes to doe as

¹³⁶ Moysie, *Memoirs*, 51; Calderwood, *History*, iv, 198.

¹³⁷ *CSP Scot.*, vii, 305.

¹³⁸ Aberdeen City and Grampian Regional Archives, Guildry Accounts, 1453-1650, i (unnumbered folios); Aberdeen City and Grampian Regional Archives, Aberdeen Sheriff Court Book, i (Diet Books, vol. iv), 309. The Diet Books are not extant for 1581 to 1584, but from 1584 onwards Gordons replaced the Leslies in key seats. Sir Patrick Gordon of Auchindoun was Huntly’s Sheriff-Depute.

¹³⁹ Huntly spent a significant amount of time throughout 1585 trying to mediate between Caithness and Sutherland. Sutherland was descended from the second earl of Huntly and Caithness had married Huntly’s sister in 1585, ‘at which tyme by Huntley’s mediation, the earles of Sutherland and Catteynesse were reconciled’, NAS Warrender Papers GD1/371/3, f. 5v.; BL Add. MS. 35,844, f. 18v.. The three earls met in Elgin where the reconciliation was effected, Gordon, *History of Sutherland*, 181.

¹⁴⁰ *CSP Scot.*, vii, 653.

Maxwell haith done on the West Border'.¹⁴¹ There is no other evidence to support this rumour, but it is an indication of the increasing level of dissent with the Arran administration that Selby considered it plausible that such a wide array of nobles would form a political coalition in order to destabilise the north as Maxwell had done in the southwest.¹⁴²

Huntly was at Falkland in July¹⁴³ and the next Council meeting that he attended was on 6 July 1585. This was just prior to a Convention of Estates at St Andrews which he did not attend, nor did he sign the Offensive-Defensive League with England to counter the European Catholic League. By the end of September, Huntly was once again in the north, where he was said to have been sheltering two Jesuits, his uncle, James Gordon and Edmund Hay.¹⁴⁴ Much of the autumn of 1585 appears to have been spent in the locality, where, perhaps in response to worsening conditions at the centre, he began to consolidate his position in the region through contracting a number of bonds of manrent.¹⁴⁵ Huntly was still in the north in November 1585.¹⁴⁶ Huntly did not attend another meeting of the Privy Council until 11 December 1585,¹⁴⁷ after the fall of the Arran government.

¹⁴¹ *CBP*, i, 183.

¹⁴² For the increasing hostility between Arran and Maxwell and the lord's subsequent rebellion in February 1585, which 'exposed the weakness of the unpopular Arran government', see K.M. Brown, 'The Making of a *Politique*: the Counter-Reformation and the Regional Politics of John, Eighth Lord Maxwell', *SHR*, 66 (1987).

¹⁴³ *CSP Scot.*, viii, 8.

¹⁴⁴ Forbes-Leith, *Narratives of Scottish Catholics*, 206.

¹⁴⁵ For example, in October 1585 he was in Inverness contracting bonds with Mr Robert Munro of Fowlis, NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/13/8/38 and with Donald McAngus of Glengarie, NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/13/7/27; in November he bonded with Colin MacKenzie of Kintail, NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/13/8/37 and with Torquil Macleod, fiar of Lewis and his son, NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/13/7/25.

¹⁴⁶ Letters were being sent to Huntly (and others such as Marischal) in the north, NAS Treasurer's Accounts E.21/64.

¹⁴⁷ Huntly was in Linlithgow for Parliament 1-10 December 1585, at the riding of which he bore the sceptre, and during Parliament was commissioned to ride to Fairlie Read and intercept Arran, Moysie, *Memoirs*, 55-6.

Huntly's assiduous attendance of the meetings of the Privy Council from the summer of 1583 to mid-1585 can be attributed to more than a newly discovered zeal for the routine minutiae of government. It was a calculated move on his part to secure his transition from a carefree courtier during the Lennox ascendancy to that of a serious member of the king's government, especially since Arran himself rarely missed attending a meeting of the Privy Council.¹⁴⁸ Arran's return to government and rapid elevation caused concern to Huntly on a number of points. He feared that his role in enabling the restoration of Arran would soon be overlooked and the once influential earl who attended James that summer be eclipsed. Huntly needed to continue to make his presence known and to have his power, both as a regional lord and as one close to the king, continuously taken into account. And since the Arran regime 'based itself on the monarchy and the institutions of the state, rather than manipulating them in the interests of specific families',¹⁴⁹ it was extremely important that Huntly made a role for himself other than that as a strong regional magnate or close friend to the king.

Privy Council was a means to expand upon his role. Further, it was also a means for Huntly to object to the policies being pursued by Arran and an attempt to counter Arran's rise in power, as well as to be in a position to protect the rights of the nobility which Arran was perceived as encroaching upon. But as Arran and his policies became increasingly unpopular, Huntly, as did many others, began to express their discontent through withdrawal

¹⁴⁸ *RPC*, iii-iv, 590, passim. Arran was equally conscientious in his judicial capacity, sitting regularly in the Court of Session. His appearances were sporadic only in June and July 1584 (on 10 December 1583 he was appointed one of the Extraordinary Lords of Session, replacing Lord Boyd), J. Fergusson, *The Man Behind MacBeth*, 43, 68.

¹⁴⁹ J. Goodare, 'Scottish Politics in the Reign of James VI' in J. Goodare and M. Lynch (eds.), *The Reign of James VI*, 37.

from government and began to manifest their objections through other means as the opposition to Arran and his government consolidated.¹⁵⁰

From 23 August 1583 to 13 December 1585, the Privy Council met 101 times, with ten sederunts unrecorded. Out of those meetings, Huntly attended fifty-two (roughly 57%), whilst the highest attenders were Arran and Maitland, who both attended sixty meetings each (roughly 66%). The only other Councillor who attended more meetings than Huntly was Murdocairny, with fifty-five meetings (roughly 60%). For a person who did not hold office on the Council (Arran was Vice-Chancellor or Chancellor for most of the period, Maitland was Secretary and Murdocairny was Treasurer-Depute) this was striking. Montrose also attended fifty-two meetings and Doune was at just one less than either Huntly or Montrose. The next two Councillors with significant attendance records were Crawford with forty-five appearances (roughly 49%) and Colonel William Stewart with thirty-four (roughly 37%). The Master of Gray was appointed only in October 1584, but attended each one of the subsequent nineteen meetings of the Council (roughly 21% of the period's total meetings). The king attended on average ten meetings per annum.¹⁵¹

These figures demonstrate that, just as Huntly was part of the core group of men in the Court and among those noted as being regularly in James's company, he was also a pivotal member of the Privy Council. Huntly's diminishing attendance at Council correlates with the period of increasing

¹⁵⁰ See below.

¹⁵¹ *RPC*, iii, 590 passim; *RPC*, iv, 1-38. Seton was appointed ambassador to France, hence only attended six meetings. The other Council members – Rothes, Argyll, Seggy, Newbattle, Blantyre and Lochinvar – all had attendance rates from the mid to high teens; whereas Glencairn (eight meetings), Maxwell (nine meetings) and Caprinton (four meetings) rarely attended.

disaffection with Arran and may have been his way of distancing himself from Arran's administration and strengthening his position elsewhere. Contemporaries regularly reported Huntly's deteriorating relationship with Arran, which began possibly as early as March but was certainly well established by June 1585.¹⁵² This pattern of reduced attendance was mirrored by others on the Council; for example, Crawford's attendance, which tended to be sporadic, notably dropped off from August 1585 and Doune's attendance likewise deteriorated from May 1585 onwards.¹⁵³ The gaps in Huntly's Council attendance began earlier in 1584. His divided spheres of interests and influence – Court, Council and locality – always meant that he would have to divide his time in order to attend these duties. However, he seemed to be better able to schedule Council sittings into his itinerary earlier in the period than later, when he tended to concentrate on the Court and local interests more.

Huntly, for all his loyalty to James, was caught up in the increasing disaffection with the Arran government. However much he supported James's right to assert his own political ideologies and to choose his own government, Huntly also had the responsibilities of a great magnate. For him to neglect the protection of his own interests, the much vaunted ancient rights of the nobility, would also be a dereliction of his responsibilities to his dependants and wider kin-network. Arran's creation of, according to Lynch, an 'authoritarian climate' in Scotland¹⁵⁴ and the continuous enhancement of state power, raised concerns amongst the nobility regarding the subordination of their own power by the crown. Misgivings about Arran may

¹⁵² For example, *CSP Scot.*, vii, 204-05, 653; *CBP*, i, 183.

¹⁵³ *RPC*, iv, 1-38.

¹⁵⁴ M. Lynch, *Scotland: A New History* (London, 1991), 233.

have begun as early as the autumn of 1583 with Arran's pursuit of the Ruthven Raiders, which, according to Melville, caused anxiety and insecurity amongst the nobility.¹⁵⁵ As the nobility tried to come to grips with the rise of the absolutist state in the 1580s,¹⁵⁶ Arran became the focus of their discontent as they fumbled for a way to deal with this new state of affairs and to understand its implications for their own positions and possible new roles.

When Arran became increasingly serious about effecting the English alliance,¹⁵⁷ Huntly became more involved in alternative international interests. For example, from June to September 1584, he became much more interested in Mary, queen of Scots.¹⁵⁸ This may have been a natural gravitation on his part, considering his generally conservative leanings or part of a deliberate calculation to undermine Arran and to widen his own spheres of influence. Mary retained a small core of support amongst the Scottish nobility, who for the most part, had bestowed their loyalty upon her son. There was no active politicking within Scotland to restore Mary, although the queen herself was becoming more involved in European plots to place her on the English throne. In response to the 1583 Throckmorton Plot,

¹⁵⁵ Melville, *Memoirs*, 301.

¹⁵⁶ J. Goodare, 'The Nobility and the Absolutist State in Scotland, 1584-1638', *History*, 78 (1993), 161-182.

¹⁵⁷ The first treaty negotiation took place between Arran and Henry Carey, Lord Hunsdon in August 1584. The treaty was concluded on 5 July 1586, after Arran was removed from power. See R. Grant, 'The Making of the Anglo-Scottish treaty of 1586' in J. Goodare and A.A. MacDonald (eds), *Sixteenth-Century Scotland: Essays in Honour of Michael Lynch* (Leiden, 2008).

¹⁵⁸ *CSP Scot.*, vii, 176, 260, 261, 264, 305, 341, 342. Between Huntly's introduction to Mary by Jean Scott, lady Ferniehirst in a letter dated 22 October 1583 and February 1584, there is no record of contact between Huntly and Mary, *CSP Scot.*, v, 638; vii, 24-5. During the same period, Maitland, seeking an alternative to Arran, also initiated contact with Mary, but with no lasting consequence, Lee, *John Maitland of Thirlestane*, 62-3. Mary responded to Maitland's overtures, sending him a packet concerning the Association of Crowns (the scheme first advanced in 1581 whereby James and Mary would share power in Scotland) and demitting power to him to appoint commissioners for it on her behalf, but he, Huntly and Melville must be part of the appointments made, *CSP Scot.*, vii, 342.

Elizabeth herself once again raised the prospect of an Association of Crowns between Mary and James, as a means to remove Mary and the threats that her plotting posed to Elizabeth from England. The Scottish government was even less interested than when it was first approached by Guise on Mary's behalf in 1581, and in May 1585 (using the offices of the Master of Gray) clearly rejected any prospect of Mary and James sharing sovereignty.

It is notable that in the sequence of Marian correspondence concerning Huntly, Mary was informed that in August 1584 Arran was unaware of the 'Spanish enterprise' (regarding James's contacts with Spain, the discussions concerning the restoration of Catholicism and about Mary's status) expressly by James's command – whereas Huntly was specifically included.¹⁵⁹ Huntly's correspondence of the summer of 1584 with Mary may have even been at James's behest; the letter he wrote to her on 31 August 1584 was written from Falkland Palace, where he was staying with James after Parliament.¹⁶⁰ James was at this point considerably involved in Continental Catholic intrigue, as well as having indirect contact with Mary herself.

Huntly's dabbling with Marian politics was brief, however; he seems to have reached the same conclusion as many other politicians dealing with Mary during this period that there was generally very little leverage to be gained from engaging in Marian intrigues. It is unlikely that Huntly perceived Marian politics as a means to derail the proposed Anglo-Scottish treaty. Huntly's role in Marian politics was minimal, limited to receiving and sheltering Catholics in need of refuge who were occasionally directed to him

¹⁵⁹ *CSP Scot.*, vii, 261. Arran was included in deciding who was to receive letters of commission regarding the Association of Crowns, but so were Montrose, Argyll, Eglinton, Crawford and Murdocairny. Clear doubts about Arran's fidelity to Mary were also expressed.

¹⁶⁰ *CSP Scot.*, vii, 305.

by the deposed Scottish queen or through part of her network.¹⁶¹ He may have initiated contact with Mary in 1584 but it certainly had no effect on his relations with Arran nor did it undermine Arran's prominent position.

The vital point regarding the correspondence of the summer of 1584 and James's intentional exclusion of Arran, however, is that it is the first documentation that reveals that James was operating his own international agenda in Catholic politics without direction or supervision from a regent or the head of his government. These were tricky waters to navigate on one's own – especially when the Chancellor was trying to expedite a league with England and James was making contact with its enemies – and indicates a large degree of confidence on the part of James; even if he included other men (such as Seton) in his enterprises he was clearly the one in charge. These international contacts and intrigues may well have been the ones initiated under Lennox's auspices and James used the blatant abuse of monarchy by the Ruthven Raiders' seizure of his person, as well as his government, as the means to regain entrance to the covert politics of his youth.¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ For example, the next reference to Huntly within the Marian network was 27 July 1585 when the Bishop of Ross wrote to Mary. He informed her that he had received a safe conduct from James, but delayed returning, partly because 'letters from the Earl of Huntly and others, his friends, has also stayed his going into Scotland until better commodity'; he also informed her that Huntly assured her that Fontenay was employing his services effectively and discreetly on her behalf, *CSP Scot.*, viii, 40.

¹⁶² James sent Seton and his son, Sir John, to seek support from Guise, France, Rome and Spain. For examples of James's Catholic politicking see *CSP For., Eliz.*, July 1583-July 1584, 285, 356-7, 366, 369-70, 377, 535-6; *CSP Scot.*, vii, 1, 14, 245, 253, 260, 264; *CBP*, i, 137; Colville, *Letters*, 61-3; *Hamilton Papers*, ii, 702; Calderwood, *History*, iv, 2; A. Bellesheim, *History of the Scottish Catholic Church in Scotland*, iii (Edinburgh, 1887-90), 275-6, 278-9; G. Donaldson, *James V – James VII*, 180. For examples of English fears that James's close company with Catholics would be harmful, see *CSP For., Eliz.*, July 1583-July 1584, 113; *Hamilton Papers*, ii, 702; Calderwood, *History*, iii, 735-8; Row, *History*, 103-05; Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 304; *CSP Scot.*, vii, 231.

This appears to be the beginning of his wider strategy throughout his Scottish reign of using his contacts with or over-looking various nobles' contacts with Continental Catholic politics to demonstrate to Elizabeth the potential risks to her security that could be allayed through the official recognition of James as her heir, which at this point was one of the pivotal points of treaty negotiations for James.¹⁶³ By independently testing the waters of international politics, James may have found the confidence to run his domestic agenda independently as well and this may be part of the reason why he so readily ceded to the demands made at Stirling in November 1585 for the removal of Arran: he was ready to rule entirely in his own right.

In July 1585 Huntly was reported as having returned to Falkland, where 'Arran follows him "at an inch" from here to Cupar where he lies ... entertaining him with all the means he can to win him from the Master [of Gray]... For all Arran's familiarity with him, hard words of late have passed between them'.¹⁶⁴ Arran was well aware that he needed the adherence of a powerful, influential earl such as Huntly as his wider support rapidly diminished and the Master of Gray actively undermined his government. Previously in Mary's service, the Master of Gray, a relatively new favourite of James who was growing in influence, saw himself as Arran's successor and worked assiduously to weaken Arran in both domestic and foreign affairs. Following Arran's meeting with Hunsdon in August 1584, Maitland (who had been excluded from Arran's and Hunsdon's privy discussions) aligned with the Master of Gray, who would 'build a party of those hostile to Arran' and be

¹⁶³ The terms of the concluded treaty in July 1586, however, did not recognise his claim. Elizabeth would only concede that she would not allow any derogation of any right or title that *might* be due James. For the terms of the treaty see *CSP Scot.*, viii, 43-5, 491; for summary of the negotiations see *CSP Scot.*, viii, 533-7; for text of the treaty see T. Rymer (ed.), *Foedera*, xv (London, 1713), 803-07.

¹⁶⁴ *CSP Scot.*, viii, 8.

instrumental in Arran's fall in November 1585. Maitland and Bellenden were amongst the Master of Gray's first supporters 'and the two on whom he relied most heavily'.¹⁶⁵

Whilst Arran was busy negotiating the league with England, it was reported in July 1585 that Huntly was in correspondence with the duke of Guise, 'not without 10 [James] prevtye' and that in August Huntly 'hath dealinges under handes with Fraunce'.¹⁶⁶ These are important, although isolated, reports. Although uncorroborated and with no further evidence to indicate whether Huntly did contact Guise or received a response or if James was aware of any such correspondence, it is the first indication of Huntly's future foreign politicking in response to a domestic political situation in which Huntly feared loss of influence.

In 1586, in attempting to counter the policies of John Maitland of Thirlestane and his government, Huntly contacted Guise and Henry III in France and soon thereafter with Philip II in Spain. And, as with this report in the summer of 1585, it was indicated that James was aware of his earl's politicking.¹⁶⁷ Huntly may have been completely innocent of what was suspected of him in 1585, perhaps maintaining contacts initiated during his time in France or during Lennox's regime, or concerning his marriage contract or tutelage of the late Lennox's children. Yet, it is interesting to note the assumptions made by the English that Huntly, a strong, Catholic noble, a

¹⁶⁵ Lee, *John Maitland of Thirlestane*, 65. The English identified the Master of Gray as a means to weaken Arran and in the summer of 1585 Edward Wotton was sent to Scotland 'for two purposes: to negotiate a league, and to conspire with Gray against Arran', Lee, *John Maitland of Thirlestane*, 67; G. Donaldson, *James V – James VII*, 182-3; *CSP Scot.*, vii, 611-14, 649ff.

¹⁶⁶ *Hamilton Papers*, ii, 674, 677.

¹⁶⁷ See Chapter Three below.

Francophile and active opponent to the Ruthven Regime, in his increasing disaffection with the Arran government and its pursuit of an English alliance would seek support from Catholic France. Within the context of James's own foreign contacts, it is also an interesting foreshadowing that the king was considered to be aware of Huntly's correspondence.

Huntly's substantive attempt to undermine Arran, however, was not made through international politics: it was through the banished Hamiltons, Lords Claud and John (brothers of the man whose lands and title, as well as their own lands, Arran had assumed) – the tried and true use of Scottish factions. Huntly did not initiate the plan to use the restoration of the Hamiltons against Arran, but was approached by his later adversary, Maitland. Huntly, however, did respond favourably right away to his overtures which were made soon after Maitland was appointed to the Privy Council in August 1584. According to Lee, Maitland 'evinced no enthusiasm for Arran's policies. In fact, Maitland's only political proposal in his first months as a councilor would, if successful, have resulted in a diminution of Arran's power'.¹⁶⁸

Huntly was approached by Maitland for two reasons: firstly, his personal power and close relationship with the king singled him out; and secondly, he was related to Lords John and Claud Hamilton, who were his mother's brothers. 'Furthermore, by acting with Huntly, Maitland made it appear that he was favoring the Hamiltons only for family reasons'.¹⁶⁹ Their first two attempts to reinstate the Hamiltons was unsuccessful; although perhaps in an attempt to woo him away from his uncles, Arran did make Huntly the

¹⁶⁸ Lee, *John Maitland of Thirlestane*, 50.

¹⁶⁹ Lee, *John Maitland of Thirlestane*, 50.

commendator of Paisley, which was once Claud Hamilton's.¹⁷⁰ In January 1584, Huntly and Maitland tried once again, this time suggesting that in exchange Arran assume the earldom of Ross.¹⁷¹

By March 1584, John Colville wrote to Walsingham advocating the restoration of the Hamiltons as a means to bolster the position of the Anglophiles such as the exiled Angus, Mar, Glencairn, Boyd, Glamis and of the Kirk.¹⁷² Colville concluded that if Lord John Hamilton, who was newly converted to the English amity, was restored Huntly (his nephew), Maxwell (his cousin), Crawford (a near cousin), Eglinton (a brother-in-law), John Kennedy, fifth earl of Cassillis (a son-in-law), Rothes (allied with his sons) and Herries (his dependent) would all likewise follow his suit 'and tak thame to the freindship of the said Lord' and Arran 'durst nocht abyed his presence'.¹⁷³ Walsingham more than likely recognised this suggestion as a serious misunderstanding of the real state of Scottish politics.

Lord Claud, however, rather than seeking English support, decided to cooperate with Maitland and Huntly.¹⁷⁴ By 1584, Maitland was in a stronger position on the Council and 'began to fall away and work his own credit'.¹⁷⁵ The Hamilton tact was resumed, with Huntly's active participation, and several unsuccessful attempts were made to restore him. In February 1584

¹⁷⁰ *CSP Scot.*, vi, 591-2; Lee, *John Maitland of Thirlestane*, 50.

¹⁷¹ *CSP Scot.*, vii, 23; *CSP Scot.*, vi, 591-2; Lee, *John Maitland of Thirlestane*, 50-51.

¹⁷² Angus and his associates were still taking refuge in England. Following Arran's and Hunsdon's meeting in August 1584, the Master of Gray was sent to England. Elizabeth obliged his petition to remove the exiled lords from the borders and relocated them in Oxford, Lee, *John Maitland of Thirlestane*, 64. In his bid to overthrow Arran, the Master of Gray would later request the Elizabeth allow them to return to the borders.

¹⁷³ Colville, *Letters*, 44-5.

¹⁷⁴ Lord John remained loyal to the English party, participating in the Stirling Coup in November 1585, *CBP*, i, 176, 187, 208-211. He was restored 4 November 1585.

¹⁷⁵ Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 323; Lee, *John Maitland of Thirlestane*, 61-2.

Mary was informed that Lord Claud Hamilton had converted to Catholicism and desired 'to make a straight league between himself, the Earls of Huntly and Morton, and divers others, and that your son will be contented therewith'. James personally wrote to Hamilton requesting that he quickly return to Scotland, albeit 'without the privyete or consent of any aboute him, which sheweth he meaneth to employe him'.¹⁷⁶

In either October or November 1584, after four years of banishment on the king's 'simple promise', the lord did return by the means of Seton, Huntly and Maitland (now Secretary) but 'without Arran's knowledge, as was supposed'. Hamilton arrived first at Seton, was then sent to Niddry 'and then upone the kingis warrand, to the northe to my lord Huntlie'.¹⁷⁷ Hamilton apparently did not have the opportunity to leave Huntly's hospitality. Affronted once again, 'Arran was not contented with his coming, and therefore he was confynned in the north with Huntlie. Sir Johne Matlane draweth Huntlie to court, to outmatche Arran in counsell; but Arran carried away the prize, because of Huntlie's follie' – none of the records mention what Huntly's mistake may have been and Hamilton once again had to leave Scotland.¹⁷⁸

Once again Lord Claud returned in February 1585 and, again, things did not go as planned. Arran reacted badly to the threat that Hamilton posed, would 'not suffer any favour to be shown to Claud Hamilton' and proposed that Hamilton should resign his title to the crown and take that of Mar in its

¹⁷⁶ *CSP Scot.*, vii, 29.

¹⁷⁷ Moysie, *Memoirs*, 51-2; Colville, *Letters*, 74-5; Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 320; Calderwood, *History*, iv, 208-09; *HKJVI*, 208. This was much the same route as priests smuggled into Scotland took, utilising an already existing network of safe-houses.

¹⁷⁸ Calderwood, *History*, iv, 209.

stead, 'whereat Huntly and Morton are much grieved, and Seton for displeasure is fallen very sick'.¹⁷⁹ In April 1585, James ordered Lord Claud to leave Scotland but 'the King as I understand doth give him a some of mony, but how much I knowe not'.¹⁸⁰ Maitland was still considered not only 'a great favorer of the Hameltons' but also still an advocate for the Marian cause in August 1585. But by then Arran was more concerned with the return to Court of Bothwell.¹⁸¹

What is important to note, however, is that during the course of Huntly's politicking against Arran, he never lost the king's favour. For example, he bore one of the honours of Scotland at every riding of Parliament and there is not a single recorded instance of Huntly ever having a falling out with James – or with any other noble, for that matter. At no point did Huntly's actions move outwith the realm of normal politics; he was merely playing the game and in doing so abiding by the appropriate rules. An additional point to note is that, aside from his alliance with Maitland in order to restore the Hamiltons, Huntly seemed to avoid factional domestic politics. He attended Council, Court and to the various duties in his locality, but neither the primary nor the secondary sources for the period of July 1583 to December 1585 indicate any other political alliances contracted for a specific purpose. Indeed, for a man who was closely watched because of his affinity with James, his local power-base, his Catholicism (and therefore possible international contacts, as well his correspondence with Mary) and past

¹⁷⁹ *CSP Scot.*, vii, 547; Colville, *Letters*, 82.

¹⁸⁰ *CBP*, i, 179. Finally restored by the December 1585 parliamentary Act of Restitution, Lord Claud Hamilton returned to Scotland and sat on the Privy Council on 24 February 1586, *RPC*, iv, 49.

¹⁸¹ *Hamilton Papers*, ii, 686.

associations with Esmé Stewart, duke of Lennox, the sources are surprisingly reticent about Huntly's political activities on the whole.

Huntly was readily associated with Montrose and Crawford throughout the period, but solely within the context of identifying the men whom were consistently in the king's company (and noting their religious and foreign sympathies). His only other noted affiliation in terms of national politics was with men who were increasingly disaffected with Arran; but this was in accordance with his Maitland alliance, for they were also men with whom Maitland was associated, such as Bellenden and the Master of Gray. But this in itself was insignificant for, by October 1585, the only people in either the Court or Council, who still supported Arran were Montrose, Rothes, Crawford, Doune and Colonel Stewart and 'when the end came, Arran's only wholehearted supporters ... were Colonel Stewart, Crawford and Montrose'.¹⁸² In short, aside from the Hamilton affair, Huntly appeared predominantly in the domestic political context just as a magnate who took his responsibilities seriously, but more importantly, as one of James's personal coterie.

Opposition to Arran grew, encompassing as would be expected the exiled Ruthven lords and the ministers avoiding subscription of the Black Acts¹⁸³ and members of the English government who had always distrusted him. But it now included men such as Huntly, Crawford, Bothwell, Maitland, the Master of Gray and Bellenden, whose disaffection with Arran had been

¹⁸² Lee, *John Maitland of Thirlestane*, 71.

¹⁸³ This legislation in May 1584 confirmed the episcopal government of the Kirk and asserted the supremacy of the king, parliament and the privy council over all estates, spiritual and temporal. The ministers who refused to subscribe were given refuge in England, a bone of contention between James and Elizabeth.

increasing since June 1584.¹⁸⁴ Most of these men were the backbone of James's government and the king realised that the situation had finally reached breaking point. Baldly stated, it was either risking further opposition to his own policies through retaining Arran in the face of such growing opposition (opposition, it must be noted, that was coalescing around Arran rather than James) or sacrificing Arran. Ever the realist, when the banished lords returned to Scotland in October 1585,¹⁸⁵ supported by not only the English, who 'wrought all the meyne thay could for his fall',¹⁸⁶ but by members of his own Court and Council, and convened at Stirling Castle, James had no choice but to concede – albeit grudgingly, saying that 'weapons had spokin loud enough, and gottin them audience, to cleare their owne caus from which they were debarred before'.¹⁸⁷

Huntly (and, perhaps more importantly, his armed retainers), whilst this renovation in state occurred, was safely ensconced in the north. Although he himself did not support Arran, he did not engage in the coup that planned to force a change of government upon James. One source does intimate that Huntly (as well as Maxwell, Bothwell, Atholl, Alexander, sixth Lord Home and Yester) favoured a change in government,¹⁸⁸ but the best he could do to support their cause was to remove himself from Court.¹⁸⁹ Yet James did not

¹⁸⁴ See reports of disaffection with Arran involving Huntly, Crawford, Doune 'and others of their own faction' and Campbell of Ardkinglas (the Comptroller and one of the tutors to the new seventh earl of Argyll, whose father had died on 10 September 1584), *CSP Scot.* vii, 205, 207. On 1 April 1584, William Holt, S.J. wrote that Arran was detested by everyone, Forbes-Leith, *Narratives of Scottish Catholics*, 193.

¹⁸⁵ Calderwood, *History*, iv, 381-2, 385-92; Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 331-4; Sir J. Balfour of Denmilne, *Historical Works*, i, 381-2; *RPC*, iv, 28, 29-30, 30; Lee, *John Maitland of Thirlestane*, 71-6.

¹⁸⁶ *HKJVI*, 206-07.

¹⁸⁷ Calderwood, *History*, iv, 392; a Venetian correspondent interpreted the events as 'the king is now surrounded by the rebels, who govern him as they and the Queen of England desire', *CSP Venice*, 1581-91, 127; G. Donaldson, *James V – James VII*, 183.

¹⁸⁸ Sir J. Balfour of Denmilne, *Historical Works*, i, 382.

¹⁸⁹ There is evidence of Huntly during this time in the north taking bonds of manrent, perhaps to further secure his position if any renovation in government should prove

take this unkindly and, for example, in the Parliament which met in December 1585 to confirm the deposition of Arran and install the new government Huntly bore the sceptre in the riding of the Parliament.

Perhaps in acknowledgement of his years of service, Arran was given the advantage of an early escape and he slipped out the back of Stirling Castle and ultimately out of Scottish politics for the remainder of his life. As for Huntly, he too started the period from great strength but, unlike Arran, his power was never diminished, but rather enhanced. He, with Montrose and Crawford, were instrumental in the coup which enabled their king to choose his own government for the first time in his reign. The government that James chose put into effect a course of action that would, in time, change the political role of the greater nobility, Huntly included.

Groomed from childhood to assume the role of a great landed magnate, Huntly too had to come to terms with how the changes wrought by his king affected his own role and position. One of these changes controversially centred around access to the king but, fortunately for him, Huntly had cemented an already close relationship with James in the summer of 1583 which would guarantee him unlimited access, often giving him the advantage over an opponent, for much of the remainder of James's Scottish reign. Huntly also began that summer the transition from the care-free courtier of the Lennox period to responsible politician and local lord. He took seriously

successful. For example, in October 1585 he was in Inverness contracting bonds with Mr Robert Munro of Fowlis, NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/13/8/38 and with Donald McAngus of Glengarry, NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/13/7/27; in November he bonded with Colin MacKenzie of Kintail, NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/13/8/37 and with Torquil Macleod, fiar of Lewis and his son, NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/13/7/25; letters were being sent to Huntly (and others such as Marischal) in the north in November 1585, NAS Treasurer's Accounts E.21/64.

his role in each of the spheres that were his responsibility – in the Court, the Council, the locality and in international politics – tending each carefully.

Although the sources are mostly silent regarding Huntly's activities in domestic politics, one thing remained unquestioned: he was steadfastly the king's man, both at home and abroad. As the strongest Catholic magnate in Scotland, from 1583 to 1585 he bolstered his king's position in Continental Catholic politics; continuing from Lennox's example from 1581 to 1582, both he and James increased their involvement in this important sphere, improving James's profile. Just as Arran, and subsequently Maitland, worked the English angle to keep James's options open regarding the English succession, so did Huntly enable James to keep the Catholic options open as well.

James had learned from Irish and wider Continental Catholic politics that Elizabeth was becoming increasingly vulnerable as the period progressed. Until he had secured the English succession, therefore, he attempted to make Elizabeth's weakness his strength, to protect his realm and his claim in the English succession from Spanish encroachment. In addition, Huntly was not only a powerful magnate, but a magnate whose uncle was actively involved in the Scottish mission. He was a means through which James would seek to cultivate a position of strength in his future dealings with both Catholic Europe and with England.

The period between June 1583 and November 1585 was very much a transitional one for Huntly. By the end of it, he had established himself well and truly in the general government of the realm, as well as in the king's

personal favour and was becoming known in England as someone to be watched within the context of international Catholic politics. There may not be any instance of singular import during this period following his immediate role in the fall of the Ruthven Regime and emergence of the Arran government, but it was an important time for him nonetheless. It began with him flexing his noble muscle for the first time in a coup which enabled his king to establish the government of his choice and ended with him playing a key role in James's government. Huntly began the period from a position of domestic strength, remained an intimate member of James's coterie and ended the period not only bolstering the king in domestic politics, but in international politics as well.

Chapter Two:
HUNTLY, THE ANGLO-SCOTTISH ALLIANCE
AND THE POLITICS OF THE COUNTER-REFORMATION
DECEMBER 1585 – JULY 1586

From December 1585 to August 1586, Huntly quietly explored the wider implications of the new political situation in Scotland following the fall of the Arran government. He and James operated at more of a distance and Huntly for once did not play an active role in either the Court or the central government. His previous political ties and objectives were changing, as was his role in royal policy now undertaken one step removed from the crown. He was slow to make attachments or affiliations and reluctant to allow himself to be drawn into factions. All of Huntly's previous political affiliations or actions (aside from consolidating his position in the locality) had been tied steadfastly to the king and his interests; he associated with other king's men to achieve the king's policies. There had been little or no room for independent manoeuvring. In the environment of post-Arran Scotland, however, Huntly had the scope to develop his own networks in order to realise his personal political objectives. It was on a whole, a time of evaluation when he preferred to remain on the periphery and his actions were limited, but carefully considered.

The Parliament called in December 1585 swiftly settled any debate that may have arisen regarding the constitution of the new government following the Stirling Coup in November. The governments following Mary's deposition in 1567 were dominated by faction and confessional politics, whereas James's first completely independent government was composed of men drawn from

across the political spectrum, made possible by restoration of the exiled lords from the Ruthven Regime. The Privy Council's proclamation of 4 November 1585 fully rehabilitated John, Lord Hamilton and commendator of Arbroath, Archibald Douglas, eighth earl of Angus, John Erskine, seventh earl of Mar, Thomas Lyon, master of Glamis, as well as others of the banished lords. The Council was satisfied that they 'on nawayes to have tendit to the harme or skaith of his Hienes persoun, estate or authority, bot aganis sum privat personis quhom thay had occasioun of offence'.¹ Their absolution appears to have been based on a rather formulaic excuse for their actions with a decidedly hollow ring, but it sufficed to achieve the king's objective to reunite his nobility under one universal head – himself. Three days later Lord John Hamilton, Angus, Mar and the Master of Glamis were admitted to the Privy Council itself; the Master of Glamis was also appointed Captain of the King's Guard.²

The legitimate return of the exiled lords enabled the next step required to consolidate the new government to be taken: from 1-10 December 1585, Parliament met at Linlithgow. The riding of Parliament underscored James's message regarding factions. On the first day, Ludovic Stewart, second duke of Lennox, bore the crown; Huntly carried the sceptre; and John Stewart, fifth earl of Atholl bore the sword. On the second day, Angus and Francis Stewart, fifth earl of Bothwell, replaced Huntly and Atholl respectively. Members from across all the factions were included equally in the panoply of the honours of state and Huntly was subsequently appointed to the Lords of

¹ *RPC*, iv, 30.

² *RPC*, iv, 33.

the Articles.³ Above all, James was determined to restore the political equilibrium that had been absent from Scottish politics for twenty years. Although James was still recovering from the Stirling Coup, the members of the new government recognised that they needed the king's support, understanding 'that the king's hostility was the chief cause of the failure of the Ruthven raiders'.⁴ Previous administrations had governed without the king, whereas following the Stirling Coup, James became active in government and policy formation. He was now in a position to work towards his ideal of universal kingship and restoring the political equilibrium.

Parliament completed the move to make the Privy Council and the administration representative of all facets of Scottish political opinion. Accordingly, an act of restitution was passed in favour of the banished lords⁵ that enabled the Scottish nobility to come together in accord for the first time since 1567. The Privy Council consisted of men whose political opinions ranged from hard radicals to deep conservatives, including: Lord John Hamilton, Angus, Huntly, George Keith, fifth Earl Marischal, Andrew Leslie, fifth earl of Rothes, John, eighth Lord Maxwell,⁶ Patrick Adamson, archbishop of St. Andrews, Adam Bothwell, bishop of Orkney, William Maxwell, fifth Lord Herries, Lord Claud Hamilton, commendator of Paisley, Patrick, master of Gray, Robert Keith, commendator of Deer, Andrew

³ *CSP Scot.*, viii, 161. The Lords of the Articles included future members of the government such as Atholl, Patrick, master of Gray, Patrick Adamson, archbishop of St Andrews, Andrew Colville, commendator of Culross and Alexander Seton, commendator of Pluscarden.

⁴ Lee, *John Maitland of Thirlestane*, 79.

⁵ The act entailed that 'thair haill transgressions, with all heirships, burning and slaughter, committit be Maxwell in speciall before that day, was bureit be ane act of oblevioun, never to be callit in compt agane be the King, or any inferior Juge whatsoever', *HKJVI*, 214-15. This was a precedent for the Act of Abolition passed in Huntly's favour at the end of 1594.

⁶ Maxwell's earldom of Morton conflicted with that of William Douglas of Lochleven, who assumed the earldom of Morton in July 1587. To avoid confusion, Maxwell will be referred to throughout by the title of his lordship.

Colville, commendator of Culross, Alexander Seton, commendator of Pluscarden and Sir James Home of Cowdenknowes.

Officers of state were equally broadly represented: John Maitland of Thirlestane continued as Secretary; the Master of Glamis was appointed Treasurer with Sir Robert Melville of Murdocairny continuing as his deputy; Walter Stewart, commendator of Blantyre was appointed as Keeper of the Privy Seal; Alexander Hay of Easter Kennet as Clerk-Register; Andrew Wood of Largo as Comptroller; Master Robert Douglas, provost of Lincluden, was appointed Collector-General; Mark Kerr, commendator of Newbattle as Master of Requests; and Sir Lewis Bellenden remained Justice-Clerk; the office of Chancellor remained vacant by act of Parliament.⁷

The political amelioration also extended to a redistribution of the major castles, many being restored to those who traditionally held them from the crown. Angus was made Keeper of Tantallon Castle; Lord John Hamilton received Dumbarton Castle; John Erskine, seventh earl of Mar held custody of Stirling Castle; Edinburgh Castle was given to Sir James Home of Cowdenknowes (much to the dismay of Bothwell⁸); whilst Bellenden received Blackness Castle. Additionally, Maxwell was appointed Warden of the West

⁷ *RPC*, iv, note 36. Sir John Seton, Master of the King's Household, was appointed to the Council on 27 January 1587 (his return to Scotland in January 1585 raised English anxiety; Sir Henry Woddrington wrote to Sir Francis Walsingham on 16 January 1586 that Seton was 'well accepted of the King' and 'is thought to be the chief instrument about the King for the staying' of action against Maxwell for his open Catholic masses at Christmas 1585, *CBP*, i, 217). Although there are no noted formal appointments, Bothwell began to attend sporadically from July 1586 onwards, Montrose and Crawford also resumed attendance from May 1587.

⁸ *CBP*, i, 211; R.G. Macpherson, 'Francis Stewart, Fifth Earl Bothwell, c.1562-1612: Lordship and Politics in Jacobean Scotland' (unpublished University of Edinburgh PhD thesis, 1998), chapter 3. Bothwell was also upset regarding Maitland's continued control over Coldingham, which he considered should rightfully be his, chapter 3. See also Lee, *John Maitland of Thirlestane*, 78-9.

March. Patrick, master of Gray assumed the captaincy of the King's Guard (replacing Colonel William Stewart of Pittenweem), as well as being awarded the wealthy Dunfermline Abbey.

The lists makes for impressive reading: the privy councillors, officers of state, redistribution of major crown holdings together represent what must have been James's ideal government, one based on a broad coalition of all political interests, as well as Presbyterian, Episcopalian and Catholic religious affiliations. In 1583 James VI had expressed his desire to be a 'universal king', above faction and able to choose his councillors at will. According to Gordon Donaldson, the administration formed in December 1585 'was such a coalition as the king had in mind'.⁹ Superficially, this did seem to be the case. However, in practice, it was entirely different. Those who were appointed did portray a broad coalition, but few of the twenty-five men representing this wide range of political interests actually attended the Council regularly or frequently enough to affect policy. The most seldom present were Maxwell (the only time he attended was 11 December 1585), Marischal, Rothes, Huntly,¹⁰ Herries, Lord John Hamilton,¹¹ Patrick Adamson, the archbishop of St Andrews¹² and Robert Keith, commendator of Deer. The Master of Gray only attended fifteen Council sessions, whilst James himself attended sixteen (out of the seventy sederunts recorded for the period of November 1585 to August 1587).

⁹ G. Donaldson, *Scotland: James V - James VII* (Edinburgh, 1965), 187.

¹⁰ Huntly attended Privy Council on 11 December 1585; he did not attend again until 5 May 1587, which coincided with a Convention of Estates. He attended fairly regularly for several months: 5, 19, 24 and 31 May 1587; 7 and 9 June 1587; 12 and 15 August 1587; 16 September 1587. He was not listed in the next fourteen sederunts and next attended Council on 4 April 1588, with subsequent erratic attendance.

¹¹ Lord John Hamilton attended seven Council meetings from November 1585 to August 1587, while his brother, Lord Claud, attended twelve times during the same period.

¹² The archbishop attended only six sessions.

The most consistent members were Angus, Mar, the Master of Glamis, Maitland, Bellenden, Blantyre, the Bishop of Orkney, Alexander Hay, Culross, Pluscarden, the Provost of Lincluden and Cowdenknowes. Of these men, Mar and Culross had the lowest attendance rates whilst Angus, the Master of Glamis and Maitland were clearly the dominant members. Maitland did not miss a single Council session for twenty-one months, which was indicative 'of his growing power and importance'.¹³ Analysis of the Council attendance clearly demonstrates that the Privy Council represented a broad coalition on paper only. Of those who predominantly attended, 'the distinctive core of it was the restored element of the Reform or Ruthven-Raid Government of August 1582-July 1583'¹⁴ – namely, Angus, the Master of Glamis and Mar, Maitland being the exception.

The sources for the period do not emphasise the link between the new administration and the Ruthven Regime, but it was immediately clear that the government was not being run by the broad coalition appointed by the Linlithgow Parliament. Instead of being referred to by the name of their previous coup, the men from the Ruthven Regime, with the addition of Maitland, were now referred to by their most recently successful coup: the 'Stirling lords'.¹⁵ Whatever nomenclature one chooses to append to the new administration, it was apparent by January 1586 that Angus, the Master of

¹³ *RPC*, iv, xiii. Maitland's growing influence on developing and implementing policy, aside from his personal influence with James, is further demonstrated by his rapid elevation in status: on 31 May 1586 he was made Keeper of the Great Seal for life, with the subordinate title of Vice-Chancellor (he first appeared in a sederunt as Vice-Chancellor on 19 June 1586, *RPC*, iv, 85). As Maitland's influence grew, that of his colleagues, Angus's particularly, correspondingly declined.

¹⁴ *RPC*, iv, xiii. For comments on general attendance patterns, see xi-xiii. '[T]he men of the Ruthven Raid had returned to power', J.R. Elder, *Spanish Influences in Scottish History* (Glasgow, 1920), 129-30.

¹⁵ For example, Gray, *Letter and Papers*, 139; *CSP Scot.*, viii, 311; ix, 266. Although not part of the Ruthven Raid, Maitland certainly did play a role in the Stirling Coup.

Glamis and Maitland dominated the administration and subsequent policy. Not only did the wider nobility rarely attend sessions of the Privy Council, but they melted away from Court as well: the only nobles remaining at the turn of the new year were Angus, Mar and Bothwell.¹⁶ By the middle of January 1586, Roger Ashton informed Sir Francis Walsingham that James was guided by Maitland and the Master of Glamis and that ‘there is great division among the nobility, the one half ready to cut the other half’s throats’.¹⁷

Patrick, master of Gray, however, held his ground at Court and began trying to counter the influence of the new government, particularly that of Maitland. Despite the fact that Maitland and the Master of Gray had been a part of James’s coterie for years and had been closely aligned to bring down Arran’s government, their competition for position and influence (particularly with regard to James), inevitably resulted in the ‘great dislike conceived between the secretary and the master of Gray, who is not so great a courtier as he was’.¹⁸ The Master of Gray’s politics during the winter of 1585 to 1586 was wholly focused on the removal of Maitland, whom he considered his foremost adversary. He openly competed with Maitland for both influence and the king’s affections – and lost.

The Master of Gray’s strategy was to upset the political equilibrium by provoking action against the administration itself (and individuals within it) or its policies. He made appeals to other likely political groupings or to men

¹⁶ *CBP*, i, 218. Bothwell’s presence may be attributed to his persistent complaints regarding Coldingham, Lee, *John Maitland of Thirlestane*, 79.

¹⁷ *CSP Scot.*, viii, 188. In December 1585, the Master of Glamis confided in Walsingham that he believed that Maitland, rather than Angus, Mar or himself, had the most influence with James, *CSP Scot.*, viii, 172.

¹⁸ *CSP Scot.*, viii, 216. In March 1586, Thomas Randolph, the newly arrived English ambassador in Scotland, was still reporting ‘great enmity between the Master of Gray and the Secretary’, 241.

who were known to have points of dispute with either policy or with the individuals who made that policy. He attempted to undermine Maitland in the continuing treaty negotiations with England. Hence, in February 1586, Queen Mary was informed that the Master of Gray would ‘fill Scotland with factions and divisions’ and was ‘doing his utmost to bring back to court, and to reconcile with the King of Scotland the earls of Huntley, Atholl and Bothwell and others’.¹⁹

Huntly had withdrawn from Court prior to the Stirling Coup, returning only to attend Parliament in December 1585, immediately followed by a session of the Privy Council on 11 December. He carried out his parliamentary commission to pursue Arran in order to retrieve the jewels he had allegedly stolen from Edinburgh Castle, but was unsuccessful.²⁰ Upon completing his parliamentary obligations, Huntly withdrew north where he remained for several months.²¹ Huntly’s withdrawal from Court was noted by those

¹⁹ *CSP Scot.*, viii, 213. One example given of the factions he was encouraging was the competition between the Hamiltons and the Lennox Stewarts. See Lee, *John Maitland of Thirlestane*, 88-92.

²⁰ Huntly followed Arran to Fairlie Read, but Arran successfully hid on the isle until Huntly departed. Sir William Stewart subsequently managed to recover for the king one jewel and a chain, Moysie, *Memoirs*, 56; *CSP Scot.*, viii, 161-2.

²¹ On 18 December 1585, Huntly received a bond of manrent from Alasdair and Ewen MacGregor at Weymss, NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/13/8/40 and on 22 December 1585 he contracted another bond of manrent with George Drummond of Blair at Blair, NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/13/7/26. Neither bond was witnessed by Huntly personally, but the latter was witnessed by men known to be in his personal retinue, such as John Gordon of Pitlurg, Thomas Gordon, heir apparent of Cluny and John Gordon, heir apparent of Carnbarrow. Huntly had subscribed the bonds he had taken in October and November 1585, NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/13/8/38, NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/13/7/27, NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/13/8/37, NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/13/7/25 (as well as his one previous bond in August 1583 with the earl of Argyll, NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/13/8/36) and subsequent bonds continued to be witnessed by those in his personal retinue or himself. It therefore seems unlikely that he was not at the very least in the vicinity when the bonds were taken and therefore a reliable indication of his location. Huntly was still in the north in February and March 1586, *CSP Scot.*, viii, 213, 214, 261. The first evidence of him venturing south was in April 1586 when he attended a meeting at Montrose’s house, *CSP Scot.*, viii, 311. In January 1586, Huntly was granted the wardship and marriage of Alexander Menzies, son and heir to the late James Menzies of that ilk; the Treasurer’s Accounts indicate that £333.7s.8d. was discharged to Huntly that month, NAS Treasurer’s Accounts E.21/64, f. 114v.. Huntly subsequently assigned the gift of the marriage of

carefully monitoring the developing political factions. Within the context of Maxwell's blatant Catholic displays in the Borders,²² concerns regarding the imminent return of prominent Catholics such as Lord Claud Hamilton and Sir John Seton²³ and rumours circulating regarding Spanish invasion plans for England (either through Ireland or Scotland),²⁴ as well as Angus's, the Master of Glamis's and Mar's deep-seated Protestantism,²⁵ it is not surprising that Huntly's decision to remain within his own earldom was attributed to

Alexander Menzies to Duncan Campbell of Glenorchy, NAS Breadalbane Muniments GD112/23/2/15, NAS Breadalbane Muniments GD112/23/2/20, NAS Breadalbane Muniments GD112/23/2/22, NAS Breadalbane Muniments GD112/23/2/23, NAS Breadalbane Muniments GD112/1/291 and for the Bond of Friendship between Huntly and Glenorchy on 10 December 1588, NAS Breadalbane Muniments GD112/1/290. Glenorchy discharged £1,100 Scots and 4,000 merks in total to Huntly; on 3 September 1589 Huntly assigned to Robert Bruce of Baldrig, his servitor, £1,000 Scots out of the amount due Huntly from Glenorchy, NAS Breadalbane Muniments GD112/23/2/23 (Bruce was identified as Huntly's servitor in NAS Breadalbane Muniments GD112/39/16/2).

²² Maxwell and Herries were converted to Catholicism in 1585 and 1584 respectively. Maxwell was known to shelter at least four priests (including: Alexander Macquhirrie, alias Alexander Scot, suspected Jesuit, but a secular priest; William Holt, S.J.; William Lang, an alias for John Dury, S.J., but separately documented as arriving in January 1586 with the French ambassador when Dury had already been with Maxwell for several months; John Dury, the Jesuit who converted Maxwell, as well as reputedly 10,000 others in Dumfries and longest resident mission priest in the Borders; Frossoment, a French Jesuit; in addition to the mission priests, was Gilbert Brown, former Catholic abbot of New Abbey). Maxwell openly supported the priests' evangelising and held open Christmas masses (complete with processions) in and near Dumfries on 24, 25 and 26 December 1585; he was also known to maintain a substantial number of foot and horse, suspected to have been funded by the French. He was warded in Edinburgh Castle from January to May 1586. See K.M. Brown, 'The Making of a Politique: the Counter-Reformation and the Regional Politics of John, Eighth Lord Maxwell', *SHR*, (October, 1987), 158-60; Forbes-Leith, *Narratives of Scottish Catholics*, 204-05; Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 337; *HKJVI*, 215-16; Calderwood, *History*, iv, 489; *CBP*, i, 216, 217-18, 220, 221; *CSP Scot.*, viii, 188, 216; for further discussion see Chapter Three below.

²³ Lord Claud Hamilton, Sir John Seton and an ambassador from France all arrived in January 1586.

²⁴ For example, *CSP For., Eliz.*, September 1585-May 1586, 118, 196, 234, 254; *CSP Ireland*, 1586-1588, 7. In 1586, concerns were first raised about Anglesey, perceived as an ideal stepping stone between Ireland and Wales; the general unreformed state of Wales encouraged wider consideration of the defence of Wales, as a whole and its borders, with the English government's concerns becoming more marked by March 1587, *CSP Dom.*, 1581-90, 375, 357, 392.

²⁵ Considering their Protestant agenda when Angus, Mar and the Master of Glamis were in government during the Ruthven Regime, it would be expected that Huntly would be wary. Although English correspondents and politicians already had a penchant for analysing politics within a strict Protestant-Catholic dichotomy, the entrenched Protestant reputation of Angus, Mar and the Master of Glamis versus Huntly's known Catholicism and tangential connection with the Jesuit mission, as well as Maxwell's public masses, may help to explain why religious affiliations seemed to be noted with even more painstaking awareness during this period when identifying factions.

confessional politics. Sir Edward Stafford ascribed Huntly's withdrawal, along with that of David Lindsay, eleventh earl of Crawford and Thomas Kerr of Fernihurst, to Maxwell being warded in Edinburgh Castle, having 'retired themselves, and sent the King word of the cause; that seeing others that were stayed for their consciences they were to look to themselves'.²⁶ Confessional politics, however, had little bearing on Huntly's actions or political affiliations in early 1586. Huntly and Maxwell may well have shared common political objectives, but the foundation of those objectives was not primarily Catholicism.

Huntly had been careful to disassociate himself from Maxwell's public masses at Christmas 1585²⁷ and their views differed on the best way to preserve the Catholic faith. Huntly followed a path which sheltered the faith and the mission priests in Scotland, drawing little public attention to it and employing prudence in the private practice of his own Catholicism. He adopted a discreet and strategic approach in the maintenance of his faith. It is in this sense that Huntly, as well as men such as Crawford, Seton, Erroll, Sutherland, Livingston and Lord Claud Hamilton, were typical of the Catholic aristocracy in Jacobean Scotland. Maxwell was the exception, the only Catholic lord who openly promoted public masses. The consensus of the Catholic nobility was that bringing the celebration of the mass into the public domain would jeopardise the Jesuit mission, which recognised that the continuation of Catholicism in Scotland depended on the private faith and patronage of leading Catholic families, especially the nobility. The Jesuits specifically targeted the elite for these were the people in society most able to

²⁶ *CSP For., Eliz.*, September 1585-May 1586, 376.

²⁷ Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 337; *CBP*, i, 216, 218.

effect, protect or even enforce change.²⁸ Huntly, like other Catholic nobles, would be unable to undertake such a role if he became the subject of religious prosecution.

Maxwell took the opposite position and justified his taking blatant liberties with the law by claiming that the king ‘had graunted him lycence to use his own conscyence in religioun’.²⁹ It would certainly have been consistent with James’s past as well as future relations with Scottish Catholics if he may well had given Maxwell such a dispensation, but the king never tolerated the public celebration of mass at any point in his reign. Huntly’s approach was consistent with the norms of the wider Catholic aristocracy; it was the atypical Maxwell, however, who represented to the Protestants the conventional Catholic lord. Maxwell embodied Protestant fears in his open promotion of the faith and protection of the mission priests, as well as his willingness to engage with Catholic powers abroad and to take up arms on behalf of his faith. The key point, however, is that the Protestants projected Maxwell’s practice onto his co-religionists.

Huntly’s withdrawal from Court after the Linlithgow Parliament in December 1585 had little to do with his Catholicism, nor with speculations regarding an alliance between him and Lord Claud Hamilton. It was based on continued opposition to the policies being pursued by the new government and to the men implementing them. Huntly had no common links with the men who formed the core of the new administration and its policies: foremost, he was against the league with England. He adopted a watching brief and any

²⁸ T.M. McCoog, S.J. “Pray to the Lord of the Harvest”: Jesuit Missions to Scotland in the Sixteenth Century’, *IR*, 53 (2002), 157.

²⁹ *CBP*, i, 217.

supposed ties between himself and men such as Lord Claud Hamilton or Maxwell were purely conjectural.

The links made by observers to Lord Claud Hamilton and Maxwell did make sense politically. Like Huntly, neither of the two men had sympathy for the new administration. Their similarities ended there, however, for all three had very different long-term agendas. Hamilton was focused on national politics and the formation of his own party. His religion and the connections he had made whilst in exile in France were calculated to bolster his position. It can be argued that out of the entire Scottish Catholic nobility, Lord Claud Hamilton was the clearest example of a Catholic *politique*. He was willing to use his extensive range of influential Catholic connections and resources to pursue more secular political outcomes. This, of course, does not negate the strength that religious conviction played in the opposition to the English league, but Hamilton was also adept at manipulating the Catholic cause for his own benefit. Primarily, this meant the restoration of the prestige and influence of the Hamiltons to the level obtained prior to Mary's engagement to Henry Stewart, Lord Darnley which had first marginalised the Hamiltons in favour of the Lennox Stewarts.

Patrick, master of Gray hoped to capitalise on Hamilton's ambition, that by 'opposing the Hamiltons to the house of Lennox' he personally could take advantage of the increased division within Scotland.³⁰ Along with the Master of Gray, Lord Claud Hamilton's success lay in gaining access to James, but even then he faced an exceedingly difficult task. Reinstating the Hamiltons necessitated the displacement of Ludovic Stewart, second duke of Lennox –

³⁰ *CSP Scot.*, viii, 213.

Esmé Stewart's son and heir, whom James was determined to protect as if he was his own son.³¹ Such a change would also entail replacing the faction that currently dominated Scottish politics. Logically, Lord Claud Hamilton needed to build his own faction in order to achieve either objective.³²

Huntly and Lord Claud Hamilton had aligned prior to Arran's fall, they both had French connections and were kin (through Huntly's mother). Additionally, both men were interested in supplanting the current administration and objected strongly to an alliance with England. Their shared religion consolidated their alliance but it was not necessarily the primary motivating factor in determining their association. All points considered, from the vantage of those closely monitoring Scottish politics, it was therefore logical to assume further political affiliation between Huntly and Lord Claud Hamilton. The most important point regarding these speculations, however, is that the context of the dispatches regarding Lord Claud Hamilton and Huntly were decidedly political with the emphasis on their opposition to Angus and the English league.

Maxwell was also one of the more common associations made with Huntly. Perhaps their initial connection was predicated on, again, a shared religion, but Maxwell, although he had played an instrumental role in the success of the Stirling Coup through his local insurrections, had overt political differences with the new administration. Perhaps more so than other individuals, Maxwell particularly had issues with Angus. These, however,

³¹ This became much harder to achieve once Huntly married Lennox's elder sister, Henrietta Stewart, in 1588.

³² Apart from his role in the demise of the Arran government and intervening on Maxwell's behalf both to obtain his release from ward and in the locality, Claud's elder brother, Lord John, seemed disinclined to play a very active role in Scottish national.

were predominantly based on a local level, rather than national. Maxwell's history of government opposition during the minority and care-taker governments of James, with the exception of the Lennox regime, was coloured by local contentions. The friction between Arran and Maxwell was firmly based on Arran's attempts to undermine Maxwell's local powerbase. Maxwell's antagonism to Angus was more personal, with Angus questioning his right to the Morton earldom and disputing his share of the Morton inheritance.³³

The rivalry between the two men escalated after Maxwell's flagrant masses at Christmas 1585. Not only was Maxwell warded for five months, but his positions as lord of Dalkeith and Warden of the West March were awarded to Angus; moreover, Angus was appointed Lieutenant for all of the Borders on 2 November 1586. The Hamiltons assisted Maxwell in obtaining an early release from his ward in Edinburgh Castle and in protesting against Angus's appointment. The earl's commission was reduced at the end of November 1586 to exclude the West March where Lord John Hamilton assumed control instead.³⁴ Although Angus and Maxwell assumed an uneasy truce their dance was by no means over.

In addition to his personal rivalry with Angus, Maxwell was also opposed to the league with England. A stalwart Marian pre-dating his conversion to

³³ K.M. Brown, 'The Making of a *Politique*', 153-8. James Douglas, fourth earl of Morton was Regent, 1572-78 and retained control of the administration until 1580. He was executed in June 1581 for complicity in Darnley's murder. His heir was Archibald Douglas, eighth earl of Angus but Maxwell was created earl of Morton in his stead.

³⁴ *CBP*, i, 218; Lee, *John Maitland of Thirlestane*, 78; K.M. Brown, 'The Making of a *Politique*', 159-60. Dalkeith was part of the estates of the late regent, Morton. Hamilton's daughter married Maxwell's heir. Maxwell was relaxed from close ward in Edinburgh Castle to ward within the burgh of Edinburgh on 22 March 1586 and fully released from his ward on 27 May 1586, *RPC*, iv, 54-5, 76-7.

Catholicism, his antagonism towards the English only increased after the Babington Plot's revelation in August 1586.³⁵ The Hamilton connection appears to have become the axis on which the opposition to the government was being formed. Although all Huntly and Maxwell shared to this point was their common religion, their known opposition to the administration and its English policy seems to have brought them under the Hamilton umbrella, with their names being increasingly linked together. In fact, Huntly carefully maintained a steadfast distance from Maxwell because the latter's Catholic policy was diametrically opposed to Huntly's own. Huntly and Maxwell shared previous affiliations with Lord Claud Hamilton,³⁶ both opposed the English league and both were Catholics. But there is no evidence for a political alliance or relationship of any nature between Huntly and Maxwell in early 1586.

Reports regarding Huntly's connections were not limited to Maxwell and Hamilton, but covered a range of men with cause to oppose or to be discontented with either the present administration or the direction that policy was taking. Huntly's frequent links with Crawford and Montrose are the most unsurprising of all. Huntly, Crawford and Montrose had been closely associated with each other and with the king since 1581; as with Huntly, this was the first time since 1581 (excluding the Ruthven period) that these two earls were not a part of either the Court or the government.³⁷ In January 1586 it was rumoured that Huntly and Crawford were

³⁵ See below.

³⁶ After the Maxwell-Hamilton marriage alliance in 1586, Huntly and Maxwell were both part of the extended Hamilton kin network.

³⁷ Of the men who had supported and surrounded the king consistently since 1581 (with the exception of the Ruthven government when their physical separation was compelled), it was the men of lesser rank who remained within the administration formed in December 1585 or at Court: for example, Maitland, the Master of Gray, Bellenden.

communicating with the deposed Arran, now Captain James Stewart.³⁸ Crawford had been one of the last men, along with Montrose, to support the failing Arran; as a result, both earls were politically ostracised – Crawford had even been warded.³⁹

Although the report mentioned that Huntly and Crawford were both Catholic, it was an aside. They may have differed in their views of Arran, but their underlying political beliefs remained the same. Unlike their relations with Maitland, which had changed abruptly when he became a pivotal member of the administration formed in December 1585, the relationship between the three earls remained unaltered. Yet, they all found themselves in similar positions under entirely new circumstances, trying to make sense of the new state of play in James's first independent government. As with Huntly, neither earl committed himself to any public stance or action against the government: all three waited to see how the game would play out, to see who the players of note would be and their opening moves.

Suspensions regarding Huntly's active participation in opposition to the government were just that: unfounded suspicions. The attempts to draw him into various factions or the sheer number of unsubstantiated links that were made between Huntly and a faction or individuals illustrate Huntly's

³⁸ *CSP Scot.*, viii, 188. Rumours regarding the schemes to reinstate Arran were numerous, but there is no evidence of Huntly either supporting these plans or meeting with Arran himself. Reinstating Arran would actually have been counter-productive and undermined Huntly's own interests.

³⁹ The Archbishop of Glasgow wrote to Mary that when he was at liberty, Crawford went 'to the country of the north towards the Earl of Huntley. The common rumour is that he did not make this retreat without his majesty's connivance', *CSP Scot.*, viii, 261. It is not surprising that Huntly would welcome Crawford or that James would encourage Crawford to join Huntly in the north. After all, Crawford had remained loyal to James's trust in Arran when the tides were overwhelmingly turning against the Chancellor. Loyalty was highly valued by the king and he repaid it in kind.

importance in Scottish politics. The attempts by Patrick, master of Gray to draw on Huntly's influence in order to further his personal ambitions may be seen as opportunistic, but it does further the point.⁴⁰ Huntly's retiring from the Court and the centre was about the new political establishment. All the people Huntly was either associated with or solicited by had demonstrable problems or issues with either the personnel composing the government, its policies or both: Lord Claud Hamilton, Maxwell, the Master of Gray, Crawford, Montrose, Bothwell.⁴¹ Although this does demonstrate Huntly's political importance as a major magnate, the fact remains that he was not the focus of attention. The man who was being closely watched and suspected of working to form the faction in opposition to Angus, the Master of Glamis and Maitland was Lord Claud Hamilton. Huntly was just one of a number of men who was suspected of being party to Hamilton's politicking.

The English correspondents who accurately perceived the context of Huntly's role in the opposition to Angus and his colleagues were equally astute in marking Lord Claud Hamilton as the proposed leader of the opposition. For example, at the end of December 1585, it was reported to Walsingham that there 'is great desire that Lord Claude Hamilton may return home, to make some new party against England ... by the help of his brother, the Lord Huntly and others'.⁴² The deduction that the formations of new factions and alliances were in response to Angus, Mar, Maitland and the Master of Glamis,

⁴⁰ *CSP Scot.*, viii, 213, 214.

⁴¹ There were no connections whatsoever between Huntly and Bothwell; both of their names were merely included in lists of men joining against the government. Bothwell had supported the Stirling Coup because of his personal rivalry with Arran, 'within three months, however, Bothwell was considered malcontent with the new regime' and 'blamed his fellow "confederate lords" for failing to gain him preferment and attempted to ally himself with other members of the nobility' to challenge Angus, Mar and the Master of Glamis, R.G. Macpherson, 'Francis Stewart, Fifth Earl Bothwell', 156-7.

⁴² *CSP For., Eliz.*, September 1585-May 1586, 708. See below for further discussion of Lord Claud Hamilton's assumed leadership of an opposition party.

not a product of confessional politics, is a key point in the analysis of this period in general and in understanding Huntly's role in particular. Despite concerns about Maxwell's masses, the number of Jesuits in Scotland and Catholicism in general, the emphasis in their discussions regarding factions and their supposed objectives by contemporaries (English and Scottish alike) was firmly on secular politics.

Within a wider context, it was the political objectives of European Catholics – such as the subjugation of England – which was of primary concern to the politicians and therefore noting the religious and European affiliations of individuals, especially those within a position of political influence with known Continental connections, was indeed relevant. This does not minimise the religious implications of Catholic mission priests and those who sheltered them or the examples set by undisciplined Catholic nobles who protected priests and neglected the planting of kirks or the payment of stipends in their locality, but to a large extent it was a separate issue. It must also be noted that the Jesuit mission was inherently political and demands made by the English that Jesuits be expelled from Scotland were part of its wider political concerns.

Hence, in early 1585 English speculation was about factions forming in response to the new administration and its policies. The main political players – and their religions – were noted in the suspected composition of a faction supposedly being formed by Lord Claud Hamilton. Of those linked together in opposition, there were certainly Catholics (for example, Huntly, Lord Claud Hamilton, Crawford, Maxwell), but Protestants were represented as well (Montrose, Rothes, Bothwell, Lord John Hamilton, the Master of

Gray, Atholl). Unlike the government, its opposition did form a broad coalition. Conjecture was rife about who, what and why (opposition, like government, could make strange bedfellows), but the one thing that all seemed to agree upon was that any faction being formed was in direct opposition to Angus, Maitland, the Master of Glamis and one policy in particular: the proposed league with England.

The formation of a new faction was explicitly linked with Lord Claud Hamilton in December 1585 in the first mention of his anticipated return to Scotland.⁴³ It was expected that Hamilton's primary target, with the assistance of Huntly and Maxwell, would be Angus – and not necessarily without the king's support.⁴⁴ According to reports, Hamilton was personally urged by James himself to return to Scotland, 'that he may be the better able to revenge himself upon the Earls of Angus and Mar, whom he means to ruate'.⁴⁵ Following his arrival in Scotland, Hamilton was described by Moysie as 'a man weill lykit of be the King for his wit, and obedience in comming and going at the Kingis command, and for the reueiling of certane interpryses of the lordis at thair being in England'.⁴⁶

⁴³ *CSP For., Eliz.*, September 1585-May 1586, 708. For Hamilton's faction-forming and the king's support, see R. Grant, 'The Making of the Anglo-Scottish Alliance of 1586' in J. Goodare and A.A. MacDonald (eds), *Sixteenth Century Scotland: Essays in Honour of Michael Lynch* (Leiden, 2008), 221-3.

⁴⁴ *CSP For., Eliz.*, September 1585-May 1586, 316, 375, 709; *CSP Scot.*, viii, 220.

⁴⁵ *CSP For., Eliz.*, September 1585-May 1586, 709; *CSP Scot.*, viii, 220; the former Spanish ambassador to England, Bernardino de Mendoza, wrote that Hamilton was 'a person of valour and understanding, devotedly attached to the queen of Scotland, and his family is of great influence in the country ... the king of Scotland, for these reasons, was induced to recall him', *CSP Spain*, iii, 635; James Tyrie, S.J. informed Claud Aquaviva, S.J. in January 1586 that James personally wrote to Lord Claud Hamilton, 'urging him to come to Scotland for reasons he will learn on his arrival', Forbes-Leith, *Narratives of Scottish Catholics*, 208.

⁴⁶ Moysie, *Memoirs*, 56; Calderwood, *History*, iv, 491. He sat on the Privy Council for the first time on 24 February 1586, *RPC*, iv, 49.

Therein may lie the reason for James's favour: the former Ruthven lords, whose true colours were attested yet again with the commission of a second coup in November 1585, may have formed a new government, but he saw Hamilton as a man who could prove a balance to the administration. His Marian credentials and French connections, as well as his religion and place in the Scottish succession, played into the king's strategy of attempting to pressure Elizabeth into a league on his terms, namely recognising his place in the English succession. Hamilton's influential European Catholic connections also safeguarded the king's need for Catholic support should he have to contest the succession. James was never one to restrict himself solely to one course of action: the administration led by Angus, the Master of Glamis and Maitland was one means to an end; Lord Claud Hamilton provided another. By March 1586, he was recognised as one of England's 'greatest enemies' in Scotland.⁴⁷

Perhaps one of the most surprising aspects of this period is that James, who now ruled entirely in his own right without any hindrance whatsoever, permitted his first independent administration to be dominated by the former Ruthven lords. Despite their legal rehabilitation, his feelings regarding the Ruthven Raid and for the men who had been banished for their part in it were well known.⁴⁸ The king's disposition towards Angus was described as 'scarcely soundly affected, notwithstanding the reconciliation'.⁴⁹ James, however, had chosen them as the best means to achieve his objective of satisfactorily concluding an alliance with England.

⁴⁷ Gray, *Letters and Papers*, 140.

⁴⁸ For example, in a letter on 12 April 1585 to Bellenden, James strongly indicted the Ruthven lords as 'culpable of the unnatural practice of our intended murder', G.P.V. Akrigg (ed.), *Letters of King James VI & I* (London, 1984), 60-62.

⁴⁹ Rogers, *Estimate*, 48; two months later, his feelings remained unchanged, *CSP Scot.*, viii, 563.

The February 1586 report that '[t]he King begins to take a more solid kind in governing than he did, but does nothing without good advice'⁵⁰ indicates that James was actively involved in government policy. Whilst Secretary Maitland urged caution and counselled delay so that Scotland's dividends from the alliance could be maximised,⁵¹ his aristocratic colleagues were keen to accomplish the completion of the alliance as quickly as possible. James quite neatly used their English connections and credentials (and need for the security that the league represented to their faction) to achieve his own ends. Meanwhile the Master of Gray avidly worked to undermine Maitland, whilst overtly furthering the king's agenda – and venturing further and further into the English orbit.⁵²

The English too were anxious to conclude the treaty as quickly as possible. The developing international situation as well as internal Scottish politics made delay decidedly against their best interests. Widespread fears regarding Spain,⁵³ coupled with England's financial and military over-extension, combined with the arrival in Scotland of the first resident French

⁵⁰ *CSP Scot.*, viii, 216.

⁵¹ For Maitland's position regarding the treaty and disagreement with James, see Lee, *John Maitland of Thirlestane*, 87-97.

⁵² One of first things the English ambassador reported at the end of February 1586 was that there was 'great enmity between the Master of Gray and the Secretary', *CSP Scot.*, viii, 241. The increased hostility and 'great dislike conceived between the secretary and the master of Gray' was also reported by Roger Aston on 4 February, *CSP Scot.*, viii, 216. The English used the enmity between the Master of Gray and Maitland to their advantage; for example it facilitated the repatriation of their agent, Mr Archibald Douglas, in April 1586, Moysie, *Memoirs*, 57.

⁵³ Pope Gregory XIII had died in April 1585. The desire of the new Pope, Sixtus V, for Christian unity and a Catholic England increased the chances that Rome would heed Spain's requests for aid. Sixtus V dispatched four priests to Scotland (they arrived in January 1586 in the company of the French ambassador) to conduct an appraisal of the country. The Pope did endorse Philip's Enterprise of England on 29 July 1587: Sixtus V was to invest a Catholic nominee of Philip II (who intended to nominate his daughter, Isabella) as monarch of England; the papal contribution was fixed at one million gold ducats, half to be paid on the Spanish army's landing in England and then bi-monthly instalments, A.O. Meyer, *England and the Catholic Church under Elizabeth* (London, 1916), Appendix XX; T.M. McCoog, S.J., *The Society of Jesus in Ireland, Scotland, and England, 1541-1588: 'Our Way of Proceeding?'* (Leiden, 1996), 244-5.

ambassador in twenty years, Baron d'Esneval, heightened English anxiety about their security.⁵⁴ Negotiations for the league finally began with the arrival of the English ambassador, Thomas Randolph, at the end of February 1586.⁵⁵ The Anglo-Scottish alliance was the single outstanding issue which dominated Scottish politics from January 1586 until it was formally concluded on 5 July 1586. Even after its conclusion it had profound repercussions on Scottish politics.⁵⁶

The negotiations in early 1586 for an alliance with England brought together an opposition coalition based on a broad platform, encompassing men of varying complexions with differing issues and interests. Indeed, the faction might never have coalesced without this instigating factor. There may not have been one single unifying issue in their opposition, but the men in this faction did share one characteristic: none of them were involved in either Court or government. At the beginning of April, Montrose hosted a convention for 'the chief adversaries of the league – all Papists or malcontents for their own or the King's mother's cause'. Amongst those gathered was Huntly, 'with his adherents in the north, who here want no friends'.⁵⁷ Huntly was also identified as 'the cheifaste pillar to this factioun'.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ D'Esneval and his aide, Courcelles, arrived on 13 January 1586 'and wes to stay lang in Scotland', Moysie, *Memoirs*, 56; his endeavours were well-financed by the supply of gold he supposedly brought with him, *CSP Scot.*, viii, 188. In March, d'Esneval petitioned that the Anglo-Scottish league should not be concluded without the consent of the French king, according to the Franco-Scottish alliance. James responded that since France had not consulted with Scotland prior to the conclusion of its own treaty with England, 'he was not so tied', *CSP Scot.*, viii, 245.

⁵⁵ Randolph had arrived in Berwick on 25 February. Randolph informed Walsingham that he was warmly received and met by Lennox, Angus, Mar, Maitland, Bothwell, Lord Claud Hamilton, Herries, Seton and the Master of Gray, *CSP Scot.*, viii, 241.

⁵⁶ For detailed discussion of Scottish politics during treaty negotiations and the negotiating of the alliance, see R. Grant, 'The Making of the Anglo-Scottish treaty of 1586' in J. Goodare and A.A. MacDonald (eds), *Sixteenth-Century Scotland: Essays in Honour of Michael Lynch* (Leiden, 2008), 223-31.

⁵⁷ *CSP Scot.*, viii, 311.

⁵⁸ *CSP Scot.*, viii, 426-7.

According to the Archbishop of Glasgow, the king ‘continued more than ever his wonted affection to the lords, the Earls of Huntly, Crawford and Montrose, and others of that faction, and that he was preparing to go to Falkland after the feast of Easter, where, in the opinion of some, some change might be made’.⁵⁹

It is indicative of the political stability that policy dissent was not a challenge to authority. Huntly, Crawford, Montrose, Lord Claud Hamilton and others who opposed the league with England never stepped outwith the bounds of legal political intercourse. Even when James exercised his prerogative and bypassed confirmation of the treaty by a Convention of Estates,⁶⁰ they never did more than make their profound dismay patently clear, ultimately respecting and accepting the king’s government.

The treaty was finally quietly concluded on 5 July 1586 when an alliance between Scotland and England was confirmed by each country’s commissioners at Berwick. The terms of the treaty included an offensive and defensive alliance ‘for the causes of the true religion’, stipulating the amount of troops each would send to support the other. If the English borders were invaded, the Scots would send forces for thirty days or longer and if Ireland was the point of invasion, then Scottish mercenaries would be prohibited from going to Ireland. The treaty was predominantly concluded on England’s terms: concerning the succession, Elizabeth would only concede

⁵⁹ *CSP Scot.*, viii, 369. Even after the treaty was concluded, this perspective was reiterated at the end of July 1586: ‘[i]f any changes happen it is thought able to come that way by assistance of Huntly, Crawford, Montrose, and Lord Claud with others that are malcontents’ *CSP Scot.*, viii, 563.

⁶⁰ Maitland suggested convening a Convention of Estates as a delaying tactic and in doing so he made common cause with the opposition. English diplomatic correspondence from May to June 1586 discussed the proposed Convention in detail since it represented a means of derailing the whole league. See Lee, *John Maitland of Thirlestane*, 94-5.

that she would not permit any derogation of any right that James might possess; nor was James granted an English peerage. The English also rejected a mutual naturalisation clause. The article stipulating that neither monarch would support the other's rebels and would comply with extradition requests, however, was conceded by Elizabeth on the proviso that they were lawfully proved to be so.⁶¹ Discussion of the king's pension was kept separate from the treaty. The English queen refused to commit to a pension exceeding £4,000 sterling, nor would she agree to an annual payment.⁶²

Once the English alliance was concluded on 5 July 1586, the nobles who had thus far dominated the administration had fulfilled the objectives James had set for them. The completion of the treaty, which the Anglophiles had sought as a source of personal security, now conversely worked to their disadvantage: they no longer were of any significant use to the king, which posed questions about the longevity of their positions within the administration. Whereas James would always be wary of the lords who had wrought the Ruthven Raid and the Stirling Coup, thereby proving that their interests were paramount and would be promoted at the expense of the crown, Maitland was a different case entirely. Maitland had a history of service to the crown, whereas Angus and the Master of Glamis had a history of treason.

⁶¹ The commissioners representing Scotland were Bothwell, Lord Boyd and Sir James Hume of Cowdenknowes. For the terms of the treaty, see *CSP Scot.*, viii, 43-5, 491; for Randolph's summarisation of the negotiations, see *CSP Scot.*, viii, 533-7; for the text of the treaty see T. Rymer (ed.), *Foedera*, xv (London, 1713), 803-07; for discussion of the terms of the treaty, see R. Grant, 'The Making of the Anglo-Scottish Treaty of 1586', 230-31.

⁶² J. Goodare, 'James VI's English subsidy' in J. Goodare and M. Lynch (eds), *The Reign of James VI* (East Linton, 2000), 112-14.

The explanation provided for the strength of Maitland's position at the end of April 1586⁶³ by the Secretary's antagonists proves that they did not recognise the underlying reason. The reason, however, is more than evident in the very explanation itself: 'his greatness with the king did consist in this, that he had set down certain platts unto the king, how he might preserve his state in obedience and be in estimation and credit with foreign princes'. Since the outcomes of these long-term plans would only be realised over the fullness of time, the king would support Maitland until the success or failure of the plans laid by his Secretary was determinable.⁶⁴ The key to the Secretary's strength and the reason why men such as the Master of Gray could not compete with him lay in the fact that his actions were dictated by his commitment to Scotland and its monarchy, working to ensure the ascendancy of the crown. Like Huntly, his loyalty and commitment had no reservations – they would both go the distance. That in itself may have been an underlying reason as to why the competition between Huntly and Maitland was so intense and protracted.

Again, as with Huntly and James's Catholic politicking, Maitland was willing to invest in plans (as in the above quotation) which were incremental and implemented over years. Hence, his objections to the treaty negotiations were firmly based on what he understood to be in the best interests, both immediate and over time, of Scotland and the unspecified plans referred to by his detractors were perceived by Maitland, again, to be in the best long-term interests of the realm. Maitland, however, was not by any means

⁶³ James amply demonstrated his favour in the middle of April 1586 when he jointly granted the wardship and marriage of the two year old Hugh Montgomery, fourth earl of Eglinton to Maitland and the Master of Glamis. Randolph estimated the value of the gift to be £10,000 sterling, *CSP Scot.*, viii, 364-5. The first recorded sederunt that listed Maitland as Vice-Chancellor was 29 June 1586, *RPC*, iv, 85.

⁶⁴ *CSP Scot.*, viii, 346-7.

entirely altruistic. Investment in the realm translated into investment in James VI. James could depend on Maitland's continued loyalty and faithful service for Maitland's success and influence was inextricably tied to the king. And thus it was made abundantly clear to Huntly who his main opposition was when it came to securing the pre-eminent position in Scottish political influence, whether it was influence with the king or within the wider context of Court and government.

Although the conclusion of the treaty with England in July 1586 is widely recognised as a key event in the reign of James VI, the events in April and May 1586 arguably had a more pronounced impact on the dynamics and outcomes of Scottish politics over the next eight years. From the king's bestowal of the immensely valuable gift of the earl of Eglinton's wardship and marriage in mid-April to his appointment as Keeper of the Great Seal for life, with the subordinate title of Vice-Chancellor on 31 May, Maitland's preferment was made eminently clear. This was bolstered by the king's unconcealed aversion for the men who shared the administration with Maitland, now Secretary, Vice-Chancellor and Keeper of the Great Seal.

April and May 1586 were pivotal months for Huntly as well. The apprenticeship served under Esmé Stewart, his tentative entry into independent domestic politicking during the last months of the Arran government and his close observation of Scottish politics over recent months all prepared him for the political manoeuvres he was about to undertake. Just as James was currently exploring his new-found political independence and pursuing his own policies, Huntly too began to implement his own independent agenda in April 1586. Huntly's decision to initiate action in

April 1586 may have partly been because an opportunity presented itself, but he would certainly have been spurred on by the steady progression to the conclusion of the league and the need to counter Maitland, whose position would otherwise only become more entrenched over time.

Like his king, Huntly exhibited a predilection for the opportunities presented by the European continent. Cultivating European connections offered several advantages and provided Huntly (or James) with a wider range of options from which to choose in order to counter developments in Scottish domestic politics. By adding the European theatre to his area of operations, he hoped to counter Maitland's domestic expansion and institutional dominance. At the very least, he wanted to achieve a balance of power between Maitland's influence and his own, but his over-riding objective was to tip the balance of power in his favour. He also hoped to tap into the power exercised by European Catholics to counter English influence in Scottish politics as a result of the league. Of course, Huntly was not alone in his desire to minimise the influence of either Maitland or England, Crawford and Montrose, as well as Maxwell and Lord Claud Hamilton, for example, shared the same goal.⁶⁵

Huntly's European venture began with France, not only Scotland's traditional ally but the country Scottish Catholics had traditionally looked to since the Reformation in 1560. The amount of time Huntly had spent in France as an adolescent and his personal contacts there made France all the more

⁶⁵ The political factions that coalesced as a result of the treaty negotiations remained together after the league was concluded as well. Huntly, Lord Claud Hamilton, Montrose, Crawford and Maxwell were the leading members of the anti-English faction both before and after the treaty. It is interesting that of this faction, those who had been appointed to Privy Council were also the ones with the poorest attendance rates.

appealing as a place to start. In France, Huntly would be able to expand his range of contacts, as well as further develop existing connections with, for example, the Guises or the Lennox Stewarts.⁶⁶ Henry III of France wrote on two separate occasions, 18 and 30 April 1586, to d'Esneval in Scotland that he had been contacted by Huntly, Maxwell and Lord Claud Hamilton requesting his assistance.⁶⁷ Having already been solicited by Mendoza, to take action in England on behalf of Mary, the French king was now being petitioned by these Scottish nobles to further extend himself and intervene in Scottish politics.⁶⁸

The French king was in a difficult position. The political and religious divisions within his own country put involvement in either Scotland or England outwith the bounds of consideration; conversely, however, if he did not become involved and Spain was successful in an independent bid against England, the balance of power in Europe would be overwhelmingly in Spain's favour.⁶⁹ Further, he believed that if he refused to aid the Scots, they would

⁶⁶ Huntly was engaged to Henrietta Stewart, the second duke of Lennox's sister, and would shortly begin to organise their marriage.

⁶⁷ Teulet, *Relations*, iv, 37-40.

⁶⁸ The Scottish nobles' petitions to the French king, however, pre-dated the English revelations regarding the Babington Plot and were not connected to any attempts on their part to save Mary.

⁶⁹ Henry III never believed that Philip II's interest in England was anything other than personal political ambition and he certainly was not championing the Scottish cause. He also felt that the Pope was gullible and needed to be much more sceptical: once Rome assisted Spain's war against England, the Pope could not compel Spain to relinquish the kingdom it had conquered, H.G. Koenigsberger, *Politicians and Virtuosi: Essays in Early Modern History* (London, 1986), 93. Elder posits that Sixtus V had no illusions regarding Philip II and 'feared the manifest aspirations of the Spanish king towards universal monarchy' and 'that the time had not come when the papacy could afford to dissociate itself from Spain', J.R. Elder, *Spanish Influences*, 125. For the condition of France at the end of the sixteenth century, see M. Greengrass, *France in the Age of Henri IV* (Longman, 1995); for the general European context, see R. Mackenney, *Sixteenth Century Europe: Expansion and Conflict* (London, 1993); T.M. McCoog, S.J., *The Society of Jesus in Ireland, Scotland, and England*, chapters 5 and 6.

simply approach Philip II. The only action Henry III felt that he could take was to urge Pope Sixtus V to discourage the enterprise against England.⁷⁰

Henry III was correct in that Huntly, Maxwell and Lord Claud Hamilton did contact the Spanish, making their first overtures in May 1586. However, the French course was not entirely abandoned. The faction that had previously objected to the negotiations for an Anglo-Scottish alliance began to cultivate foreign support to counter the Anglophiles following the successful conclusion of the treaty in July. The French were a known quantity: their embassy had already succeeded in upsetting the English, they were easily accessible and had established warm relations with the king. Within the wider historical context as well, overtures to France may have appeared to be the most logical step to take and were decidedly less risky than pursuing Spain.

In August 1586, before the Babington Plot became a factor in Scottish politics, Huntly pursued the initiative with his French contacts in Scotland. On 5 August 1586, a letter by Peter Hay, laird of Melgund to d'Esneval reveals that Huntly was taking advantage of the ambassador's return to France to send 'all such credentials as may be entrusted to this present opportunity'. Melgund informed d'Esneval that although Huntly was unwell following a journey to Dundee, the earl still 'intends to take leave of his majesty this very

⁷⁰ BL Add. MS. 48,027, f. 333. In this letter written by Mendoza to Mary on 4 April 1586, the Spanish ambassador described his approaches to the French king on her behalf. But Mendoza failed to recognise the political limitations within which the king was operating and attributed his unwillingness to engage England on Mary's behalf as approval for Elizabeth's actions. For a translation of this Spanish document, see C. Sáenz-Cambra, 'Scotland and Philip II, 1580-1598: Politics, Religion, Diplomacy and Lobbying' (unpublished Edinburgh University PhD thesis, 2003), Appendix II.

day in order to go to you tomorrow'.⁷¹ Within the next two weeks, the French ambassador's key aide, Courcelles, was contacted by Huntly, Crawford and Caithness. The earls continued to put forward their desires for a closer relationship with France. Courcelles described the earls as 'well affectioned to the good and advancement of the affairs of his majesty [Henry III] in that which he might desire of them here' and that they would keep James 'in the will that he has made a show of having for the continuance of the friendship of his majesty'. The Scottish earls easily promised to continue their pro-French advocacy with James, invoking 'the example of their predecessors who have always followed the party France'.⁷²

On 30 August 1586, Courcelles informed d'Esneval (now in France) of the recent developments with the Scottish earls. In this letter Courcelles added that Huntly was particularly upset by James's amity with England. Like Crawford and Caithness, Huntly offered his service, but 'will undertake nothing against the will of his sovereign'.⁷³ This last statement is not at all surprising and suggestive that the Scottish king may have been aware of what Huntly's intentions were. The objective of the earl's activities was not to undermine James or, like the Ruthven lords, use the support of a foreign country as a means to seize control of the government of Scotland. Huntly would have taken special care to avoid even the slightest hint that he was following in their footsteps. In undertaking to develop relations with the French, Huntly's own political policy overlapped with his king's. Both men

⁷¹ *CSP Scot.*, viii, 591. Melgund was sure that the king would allow himself to bid farewell to d'Esneval personally, since he 'was your first acquaintance among the gentlemen of his majesty's household at your first arrival, I am disposed to be among the last to receive your commands'. Additionally, if Huntly himself could not obtain leave to see d'Esneval, he would send Melgund 'or some other of his folk' in his stead.

⁷² *CSP Scot.*, viii, 622-3.

⁷³ *CSP Scot.*, viii, 640.

were seeking to widen their sphere of influence and develop greater political collateral – the earl to counter Maitland’s growing influence, the monarch to counter Elizabeth’s dominance. When evaluating what Huntly and the anti-English faction generally wished to achieve through lobbying the French, it is remarkably similar to James’s own French policy.

The nature of the contacts these nobles made with the French is recognisable as an extension of James’s own policy: he had no intention of alienating the French now that he was officially allied with England. Continuing cordial relations with France and close connections amongst his nobility with that country was an easy way to enhance his position, whilst also increasing his appeal to the Catholics. James needed to balance the English league with wider European connections in order to realise his long-term political objectives. After the revelation of the Babington Plot, this became even more important.

The treaty with England was an important achievement for the Scottish king, but it did not recognise his rights to the English succession, only conceding that Elizabeth would not allow any derogation of any right or title that might be due James.⁷⁴ Until he was explicitly recognised as Elizabeth’s heir apparent, James was compelled to keep all of his options open both to protect his claim to the throne of England and to take the crown by force if need be. To do so, he needed to cultivate the Catholic powers of sixteenth century Europe, as well as the Catholics within the British Isles.⁷⁵ In short, this was

⁷⁴ See above; M. Lee, Jr, *Great Britain’s Solomon: James VI and I in his Three Kingdoms* (Chicago, 1990), 64-5.

⁷⁵ James’s continued toleration of Jesuits in Scotland was a part of this policy. For example, the Bishop of Ross informed Mary on 29 July 1586 that Huntly was in the north with Lord Claud Hamilton, who seldom attended Court. Huntly had refused the ministers demands to enter his uncle, James Gordon, S.J. and the other Jesuits who accompanied Gordon, ‘and

James's insurance policy.⁷⁶ Further, although Philip II was advised to keep his dynastic interests in the English succession secret, English Catholics generally distrusted the Spanish king's intentions towards England and favoured James over any Spanish intervention in England. It was in France's interests, as much as it was in James's, to prevent Spain from realising its ambitions regarding England.⁷⁷

Huntly's contacts with the French and his long-standing relationship with Henry, duke of Guise facilitated the next move he made in attempting to harness the politics of Catholic Europe to serve his domestic political interests in Scotland. France was certainly useful to Huntly and his faction, but its ability or willingness to actively engage in Scottish politics was extremely limited – as evidenced by Henry III's response to Huntly's letter in

since came not to Court. These fathers remain still in the country quiet, and it is thought, by connivance of her son', *CSP Scot.*, viii, 563. According to McCoog, 'many in Scotland and England continued to regard the Scottish King as the preferred Catholic candidate', T.M. McCoog, S.J., *The Society of Jesus in Ireland, Scotland, and England*, 241.

⁷⁶ Lee comments that '[f]or James, in the years immediately following the defeat of the Armada, Huntly represented his insurance policy in the matter of the English succession', *Great Britain's Solomon*, 98. It is a valuable point, although it is clear that Huntly began to function as part of this insurance policy, with regard to England and the succession, in 1586; it could be argued that the king's Catholic politicking pre-dating 1586 represents an awareness that to safeguard Scotland's interests and to overcome the restrictions imposed by its relations with England, it would therefore be beneficial to develop contacts and options from as wide an orbit as possible.

⁷⁷ The papal endorsement of Philip II's dynastic claim was also to be kept secret until after a successful Spanish landing in England. Philip based the supremacy of his claim on the fact that there were no English or Scottish claimants descended, as he was, through John of Gaunt and the House of Lancaster; claimants descended from the House of York were excluded for heresy or other defects. Philip was also the only person outside England with a Lancaster/Portuguese claim, but he was willing to forgo the English crown himself and bestow it upon his daughter, the Infanta Isabella, G. Parker, *The Grand Strategy of Philip II*, 191; T.M. McCoog, S.J., *The Society of Jesus in Ireland, Scotland, and England*, 239-240; J.R. Elder, *Spanish Influences*, 138-41; G. Parker, *The World is Not Enough: the Imperial Vision of Philip II of Spain* (Waco, Texas, 2001); for detailed discussion of how dynasticism shaped Philip II's policy and actions, see M.J. Rodríguez-Salgado, 'The Anglo-Spanish war: the final episode in the 'Wars of the Roses'' in M.J. Rodríguez-Salgado and S. Adams (eds), *England, Spain and the Gran Armada, 1585-1604* (Edinburgh, 1991). The research conducted by Sáenz-Cambra comprehensively discusses Philip II's political ambition with regard to England and his engagement with Scottish Catholic politics to that end, C. Sáenz-Cambra, 'Scotland and Philip II'.

April 1586. France itself was riven by factions: it was from amongst these factions that Huntly sought real influence when he pursued his earlier connections with Guise. Guise was not only extremely powerful within France, but he was a key player in the Counter-Reformation movement that was being spearheaded by Spain. Philip II sought to avoid involving Guise in his planned enterprise against England because to do so would impede his objective to secure the English crown. For Huntly, however, Guise was his conduit to the real power in Europe: Spain.

When Huntly first entered into correspondence with Spain in May 1586, he, along with Lord Claud Hamilton and Maxwell, did so on the advice of and by the means of Guise. On 15 May 1586, from Elgin, Huntly carefully constructed his first letter to the Spanish king. Although Huntly was careful to clothe his missive to Philip II in the rhetoric of faith, aid was specifically asked for in order to liberate James, who was 'by the intrigues of his insidious sister, the Queen of England, in the power of his enemies', thus releasing him from following the policies of Elizabeth, which 'are not popular even in her own country' and 'restoring the Catholic faith in the realm'. With careful calculation, Huntly concluded that in providing assistance, '[n]ot only will your Majesty gain by so doing immortal lustre for your name, but solid advantage for yourself'.⁷⁸ The desire to restore Catholicism to Scotland was undoubtedly real; so was the political target of deposing certain members of

⁷⁸ *CSP Spain*, iii, 580, 581; Teulet, *Relations*, v, 349-50; for Lord Claud Hamilton's letter, Teulet, *Relations*, v, 351-2; for Maxwell's letter, Teulet, *Relations*, v, 353-4; for correspondence concerning the Scottish proposals, Teulet, *Relations*, v, 402 *passim*. Spanish debate about the Scottish proposals carried on for months. See also J.R. Elder, *Spanish Influences*, 130-6; K.M. Brown, 'The Making of a *Politique*', 160-4; J.D. Mackie, 'Scotland and the Spanish Armada', *SHR*, 12 (1914-15), 1-23; T.M. McCoog, S.J., *The Society of Jesus in Ireland, Scotland, and England*, chapters 5 and 6; C. Sáenz-Cambra, 'Scotland and Philip II', 92, 100-12.

the Scottish government – differing only in scale from Philip II's own objectives in England.

Even Mendoza, who from the very beginning enthusiastically endorsed the Scottish proposals, partially recognised that the Scots also had their own political agenda, warning Philip II in 1586 that the Scottish messenger, although a Catholic, was also a 'politician'.⁷⁹ The man chosen by Huntly, Maxwell and Lord Claud Hamilton to carry their correspondence and empowered to negotiate on their behalf was Robert Bruce of Bervie.⁸⁰ The first reference to Bruce was in February 1579 when he was in the company of Lord Seton and Bruce was proclaimed a rebel and put to the horn for his Catholic activities. He may have then turned to scholastic endeavours and could be the Robert Bruce listed amongst the first scholars enrolled in the Scots College at Douai in 1581, who was said to have 'followed the court'. In January 1585 Mary was informed that Bruce was 'being drawn from his studies by my Lord of Glasgow to serve her Majesty'. He had been the secretary of James Beaton, archbishop of Glasgow prior to becoming more directly involved in the Scottish mission and Catholic politics. In March 1585, he smuggled Edmund Hay, S.J. and John Dury, S.J. into Scotland disguised as his domestic servants and brought money from Flanders.⁸¹

When he was engaged by the Scots in 1586, Bruce became an important conduit and negotiator between the Scottish Catholic nobles, the Guises, Parma and Spain into the 1590s. In his letters of commendation, Bruce was

⁷⁹ *CSP Spain*, iii, 681-3.

⁸⁰ He was also identified as Bartill Bailzie (during the Spanish Blanks affair in 1592), Edward Foster and perhaps Peter Nerne, T.G. Law, 'Robert Bruce, conspirator and spy' in P.H. Brown (ed.), *Collected Essays and Reviews of Thomas Graves Law*, 314.

⁸¹ They joined James Gordon, S.J. and William Holt, S.J., Forbes-Leith, *Narratives of Scottish Catholics*, 201-02, 204-05; T.G. Law, 'Robert Bruce, conspirator and spy', 314.

described as a ‘Scottish gentleman of great constancy in the faith, devoted to Mary and to her son, and expert in the conduct of affairs’ and Philip II was requested to take Bruce into the same confidence as he would Huntly, Maxwell and Lord Claud Hamilton.⁸² Bruce departed Scotland on 23 July 1586⁸³ for Paris; from there Mendoza sent him to Madrid with letters from himself and Guise. He finally arrived at the Escorial (Philip II’s favourite residence) in the last week of September 1586.⁸⁴

In addition to the letter from Huntly to Philip II, Robert Bruce also carried concrete proposals for the Spanish king to consider from Huntly, Maxwell and Lord Claud Hamilton. The Scottish nobles ‘in order to carry out the enterprise and resolution they have undertaken of re-establishing the Catholic religion in the country, driving out the English and liberating the King and his mother’, petitioned Philip II for: 6,000 paid troops for one year only, to be used if England sent armed forces against them; 150,000 crowns to be deposited (not paid directly to themselves), to be drawn on if needed to meet the expenses of soldiers and war generally (they would pledge their lands for security); a sum to be determined by Philip II to be granted to them for only two years to enable them to maintain their position and cause. With God’s grace and Spain’s aid, ‘they are certain of being able to successfully carry through their holy enterprise’.

In return, the Scots promised that no future levies would be made in Scotland either against Philip II or for Elizabeth; to deliver to Spain one to two ‘good’ Scottish ports near the English border to be used against England; ‘when

⁸² T.G. Law, ‘Robert Bruce, conspirator and spy’, 315; J.R. Elder, *Spanish Influences*, 131.

⁸³ D.L. Jenson, *Diplomacy and Dogmatism: Bernardino de Mendoza and the French Catholic League* (Cambridge, 1964), 81.

⁸⁴ *CSP Spain*, iii, 286-9; J.R. Elder, *Spanish Influences*, 131.

their king is delivered from the custody of the rebels who force and hold him', he shall be converted to Catholicism and will recognise his obligation to Philip II; James would not marry without Philip's prior approval.⁸⁵ Of all that was offered, Philip II was particularly impressed with the deep-water ports, but he still required time to consider and sent Bruce back to Paris in order to obtain Alejandro Farnese, duke of Parma's opinion. The Spanish king would not reach a decision regarding the Scottish propositions until 28 January 1587; this decision would then be revised at the end of March in response to Mary's execution.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ *CSP Spain*, iii, 286-9; J.R. Elder, *Spanish Influences*, 131-2.

⁸⁶ Philip II sent Bruce back to Paris in the autumn, with several Spanish agents, because he wanted Parma to be consulted; Philip II instructed Mendoza, 'in the meanwhile you will keep them in hand without giving any pledges or cause for complaint', *CSP Spain*, iii, 630-32. Mendoza enthusiastically endorsed the proposals to Parma in October 1586 and received a cautious reply on 27 November 1586. Parma recognised the strategic advantages of the proposals, but would not commit until he could ascertain how seriously the king himself entertained the Scottish approach. His suggestion to Mendoza became one which was often repeated by the Spanish: whilst they considered the plans, Mendoza was to 'keep the Scots in hand with fair words', *CSP Spain*, iii, 536, 580-81, 589-90, 595-6, 630-1, 635-40, 665, 686; Teulet, *Relations*, iii, 417-18. Huntly, Maxwell and Lord Claud Hamilton, concerned about the delay in receiving any reply, sent Colonel William Stewart to Paris in December 1586 to meet Mendoza, but the ambassador still could only stall despite Stewart's provision of an analysis of the Scottish nobility's foreign dispositions and a troop analysis based on varying tactical situations in Scotland and England, *CSP Spain*, iii, 681-9, 688. On 28 January 1587, Philip II finally sent his decision to Mendoza and again he was directed to stall. The Spanish king considered the matter to be of great importance, but must only be undertaken in the proper 'season'. Until then, 'the three personages should be kept in hand and encouraged to expect the aid they require; but as the necessary forces are not now readily at hand ... they must hold firm until they are advised that the time has arrived. They must be pledged to take up arms, and fulfil their promise as soon as the word is given them', *CSP Spain*, iv, 10-11. Mendoza personally concluded that the friendship of these Scots was important for maintaining the balance of power with England, warranting financial aid in the very least. He preferred the Scottish plans to Philip II's naval expedition; invading England through either Scotland or Ireland would be safer, less costly, use less troops (especially considering Scottish military prowess in light of Spain's experience in the Low Countries) and ultimately more assured of success. Until it was decided, the Scottish Catholics were still to be held to their pledge to take up arms but only when directed to do so, *CSP Spain*, iii, 636, 637; iv, 10, 28, 46, 58. Philip's revised decision (sent to Mendoza on 31 March) granted the Scots, after James was liberated, 150,000 crowns for three or four months, on the proviso that he would be reimbursed from funds raised from their estates; it was impossible, however, for Spain to send 6,000 soldiers. Before taking action, Parma was to be consulted as the money for the Scottish lords was to be taken from Flanders' provision. Above all, Mendoza was warned, he 'must not lose sight of the offer they made to give me a port in Scotland', *CSP Spain*, iv, 57-8.

Huntly had finally entered the political spectrum of the Counter-Reformation: for the first time in his political career, Huntly deliberately identified with the Catholic cause and used it to promote his own political purposes. His close association with the Jesuits through sheltering his uncle, James Gordon, S.J. and his colleagues, and wider exposure to Catholic politics may have opened his eyes to the political implications for his own policies – not just his king's. Now, the imminent English league, the rising influence of Maitland and his own newfound political independence, provided perhaps his first real incentive or opportunity to make political capital out of his faith. He also adapted this strategy to his dealings with the French king when he indicated to Courcelles in August 1586 that Catholicism was an issue in his affiliation with France.

The English, though, failed to recognise this. Aside from his covert correspondence, Huntly's domestic *modus operandi* remained unchanged. Unlike Maxwell, he never linked the politicisation of his faith with public demonstrations of worship or mass evangelisation. To do so would actually have been detrimental not only to his own political purposes, but to the faith as well. Drawing closer attention to himself and to the Jesuits whom he harboured, and thereby submitting them all to closer scrutiny, would have severely limited what they could achieve now and in future. It would also make Huntly's propositions less attractive, since attention and suspicion focused on himself would be a liability. Huntly continued to maintain his distance from the centre, continued to shelter the Catholic priests and continued to cultivate his Francophile profile.

Hence, the English in turn had no reason for more than their standard qualms that his Catholic and French sympathies might adversely influence James. These qualms, however, never extended to attributing an international agenda to Huntly himself. Throughout this period, therefore, Huntly's Catholicism was an English concern only in connection with their desire to suppress Catholicism and to remove all the Jesuits from Scotland and, politically, only with regard to his known opposition to the present administration. The automatic political agenda associated with Jesuits was yet to be extended to Huntly.

Huntly's motive was as much to break the influence of Maitland as it was to support Catholicism in Scotland. When placed within the context of the political factions of the mid to late 1580s, this becomes more apparent. Both Maitland and Huntly had become closely involved in the Court since 1581. After the December 1585 Parliament, however, their interests diverged. James's persistent attempts over the new few years to pander simultaneously to both Catholic and Protestant sentiments helped create a polarisation of the two main parties: the Anglo-Protestant party (including men such as Angus, Mar, Marischal, the Master of Glamis, Lord John Hamilton and Bellenden) whose agenda was implemented by Maitland from his increasingly influential position within the administration and the conservatives, opposed to the English alliance and tying Scotland's interests directly to those of England, increasingly associated with Huntly. Each party had its roots in the combative politics of the Esmé Stewart period in the early 1580s, which had seen the restoration of the French interests in Scottish politics. Perhaps Huntly and his faction were following Lennox's lead in attempting to

establish their party through French, and, now through Guise, Spanish support.

From James's perspective, Maitland and Huntly were both useful in pursuing his own political agenda and in appealing to diametrically opposed interests both within and outside Scotland. Huntly's independent pursuit of his own French and Spanish policies alone would have furthered James's objectives. The selection of Colonel William Stewart, who had been involved in the king's Catholic politicking in 1584,⁸⁷ as Huntly's, Maxwell's and Lord Claud Hamilton's emissary to Spain in December 1586 makes it unlikely that James was not at least aware of the nobles' Spanish associations, especially when the king began openly to cultivate Catholic connections (such as his letters to Henry III and Guise and his appointment of the Archbishop of Beaton as his ambassador in France) in response to Elizabeth's treatment of Mary following the revelation of the Babington Plot in August 1586, the Scottish queen's show trial in October and the English parliament's petition for Mary's execution in November.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ According to William Holt, S.J., in April 1584 Stewart was fully informed of the king's plans, ready to respond to any contacts from Guise and was 'entirely with us and very active'. The Master of Gray, Huntly, Crawford and Maitland were also informed but to a lesser extent; Huntly was described as 'full of courage', Forbes-Leith, *Narratives of Scottish Catholics*, 193-4.

⁸⁸ Colonel William Stewart met with Mendoza, then Parma in December. Mendoza remarked that Stewart was a Catholic, 'although a politician. It is evident that they have not opened out very much to him'. This may indicate that Huntly *et al.* were controlling the information flow to James's representative. Stewart also met with Guise, requesting that he act as their 'intercessor' with Mendoza and Philip II, *CSP Scot.*, ix, 195; *CSP Spain*, iii, 681-3; Teulet, *Relations*, v, 439-52; Courcelles, *Despatches*, 35-6. Stewart was sent again in May 1587, *CSP Spain*, iv, 91-2. James had intended in March to send him as ambassador to France in order to negotiate a new alliance but decided otherwise in May when he appointed James Beaton, archbishop of Glasgow and the late Mary's ambassador, in Stewart's stead, Calderwood, *History*, iv, 615. According to Brown, the king 'almost certainly had an idea of what his catholic noblemen were plotting, and may even have encouraged them in order to keep his options open', K.M. Brown, 'The Making of a *Politique*', 162. James's knowledge of the Spanish intrigues conducted by his Catholic aristocrats will be discussed and examined in more detail in Chapters Five and Six below.

From the various perspectives from which the Spanish correspondence can be examined – the Scottish nobles, the monarchs of Scotland, Spain and England – it is clear that the emphasis was political, with a successful political outcome then leading to religious change. Huntly's very first personal letter addressed to Philip II makes it eminently clear that secular concerns were paramount, even alluding to the advantages for Spain. As the Protestant reformers themselves had discovered, faith made a powerful political vehicle. It provided an umbrella under which a coalition of differing political concerns and objectives could come together. To interpret the instigation of correspondence with Spain in May 1586 purely within the context of Catholic idealism, therefore, would be erroneous. Huntly's faith was certainly an important and significant factor, but his over-riding motivation was to shift the balance of power within domestic politics. That this shift might have proven favourable to Catholicism was a positive outcome, but it was not the set priority by Huntly's party. Huntly harnessed his two interests together, recognising that a favourable religious outcome would only follow a successful political one.

The objective of the Scots, as told to Philip II, was to restore James to his former liberty. In phraseology harking back to the Ruthven Raid, the botched Stirling coup attempt in 1584 and the successful Stirling Coup in 1585, this was a direct reference to the administration now clearly dominated by Maitland. In a sophisticated analysis of the politics of Catholic Europe, Huntly was using the opportunities offered by the Counter-Reformation and Philip II's ambitions regarding England which he believed were endorsed by

God,⁸⁹ to further his party's domestic programme, which, by extension, would have promoted the Catholic cause as well.

James's interests were served very well by Huntly's Spanish correspondence. The Guise support for a Spanish enterprise against England foundered over the contentious issue of the English succession. The Guises, naturally, endorsed and promoted the Stewart claim and protested at Spain's attempts to abrogate James's claim. In February 1586 Spain seriously considered invading England and placing Mary on the throne – with the stipulation that a heretical James would not be her successor. As a result, the Pope was urged by the Guises not to support any enterprise with which they were not involved. The duke of Guise's advice to Huntly to approach Spain in 1586, therefore, was a calculated move to involve the Scottish Catholics in the Guise campaign to protect James's claim to the English throne and to secure a Stewart, rather than Hapsburg, succession. Ultimately, the papal endorsement of Spain's Enterprise of England cost Philip II the support of the English Catholics. Faced with the prospect of a Spanish succession, English Catholics predominantly supported the claim of James. Guise took advantage of this by promoting a new plan to liberate Mary and James, even requesting funding and troops from Spain to implement it.⁹⁰

The representations made to both Guise and Spain by Huntly, Maxwell and Lord Claud Hamilton provided an ideal opportunity for those who supported James's claim to advance the Scottish king's position, providing an alternative to Spain's original plans. Further, if the Scottish Catholics

⁸⁹ See, for example, G. Parker, *The World is Not Enough: The Imperial Vision of Philip II of Spain* (Waco, Texas, 2000).

⁹⁰ T.M. McCoog, S.J., *The Society of Jesus in Ireland, Scotland, and England*, 227-8.

succeeded in their stated objective of converting James, this would remove any pretext for a Spanish invasion of Scotland if Philip II was successful in his English venture for the Spanish king's own dynastic claim was to England alone. In March 1587, to overcome the obstacle that James posed to Spanish plans, the Count of Olivares even suggested offering the Scottish crown to Lord Claud Hamilton, 'who is the legitimate heir to it, failing the King and two heretic brothers'. It would offend Guise, but when the Scots 'saw that your Majesty was not seeking Scotland for yourself, [it] would lead to the impression that you would not have claimed England unless you had a just right to it'.⁹¹

Philip II was in a difficult position and that may partially explain his difficulty in reaching a decision. He may genuinely have believed that converting the Scottish king was not a realistic objective.⁹² But considering James's statements and Catholic correspondence over the past years, his overt favour to Scottish Catholics and repeated failure to pursue Jesuits, it could not be ruled out as impossible, especially from the perspective of the wider European Catholic population. Huntly's (and James's) links with the French king and Guise are highly relevant within this context as well. For between them, the Scottish nobles and their French allies could keep pressure on Philip II and the Pope, highlighting existing doubts about Philip II's motives, James's position and the Scottish claim as opposed to conceding to the Spanish manoeuvrings in favour of Philip's claim.⁹³

⁹¹ *CSP Spain*, iv, 53-5.

⁹² Regarding James's conversion and the perspectives of European Catholics regarding Philip II's position, see M.J. Rodríguez-Salgado, 'The Anglo-Spanish War: the final episode in the "Wars of the Roses"?' in M.J. Rodríguez-Salgado and S. Adams (eds), *England, Spain and the Gran Armada, 1585-1604* (Edinburgh, 1991), 9-20.

⁹³ On 20 May 1587 Mendoza's reports to Philip II about rising hopes regarding James's conversion must have made the Spanish king uneasy. The restoration of the archbishop of Glasgow and the bishops of Ross and Dunkeld, plus the appointment of the archbishop as

There were obvious advantages in the Scottish plan which were clearly appealing to the Spanish. Philip II was impressed by the possibilities posed by the use of Scottish ports and Parma found the idea of a direct attack on England unfeasible. The more Parma considered the possibilities and discussed details with Robert Bruce and Colonel William Stewart, the more enthused and committed he became – even to the point of over-ruling the king’s denial of troops in March 1587. Mendoza’s endorsement was clearly articulated from the beginning and his arguments regarding lower cost, lower risk and greater assurance of success were compelling.⁹⁴ Philip II – and his advisers – simply could not dismiss the opportunities that the Scottish proposals proffered out of hand, not if they wanted to ensure that they chose the best route possible to success.

The possibility of the Scottish king’s conversion put Philip in the position of being forced to consider several options: cultivate the Scottish king and support efforts to convert him, which would then enhance Spain’s strategic position regarding an English invasion; if Philip accepted James’s conversion, then it in turn posed queries regarding the strength of Philip’s own claim to the English crown; if he truly doubted that James would convert, then Philip

Scotland’s ambassador to France increased expectations that he would convert. Mendoza’s own assessment of the king’s actions were extremely accurate. He conceded that although there might be grounds for hope, it also ‘signifies that the King desires to follow a certain line in politics, and not in religion, and would like to stand well with all parties’. The French king and Queen Mother, Catherine de Medici, wrote to the Pope about their hopes for the conversion of the Scottish king as well, but they further indicated that as the heir to the English throne, it was James who was bound to avenge his mother. Therefore, if Spain were to attempt any action against England, the French king would be obliged to prevent it – if only by disturbing Italy, *CSP Spain*, iv, 85-6. In December 1586, the Guises informed Philip II that they were confident that James would convert – he was only hesitating from fear of England and his Protestant subjects. Spain ‘resolved to give him fair promises until he shows more determination, as they hold that good relations with Scotland and its detachment from England will prove of great service to this Crown and to religion’, but it was kept highly secret, *CSP Venice*, 1581-91, 227.

⁹⁴ Philip II’s 31 March 1587 decision, *CSP Spain*, iv, 57-8; Parma also agreed to give Bruce 10,000 crowns, *CSP Spain*, iv, 68-9, 75-6; K.M. Brown, ‘The Making of a *Politique*’, 161-2; Mendoza’s endorsements, *CSP Spain*, iii, 636, 637; iv, 10, 28, 46, 58.

had to decide whether it would be best to counter James's claim by making his own claim public. For the Scots, presenting Spain with these possibilities may have acted as a delaying tactic and, more importantly, safeguarded them from a Spanish invasion. It also highlighted the question of who had the strongest claim in the English succession.

The direct advantage that Huntly, Maxwell and Lord Claud Hamilton provided for James, therefore, was extremely significant: Spain could not simply ignore James's rights if he was to take advantage of anything that the Scots offered. By working with Guise, Huntly helped to uphold the Stewart claim in European Catholic politics. The Scottish Catholic nobles' covert politicking kept James and the alternative that he provided to Spain to the forefront of Counter-Reformation intrigues.

The advantages and opportunities that Huntly provided for James dramatically increased once the English revealed their discovery of the Babington Plot to the rest of Europe in August 1586. From November 1585 to September 1586 Catholicism in Scotland had a very low profile, with the sole exception being Maxwell's spectacular Christmas masses in December 1585.⁹⁵ For the first time since 1581 (excepting the Ruthven government), few Catholics attended Court and none were involved in the administration. Complaints about Jesuits continued from both the Kirk and the English but the volume of complaints was comparatively low when compared with the periods preceding or following September 1586. Ironically, it was arguably one of the more active Jesuit periods with one of the highest numbers of

⁹⁵ Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 337. According to one account, up to 200 people attended Maxwell's mass, *CBP*, i, 216. The public mass in the College Church of Lincluden was followed by two further private masses in Maxwell's house in Dumfries.

Jesuits ministering in Scotland. Catholicism was simply not a strong political or social issue.

This, however, radically changed once the news regarding Mary's situation had reached Scotland and been absorbed not just by James, but by the wider political community as well. From September 1586 onwards, reports of Catholic activity and Jesuits throughout Scotland skyrocketed. Catholics and Catholicism now dominated the political landscape. Catholicism became very much an issue when it was rumoured that the king was once again entertaining thoughts of conversion and it was reported that James had begun to surround himself with Catholics – particularly in Court and in his household, which contained a number of Huntly's adherents.

The number of Catholics who returned to Court following the Babington revelation and the overt favour they received marked the king's discomfiture with the news that he had received and signalled a change in the king's relations with Elizabeth. James may not have been able to or may not have wanted to take a direct action against England in response to Babington; nor was breaking the recent treaty a desirable outcome. But he could certainly express his displeasure very effectively through other means and consequently make Elizabeth very uncomfortable. It was following the Babington disclosure that the Continental contacts and policies that James had been nurturing for years truly came into their own.

Huntly's recently initiated contacts with France, Guise and Spain would prove exceedingly useful – to both men – and enable the king to demonstrate his value to England's security and that he should not be underestimated by

the Elizabethan administration. To that end, not only was the Catholic presence at Court in part a message for foreign consumption but so was the royal favour bestowed on a new faction closely associated with the Catholic nobility. By the end of 1586, an increasingly concerned Walsingham had identified this new political grouping as the Spanish faction. The former French faction made the English apprehensive, but the Spanish faction was alarming.

Chapter Three:
CATHOLIC POLITICS
August 1586 – May 1587

The Babington Plot,¹ revealed in August 1586, divides the analysis of December 1585 to May 1587 into two distinct periods. Huntly's role and activities changed dramatically over the course of months. Just as the wider polity had settled into subsequently recognisable patterns from December 1585 to July 1586, so had Huntly and the role he played in Catholic politics. The Babington Plot and Mary's subsequent execution by the English government on 8 February 1587 was a watershed in Huntly's career. Post-Babington, Huntly's *modus operandi* changed completely. The distance that he had maintained from James, Court, government and factional affiliations, both secular and religious, disappeared. The attributes that had previously made him appealing to James's earlier Catholic politicking and attempts to apply pressure on Elizabeth were in demand once again. His rapid movement from the periphery to the bosom of Scottish politics had James's fingerprints all over it. In a situation where James's own possible range of actions was extremely limited, Huntly was a positive asset. Huntly's subsequent actions once he was firmly ensconced again in the centre were also redolent of Jacobean manoeuvring, especially when placed within the wider context of events leading up to the battle of Glenlivet in 1594.²

¹ The Babington Plot was a conspiracy organised by Anthony Babington with five associates begun in June 1586. Their objective was to assassinate Elizabeth and liberate Mary who would lead English Catholics in support of a Spanish invasion. Sir Francis Walsingham intercepted Babington's letters to Mary regarding the plot and Mary's reply on 17 July 1586 endorsing Babington's plans and continued to monitor progress. On 4 August Mary was formally charged with complicity in the plot. Babington and his colleagues confessed and were executed in September 1586; Mary's trial for treason against Elizabeth (11-25 October 1586) was based on the Act for Security of the Queen's Person (27 Eliz. I c.1, passed in 1585) which held Mary culpable for any plots in her favour.

² See Chapter Six below.

If James took advantage of the opportunities proffered by his Catholic magnate, then Huntly likewise took advantage of the opportunities his sudden return to influence presented to further his own political agenda. The results of nine months of careful evaluation now came into play – and John Maitland of Thirlestane would definitely play no part in the Scotland Huntly had envisioned and now worked to bring about. In short, Huntly's role in Jacobean politics changed drastically in the aftermath of the Babington Plot and Mary's execution. It was a pivotal, formative period for these changes became the basis of his relationship with James, the wider political role he would play in James's foreign politics and in his attempt to manipulate Catholic politics for the next decade. The months preceding the Babington revelation were equally important for the development of Huntly's own political agenda; the months following Babington, however, set the template for the overlap between Huntly's personal agenda and that of his king.

Having successfully secured the treaty with Scotland in July 1586, the release of the news of the Babington Plot the following month was extremely tidy timing from the English perspective. Having thought that they had protected at least one vulnerable frontier, the unofficial Scottish response in the escalating Catholic activity and the identification of a Spanish faction must have been particularly unsettling in light of the situation England was facing in Ireland. The various reports sent to English ministers, such as William Cecil, lord Burghley and Walsingham, in September and October 1586 alone on the state of Ireland would have been extremely disturbing without having to consider the implications of Scotland's apparently changing disposition. The English government was primarily concerned with the Catholics in Ireland and Scotland making common cause, utilising the existing cultural,

social and military ties between the two countries, possibly looking for support through Ireland's links with Spain and uniting against England.

This fear raised its head in early September 1586 when it was reported that there was 'in Scotland presently a great and perilous enterprise to be shortly put into execution'. The alleged enterprise comprised a rising in Ireland followed by one in Scotland with a confederation of Irish and Scottish nobles in order to overthrow the Protestant religion. A similar conspiracy in England was apparently still 'brewing'. The whole affair had supposedly been planned by Edmund MacGauran, bishop of Ardagh when he had travelled through Scotland in the summer of 1585.³ As improbable and fantastic as this supposed enterprise seems – there is no evidence to support it at all – the report is still important with respect to the fact that it does highlight England's insecurities, their vigilance and the types of problems they were trying to anticipate.⁴ The conjunction of Irish dissidents, Catholics (from laymen to deposed bishops to Jesuits) and a highly placed, influential anti-English element in Scotland are all exemplified in this document.

The Elizabethan government were not the only ones who recognised that their two most vulnerable frontiers were Ireland and Scotland. In discussion of the proposals received from Huntly, Lord Claud Hamilton and John, eighth Lord Maxwell in the autumn of 1586, Bernardino de Mendoza, the former Spanish ambassador to England now resident in France, advised

³ *CSP Ireland*, 1586-8, 7, 674-5; J.H. Pollen, S.J., *The Counter-Reformation in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1921), 54, 58-60; Forbes-Leith, *Narratives of Scottish Catholics*, 206-07.

⁴ The report was not dismissed out of hand, however: on 6 November 1586, Henry, lord Scrope wrote from the English border that the "Plot" for the general subversion of religion still holds and the "masse of money" ready in France is kept untouched for this purpose', *CBP*, i, 239. On 7 December 1586, it was intimated that the plot had been abandoned, although 'all are to join wholly together against this realm', with assurances that the French king will provide assistance in the form of money and troops, *CSP Scot.*, ix, 185.

Alejandro Farnese, duke of Parma that to prevent the military situation in Flanders from becoming hopelessly entrenched, it would be necessary to 'sting' England in either Ireland or Scotland.⁵ Of course, if the Spanish identified Elizabeth's weaknesses, then so did the Scots. Following August 1586, Jacobean policy played on English anxieties and apprehensions, forcing them to question whether their northern border truly had been secured by the treaty in July 1586. In the autumn of 1586, Huntly, his Catholic compatriots, the anti-English faction, Marians in general and Scotland's European connections were all key components in the English evaluation of Scotland which served to increase Elizabeth's apprehensions, highlighting the potential risks to English security.⁶

With Maitland's objective to be involved as little as possible in the after effects of the Babington Plot,⁷ there was little restraint on the king's employment of Catholic politics to unsettle England. He adopted an unofficial, but pronounced antagonism to England. James's objectives, policies and actions from Babington to his mother's execution have been analysed, debated and argued by generations of historians and there is indeed little to add.⁸ The purpose of this discussion is not to evaluate whether James followed Mr Archibald Douglas's advice to concentrate exclusively on the succession or whether he indicated to the English that he would reserve

⁵ *CSP Spain*, iii, 637-8.

⁶ For discussion of James's response to Babington and the affect on Anglo-Scottish relations, see R. Grant, 'The Making of the Anglo-Scottish treaty of 1586' in J. Goodare and A.A. MacDonald (eds), *Sixteenth century Scotland: Essays in Honour of Michael Lynch* (Leiden, 2008), 231-6.

⁷ Lee, *John Maitland of Thirlestane*, 101.

⁸ See, for example, Lee, *John Maitland of Thirlestane*, chapter 5; P. Croft, *King James* (Basingstoke, 2003), 21-2; G. Donaldson, *Scotland: James V – James VII* (Edinburgh, 1965), 184-5; R.S. Rait and A.I. Cameron, *King James's Secret* (London, 1927); S. Doran, "Revenge her foul and most unnatural murder"? The Impact of Mary Stewart's Execution on Anglo-Scottish relations', *History*, 85 (2000), 589-612.

judgement on the execution of Mary, but, rather, it is to evaluate the effects that the affair had on Catholic politics and, in particular, on Huntly.

The climate created by James's response to the Marian crisis favoured the implementation and development of Huntly's foreign agenda; this climate also proved to be an asset within a purely domestic context. The policy that Huntly had embarked upon in April 1586 in order to counter the treaty with England and the growing influence of Maitland entered another phase in September 1586. Huntly's foreign contacts were an important part of his political assets, of value to both himself and to his king. Through developing these relations abroad, Huntly was extending his spheres of influence and his powerbase in Scotland. It was not sufficient, however, in itself to contest Maitland's dominance within Scottish domestic politics and could actually prove to be detrimental if his actions were publicly exposed, not only bringing him under the scrutiny of the Kirk but also making it difficult for him to contest Maitland on his home ground. Huntly needed a means to consolidate his position within the centre that was not dependent on political vagaries and that could withstand any opponent, from the queen of England to Protestant nobles to civil servants such as Maitland.

The means of doing so had been handed to him by Esmé Stewart, first duke of Lennox. Before Huntly had returned to Scotland in 1581, he had become engaged to Stewart's nine year old daughter, Henrietta. His marriage alliance with the Lennox Stewarts was perhaps one of the most important acts in Huntly's entire career.⁹ The advantages that accrued from this affiliation,

⁹ On 21 July 1583, the English ambassador in Scotland, Robert Bowes, wrote to Walsingham that Huntly 'likes not so well of the Court that he has any desire to make longer abode, for finding that he shall be pressed to accept Lennox's daughter in marriage, and misliking presently to be bound thereto, he is purposed to put the matter over by all fair means he can', *CSP Scot.*, vi, 552. There is no other evidence to support this. On 28 September 1584, Mary

both personal and political, is an outstanding example of the power of patronage in sixteenth century Scotland. Through his mother, Huntly was already part of the extended Hamilton kin network and now through his proposed marriage to Henrietta Stewart, sister of Ludovic, second duke of Lennox, Huntly became connected to the Lennox Stewarts: he, therefore, became part of the kin networks of the only two houses which were of the royal line. Once married to the king's closest female relative in Scotland, his own issue would be distantly related to the king himself. More importantly, there was no doubt that James would bestow the same favour upon Henrietta as he had upon her younger brother. Add to that her prospective husband's already close relationship with the king, and it was a political marriage made in heaven.

Henrietta was now of age and in September 1586 Huntly decided it was time to initiate arrangements for his marriage, a marriage that he trusted would prove to be the ultimate political trump card in that his wife's personal tie to James would hopefully elevate him above his peers, ensure continued favour, enhance his position in Court and assure access to the king. Like his foreign policy, his marriage plans would take time to mature (they would not marry until 1588) but the first step was taken at the Convention of Estates held on 23 September 1586. The Convention was advised that a marriage was contracted 'be the Kingis Majesteis speciall avise and consent' between Huntly and Henrietta Stewart and that the king had directed Huntly 'to send in France, and to caus convoy and transport thairfra in this realme his Hienes foirsaid cousignace ... with all guidlie diligence, and to mak all neidful chargeis and expenssis to that effect'. For relief and supply of the expenses,

instructed Fontenay to inform James of her 'recommendation for the accomplishment of the marriage between the said earl [Huntly] and the said Duke of Lennox's youngest sister', *CSP Scot.*, vii, 341.

James granted Huntly 5,000 merks, appointing him donator to the casualties of the treasury to that value falling vacant within the bounds of his lieutenandry.¹⁰ The 5,000 merks grant attested to the degree of favour in which both Huntly and his fiancée were held by the king and only presaged greater favour yet, enabling Huntly to achieve precisely what he had hoped. Like the king's gift in September 1586, Huntly began to accrue the benefits from his impending marriage before Henrietta arrived in Scotland.

Although Huntly had rarely exerted himself outwith the north for months, the anxieties of the English administration, Scottish Protestants and Anglophiles regarding Huntly and his fellow Catholics were becoming more widely expressed in the autumn of 1586. It is a significant indicator of Huntly's potential influence and of what he had come to represent to the English and the wider Anglophile community that early in October Courcelles, the French ambassador's aide, reported a rumour to the French king that England was dispatching an ambassador to Scotland to lodge a complaint against Huntly, David Lindsay, eleventh earl of Crawford, John Graham, third earl of Montrose and Lord Claud Hamilton, 'which the Queene of England knowinge to be adversaryes to her factiones, seeketh eithere by causinge them to be presented as Catholicks, or upon some other pretext, to vexee and procure them to lose their lives and goods, or be banished that realme'; judging these men to represent such a threat, that England would be willing to go so far as to 'not forgette at this time to charge them with the conspiracy, to make them more odious'.¹¹

¹⁰ *RPC*, iv, 103. Huntly himself did not attend this Convention of Estates. Its overall attendance was actually quite poor: only seven nobles, six ecclesiastical personages, five officers of state and fifteen commissioners of, *RPC*, iv, 101.

¹¹ Courcelles, *Despatches*, 8-9. At the end of October 1586, Mendoza informed Philip II that Robert Bruce had received letters from Lord Claud Hamilton and two other earls (supposedly Huntly and Maxwell) informing him that they had rejected Elizabeth's offers of pensions and that she was retaliating by attempting to have them expelled from Scotland, *CSP Spain*, iii,

It is also an indication of England's vulnerability if leading Catholics and Marianers were considered such a significant risk to England's security, despite the fact that no action had actually been undertaken, that a pre-emptive policy, such as implicating them in the Babington conspiracy, could even be mooted. The matter was raised again in November when Scrope wrote to Walsingham that letters had been sent from England accusing Lord Claud Hamilton of conspiring in Elizabeth's murder. According to Maxwell, if Hamilton was guilty, 'then Montrose, Crawford, Huntly, and himself were equally chargeable'.¹²

Close tabs were being kept on this core group of men not just because of their religious and political sympathies or because of their independent capabilities, but because all were also known to be close to James and therefore could unduly influence the king's reaction to Mary's predicament. This point increases in importance when James's relationship with members of his government is considered: Archibald Douglas, eighth earl of Angus and Thomas Lyon, master of Glamis were barely tolerated by James and by November it was reported that Maitland was 'suspected by the king and not consulted in secret affairs'.¹³

668; Teulet, *Relations*, v, 432-3. This may be connected to the rumour reported by Courcelles. Philip II suggested in January 1587 that with regard to Elizabeth attempting to expel them after refusing her pension, it might be advisable 'to allow them to feign to be in agreement with the English until the hour has arrived for successful action', *CSP Spain*, iv, 10.

¹² *CBP*, i, 238. Unless Maxwell was referring to the Spanish correspondence, there is no evidence for any other joint plans by these men to undermine Elizabeth or to conspire to assassinate her. Nor is there any indication at all that English intelligence had noticed any traffic between Huntly, Maxwell, Lord Claud Hamilton and Spain.

¹³ *CBP*, i, 238-9. The number of men advising the king whom the English considered reliable steadily reduced as events progressed: Archibald Douglas, William Keith of Delnies, the Master of Gray and Sir Robert Melville of Murdocairny were all eventually dispatched as envoys to England. With the exception of Melville, who was considered a Marian, the envoys were members of the English faction; thus increasing opportunities for the king's long-standing, trusted friends – such as Huntly and Crawford – to sway James.

In October both Patrick, master of Gray and Courcelles reported a meeting '[o]f those who were before about the King'. Apparently, Huntly, Montrose, Captain James Stewart and others met at Crawford's lodging after the Convention of Estates at the end of September – none of these men had attended the Convention. Courcelles himself also attended and reported that there was 'no apparence of any thing to be done, but rather that they shall accorde, yf the Queene of England attempted any thing againste the Scottish Queen'. The Master of Gray wrote that the meeting 'causes rumours to arise though in the end they turn to nothing'.¹⁴ Considering that Mary's trial began on 11 October 1586, ending on 25 October, it would be surprising if there had been no meetings at all by those who opposed England's actions. Even if these men were not contemplating direct action against England, there were certainly recognisable political opportunities that warranted wider discussion. For example, a known Anglophile administration which had idly stood by as England tried Scotland's exiled queen for her life would be politically susceptible.

It could not have been a coincidence that the men whom the English were closely watching were also the men who had been identified as adamantly against the English alliance. Their scrutiny, however, did not always indicate Catholic or anti-English intentions. For example, Crawford may very well have been pursuing a domestic concern when it was noted early in November that he, having lately left Court, 'suddenly returned, and after "small tarriance, he, conferringe with Montrose and Fentrie, repaired unto James Steward"' (the former earl of Arran) at Thomas Kennedy of Bargany's house

¹⁴ Courcelles, *Despatches*, 15; Gray, *Letters and Papers*, 95.

in Ayrshire, a well known Protestant.¹⁵ Maxwell's actions, however, although he did pursue regional political concerns, were typically perceived within a Catholic context by those watching him. This was unsurprising when he himself had consistently linked his past actions with ostensible Catholic goals – it was inevitable that those observing him would do likewise. It was written that his behaviour “greatlie argueth suspicion of some evell evente shortlie to ensue” for over the last fortnight he had attended private mass daily and often went to Kirkcudbright, but Scrope could not ascertain why.¹⁶

Although the men being scrutinised were predominantly Catholic or Marians, it was their known anti-English credentials and political agendas that opposed the present Scottish administration that made them a primary cause for concern. An additional reason for worry was some of these men had a better relationship with the king than his own government did, apart from Maitland, and therefore could still find the opportunity to impress upon James an alternative means of responding to England's progressive escalation of the situation concerning Mary. England's own reports (as well as those of Courcelles), however, demonstrate that despite their concerns, Huntly, Crawford, Maxwell, Montrose or Lord Claud Hamilton undertook no substantive action.

In October, aside from Maxwell, the lack of religious content in reports and observations regarding suspected nobles such as Huntly, Crawford, Montrose

¹⁵ *CBP*, i, 238. David Graham of Fintry, was also the nephew of the Archbishop of Glasgow, Mary's ambassador in France. He had hosted William Holt, S.J. and James Gordon, S.J. in Edinburgh in February 1585, Forbes-Leith, *Narratives of Scottish Catholics*, 201-02.

¹⁶ *CBP*, i, 235. John Dury, S.J. was also reported to be “contynuallie with Maxwell, who ... is not ignorant of any matter comitted to the Jesuytes”. In addition to Dury, it was suspected that there were three to four other Jesuits at New Abbey, 236. Kirkcudbright was one of the ports offered by Maxwell that Robert Bruce suggested in his negotiations with the Spanish in the autumn of 1586, *CSP Spain*, iii, 681-3.

or Lord Claud Hamilton extended to general comments on the overall state of the country as well. The only religious references in October 1586 pertained to the continuing preoccupation with members of the Society of Jesus. The English government's anxieties concerning the Jesuits ranged from Scrope undertaking on 3 October to investigate Walsingham's information that "many Jesuytes latelie entred the realme of Scotland"¹⁷ to Elizabeth's personal letter to James on 4 October, blaming 'the wicked suggestion of the Jesuites' that 'a kinge not of their profession shuld be murthered' for the Babington Plot. She was therefore duty bound to warn him of the perils Jesuits posed, that he 'suffer not suche vipars to inhabite your lande'. She found reports that he 'gaue leve undar your hand that they might safely come and go', greatly dismaying and strongly urged James 'to regard your surety above all perswations, and account him no subiect that intertaines them'.¹⁸ For the English queen, the very real political threat posed by the Jesuits eclipsed the religious dimensions of a Catholic mission and, accordingly, her letter forbore any reference to religious implications.

Ironically, in Scotland, that was the sphere in which the Jesuits were most effective. Aside from Holt, the priests assigned to Scotland had little or no contact with the political dimensions of the Jesuit organisation. Although the likelihood of James's conversion may have been debated on the Continent¹⁹

¹⁷ *CBP*, i, 234. Two weeks later he concluded that no Jesuits or strangers had entered Scotland, but he was aware of Jesuits in Northumberland, which had been 'slenderly searched'. Scrope determined that those chiefly responsible for conveying the priests in and out of Scotland were Edward Collingwood and Robert Carr, both English outlaws and a Scot, Carr of Linton, 235-6. Other evidence supports Scrope's conclusion that the Jesuits in Scotland remained unchanged, with the exception of Holt's departure in October 1586. Pollen asserts that Robert Abercromby, S.J. and William Ogilvy, S.J. both were sent to Scotland in 1586, although further details or evidence of their arrival has proved elusive, J.H. Pollen, S.J., *The Counter-Reformation in Scotland*, 62.

¹⁸ J. Bruce (ed.), *Letters of Queen Elizabeth and King James VI of Scotland* (Camden Society, 1849), 38. James's 'surety' was, of course, pivotal to maintaining her own 'surety'.

¹⁹ In January 1587, instructions to determine the state of Catholicism in Scotland included assessing whether there was still hope for converting James or whether he would only

(with William Crichton, S.J. his strongest advocate),²⁰ in Scotland the priests themselves dedicated their attention to their mission, either ministering to existing Catholics or quietly evangelising under the protection of men like Huntly. Perhaps few were willing to test the boundaries of the king's tolerance or, with Maxwell as an example, risk the position of the men who sheltered them.

The warnings Elizabeth issued to James, therefore, rang hollow with regard to his own experience and provided the king with fresh insight into how much more Elizabeth felt personally threatened by the Jesuits now that the Babington Plot had been discovered.²¹ England's steadily deteriorating relations with Spain were also a factor in that she knew that the Jesuits' politicking was intended to further Spain's endeavours as the secular arm of the Counter-Reformation. More than ever in the months following Babington, the Jesuits in Scotland were a tool employed by James in an attempt to increasingly unsettle Elizabeth. Mendoza reported that the

become more confirmed in his Protestant beliefs as he aged. The precise instructions included: to determine how James was disposed in general, to the Catholic cause in particular and to Mary; to assess any indications that he would lead the Catholic party in both Scotland and England and, if not, to evaluate the disposition, composition and strength of the Scottish Catholic party. It was asserted that his efforts on behalf of Mary were recognised by both Protestants and Catholics alike as an exercise to preserve his honour and that some English Catholics placed their hopes in Rome and in Spain taking Elizabeth's crown. The persons inspecting Scotland were therefore instructed to determine what the views of the Scottish Catholics were regarding these issues as well and to spread the knowledge of Mary's desperate situation amongst Catholics, *CSP Scot.*, ix, 243-4.

²⁰ Crichton was captured and imprisoned by the English from August 1584 to May 1587, see M. Yellowlees, *'So strange a monster as a Jesuiste': The Society of Jesus in Sixteenth Century Scotland* (Isle of Colonsay, 2003), 95-105. He returned to Scotland in August 1587.

²¹ The persecution of English recusants increased from 1587 onwards. In March 1587, as a direct outcome of Babington and evidence of Catholic plotting, the 1581 law which imposed a £20 fine per month for non-attendance of Church of England services was amended so that two-thirds of a recusant's property could be confiscated (29 Eliz. c. 6). Catholics were imprisoned with increasing frequency and subjected to judicial questioning regarding their possible future actions, referred to as the 'bloody questions'. See J. LaRocca, S.J., 'English Catholics and Recusancy Laws, 1558-1625: A Study in Religion and Politics' (unpublished Rutgers University PhD thesis, 1977). There were no corresponding recusancy laws in Scotland and the Kirk was reliant upon the cooperation of the local magistrates, some of whom were Catholic.

Jesuits in Scotland were continuously harassed,²² but there is no evidence to support his assertions – which was the point of Elizabeth’s letter. In fact, Scrope informed Walsingham on 6 November 1586 that the ‘Scottish Jesuits keep very close and quiet now’.²³

Discussion of religion in October may have been predominantly restricted to the Jesuits, but in November 1586 the substance of the reports regarding Scotland changed considerably and Catholicism moved to the top of the agenda. As the circumstances surrounding Mary changed, it is interesting to note the changing nature of reports concerning Catholicism in Scotland. In the month when the English Parliament formally petitioned Elizabeth for the execution of Mary, Catholicism in Scotland became overwhelmingly politicised by the English observers. In October, individuals whom the English were concerned about were explicitly named and observed, but their religion was not the predominant issue. In the following month, however, generalisations became the norm and rather than observing those with recognisable political agendas, systematic evaluation appears to have been abandoned. James’s unofficial response to England’s actions seems to have been escalating by degrees, employing those elements most unsettling to England: first, continued toleration of Jesuits and now closer association with Catholics after months where their presence in Court or government had declined.

On 30 November, Courcelles wrote to Henry III that ‘many of the nobillitie of the realme begine to delare them selves openlie, and make professyon of the

²² Teulet, *Relations*, v, 413-16. At the end of October Mendoza was informed that ‘three of the greatest lords in Scotland have been again reconciled to the church’ by the Jesuits, who had also converted in excess of 20,000 people, *CSP Spain*, iii, 668; Teulet, *Relations*, v, 432-3. The identity of these three nobles is uncertain.

²³ *CBP*, i, 239.

Catholicke religeone in their howses, with a desire to establishe the same in the realme publicklye'. The Protestant ministers were complaining to the king 'that his courte, his counsell, the tolbuith, were full of Papistes; that many papisticall bookis and ornaments were brought into the realme' and Huntly was singled out for sheltering two or three Jesuits in his home. James's reply was one often repeated in the years to come, neatly turning the blame and the responsibility for the unconverted back onto the ministers: he enquired of the ministers as to whether they had spoken with those they accused of Catholicism in his Court and Council, as well as elsewhere; when they replied in the negative, he ordered them to do so and apply themselves to their conversion. Regarding Huntly specifically, James maintained that the earl 'could not refuse his house to his uncle, although he was a Jesuit, for the charity that we owe one to another, and chiefly to our kinsmen'.

Courcelles concluded that 'many remark that the ardour which the greater part of this realm had to the Protestant religion and to the said ministers is beginning to greatly abate'.²⁴ To another correspondent, Courcelles commented upon a recent rumour 'to alter the court and the religion', which was feared by the ministers 'who recognise that the King of Scotland does not love them at all, they having preached only sedition'. He also noted a reversal in the positions of the Anglophiles, 'who see themselves now with little strength', and the Catholic lords who 'speak more openly against them and their religion that they have done, and increase every day in friends and in desire to chase them from about their King'.²⁵

²⁴ Courcelles, *Despatches*, 21; *CSP Scot.*, ix, 175. The books and ornaments referred to may be the result of the discussion Claud Aquaviva, S.J. had with Pope Sixtus V concerning the work of the Jesuits in Scotland and his request for assistance in purchasing ornaments and in printing books in order to further the Scottish mission, Teulet, *Relations*, v, 416-18. Huntly's uncle was James Gordon, S.J..

²⁵ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 175.

With the current situation surrounding Mary, Walsingham recognised the added potential that Scotland presented for Spain in its plans against England, especially within the wider context of Sir Francis Drake's escalating attacks on Spanish shipping and England's by now vested position in the Low Countries. The correspondence of the English Secretary's informants reflects the increasing concern regarding any possible Iberian-Scottish connections. At the end of December 1586, one correspondent intimated that he was not aware of any definite intelligence between Scotland and Spain. He personally doubted that the Scottish king would open his ports to Spanish naval ships 'or would be so blinded as not to see that thereby his own misery would ensue', especially considering James's 'zeal' in religion and 'a most rare judgment of all matters politics'.

However, considering that Scotland was in the best position to advance Spain's enterprise and the 'Spanish faction vaunting James's consent', together with his contacts with the Archbishop of Glasgow in France and the Bishop of Ross in Rome, it was feared that James might pursue an arrangement with Spain in order to increase his own power. Therefore, 'it is thought by our men here that he cannot be free from suspicion of some intelligence with Spain'. He supported his conclusion with the point that Spain had warmly received Scottish priests sent by the Pope, whilst at 'the same time there came two gentlemen by stealth out of Scotland that did belong to the Earl of Huntly, with a secret message from the King, so that these lines (to use their metaphor) ... meeting in one centre, Spain, it is thought they agree in one point', which is confirmed by reports from Rome and Spain.²⁶

²⁶ *CSP For., Eliz.*, June 1586-June 1588, 454. There is no evidence of Huntly dispatching any men to Spain at this time nor acknowledgement by his contacts in Europe, for example Bruce, Mendoza or Guise, that they had received letters from Huntly. At the end of

This is an important document for it is the first time that a ‘Spanish faction’ in Scotland was identified and in looking to Spain rather than to France for support, this faction was perceived to represent a marked threat to England. The implication of both James and Huntly is equally important, even though England never suspected either man of actual involvement in foreign politicking simply because there was no evidence to give cause for such conjecture. Being identified or suspected of being favourable to Spain did not imply an active relationship with Spain’s representatives. England may have been completely oblivious to any connection between Scotland and Spain, but even the Spanish were not entirely confident of how extensive their relations were.

Mendoza first raised the issue as to whether the Scottish king was aware of the overtures made by Huntly, Lord Claud Hamilton and Maxwell in May 1586, which the Spanish were still seriously debating in December 1586. In October, when discussing the proposals with Parma for the first time, Mendoza wondered whether ‘the Catholic lords have entered into this enterprise with the connivance of the King’.²⁷ The point that James’s involvement was seriously speculated and not immediately dismissed by the Spanish government is important in and of itself. The arrival of Colonel William Stewart as the Scots’ envoy in December 1586 is perhaps the strongest indication that James was aware of the Spanish correspondence, but Mendoza’s realisation that Stewart had not been fully briefed by Huntly,

December Mendoza informed Philip II that he had just met with Colonel William Stewart, sent by the Scottish nobles and prior to that the most recent communication from the three Scottish nobles was to Robert Bruce on 20 November 1586, *CSP Spain*, iii, 681-3; Teulet, *Relations*, v, 439-52. James may have used the pretext of writing to Philip II on 27 December 1586 in order to request that a Scot be released from prison in Spain and surrendered to him, but it seems unlikely. Perhaps it was in response to a request from the Archbishop of Glasgow, since Mendoza identified the prisoner as Gilbert Lamb, a Catholic and former servant of the Archbishop, *CSP Spain*, iii, 690.
²⁷ *CSP Spain*, iii, 637.

Maxwell and Lord Claud Hamilton implies that the Scottish king, although he may have been aware that a dialogue had been initiated between these men and Spain, was still not fully cognisant of all that was being negotiated.²⁸ The degree to which James was or was not aware of his three Catholic nobles' propositions to Spain, however, is not entirely relevant within this context, nor is whether England had actual evidence to support Huntly's contact with Spain. The important point is that the link had been made by the English.

Walsingham had to consider possible outcomes from reports that indicated that James was favourable to Spain and responding to the encouragement of his Catholic subjects, in particular the 'Spanish faction'. The assumption that there was now a Spanish faction in Scotland represented an important turning point in how Huntly was viewed by those with differing religious and political perspectives than him both within and outwith Scotland. Huntly's association with Francophiles may have been a stepping stone to his association with Spain, but an association with French Catholicism was relatively benign when compared to one with Spanish Catholicism. In being increasingly identified over ensuing years as part of a Spanish faction, Huntly was also being overtly identified with the Counter-Reformation. It was these over-riding assumptions which coloured later interpretations of his actions during the Brig o' Dee affair in 1589 and the battle of Glenlivet in 1594, even when both were the product of domestic politics.²⁹

The king's toleration of Jesuits, reported increases of Catholics in Court and government, even his apparently flippant defence of Huntly hosting his Jesuit uncle all factored into an assessment that indicated that James was steadily

²⁸ *CSP Spain*, iii, 681-3.

²⁹ See Chapters Five and Six below.

heading out of the English orbit into a Spanish one. James appeared to be deliberately cultivating the same assessment by his Catholic nobles. In their letters to Bruce in November 1586, Huntly, Maxwell and Lord Claud Hamilton informed him that the ‘King now not only secretly favoured the Catholics, but was pleased for them to speak to him about religion, which he was not formerly’ and James supposedly even went so far as to surreptitiously acquiesce to the Catholic lords liberating him from the English faction.³⁰ The Scottish king may have been playing a dangerous game, but his cultivation of domestic and foreign Catholics and contacts with powerful Catholic interests abroad in order both to deliberately provoke Elizabeth and to increase his Catholic credentials were part of a calculated policy which he developed further as his reign progressed. In the autumn of 1586 through to the beginning of spring 1587, however, this Catholic policy was perhaps more overt than in any other period because it was James’s vehicle to clearly illustrate his indignation with Elizabeth.

England’s anxieties regarding the king of Scotland at the end of 1586 may have been difficult to quantify, but interpreting the reactions of the Scots on the Border to reports of Mary’s execution in February 1587 was entirely different. One week after Mary had been executed there was growing disorder in the Borders with no attempts made by the Scots to control incursions against England. Scotland’s closing of the Borders, refusal to receive English envoys, such as Robert Carey, and the intimation that the “King and all the nobylitie doe take the death of the Quene in very evill part, and are in great heat for the same – and showe by ther outragious speaches ther full intencion is to revenge yt”, could not have been unexpected.³¹

³⁰ *CSP Spain*, iii, 683; Teulet, *Relations*, v, 439-52.

³¹ For conditions and responses in the Borders see *CBP*, i, 242, 244, 245, 247; Moysie, *Memoirs*, 60; G. Donaldson, *Scotland: James V – James VII*, 184-5; Lee, *John Maitland of*

Descriptions of James's response to the news of his mother's death ranged from upon receipt of confirmation of her death on 23 February that he 'wes in great displeasour, and went to bed without supper; lyk as on the morne he past solitarlie to Dalkeithe, desyring to be solitar', to, on 6 March, that 'the Kinge taketh the death of his mother most haynously' and, two days later, that James 'is greatly afflicted with this accidente'.³² In the weeks following his mother's execution, James pursued a course which amply demonstrated his anger with Elizabeth and not only refused entry to her envoy, but refused to communicate with the queen herself, permitted Border raids and seemed to be sympathetic to those calling vengeance.³³

The first report from Scotland seemed to indicate that James's response was not going to be favourable to either the English or his Anglophile government. On 7 February 1587, Mr Archibald Douglas was informed that a letter subscribed by Huntly, Crawford and Montrose was brought to the king, 'desiring that he would put hand to his own delivery out of the bondage that he was in, and they would take arms with the rest of his loyal subjects to that effect, otherwise they would attempt themselves out of their own duty'. Maitland relayed news of the letter 'to the rest of the fellowship that came in at Stirling' and subsequently persuaded the king to personally inform them, and 'as it appeared to all that are about him, he repents himself of that dealing'. Apparently threatened by these developments, Maitland may have decided to build bridges with the men he had disagreed with over the treaty negotiations and over the course pursued regarding Mary, as Douglas was

Thirlestane, 106; R.G. Macpherson, 'Francis Stewart, Fifth Earl Bothwell, c.1562-1612: Lordship and Politics in Jacobean Scotland' (unpublished University of Edinburgh PhD thesis, 1998), 159, 161.

³² Moysie, *Memoirs*, 60; *CBP*, i, 50; Courcelles, *Despatches*, 46-7; *CSP Scot.*, ix, 324.

³³ For a full analysis of James's reaction to Mary's trial and execution, see S. Doran, 'Revenge her foul and most unnatural murder?', 589-612; R. Grant, 'The Making of the Anglo-Scottish Treaty of 1586', 231-6.

informed ‘that at this present the Secretary leans only to the faction of Stirling’.³⁴

The authenticity of the information relayed to Douglas is questionable – not because of the offers made by Huntly, Crawford and Montrose to liberate the king for they would be in keeping with their own political objectives and means of operating. It is the subsequent statement, that if James refused they would ‘attempt’ a raid into England without his authorisation. Such an undertaking seems unlikely at this point as their relationship with James had been built on achieving the king’s trust through their obedience and support of the king, even if they did not concur with his policies. It is possible that they took advantage of a political opportunity in the upheaval surrounding Mary and misread James, anticipating a favourable response. Even if the whole event was purely rumour, it is still illustrative of the uncertain political conditions: there were clearly two leading factions (the Stirling faction and Huntly, Crawford and Montrose, who were frequently linked together in representing the opposition), but Maitland seemed to be somewhat outside the core group of the Stirling faction and nobody was entirely sure where the king’s affections lay.

At the end of February 1587, a *communiqué* from Courcelles to Henry III makes it clear that James was deliberately encouraging this confusion and sending out mixed signals. The ministers’ response to the command to pray for Mary at the beginning of February was an additional element of disunity within Scottish society provoked by the king, yet left unresolved. The refusal

³⁴ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 266. For discussion of Walsingham’s policy conclusions and attempts to convince Maitland that a Scottish foreign policy other than alliance with England would be foolhardy, see C. Read, *Mr. Secretary Walsingham and the Policy of Queen Elizabeth*, iii (Oxford, 1925), 181-6; Lee, *John Maitland of Thirlestane*, 107-10.

by some caused 'a great dissension betuix sum of the ministrie and his Majestie, namely the ministry of Edinburgh'.³⁵ According to Courcelles, various Catholics would have supported the king's suppression of the rebellious ministers, 'for to serve them selves of this occasione againste them; wherwith the Kinge seemed well-contented: But he heareth nothinge againste the minesteres, and those that governe the Courte, to whome notwithstandinge he saith he haith noe affectione'.³⁶

Having made it clear that he would not condone action against either those defying him or his Anglophile administration, James then announced that Huntly, Crawford and Montrose 'were redie to doe him all humble service in what it should please him to comaunde'. Courcelles interpreted this to mean that if the king 'would onlie winke at the matter, withoute pretendinge to take other parte then with the minesteres, they would thruste them out of the realme with all the protestantis, and establishe ther the catholicke religeone, and change the Courte before xv. daies yend'. The three earls, however, denied that this was what was intended, 'but held them selves in the generall termes above menconed'.³⁷

The French diplomat's analysis of the Scottish political situation was that James deliberately encouraged the factions, 'to nourish them in pike on[e] with an other'. The king not only deliberately ignored Lord Claud Hamilton's call for the Scottish polity to unite in its opposition to Mary's execution, but any such political union was 'hindred as much as hath bene in him to doe'. The reason why James did so seemed obvious: avenging Mary

³⁵ Moysie, *Memoirs*, 59; *RPC*, iv, 140; those who refused or publicly slandered the king's mother were to be warded at their own expense, 143-4.

³⁶ Courcelles, *Despatches*, 34.

³⁷ Courcelles, *Despatches*, 34-5.

depended on the unity of his subjects 'and contrarywise by their disorder'.³⁸ Ranging, for example, from the Anglophile administration, the clergy and the burghs on one hand to Bothwell, Lords Claud Hamilton and Maxwell and unsettled Borders on the other, the Scottish polity was divided concerning its response to England's execution of Mary.³⁹ A united polity would compel James to commit to a single course of action, whereas disunity allowed manoeuvrability and ambiguity. It appears that James turned the situation to his own advantage with regard to both England and foreign interests, such as Guise, who may have expected him to avenge his mother. Even if he did not want to be drawn into any direct action against England, James created a situation calculated to induce anxiety, raising questions regarding the risks posed to England's security.

Courcelles, however, wondered if there was more going on in Scottish politics than was readily apparent. Huntly, Crawford and Montrose were candid about their willingness to serve James in whatever manner he deemed best, yet they also recognised his limitations. Courcelles believed that Huntly knew that James would never avenge his mother and 'that the Kinge sufferes him to be carried after the will of such as have the moste force about him'. In light of this, and in addition to 'the zelle they have to the advancemente of the Catholicke religeon', Huntly therefore decided to send Colonel William Stewart to Flanders to confer with Parma. Stewart had sent encouraging responses back to Scotland and it was decided that if France did not respond

³⁸ Courcelles, *Despatches*, 35.

³⁹ Doran argues persuasively that James's response to news of Mary's trial unequivocally threatened 'rupture with England' and she refutes the perception that his responses on Mary's behalf were minimal. But her analysis fails to adequately consider the support within Scotland for an armed conflict with England or the role which factions played in informing James's response, see Doran, 'Revenge her foul and most unnatural murder?', 592-600; for further discussion of this point see R. Grant, 'The Making of the Anglo-Scottish treaty of 1586', 231-2.

satisfactorily to Mary's execution, then support for Spain would be pursued through Stewart's means. Courcelles was also aware that Robert Bruce had been sent to France nine months ago and had 'so straight intellygence' with Stewart, who favoured the enterprise.⁴⁰

It is not clear from the document whether he knew Stewart had been sent to consult with the Spanish duke in December or thought it was more recent, but Courcelles was certainly much more aware of the covert politicking emanating from Scotland than the English were. His report does raise a point worthy of consideration: if Huntly definitively knew that James would not take action against England, was this because the king had confided in him? And, having confided in Huntly, had James endorsed Colonel Stewart's mission, and if so, was this to ensure that he had an insurance policy in place?

Maintenance of his European contacts and securing potential sources of support in counterpoint to England had always been an important element of James's response to the evolving Marian crisis. For example, in December 1586, James Colville of Easter Wemyss was appointed to go to France 'and other places beyond sea'.⁴¹ At the end of February 1587, Mendoza informed

⁴⁰ Courcelles, *Despatches*, 35-6.

⁴¹ *RPC*, iv, 127. A document in the Laing MSS which was instructions from James to ambassadors in Denmark may have been erroneously dated as circa 1592. The content of the instructions are much more in accord with the king's manoeuvring at the end of 1586 and at the beginning of 1587. For example, his ambassadors were instructed to request that Denmark banish English merchants or increase their tolls so as to drive them from trade; request Danish assistance of 2,000 foot, paid for two years or a navy against England for one year; to avoid suspicion a direct ambassador would arouse, the Archbishop of Glasgow would confer with the Spanish ambassador in France, 'to requyre his counsell and ayde to be revenged against' the Queen of England; Scottish Catholics had intimated to Maxwell that Spanish aid was welcomed and should land in the west of Scotland, invading England from the western marches; the king 'doeth not mislike the incursions into Englande although he doe pretende that his wardenes shall doe justice upon the offendouris', H. Paton (ed.), *H.M.C. Report on the Laing MSS Preserved in the University of Edinburgh*, i (London, 1914), 80-81.

Philip II that the French king had written to James, 'offering his warm friendship ... out of fear that he may come to terms with your Majesty, seeing the position he is in towards the Englishwoman'.⁴² James responded with emissaries to both Henry III and Guise, as well as directing his ambassador, the Archbishop of Glasgow, to follow the guidance of Guise.⁴³ As Mendoza astutely recognised, Beaton's ambassadorial commission 'signifies that the King desires to follow a certain line in politics, and not in religion, and would like to stand well with all parties'.⁴⁴

Philip was subsequently informed on 6 March 1587 that Robert Bruce had shown Mendoza letters from Huntly, Maxwell and Lord Claud Hamilton assuring him that James would have sent an envoy to Spain requesting aid against Elizabeth, but refrained because he believed that he would have been rejected on the basis of his religion.⁴⁵ James received correspondence from Colonel William Stewart, Philip II, Parma and Henry III in April 1587.⁴⁶ On 20 May 1587, Mendoza advised the Spanish king that Colonel William Stewart had arrived in France after treating with Parma in Flanders regarding the proposals previously sent by Huntly, Maxwell and Lord Claud Hamilton; Parma, Guise and himself had satisfied Stewart with generalities.⁴⁷

⁴² *CSP Spain*, iv, 28. Mendoza postulated that Henry III's fear would increase once Mary's death was confirmed.

⁴³ John Chisholm, the younger brother of Sir James, had arrived in Paris in April 1587 with the king's ambassadorial commission to Beaton, who formally refused the title (albeit he acted in its capacity) until he received the Pope's brevet in August 1587. James had instructed Beaton in May 1587 to point out to the French king his obligation by the old friendship between Scotland and France to avenge Mary's death, *CSP Spain*, iv, 91; *Warrender Papers*, ii, 56-68, for Beaton's report of the outcome of his ambassadorial commission, January 1588. See Chapter Four below.

⁴⁴ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 324, 326. Courcelles asserted that the ambassador was being sent in order to excuse Scotland's former treating with England without French privity and to seek the French king's advice, Courcelles, *Despatches*, 43, 62; *CSP Spain*, iv, 91. , *CBP*, i, 256.

⁴⁵ Teulet, *Relations*, v, 483-8.

⁴⁶ *CSP Spain*, iv, 84.

⁴⁷ *CSP Spain*, iv, 92.

It may very well have been purely for the sake of appearance that James adopted this policy, but he may well have perceived it as a means of investing in his longer ranged political objectives and used the pretext of Mary's death in order to establish diplomatic links with Spain and augment his ties with the Guise faction in France.⁴⁸ James's ambiguous policy and openly favourable approach to Catholics, both at home and abroad, however, did provoke a personal response from Philip II. On 31 March 1587, the king of Spain advised Mendoza to extend to James the friendship and goodwill that he had borne for Mary. Further, if England ventured more insults to Scotland, then James would have all the aid he required from Philip and he would find Spain a 'more effectual' ally than France – if James were to convert to Catholicism.⁴⁹ What James's response was, if any, is unknown. But it is an interesting departure for Philip II, as he had hitherto consistently resisted any overtures whatsoever to the Scottish king.

In the same directive, Philip instructed Mendoza to ensure that Robert Bruce encouraged Huntly, Maxwell and Lord Claud Hamilton to make every effort to convert their king.⁵⁰ The Spanish king also granted the Scots' request for 150,000 crowns for three to four months following their 'liberation' of James. When Bruce returned to Scotland in May 1587, he carried 10,000 crowns sent

⁴⁸ Augmenting his European connections may also have been deemed necessary since, unlike in 1585, Elizabeth exerted little effort in 1586 to 1587 to 'purchase' the support of allies such as James, the Danes and various German princes. She even alienated allies such as the Huguenots and John Casimir of the Palatinate, as well as the Dutch through her independent peace negotiations with Parma. See M.J. Rodríguez-Salgado, 'The Anglo-Spanish War: The Final Episode in the Wars of the Roses?' in M.J. Rodríguez-Salgado and S. Adams (eds), *England, Spain and the Gran Armada, 1585-1604* (Edinburgh, 1991), 19.

⁴⁹ *CSP Spain*, iv, 57; Teulet, *Relations*, v, 493-6.

⁵⁰ *CSP Spain*, iv, 58. For discussion of the support by European and English Catholics for the claims of James and Philip, see T.M. McCoog, S.J., *The Society of Jesus in Ireland, Scotland, and England*, chapter 6; M.J. Rodríguez-Salgado, 'The Anglo-Spanish War'; C. Sáenz-Cambra, 'Scotland and Philip II, 1580-1598: Politics, Religion, Diplomacy and Lobbying' (unpublished University of Edinburgh PhD thesis, 2003), 112-15. For her discussion of Spain's decision to continue to deceive the Scottish Jesuits, especially William Crichton, regarding Philip's true intent regarding the English succession, *passim*.

to him from Parma, 'for the freighting of the ships' to transport soldiers from Flanders to Scotland. Before he left, Bruce assured Mendoza that he would speak 'very plainly' with James regarding religion and the provision of ports for the Spanish navy.⁵¹

Whilst Philip II decided to engage in Catholic politicking with Scotland at the end of March 1587, James had decided in that month that it was time to rein in some of his more overt posturing and undertake a rapprochement with England. He by no means abandoned his Catholic politicking entirely and he would continue to refine it over the succeeding months – indeed it had served him well. He now had a solid platform of Catholic connections that represented a diverse range of interests and capabilities on which to build in future. In addition, he had begun to establish a carefully developed set of Catholic credentials, which would serve him well in both domestic and foreign policy. Nevertheless, within an immediate context of the spring of 1587, *realpolitik* dictated that he should curb the excesses his policy had allowed to flourish.

James thus turned his attention to the domestic political divisions in Scotland, as Courcelles reported: 'the Kinge is determined ... to compound the differences and quarrelis of the nobillitie; which is contrary to his resolution formerly signefyed; yet he seeth some appearance nowe herof as necessarye'.⁵² His antipathy to members of his own government, his noted differences of opinion with Maitland, the rivalry between the Master of Gray and the Secretary, the wide opposition from across his nobility to the

⁵¹ *CSP Spain*, iv, 68-9, 90. Philip decided in April that Mendoza should dispense the 8,000 crowns that had never reached Mary by giving 4,000 crowns to the Archbishop of Glasgow and by spending 1,000 crowns on 'the objects required by those who are secretly preaching our holy faith in Scotland', *CSP Spain*, iv, 60.

⁵² Courcelles, *Despatches*, 46-7.

administration, the disruption caused by the execution of Mary, plus the general disorder in the Highlands, the Maxwell-Johnstone feud which was wreaking havoc in the Southwest and the disintegration of border justice with a high level of raiding into England, all necessitated attention. In short, it was essential to reinstate order and present a decidedly less equivocal domestic and foreign policy. James needed to mend fences amongst his nobility and within his government, and he recognised that it was time to heed Maitland's advice and do the same with England (or risk the penalties of the Act of Association).

His decision to take action against Maxwell in March 1587 would actually respond to both domestic and foreign mandates in that Maxwell embodied many of the concerns and perceived threats to the established religion, domestic order, national security and to the alliance with England. Maxwell provided a convenient means for the king to publicly reject all which he represented, thereby sending a clear message to his own subjects as well as to England with regard to where his loyalties lay. Because the pretext used for immediate action against Maxwell was that he was implicated in a plot by the Master of Gray to assassinate Maitland,⁵³ it would also prove a vehicle whereby James was able to demonstrate his support for the key member of his government and signal his return to prominence. Angus was appointed lieutenant and his control of the Borders facilitated the imposition of order and the normalisation of cross-border relations.

The decision to move against Maxwell may well have been one of political expedience. The king may not have been entirely happy about effectively

⁵³ Maxwell was accused by Colonel William Stewart, *RPC*, iv, 166-8; *CBP*, i, 241; *CSP For.*, *Eliz.*, June 1586-June 1588, 277; Calderwood, *History*, iv, 612-13; Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 372-81; *HKJVI*, 223; K.M. Brown, 'The Making of a *Politique*', 162-3.

making Maxwell his scapegoat (especially if he had been party to the correspondence with Spain), but his conscience may have been ameliorated by the light sentence Maxwell received. It was also believed that James had forewarned Maxwell,⁵⁴ thereby allowing him to make a narrow escape before the king with Bothwell, Angus, the Master of Glamis and their forces arrived in Dumfries on 31 March 1587. James's treatment of Maxwell in March to April 1587, from his forewarning to his lenient treatment, bears remarkable similarity to the king's later approach to Huntly in 1589 and 1594. Two weeks later, on 14 April, Maxwell registered a 10,000 merks caution with the Privy Council that he would go into exile overseas.⁵⁵

Having accused Maxwell of complicity in a plot engineered by the Master of Gray, the next move on the agenda was to mete out justice to the man who had allegedly instigated the scheme against Maitland. The action taken against Maxwell had provided sufficient warning to Patrick, master of Gray as to which way the political wind was blowing. But, rather than follow Maxwell's lead, he launched a desperate political initiative. Having already approached the leading members of the opposition who were known to be anti-Maitland and anti-England in March 1587, the Master of Gray approached the man he had identified as having the most influence, the vested interests and the resources to support his foolhardy plan to extricate himself in April 1587: Huntly.

⁵⁴ *CSP Spain*, iv, 78; *CBP*, i, 254; *CSP For., Eliz.*, June 1586-June 1588, 277. In these same advertisements about Maxwell – an undertaking which was intended to demonstrate the king's decisive action against a leading Catholic – rumours that James was supporting Captain James Stewart's efforts to sustain Catholicism in Ayr were reported.

⁵⁵ *RPC*, iv, 158, 166-7; *CBP*, i, 253-4; Courcelles, *Despatches*, 64. Lord John Hamilton, William, fifth Lord Herries and Sir John Gordon of Lochinvar – one of Huntly's closest personal advisors, a Protestant – stood surety for Maxwell. Maxwell arrived in Lisbon in mid-June 1587, although the Spanish king believed Maxwell would be more useful to the Spanish enterprise in Scotland, *CSP Spain*, iv, 120-1; *CSP Venice*, 1581-91, 286, 290. Maxwell may have gone to Portugal 'at James's behest, or at least with his connivance', K.M. Brown, 'The Making of a *Politique*', 163.

The Master of Gray's plan was completely revealed to Walsingham at the end of April – a man whose aid he had enlisted in making his approach to Huntly had been a secret informer for the English Secretary. Not surprisingly, his first obstacle was to overcome the fact that the Catholics had 'no sik confidens in him as is requisit to effectwat aeny gwide twrne'. He therefore decided to approach Huntly with a proposition to advance the Catholic cause and to change the current government. Huntly was targeted because he was:

ane preceis catholik, mislyks alsua of the present aesteit and governement, and haes the hoill nobill maen of this contrie bandit togither till assist, perseu, and defend with him, and he with them, in all his and thaer acteis, sik as Craferd Montrois Marischal Ogilvy Kaertnes Sutherlande Saltoune Elfinstoune Forbes Gray, with the graetest pairt of owr Hielands, and all the barons and contrie maen.⁵⁶

The plot laid before Huntly encompassed removing James from the control of the present government, then to encourage the king to take arms against England, grant liberty of conscience and finally persuade James to travel to France, 'that thereby all things micht attain to thaer desyrit effectis'. Huntly responded amenably and was curious to know the details, to which end he was sending 'ane of his maist specialls', Captain Thomas Kerr, to confer with the Master of Gray. At this point in their discussion, the king had decisively moved against Maxwell and the Master of Gray was publicly disgraced, 'qwha haes nocht bein at court sens'. The Master of Gray explained the situation to Walsingham's spy as 'nothing els bot policie to pleis the Secretar his ennemie, and thir lords Angus and Mar, qwha haes alredie consaewit ane jalwsie agaenist him'.

⁵⁶ Gray, *Letters and Papers*, 145. An interesting point is that Erroll, a Catholic, had yet to openly commit himself to supporting Huntly's faction.

The Master of Gray continued to scheme, perhaps realising that he had little left to lose at this point. He proposed that the king be drawn to Dunfermline (the abbey lands had been granted to the Master of Gray in December 1585) and be convinced to send for Huntly, who would be *en route* with his forces, and their plan to obtain control of the king – and therefore the government – would be effected swiftly, with James unaware that it had been completely premeditated. On the face of it, it was a naïve and facile plan that speaks plainly to the degree of the Master of Gray’s desperation. Even Walsingham’s informant recognised that ‘[q]whaitsuewer the King haes done ass yeit with France, the Catholiks heir haes no howpe of it’.⁵⁷

It is exceedingly difficult to believe that Huntly actually entered into negotiations with the Master of Gray in all seriousness. Not only were the Master of Gray’s circumstances well-publicised but what was proposed was anathema to Huntly. His willingness to engage in discussion with the Master of Gray can most likely be attributed to an attempt to gather intelligence and subvert any potential action. There was, however, one curious point raised in Walsingham’s intelligence report: Huntly was stayed by the king from going to Court on 20 April 1587 ‘and yeit cam fordward wpon the assurance of ane letter of his Majestis prively convoyit to him’.⁵⁸ This was followed by a report from Henry Woddrington to Walsingham that on 21 April Lord Claud Hamilton arrived in Edinburgh with 200 armed men, ‘furnished with jackes, steale cappes and horsemens peces. And within an hower after, thErle Huntley came to Edenbroughe with thre hundreth furyshed in lyke maner.

⁵⁷ Gray, *Letters and Papers*, 145-7; *CSP Scot.*, ix, 405-07. Captain Kerr would later figure in Huntly’s Spanish correspondence in the 1590s. See Chapter Six below; *ODNB*, vol. 31, 424-5.

⁵⁸ Gray, *Letters and Papers*, 146-7; *CSP Scot.*, ix, 406.

And presently after his comynge, they two together went to the Kinge, and after conference had with the Kinge returned to there lodgings'.⁵⁹

It seems clear that the two events were linked, that perhaps the king sought to publicly be seen to prevent such an incident by commanding Huntly not to come to Court. By secretly countermanding this order, however, it appears that James wanted a public display of arms by two of the main government opposition, who also were two of his leading Catholic subjects. The reasons leading to this armed demonstration and its overall purpose are not evident. Woddrington's report is the only source that refers to the incident and neither are there any indications of political unease or perhaps the escalation or eruption of a feud which might have instigated the event. In the same letter, dated 29 April 1587, it was intimated that the nobles presently with James at Court were Huntly, Lord Claud Hamilton and Crawford. Rothes, Montrose and Atholl, 'with others of that faction', were expected as well.⁶⁰

The arrival of these nobles at Court, however, did not signify imminent political upheaval, quite the contrary: they were assembling for a Convention of Estates, convened on 10 May 1587 in Edinburgh. There is no sederunt for this Convention, but is likely that Huntly attended. He was at Court from 21 April and attended a session of the Privy Council on 5 May 1587 – his first session since 11 December 1585. He missed the next three sessions, but then attended on 19, 24 and 31 May; again, he did not attend the next two sessions, then is listed in the sederunts for 7 and 9 June 1587.⁶¹ Prior to the

⁵⁹ *CBP*, i, 255-6.

⁶⁰ *CBP*, i, 256. An impressive number of nobles attended Court in early May, but two absences were noted: Atholl was unable to attend as a consequence of falling off of a horse in Perth; and Angus apparently kept his distance because James's humour towards him had not improved and he feared that the king would revoke the lands of Dalkeith, *CBP*, i, 258; Gray, *Letters and Papers*, 149.

⁶¹ *RPC*, iv, 163, 170, 173, 182, 186, 187.

commencement of the Convention of Estates, Sir William Stewart (brother of Captain James Stewart) accused the Master of Gray in a Council session before the king of planning to murder Maitland, to change the government and deliver the king to the 'northern lords'. Huntly and Lord Claud Hamilton were implicated in the plan to assassinate Maitland, but he was unable to provide any proof.⁶²

At the Convention, Sir William Stewart accused the Master of Gray of treason: of conspiring with Rome, France and Spain for the subversion of the established religion; of counterfeiting the king's stamp to prevent France sending armed assistance on the behalf of Mary; of planning to assassinate Maitland; and, finally, in return for rewards from England, consenting to Mary's execution. The Master of Gray confessed and was convicted of treason. At the request of Lord John Hamilton, the king spared his life and his heritage (with one exception). Like Maxwell the month before, Patrick, master of Gray was sent into exile, leaving Scotland in June 1587 under a £40,000 Scots caution.⁶³

The fall of the Master of Gray led to the supremacy of Maitland in the administration and as the king's adviser, as evidenced by the king's banquet at Edinburgh's Mercat Cross. James's efforts to restore order to his kingdom, beginning with the fall of Maxwell and subsequent efforts to control the Borders,⁶⁴ extended to his government and his nobility following the

⁶² *CBP*, i, 257; Gray, *Letters and Papers*, 148.

⁶³ He was released from Edinburgh Tollbooth and had the option to immediately repair to either Huntly, Broughty or Foulis until he left Scotland within one month, *RPC*, iv, 164-8, 173; Calderwood, *History*, iv, 612-13; *CBP*, i, 257; Gray, *Letters and Papers*, 148-9; Courcelles, *Despatches*, 65; R. Pitcairn (ed.), *Criminal Trials in Scotland, 1488-1624* (Edinburgh, 1833), vol. i, part 3, 157.

⁶⁴ On 20 April 1587, the king sent a commission to Huntly as Lieutenant of the North indicating that he wished to extend his recent efforts to implement order in the Borders to the Western Isles. Huntly was instructed to command Donald Macleod of Lewis, Macleod of

condemnation of the Master of Gray's attempts to undermine the king and his appointed government. In a very public display of support and compliance, the nobility acquiesced to their monarch's desire for a public resolution of their feuds and disagreements. In remarkable symbolism, he paraded pairs of disputing nobles down the High Street of Edinburgh. This was, however, about more than the king's well known desire to eradicate bloodfeud: it was a calculated display of support for him and his selected government as well.⁶⁵

The banishment of the Master of Gray has been interpreted as the removal of the last obstacle to Maitland's supremacy in government. It is doubtful that the Master of Gray could ever have eclipsed Maitland in the king's confidence and he never truly presented a threat to Maitland's position within the government. His persistent schemes may have undermined his ability to wield his authority or implement policy effectively, but the Master of Gray would have been a serious distraction at most – not a threat. The removal of the Master of Gray, however, did permit the opportunity for the king to make it perfectly clear who the pre-eminent politician in Scotland was. The procession in Edinburgh on 14 May 1587 graphically reinforced this as the king processed with Lord John Hamilton on his right and John Maitland of Thirlestane, Secretary and Vice-Chancellor, on his left, followed by the greater nobility of Scotland.

Harris and Clan Ranald to keep the peace; whilst James had commanded the same of Angus McConnell and MacLean, *Spalding Miscellany*, iii, 214-15. For wider discussion of the MacDonald-MacLean feud ravaging the Western Isles, see D. Gregory, *The History of the Western Highlands and Isles of Scotland* (London, 1881), 236-7.

⁶⁵ Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 374; Calderwood, *History*, iv, 613-14. Huntly was paired with George Keith, fifth Earl Marischal, a Protestant who very much resented Huntly's encroachment on his small Northeastern domains.

Yet, having made his choice of Maitland (and what he represented) perfectly clear, the king balanced the Secretary with an open display of favour to Huntly, who was granted the lands of Dunfermline Abbey on 26 May 1587 as his prospective wife's tocher.⁶⁶ A year ago, in April and May 1586, Huntly had embarked upon a new independent policy, designed to consolidate and expand his spheres of influence in order to place himself in a viable position to counter the dominance of Maitland in the centre. Now, sure of the king and his recognition of the greater assets Huntly placed at his disposal, in April 1587 Huntly returned to Court. His period of working from the periphery was over. His consistent Privy Council attendance through the spring and summer of 1587 and residence at Court signalled his change in policy and tactics. Over the next two years he would contest Maitland's influence and challenge his ascendancy.

By the spring of 1587, James had sampled a wide range of political initiatives and had engaged in both Protestant and Catholic politicking, covert or otherwise. Maitland and Huntly represented two very different political ideals and as such both were extremely valuable to the promotion of the king's dual policies. Thus, learning from his cultivation of factions following Mary's execution, James supported both Huntly and Maitland over the next two years, tolerating their faction fighting for they balanced each other and permitted the king to pander to two diametrically opposed political and religious positions.

⁶⁶ These lands, which had previously been the Master of Gray's, were later surrendered to Queen Anna, upon reversion to Henrietta Stewart when the queen died (this revision did not become effective as Anna eventually bequeathed the lordship of Dunfermline to Charles), NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/66/3; *RMS*, v, no. 1261; *CBP*, i, 257; Calderwood, *History*, iv, 613; *CSP Scot.*, x, 86-109, 298-9, 334, 552; Gray, *Letters and Papers*, 168.

The politicking undertaken by Huntly and James from December 1585 to May 1587 mirrored each other and was heavily influenced by their common mentor, Esmé Stewart, first duke of Lennox. It was a pivotal, formative period for both men as they each confidently expanded their political contacts into wider fields and deliberately tapped into the politics of Counter-Reformation Europe to further their goals in Scottish politics. Yet, what had begun in the spring of 1586 and developed over the next year, would not be made public for two more years. Those intervening years would be dominated by the contention between Huntly and Maitland, not by the Catholic politics which had put Huntly in the position to challenge Maitland.

Chapter Four:
FACTIONAL POLITICS
JUNE 1587-FEBRUARY 1588

By June 1587, over the two years since the fall of the Arran regime in November 1585 and the erection of James's first entirely independent government, important foreign policy initiatives had been undertaken, which significantly impacted on domestic politics. A formal alliance had been contracted with England in July 1586 and contact, both overt and covert, had been established with the leading Catholic powers on the Continent.¹ The first had been achieved through the king's newly appointed government, which was primarily composed of the men who had led the coup against Arran – men, such as Archibald Douglas, eighth earl of Angus and Thomas Lyon, master of Glamis, for whom the king's antipathy was widely known. The Secretary, John Maitland of Thirlestane, stood out amongst those who dominated both government and Court until early 1587 as a person that James actually trusted, even if he ignored Maitland's advice to secure better terms before concluding the treaty with England.

The second policy initiative was realised through contacts James had made with Catholic Europe following the execution of Mary in February 1587 and bolstered by the covert negotiations that Huntly, Lord Claud Hamilton and John, eighth lord Maxwell had initiated with Spain, of which, to a limited extent, James was aware. Unlike the men in government, the king's affection for Hamilton and especially for Huntly was indisputable and his response to Maxwell had only ever been lenient – to the extent that following the lord's

¹ *CSP Scot.*, viii, 43-5, 491, 533-7; see Chapter Three above.

rebellion, it has been posited that his arrival in Spain in June 1587 was ‘at James’s behest, or at least with his connivance’.²

The contrasting foreign policies launched in 1586 were to become a hallmark of Jacobean political strategy until the Union of Crowns in 1603 as James VI sought to protect not only his right to the English succession, but also his realm from Spanish predation. As James attempted to manipulate confessional politics in the years dominated by the Spanish Armada, it was clear from June 1587 that Maitland and Huntly represented the best means to pursue the king’s divergent interests. What also became increasingly apparent was that the political conflict between Huntly and Maitland was escalating and becoming more difficult to control, as each endeavoured to undermine the other’s domestic position and influence with the king. Domestic and foreign politics became increasingly intertwined as each man sought more leverage, yet the rising fears concerning the Spanish Armada obscured the personal aspects of their opposition. Their antagonism escalated until in April 1589 Huntly raised troops on the field of Brig o’ Dee near Aberdeen in response to the perceived threat from Maitland.

On 19 June 1587, James celebrated his twenty-first birthday. To mark the attainment of his ‘perfect age’ and to rectify “all enormiteis and disordouris” from his minority’ a Parliament was called in Edinburgh for 8 July, although

² K.M. Brown, ‘The Making of a *Politique*: The Counter-Reformation and the Regional Politics of John, Eighth Lord Maxwell’, *SHR*, 66 (1987), 163. According to Courcelles in August 1587, Elizabeth was suspicious that James may have used Maxwell as a means to treat secretly with Spain, Courcelles, *Despatches*, 77-8. A Venetian correspondent reported rumours in August 1587 that Maxwell left Spain with a reply to James ‘that the King of Spain has heard with great pleasure of his good intentions’, urging him to convert and ‘to join in attacking the Queen of England in order to avenge the death of his mother’ and intimated in October that in secret negotiations James had offered the Spanish navy a harbour, *CSP Venice*, 1581-91, 307, 313.

it actually began five days later.³ Although the king had been ruling independently since December 1585, this Parliament would launch the policy initiatives that would frame much of James's Scottish reign. It has been argued that this Parliament was James's most important and, excepting the Reformation Parliament in 1560, the most significant of the sixteenth century.⁴ The significance of this Parliament with regard to the earl of Huntly, however, lay not within a detailed discussion of its legislative acts but with the point that the Parliament signalled a significant change in Scottish politics with the elevation of Maitland to Chancellor and the government's subsequent adherence to his policies. In the riding of Parliament, Ludovic, second duke of Lennox, processed with the crown, the earl of Angus carried the sceptre and Huntly bore the sword.⁵ These men may have figured prominently in the pomp and ceremony, publicly basking in royal favour, but the real power and influence in this Parliament lay with Maitland. It was this influence which Huntly would fiercely contest over the ensuing two years.

Huntly became the recognised leader of the main faction in opposition to Maitland and to his government's policies. This faction had been coalescing steadily since the treaty with England was concluded in 1586, further augmented by the execution of Mary and was identified by England as its principal threat in Scotland. Its membership was varied and somewhat fluid,

³ *RPC*, iv, 194-5.

⁴ Lee, *John Maitland of Thirlestane*, 120. Lee is the only historian to comprehensively discuss the 1587 Parliament, 120-154. See also *ODNB*, vol. 36, 216-17; R.S. Rait, *The Parliaments of Scotland* (Glasgow, 1924), 196-210, 486; J. Goodare, 'The Admission of Lairds to the Scottish Parliament', *English Historical Review* (November, 2001); J. Goodare, *State and Society in Early Modern Scotland* (Oxford, 1999), 74-5, discussion follows on the resultant restructuring of state power into the early seventeenth century, 75-101; J. Goodare, 'The Nobility and the Absolutist State in Scotland, 1584-1638', *History*, 78 (June, 1993), 166-70; J. Goodare and M. Lynch, 'James VI: Universal king?' in J. Goodare and M. Lynch (eds), *Reign of James VI* (East Linton, 2000), 12; M. Lee, Jr, 'James VI and the Aristocracy', *Scotia*, i (1977); G. Donaldson, *Scotland: James V – James VII* (Edinburgh, 1965), 187-8; P.H. Brown, *History of Scotland*, ii (Cambridge, 1912), 205.

⁵ Calderwood, *History*, iv, 640; *RPC*, iv, note 202.

encompassing men such as Lennox, Lords Claud and John Hamilton, Francis Stewart, fifth earl of Bothwell, David Lindsay, eleventh earl of Crawford, John, eighth Lord Maxwell, John Graham, third earl of Montrose, Francis Hay, ninth earl of Erroll, James Cunningham, sixth earl of Glencairn, Alexander Gordon, twelfth earl of Sutherland, George Sinclair, fifth earl of Caithness, Andrew Leslie, fifth earl of Rothes, Hugh Montgomery, fourth earl of Eglinton, Robert, sixth Lord Seton and his brothers, Sir John Seton of Barns and Sir Alexander Seton, commendator of Pluscarden, James, fifth Lord Ogilvy, John, sixth Lord Fleming, Alexander, master of Elphinstone, Simon Fraser, sixth Lord Lovat, Robert, fourth Lord Sempill, Alexander, seventh Lord Livingston, Alexander, sixth Lord Home, William Maxwell, fifth Lord Herries, David Graham of Fentry, John Gordon of Lochinvar and latterly Thomas Lyon, master of Glamis.⁶

This faction now became adamantly anti-Maitland, focusing its efforts on his removal from government. If part of Maitland's legislation was implemented 'as the coordinator of a pro-English political faction manoeuvring to do down his immediate rivals',⁷ then he failed: he not only managed to unite a powerful faction in their grievances against both government and England, but also motivated it to take action directly against himself. Antagonism and hostility towards England following the execution of Mary remained high in Scotland to the point that England was still unsure whether the Anglo-Scottish alliance contracted in 1586 would hold. Uncertainty regarding the

⁶ This is a good example of Brown's definition of a faction: 'faction defied natural bonds, and crossed kindred lines, feud, local interests, or religious party'; he further comments that 'Scottish politics were not, therefore, divided into stable, identifiable parties founded on religion.... Instead the political world was highly volatile', Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 124.

⁷ J. Goodare, 'The Admission of Lairds to the Scottish Parliament', 1116.

English succession was an additional cause of friction.⁸ Scottish domestic politics from 1587 to 1589 was largely defined by the faction fighting between Maitland and Huntly, which took place on the stage that James had constructed for international consumption.

If, as Sir James Melville of Halhill commented, that through his appointment as Chancellor, Maitland 'held the King upon two grounds sure, neither to cast out with the Kirk nor with England',⁹ then Huntly ensured that the king remained on good terms with the Catholics and with France and Spain. As early as July 1587, it was patently clear that James was addressing two distinct audiences, with very different messages encompassing both threat and compliance. It was vital to James's long-term goals that Elizabeth understand that he did have other avenues of support and other resources which he could (and would) explore. He was trying to underline his importance to England's security, playing upon its obvious vulnerability, and consequently to persuade Elizabeth to overcome her reluctance to name her heir. Maitland represented the easier option for England to follow in resolving James's outstanding issues and therefore, in turn, protecting its northern border, Ireland (to a degree) and the church.

Just as Maitland was the means through which he communicated one policy alternative, Huntly was the paramount conduit for the other. Huntly, conversely, represented the alternatives that England assuredly would not want Scotland to pursue. He was the implied threat for the Anglo-Protestant audience. English intelligence was aware of large sums of money being

⁸ S. Doran, 'Revenge her foul and most unnatural murder? The impact of Mary Stewart's execution on Anglo-Scottish relations', *History*, 85 (2000), 589-612.

⁹ *The Autobiography and Diary of Mr James Melville*, ed. R. Pitcairn (Wodrow Society, 1843), 271.

infiltrated into Scotland through the Scottish Catholic network¹⁰ and aware of the overall objectives of the European contacts providing the sums. James's favour to Huntly and to Scottish Catholics in general, however, went beyond this 'carrot and stick' policy with England and the need to curry support for his right to the English crown from Catholics in England and Europe to ensure a smooth transition of power. Many historians focus on James's desire for recognition to the English succession and therefore conclude that his Catholic policies were predicated upon the realisation of this goal. James may have been using his Catholic contacts and his toleration of Catholics and priests in Scotland as a means to increase English apprehension regarding the security of her Scottish alliance and northern Border¹¹ and therefore induce her to put these fears to rest by recognising his claim. Clearly, this was one reason. However, there was another component to his policy, which addressed his own need for protection and demonstrated a large amount of *realpolitik*.

¹⁰ For example, Robert Bruce and Captain Thomas Forster brought 10,000 crowns in gold to Scotland concealed in their doublets, arriving at Loch Ryan on 31 August 1587 and, in November, Parma instructed that Bruce, still in Scotland, retain the funds for future use. In March 1588, Parma directed that Bruce could use the money which he held once Maxwell and Colonel William Sempill arrived in Scotland; in May Parma referred again to the 10,000 crowns Bruce brought to Scotland, plus 3,000 crowns 'sent to them at the same time', *CSP Spain*, iv, 90, 144-6, 160-61, 231, 241, 297. In January 1589, Bruce acknowledged the receipt of 6,272 Crowns of the Sun and 3,700 Spanish pioletts from Mr John Chisholm at Huntly's residence in Dunfermline; in the same letter he referred to sums previously sent and appears to expect more, NAS Warrender Papers, vol. B, GD1/371/3, fos. 85v.-89v.; *CSP Scot.*, ix, 686. Philip II had also authorised in April 1587 the expenditure of 1,000 crowns on 'the objects required by those who are secretly preaching our holy faith in Scotland', *CSP Spain*, iv, 60. This sum was deducted from the 8,000 crowns Philip II had sent to Mary, but failed to reach her before her death. He ordered that 3,000 crowns should be distributed to his English pensioners and the remaining 5,000 be sent to James Beaton, archbishop of Glasgow. Maxwell had been given 5,000 crowns when he arrived in Lisbon in June 1587 and a further 5,000 crowns at the end of November 1587 in order to return to Scotland, *CSP Spain*, iv, 171; Teulet, *Relations*, v, 504-09; K.M. Brown, 'The Making of a *Politique*', 163-4.

¹¹ The poor state of fortifications was not the only concern about the weakness of the Border, but the significant number of Catholics residing there was an additionally important consideration. For the numbers of Catholics in the eastern English borders, see M.M. Meikle, *A British Frontier? Lairds and Gentlemen in the Eastern Borders, 1540-1603* (East Linton, 2004), 197-226. This is a valuable and unique study of post-Reformation Catholic survival which actually tabulates known Catholics in the region.

No matter how leniently Scottish Catholics were treated, regardless of whether they were ‘admonished or exhorted’ rather than persecuted,¹² Spain would never endorse James’s claim to the English succession and consistently argued against papal recognition of his claim on the grounds that he was a heretic who would never convert.¹³ Spain represented an equal threat to James’s kingdom as it did to Elizabeth’s, even if she was the primary target. Philip II would never launch an invasion of England only to have James succeed, consequently nullifying any political or ecclesiastical gains he might have accomplished. Even if James promised freedom of conscience and Catholic toleration with liberty to practise their faith, it simply was insufficient from a Counter-Reformation perspective.

The Scottish king’s political manoeuvres through Huntly and his Counter-Reformation connections were an attempt to mitigate this. James recognised that Philip II would quite happily utilise the advantages that the Scottish nobles were offering (for example, the use of a deep water port such as Kirkcudbright and an overland route to attack England, which was preferred by Bernardino de Mendoza, the former Spanish ambassador to England now

¹² W.B. Patterson, *King James VI and I and the Reunion of Christendom* (Cambridge, 2000), 19. Patterson makes the point that not persecuting Scottish Catholics avoided opposition from abroad and thereby James remained on good terms with France, Spain and the Spanish Netherlands – as well as with the Protestant states, ‘Scotland’s more natural allies’.

¹³ For example, in March 1587 Mendoza recommended that Philip II obtain a declaration from Pope Sixtus V which barred James from the English succession, thereby the Spanish king would be the unequivocal heir to the crowns of England, Scotland and Ireland. Although Philip II continually instructed the Scottish Catholics to convert their king, he told Mendoza at the end of November 1587 that he was absolutely convinced that James would never convert, Teulet, *Relations*, v, 483-8, 493-6, 504-09. See also the Spanish response to William Chisholm, bishop of Dunblane’s papal mission to Scotland in October 1587, T.M. McCoog, S.J., *The Society of Jesus in Ireland, Scotland, and England, 1541-1588: ‘Our Way of Proceeding?’* (Leiden, 1996), 242-3; M. Yellowlees, ‘So strange a monster as a Jesuiste’: *The Society of Jesus in Sixteenth Century Scotland* (Isle of Colonsay, 2003), 112-13; see also M.J. Rodríguez-Salgado, ‘The Anglo-Spanish War: The Final Episode in the Wars of the Roses?’ in M.J. Rodríguez-Salgado and S. Adams, (eds), *England, Spain and the Gran Armada* (Edinburgh, 1991). Enriqu e de Guzman, count of Olivares and the Spanish ambassador to Rome, even suggested in March 1587 ‘that it would be advisable to give the crown to Claud Hamilton, who is the legitimate heir to it’, although it would offend Guise, *CSP Spain*, iv, 53-4.

resident in France and Alejandro Farnese, duke of Parma); he would then equally happily dispose of the king of Scotland. James himself remarked that if England was defeated, then he would receive from Philip II ‘the same which Polyphemus promised Ulysses, to devour him after all his fellows’.¹⁴

James therefore needed to neutralise Philip II and contain his ambitions (imperial as well as ecclesiastical) with respect to Scotland. He did this by tapping into the Counter-Reformation political network through Huntly and by cultivating Continental Catholics outside Spain, who would hopefully argue for his claim and thus keep it to the forefront of discussion. This would, in turn, increase existing doubts regarding Spain and the balance of power in Europe should Philip II achieve his ambitions – a threat posed to Catholics and Protestants alike.¹⁵ The duke of Guise, for example, until his death at the end of 1588, played an especially important role in protecting James’s claim and was specifically requested by Huntly, Lord Claud Hamilton and Maxwell as their intermediary with Spain.¹⁶ The Scottish Jesuit, William Crichton, who was extremely active in the Scottish mission, was an ardent supporter of James’s claim and kept it to the forefront of Jesuit discussions regarding the Scottish mission and its contacts with Spain.¹⁷ As

¹⁴ Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 387.

¹⁵ For example, in May 1587 the king and Queen Mother of France wrote to the Pope on James’s behalf, acknowledging him as heir to Elizabeth and asserting that if Spain were to attempt anything against England, then France would be obliged to prevent it, *CSP Spain*, iv, 84-5. See Chapter Three above and discussion in M.J. Rodríguez-Salgado, ‘The Anglo-Spanish War’, who describes Catholic rulers as ‘aloof and hostile to his [Philip’s] aggrandisement’, 19; T.M. McCoog, *The Society of Jesus in Ireland, Scotland, and England*, chapters five and six; M.L. Carrafiello, *Robert Parsons and English Catholicism*, 21-32.

¹⁶ Teulet, *Relations*, v, 439-52; *CSP Scot.*, ix, 195; *CSP Spain*, iii, 681-3; Courcelles, *Despatches*, 35-6.

¹⁷ Crichton was one of the few who never stopped believing that James could be converted. In June 1587 he wrote a missive in an attempt to change Spanish policy, BL ‘Reasons to shew the hastines of the enterprise. Out of the discourse found with Creichton the Scottish Jesuit’, Cotton Julius F.vi, f. 58. It is uncertain when or how this missive came into English hands, as it was written after he was released from the Tower of London in May 1587 and he was not captured again. Olivares thought it best to deceive Crichton and other supporters of the Scottish claim regarding Spain’s true intent in order to prevent future trouble; Olivares also

McCoog succinctly states, '[a]s long as James had champions, he remained a viable candidate, and the succession a confused matter'.¹⁸

Neutralising Spain and protecting himself, however, meant not just cultivating doubt through his Catholic intermediaries and supporters: James himself became more directly involved in intrigue with Spain. Huntly and his colleagues, of course, were one of the surest means of furthering his objectives through keeping him abreast of plans from an insider's perspective and making representations on his behalf to Spain. In December 1586, following Huntly's overtures the previous spring, the Scottish king sent Colonel William Stewart to initiate negotiations with Spain on his behalf. In a joint letter from Stewart and Robert Bruce, Mendoza was informed that James had informed Huntly, Lord Claud Hamilton and Maxwell that he would make a final attempt to determine if Elizabeth would recognise him as her heir, and, if not, then 'he would look for friends' and had given secret consent to these nobles to liberate him.¹⁹

James needed to counter Philip II's intentions, make it increasingly difficult for him to over-ride the Scottish claim and block his momentum. His direct contact with Jesuits or use of men such as Huntly, Maxwell and Stewart were an ideal means of ensuring that his interests were protected and his position clearly communicated to a variety of audiences. Hence, James's duplicity was

persuaded Crichton in July 1587 not to reveal to the Pope their Scottish plans, *CSP Spain*, iv, 119-20, 122; T.G. Law, 'Father William Crichton, S.J.' in *Collected Essays and Reviews of Thomas Graves Law*, ed. P.H. Brown (Edinburgh, 1904), 305-12; *ODNB*, vol. 14, 189-90.

¹⁸ T.M. McCoog, *The Society of Jesus in Ireland, Scotland, and England*, 242.

¹⁹ Teulet, *Relations*, v, 439-52; *CSP Scot.*, ix, 195; *CSP Spain*, iii, 681-3; Courcelles, *Despatches*, 35-6; Forbes-Leith, *Narratives of Scottish Catholics*, 193-4. Stewart was sent again in May 1587 and there were rumours in August that Stewart had approached Parma regarding a marriage between James and the Spanish *Infanta*, Isabella, *CSP Spain*, iv, 91-2; *CSP Scot.*, ix, 384. Stewart was replaced as James's intermediary in 1588 by Colonel William Sempill.

extended to both Philip II and Elizabeth in order to promote and protect his interests. Huntly and Maitland were equally important to the success of their king's delicately balanced, if not precarious, foreign policy.

The appointment of Maitland as Chancellor and the thrust of his policy which addressed the Anglo-Protestant audience should have reassured Elizabeth regarding his intentions and commitment to their alliance. This seemed the logical culmination of the rapprochement that was initiated in March 1587 when, urged by Maitland, James reined in his more overt Catholic posturing that followed the revelation of the Babington plot and the execution of Mary.²⁰ It suited the king to follow Maitland's advice for James had established a carefully developed set of Catholic credentials and there was now a solid platform of Catholic connections, representing a wide range of diverse interests and capabilities, on which to build. But, whilst James was signalling one thing to England via Maitland, he did not abandon his policy of probing Elizabeth's insecurities. Although he was no longer openly provocative or antagonistic, he took fewer pains to hide his Catholic connections.

Whereas there had been relatively few Catholics in the administration erected in December 1585 or at Court, this changed when the Court began to fill with Catholics after Babington. Huntly returned to Court in April 1587 and remained in close attendance upon the king for the next two years. For the first time since 11 December 1585, he attended the Privy Council on 5 May 1587.²¹ It is interesting to note that of the sixteen extraordinary councillors, eleven were either known Catholics or associated with the faction that

²⁰ S. Doran, 'Revenge her foul and most unnatural murder?', 589-612; see Chapter Three above.

²¹ *RPC*, iv, 37, 63.

represented anti-England and anti-Maitland sentiments (whilst there were only two amongst the ordinary members).²² In addition, when it is considered that the nobles with the higher attendance patterns at Privy Council were again associated with this faction (barring Mar), Maitland may have been feeling somewhat crowded in his own sphere of influence. Of the twenty-seven sessions that Huntly attended between May 1587 and August 1592, fourteen were from 5 May 1587 to 15 January 1589 (the next session that he attended was 29 July 1591).²³ Although Maitland was clearly in control of the Privy Council, when this information is combined with the Court, what becomes apparent in the summer of 1587 is James's pursuit of political balance and the representation of wider interests.

²² *RPC*, iv, note 202. These eleven were: Huntly, Lords John and Claud Hamilton, Crawford, Erroll, Bothwell, Montrose, Rothes, Herries, Sir Alexander Seton, Patrick Adamson, archbishop of St Andrews; the two ordinary members were the Master of Glamis, Treasurer and Sir John Seton, Comptroller.

²³ This number includes two Council sessions where the sederunts were unrecorded, but external evidence indicates that Huntly had attended on 12 and 15 August 1587, *CSP Scot.*, ix, 474, 477; *RPC*, iv, 209, 210; the total number does not include the two sederunts which simply indicated that attendance was the same as the day previously (which Huntly had attended), 30 July and 7 August 1591, *RPC*, iv, 661, 668. Between August 1587 and July 1592, Huntly's attendance was average for the aristocratic members when the period is considered as a whole, but certainly higher than average when considered how his attendance was concentrated (he attended eleven times in July, August, October and November 1591; in 1592, he attended twice, 21 January and 4 February; he did not attend again over the next four years). According to Rait, Huntly was recorded in 'about eighteen' sederunts from August 1587 to July 1592; this is incorrect as he was recorded in twenty, *RPC*, iv, xxv. Out of 160 Privy Council sederunts, this compares to Rait's estimates of a total of twenty sessions for Lord John Hamilton, fifteen for George Keith, fifth Earl Marischal, fourteen each for Crawford and Bothwell, nine each for Erroll and Herries, four for Angus (who died in July 1588), three for Adamson, two for Lord Claud Hamilton and one for Rothes; the three nobles whose attendance patterns were atypical were John Erskine, seventh earl of Mar and Montrose, who each attended forty sessions and Sir Alexander Seton, who attended thirty sessions. The ordinary members had a much higher, more consistent attendance record, for example: Maitland was only absent when he was in Denmark (22 October 1589 to 1 May 1590); Alexander Hay, Clerk-Register, attended 123 sessions; William Bellenden, Justice-Clerk, attended approximately 100 sessions; the Master of Glamis, Treasurer, attended roughly half the number of sessions that Maitland had; as did Robert Douglas, Collector-General; Sir John Seton, Comptroller, attended regularly; the number of sessions attended by most of the remaining members was mainly in the high sixties and low seventies (with a couple in the mid-twenties). James himself attended seventy sessions, *RPC*, iv, xxiv-xxvi.

Despite the king's decision to rein in the hostility following his mother's execution, sentiment in Scotland had far from settled. James was not prepared to alienate any group which could potentially further his own wider objectives, particularly the Marians who would address his two target audiences. Huntly had been identified as a Marian, but it was Bothwell who was at the forefront of this still significantly forceful group in Scotland. Its associated anti-English sensibilities remained strong, a position made more relevant by the fact that the Borders were not completely pacified (although there is evidence of reconciliatory moves by the government).²⁴ Roger Aston's report to England on 31 July 1587 observed that '[t]he death of the Queen is kept in such memory here as no thing is omitted that may keep the same in memory'.

Maitland even felt compelled to make an address at the end of Parliament 'in the name of the iij estates, offreing there lyfe, landes, and goodes in the reveng of the Kinges motheres morthor, wich was conferm[ed] be a generall voyes of all the hole houes'.²⁵ It was this speech which may have cost Maitland the concrete support from England that he desired and needed. Sir Lewis Bellenden of Auchnoll, the Justice-Clerk, defended Maitland in October 1587 as being justified in speaking against Mary's death. He argued

²⁴ Steps were taken in early August to pacify the Middle March following a post-parliamentary visit from Henry Carey, Lord Hunsdon and Governor of Berwick and the sentencing of Elizabeth's secretary, William Davison, by the Star Chamber for his role in the events leading to Mary's execution. Although all incursions in England were prohibited, self-defence was permitted if England invaded. Interestingly, this proclamation was signed by James, Huntly, Maitland and the Master of Glamis. At the end of August, however, Courcelles wrote that James was ignoring Scottish incursions into the English Borders, *CSP Scot.*, ix, 474, 477; *RPC*, iv, 209; Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 365-6; Courcelles, *Despatches*, 78. According to Macpherson, Bothwell kept a nucleus of armed men on the Border and was considered by the English to be a dangerous opponent. He 'continued to be at the forefront of border policy (with James's covert backing) mixing justice with deniable raids' and 'such duplicity was politically controversial both in Scotland and England', R.G. Macpherson, 'Francis Stewart, Fifth Earl Bothwell, c.1562-1612: Lordship and Politics in Jacobean Scotland' (unpublished University of Edinburgh PhD thesis, 1998), 161.

²⁵ *CSP Scot.*, x, 128, 129; Courcelles, *Despatches*, 77-8.

that however ill Elizabeth might still think of the Chancellor, Maitland had been and would continue to be the best instrument to promote the Anglo-Scottish amity. His spirited defence of Maitland speaks eloquently to the state of Anglo-Scottish relations and to Maitland's personal position:

I must saye after the Scottes fasshion he is ane evill dunge bairne that darre not greite, and it is not the waye to attenyne to the frendshippe of this cuntrey and to have matters passed pute in oblivion till heape boaste upon injurie or to quarrell the Chancellor and his harragne, who spake no thinge but that which he was earnestlie pressed to doe be the nobilitie and estates their convened.²⁶

The manner in which Parliament ended would, most likely, not have been a surprise to Sir Francis Walsingham, who was aware that the French king was secretly encouraging James 'not to accept any satisfaction for the late execution of his mother' and remarked at the end of June that 'the state of things in Scotland stands but in doubtful terms, by reason of our ill-handling of the same'.²⁷ His information in the middle of July that James "will revolte

²⁶ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 493. Bellenden was writing to Mr Archibald Douglas, between whom and Maitland there existed a great deal of animosity. Maitland had a poor relationship with the Douglasses in general and the beginning of the Master of Glamis's estrangement with Maitland was marked by his marital alliances in 1586 with Angus and William Douglas of Lochleven (who was elevated to the earldom of Morton in July 1587), Lee, *John Maitland of Thirlestane*, 118-9; for the troubled relationship between Maitland and the Master of Glamis, Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 126-7.

²⁷ *CSP For., Eliz.*, June 1586-June 1588, 319, 320. James had instructed James Beaton, archbishop of Glasgow, in May 1587 to point out to the French king his obligation by the old friendship between Scotland and France to avenge Mary's death, *CSP Spain*, iv, 91; *Warrender Papers*, ii, 56-68, for Beaton's report of the outcome of his commission, January 1588. Mr Chisholm arrived in Paris in April 1587 with the king's commission to Beaton and delivered James's letters to Guise (who advised James to cultivate Philip II and the Pope and 'doubt not they will grant your desires'). Both the French crown and Guise informed Beaton that if the French domestic situation were to change, then each would send a token of their readiness to act on James's behalf. Chisholm returned to Scotland before March 1588, rewarded with a chain to the value of 200 merks. In May, Mendoza was informed that Beaton had been instructed to present the Scottish king's letters to Philip II requesting aid. Courcelles intimated that James had approached Philip II for aid, *CSP Spain*, iv, 91; Teulet, *Relations*, v, 497; A. Strickland (ed.) *Letters of Mary, Queen of Scots* (London, 1843), 283-92. The 'Mr Chisholm' Beaton refers to must be John Chisholm, the younger brother of Sir James, whom the king sent to France in September 1587, *CBP*, i, 282. They were nephews of William Chisholm, bishop of Dunblane and members of the king's household, later active in the covert Spanish negotiations in Scotland.

from religion, and become a Papist, for the cheife aboute hym are Papistes, and do shewe them selves that they are so – namely thErle Huntley”²⁸ would have further prepared him for the continued reports regarding James’s Catholic Court and doubts about his allegiances, both political and religious. The Scottish king’s Catholic politicking in Europe over the preceding months and his close association with Huntly and his fellow Catholics at home had sent a fairly explicit message to the English Secretary about the adverse affects that the political pressures and inducements from Catholic Europe could have on James’s continued adherence to the English amity.

Following the dissolution of Parliament, Aston reported that he ‘could not certefy of good proceeding of matters here; many fear greatly that all will not be well’. He even suspected that Maitland had changed allegiance, attributing the preference of Huntly, Sir John Seton and other Catholics at Court to the Chancellor, who ‘at this time guides as he pleases’ since “the King is geve to his pasteim and lefe all the burden on him”. He accurately predicted that ‘this country cannot abyde one man to guide all’. Aston despaired of ‘some good course to be followed forth between her majesty and this King ... for they that occupy his ear are altogether enemies to her majesty, and papists’. Huntly was the chief of these men, ‘now one of the King’s chamber and daily occupys his ear, seeking to debar all others but those of his faction’.²⁹ Intelligence from Scotland on 13 August confirmed this, reporting that “[m]y lord of Huntley is indeid ane greit curteour and

²⁸ It was also intimated that a messenger from the French king was expected before Parliament dissolved and at the end of July that Huntly’s brother, William, returned to Scotland from France, *CBP*, i, 264; *CSP Scot.*, ix, 476. This most likely refers to his youngest brother, who had studied at the Scots College at Douai and later entered Franciscan orders, P.J. Anderson (ed.), *Records of the Scots Colleges at Douai, Rome, Madrid, Valladolid and Ratisbon* (New Spalding Club, 1906).

²⁹ *CSP Scot.*, x, 127-8.

knawis mair of the Kingis secreittis nor ony man at this present doithe. Sir Johnne Seytounne is waxt in greit credytie”³⁰.

Perhaps with his experience of Elizabeth’s Court, especially with her ‘politically neutralised’ bedchamber,³¹ Aston might be forgiven for equating the influence within the Court and the king’s chamber with influence over the government’s policy. It must have been fairly confusing: the erection of Maitland as Chancellor at the end of a Parliament whose policies signalled a clearly Protestant agenda, with legislation against Jesuits and Catholics,³² plus the beginnings of reconciliation on the Borders blatantly conflicted with James’s Catholic Court, especially within his chamber, the dominance of Huntly and favour to men such as Sir John Seton. Son of George, fifth Lord Seton, a staunch Catholic Marian who had assisted the Jesuit mission, Sir John’s religious and political adherences were equally marked and well-

³⁰ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 476.

³¹ A. Juhala, ‘The Household and Court of King James VI of Scotland, 1567-1603’ (unpublished University of Edinburgh PhD thesis, 2000), 12. Elizabeth’s succession necessarily altered the composition of the chamber from that of her father, Henry VIII, who had created the position of Gentleman of the Privy Chamber to be held by ‘men of importance and ambition’; P. Wright, ‘A Change in Direction: the Ramifications of a Female Household, 1558-1603’, in D. Starkey (ed.), *The English Court from the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War* (London, 1987); D. Starkey, ‘Intimacy and Innovation: the Rise of the Privy Chamber, 1485-1547’, in D. Starkey (ed.), *The English Court*.

³² Huntly purportedly obtained a twenty day immunity to enable his uncle, James Gordon, S.J. to leave Scotland, but there is no evidence that Gordon left. According to Spottiswoode, he ‘had been all the summer before in the country, and it was overseen because of his nephew, whom the king intended to match with the duke of Lennox, his eldest sister; neither was he much feared, as being a simple man and not deeply learned’. This contradicts the description of Gordon by William Crichton, S.J.: ‘[a]mong the other causes which contributed in no small degree to the growth of the Catholic religion in Scotland, was the personal influence of Fr. Gordon. He was a kinsman of the King, and not only touched the hearts of many persons by his holiness of life, but, further, being a man of great learning, he openly defeated the ministers of the heretics in the public discussions which were held’. James certainly was impressed with Gordon’s intelligence, having debated with him at Court in 1585 (where Gordon remained for two months, even accompanying James hunting) and again in February 1588. In 1585, he also publicly debated in the north with the minister of Rathven parish, Mr George Hay; this debate was influential in Erroll’s conversion, *CSP Spain*, iv, 138, 260-61; Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 378; Forbes-Leith, *Narratives of Scottish Catholics*, 202-04; *CSP Dom.*, Addenda, 1580-1625, 155; Moysie, *Memoirs*, 66.

known. His pedigree alone spoke volumes, his high profile at Court – combined with Huntly’s – left many to doubt James’s true intentions.

In the mid-1570s, whilst in Madrid at Philip II’s Court, Sir John Seton was made a Knight of the Royal Order of Santiago, a gentleman of the king’s chamber and a Master of the Household. He returned to Scotland in 1579 and was appointed Master of the King’s Horse in May 1581. He attended Court in January 1586, was ‘well-accepted’ by James and was believed to be have intervened on Maxwell’s behalf so that he was not prosecuted for having mass celebrated. One year later, his father granted him the barony of Barns and he returned to Spain as an official envoy. On 3 January 1587, James appointed him First Master of the King’s Household, followed by his admission to the Privy Council on 27 January; two months later he was proposed as an ambassador to Spain. Sir John Seton was appointed Comptroller on 27 July 1587.³³

It was clear that the king was not shy of using the laird’s Spanish connections and that his religion was no bar to advancement, as with Huntly. What was not as clear was what were the king’s intended political outcomes from these contradictory appointments in his Council and his chamber. The only common link discerned by English intelligence was Maitland’s Marian speech at the end of Parliament, which, within the wider context of European politics and growing fears concerning the Spanish Armada, planted the seed of

³³ In February 1588, as Lord Barns, he would be appointed an Extraordinary Lord of Session (replacing his brother, Alexander). His father had been a master of Mary’s household and was sent to Europe in order to negotiate support for Mary from Philip II, the duke of Alba in the Netherlands, Catherine d’Medici and English Catholics from August 1570-72, *OODNB*, vol. 51, 806-08, 811; G. Seton (ed.), *Memoir of Alexander Seton, Earl of Dunfermline* (Edinburgh, 1882), 18; G. Donaldson, *Scotland: James V – James VII*, 45; A. Juhala, ‘The Household and Court of King James VI of Scotland’, Appendix I; *RPC*, iv, note 202; *CBP*, i, 217; SCA ‘Razones por saber si escocia es desando al Rey d’Espana’, CA4/9/10; SCA ‘Clase de papeles del Coronel Semple’, 15 October 1620, CA3/13.

distrust in how steadfast Maitland actually was to the Anglo-Scottish amity. To James, however, it was clearly a matter of balancing his Anglo-Protestant government with a Court with a strong Catholic presence. Albeit to the English, the preponderance of favour seemed to be leaning towards the latter and begged the question as to whether James was deliberately evoking the dichotomy (and implied allegiance) of his mother's Protestant Council and her Catholic household.³⁴ This made them all the more wary, wondering where this might lead next. From James's perspective, however, the government under Maitland and his Court dominated by Huntly served two distinct purposes, each making equally important political representations.

The appointment of Huntly on 20 August 1587 to the offices of Chamberlain (during the minority of Lennox) and Vice-Chamberlain for life³⁵ graphically illustrates James's pursuit of the dual Anglo-Protestant and Euro-Catholic foreign policies first evidenced in 1586. Within one month of Maitland's elevation to the highest political office in Scotland, Huntly had been raised to the highest Court office in the realm. Again, the king sought to balance the two men and the two policies. Each man was empowered to wield influence in two distinct spheres, one representing the public, institutional face of public policy and the other the king's 'unofficial' policy, the not so subtle undercurrent to Scottish politics.

³⁴ J. Goodare, 'Queen Mary's Catholic Interlude' in M. Lynch (ed.), *Mary Stewart: Queen in Three Kingdoms* (Oxford, 1988), 159-61; *ODNB*, vol. 51, 807; for further discussion of Mary's approach to Catholic and Protestant policy, I.B. Cowan, 'The Roman Connection: Prospects for Counter-Reformation during the Personal Reign of Mary, queen of Scots' in M. Lynch (ed.), *Mary Stewart*, 105-22; G. Donaldson, *All the Queen's Men: Power and Politics in Mary Stewart's Scotland* (London, 1983), chapter four; J. Wormald, *Mary, Queen of Scots: Politics, Passion and a Kingdom Lost* (London and New York, revised edition 2001), 115-21, 126.

³⁵ NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/13/4/8; *CSP Spain*, iv, 139. His appointment during Lennox's minority was due to his engagement to the duke's sister, Henrietta Stewart. He is also identified in this document as Lieutenant of the North. Having secured his political position, Huntly was reported to notify his fiancée, who was still residing in France, that he was now ready for marriage, *CBP*, i, 268.

Huntly's personal relationship with James was also represented in his appointment to Vice-Chamberlain for life, raising the issue of whether the king would ultimately choose the personal over the institutional in the conflict between his Chancellor and his Chamberlain. Huntly's position was such that Maitland's father, Sir Richard Maitland of Lethington, could have been describing him when he wrote '[h]e reulls weill that weill in court can guyde'.³⁶ 'That kind of power', Brown comments, 'was derived from a personal relationship with the king'.³⁷ Huntly exerted significant influence in Court, both through the presence of his associates such as Montrose and Crawford and through his relationship with James, which marked him as a leading favourite whose company and advice was sought by the king above many others.

The Court, however, was large and amorphous, often in flux, with any aristocrat entitled to attend. The chamber, by contrast, was more intimate with fixed personnel who paid close daily attendance upon the king. As Chamberlain, Huntly was in the key position to help determine its composition and he used this to his advantage, placing his adherents in both the chamber and with sinecures in the stable (an important sphere for a king with a passion for hunting). It was his influence in the chamber through which his major influence was derived, as amply demonstrated in the early 1590s.³⁸ When combined with his pronounced presence at Court, it was a key component in securing Huntly's emergent position as a major force in Scottish politics – a position which he rapidly secured so that by the end of summer Bellenden was compelled to refute the English conviction that James

³⁶ Quoted in Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 116.

³⁷ Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 116.

³⁸ See Chapter Six below.

had been swayed by Huntly's political and religious convictions.³⁹ The personal antipathy between Maitland and Huntly was also reflected in the conflict between Council and chamber which especially marked the Maitland administration. If '[t]he council-chamber relationship was the axis on which Jacobean court politics often turned',⁴⁰ then James had not only scrupulously selected the two leading antagonists, but had carefully cultivated the potential of each domain.

Huntly was not shy about employing the power of his new position to either his personal advantage or that of his faction. 'Desiring a mair tender place and inwerde credete aboute his majestie', Huntly was specifically empowered 'to put ordour to his hienes hous or valletis of his chamber and cabinet' and 'ressave the aithis ... as are to be admittit gentlemen of his hienes hous or valletis of his chalmer'.⁴¹ He used this authority to appoint men such as Sir John Seton and Sir James Chisholm, nephew of William Chisholm, newly restored bishop of Dunblane, as masters of the household. John Chisholm, a household steward and younger brother of Sir James, was used as a messenger in Huntly's Spanish correspondence and delivered money from Parma. One of the king's leading favourites, Master Alexander Lindsay (erected to the lordship of Spynie in November 1590), younger brother of Huntly's long-standing ally, Crawford, was introduced to Court during Huntly's tenure. Lindsay was later described as James's 'only minion and conceit ... his nightly bedfellow'. Patrick Murray of Gleanis, an inner usher of the bedchamber, became a long-standing conduit for private communication

³⁹ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 491-3.

⁴⁰ Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 117, 119. This single chapter still represents the main body of research on Jacobean Court politics.

⁴¹ NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/13/4/8.

between James and Huntly; he was especially important during periods when the king could not be seen as communicating with the earl.⁴²

Not only did Huntly himself now have an indisputable right to be at Court himself and possess the authority to 'debar all others but those of his faction',⁴³ but he also controlled the chamber, those who were in closest attendance upon the king and received their personal oaths. Huntly's control of the Court was complete when he was appointed Captain of the Royal Guard in 1588; he engaged his own men in the guard and was not exaggerating when he boasted to Philip II that he could be 'master of the king'.⁴⁴

Huntly and Maitland continuously sought greater control and influence, each seeking to undermine the influence of the other's purview. Brown argues that the king's behaviour and 'refusal to allow himself to be monopolised' was key in preventing either the chamber or the Council from dominating the other (although the balance of power tipped slightly in favour of the chamber just

⁴² See, for example, *CSP Scot.*, ix, 482-3, 557-8; *CBP*, i, 309; *CSP Spain*, iv, 144-6; NAS Warrender Papers, vol. B, GD1/371/3, f. 85v.; NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/8/13/8; *ODNB*, vol. 33, 842-3; M.B. Young, *James VI and the History of Homosexuality* (London, 2000), 42; Murray was still acting in this capacity in 1598, *Warrender Papers*, ii, 353-4. According to Juhala's lists of members of the royal household, Murray was first identified as a gentleman server in 1582, last mentioned as such in November 1593; an ordinary gentleman of the chamber, December 1594 to March 1597; a gentleman pensioner to attend on the king's riding and passing to the fields, May 1580; Master of the Wardrobe in Prince Henry Frederick's household, 1597-1601, A. Juhala, 'The Household and Court of King James VI of Scotland', Appendix I. This compilation is fragmentary, with few entries covering the mid to late 1580s and does not include Huntly's appointment as Chamberlain or Vice-Chamberlain. Included in Juhala's appendix are Alexander Lindsay (Chamberlain Depute, October 1589 to December 1591, ordinary gentleman of the chamber, November 1588 to February 1589); John Chisholm, steward, 1582-91; the laird of Seggie, one of Huntly's local coterie (ordinary gentleman of the chamber, December 1591 to 1596). The use of 'minion' in describing Lindsay and other courtiers 'was a recognition of power, and was not simply derogatory. Chancellor Maitland was well aware of the threat posed by such men, and "would have wraked his Majesteis trewest myngnons" had he been able to', Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 117 (quoting Melville, *Memoirs*, 96).

⁴³ *CSP Scot.*, x, 128

⁴⁴ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 621, 627, 635, 638, 647, 653, 655; Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 390-91; Calderwood, *History*, iv, 696; Moysie, *Memoirs*, 72.

prior to 1589). He concludes that the 'result was greater political freedom, but the price was greater competition, factionalism and political feuding'.⁴⁵ This is certainly true in the relationship between Maitland and Huntly and the intense factionalism which dominated Scottish domestic politics from 1587 to 1589. Despite their attempts to out-manoeuvre the other, both parties remained relatively stalemated during this period, precariously controlled by the king.

The polarisation of the Court and Council parties was directly created by the attempt to exclude the aristocracy from the Council's ordinary members and the king's dual and difficult to balance policies of attempting to pander simultaneously to Anglo-Protestant and Continental Catholic interests. This, however, did not particularly concern James for, as following the execution of Mary, it was not always in the king's best interests to eradicate factions. In a decentralised state such as Scotland, not only did factions enhance the ability to rule by preventing the dominance of one single group, but they also allowed James to mollify Scottish, English and European Catholics, whilst ostensibly still adhering to Protestant political orthodoxy. Furthermore, James continued to operate under the illusion that he could control the conflict between Huntly and Maitland. Throughout 1587, the king did maintain control but as 1588 progressed he became increasingly less successful.

The low level friction between Maitland's and Huntly's factions, which had been constant since March 1586, markedly heightened in August 1587, not surprisingly corresponding with Huntly's appointment as Chamberlain. The earl did not wait long before exercising his new authority. According to a

⁴⁵ Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 120.

report to Walsingham from John Ogilvy, younger of Powrie, the immediate result was of a “twmulte and ciwille wproir, concitat be sume malcontant nobillmaen being debarrit frome his majestes presens”. James settled the dispute, which was apparently between nobles from Maitland’s faction and Huntly’s men at Court, because he compelled Huntly and Maitland to reconcile: “that be ane wtwarde forme of frindschipe and agreiment betwixt Hwntlie and his confederats and the said Chanselier and Jwstice Klerke” [Bellenden]. Huntly and his faction were identified as the “graetest gyders of the cowrt for the present swa maist speciali inwyit”.

Despite the king requiring Huntly’s faction to back down and to settle their dispute with Maitland, it was obvious that his personal favour was directed at this faction. The king “dois now mosit cleirlye schyne ower them all, bot in special towards Crafurde and Hwuntlie, qwha now remaens ordinarlye at courte, and that be his majesties special command”.⁴⁶ This is the first evidence of James personally intervening between the two factions and personally commanding the two leaders to reconcile publicly. But having defused the situation, he precipitated future problems by keeping Huntly at Court and prominently favouring him over the Chancellor. It was the beginning of a predictable pattern, which Huntly manipulated to his advantage; James’s reactions to the disputes between Huntly and Maitland over the ensuing twenty months was almost formulaic, with few exceptions.

John Ogilvy of Powrie did not expect the concord between the two to last, anticipating that it would dissolve as quickly as it was contracted because Huntly and his supporters had “alraedie ... woin thaer caws”; the Chancellor, however, “seing maeters to gang wrang”, already had contingency plans in

⁴⁶ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 480-81.

effect. Maitland, supported by Bellenden, initially attempted to break the alliance between Huntly and the Hamiltons, whose joint forces were impressive; if successful, then Huntly would be weakened and Maitland would have an advantage. However, Huntly was well aware of their intentions, and was not only armed, but had “besyds his majestes special goodwill and favor”.

According to John Ogilvy of Powrie, Maitland then planned to support William Chisholm, bishop of Dunblane on his mission to Scotland planned for the autumn. He supposedly promised the bishop “all kynd of frindschipe lvis in his pwar” and to persuade James to permit the Jesuits to remain in Scotland indefinitely. With intelligence such as this which portrayed the Chancellor as not only reduced in favour and influence, but also willing to compromise his policies, it is no wonder that the English officials were wary of Maitland and not entirely forthcoming in their support. The report concluded:

be this ze maey persaif thes Chanselier and Jwstice Clerk to be boith almoiste disgraesit, Hwntlie and his haiwing alwais the awantage within the contrie, als weill of his majeste fawoir ass of contrie forsis, and fering nothing bot the swden incwming of Inglande; and that in respect thaey ar supponit for Hwntleis caws to alter the aesteit of religione in Scotlande, quhilk cannot be bwit prejudice of the tranqwillitie of Inglande.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 480-81. William Chisholm had been restored to the bishopric of Dunblane in July 1587 (annulled in May 1589) as part of James’s response to the execution of Mary. In October 1587, Dunblane and William Crichton, S.J. were sent to Scotland. Their mission was instigated by Pope Sixtus V and a faction which was suspicious of Spanish policy in Scotland. Dunblane was instructed to persuade James to support the Spanish Armada and to ascertain if he desired to convert to Catholicism. There is no contemporary account of Dunblane’s meeting with Maitland or of his audience with James. He arrived at Leith in December 1587 and with his companions were sheltered in the north by Huntly. Dunblane reputedly had commissions from both the duke of Guise and the French king. He finally had audience in March 1588 and apparently James sought assurances regarding his right to the English succession, but was ultimately uninterested in Dunblane’s proposals. Crichton remained in Scotland, but Dunblane returned to France in July 1588. He confirmed James’s heresy and commitment to the alliance with England; however, if the Scottish Catholics were strongly

By the autumn of 1587, Huntly may have outwardly basked in James's favour and in his control of the Court, but Maitland's position and policies remained unaffected. This important point, however, appears to have been eclipsed in the perceptions of those observing Scottish politics in England by Huntly's dominance in Court and their concerns regarding the possible ramifications for England. If in October 1586 Elizabeth felt sufficiently vulnerable to identify Huntly, Crawford and Montrose as threats (purely on the basis of their religion or Marian sentiments) which warranted pre-emptive action such as indicting them with the Babington conspiracy in order 'to make them more odious',⁴⁸ then the European political situation a year later only increased the quotient of threat that Huntly represented. Securing Scotland had become essential to English security since the Anglo-Dutch treaty in 1585 had made '[a] Spanish attack on England virtually inevitable'.⁴⁹ Following Sir Francis Drake's attack on Cadiz in April 1587, that attack and Spanish retaliation now seemed imminent.⁵⁰

Increasingly disturbing intelligence from the Continent indicated that greater vigilance concerning Scottish Catholics was a necessity, especially now that reports from Scotland indicated that the number of reliable men around the Scottish king was declining. Maitland and Huntly were the two political constants, yet with Maitland's reliability now questionable England was faced

supported and England was engaged elsewhere, then he reported that James would join the Catholic party against England, *CSP Spain*, iv, 155, 156, 180, 242, 255-6, 351, 542-4; *CSP Scot.*, ix, 480-1; *CBP*, i, 298, 307; *APS*, iii, 383, 469; Colville, *Letters*, 89; *HKJVI*, 235; T.M. McCoog, S.J., *The Society of Jesus in Ireland, Scotland, and England*, 242-3; M. Yellowlees, 'So strange a monster as a Jesuiste', 112-13; J. Dowden, *The Bishops of Scotland* (Glasgow, 1912), 207-08; D.E.R Watt, *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae Medii Aevi ad annum 1638* (Edinburgh, 1969), 78.

⁴⁸ Courcelles, *Despatches*, 8-9.

⁴⁹ P. Croft, *King James* (Basingstoke, 2003), 21.

⁵⁰ In August 1587, an Irish merchant returning from Portugal reported that Drake was at Cadiz, terrifying the Spanish, *CSP Ireland*, 1586-88, 400. See M.J. Rodríguez-Salgado, 'The Anglo-Spanish War', 20-23.

with – and ministers such as Walsingham recognised – the prospect of Scotland slipping out of its orbit. It was not forgotten that Walsingham had been warned in December 1586 that James ‘cannot be free of intelligence with Spain’ and that Huntly had been implicated, although there was no tangible evidence.⁵¹ Concrete evidence was still lacking towards the end of 1587, yet Huntly encapsulated Elizabeth’s fears and the reports throughout the autumn only served to reduce England’s confidence in Scotland’s continuing fidelity to their alliance.

In August 1587, Courcelles speculated that Elizabeth was unsure as to whether the best way to deal with James was by persuasion or intimidation, especially considering Parliament’s supplication to avenge Mary. In addition to Huntly’s dominance and the proliferation of Catholics at Court, she was suspicious that James’s Catholic connections may have extended to using Maxwell as a means to treat secretly with Spain when the lord was banished earlier that year.⁵² Venetian correspondents reported rumours that Maxwell, was secretly negotiating on the Scottish king’s behalf regarding a harbour for the Spanish navy, James’s conversion and an alliance against England once the Armada attacked.⁵³ The general consensus in August 1587 appeared to be that Scotland would be at the centre of any action taken by Spain against England.⁵⁴ In November, it was being reported from Lisbon that ‘the common opinion here is that if war breaks out it will break out in Scotland’.⁵⁵

⁵¹ *CSP For., Eliz.*, June 1586–June 1588, 454; even Mendoza wondered in October 1586 if ‘the Catholic lords have entered into this enterprise with the connivance of the King’, *CSP Spain*, iii, 637.

⁵² Courcelles, *Despatches*, 77–8.

⁵³ *CSP Venice*, 1581–91, 290, 307, 313; *CSP Spain*, iv, 120; *CSP Ireland*, 1586–8, 420. For details of Maxwell’s activities in Spain, see K.M. Brown, ‘The Making of a *Politique*’, 163–5. Maxwell did not convince the Spanish of James’s sincerity and had to concede that the Scottish ports were inadequately deep for the Spanish navy, *CSP Spain*, iv, 138, 141; *CSP Venice*, 1581–91, 312–13, 321, 326; K.M. Brown, ‘The Making of a *Politique*’, 164.

⁵⁴ Courcelles, *Despatches*, 76, 78; *CBP*, i, 271; *CSP Ireland*, 1586–88, 400–01.

⁵⁵ *CSP Venice*, 1581–91, 326; *CBP*, i, 505.

It is therefore unsurprising that Scotland itself was submitted to close scrutiny by English intelligence, especially with Huntly controlling a reputedly Catholic, anti-English Court and in such prominent favour with the king.⁵⁶

In September 1587, Robert Carville, on the English Border, reported that '[t]he Erles Huntley, Bothuell and Crawford are in great consort to the contrary of England. The Erle Bothuell is in great jelousye that the Lord Chancellor is a frend to England, and therefore lyeth in wayte to take letters, therbye to gett matter agaynst him'.⁵⁷ The resentment against Maitland and his Anglophile policies was becoming a constant feature in Scottish domestic politics, with his opponents becoming bolder in their attempts to dissuade the king from his support of the Chancellor. September 1587 is significant in that it was the first time that English intelligence identified a concrete link with Spain in Huntly's attempts to dissuade James from his English alliance. Yet, perhaps unsurprisingly considering the reliability of the source, Carville's notifications on 22 September and again on 2 October of Huntly's contact with a Spanish messenger elicited little response.

According to Carville, a Spanish messenger arrived with letters from Philip II for James. The Spaniard had been instructed to contact Huntly, who then arranged an audience with the king. One of the proposals put before James was an offer from Spain to lend him the wages of 30,000 soldiers for three years (or longer) in order for Scotland to take military action against England. James rejected the overtures completely, 'meaning not to breake

⁵⁶ An unconfirmed plot by Huntly and Bothwell to capture Berwick was reported to Walsingham in September 1587. It was an unsubstantiated rumour and it does not appear that the English took this report seriously as there are no further references to it, *CBP*, i, 270-71.

⁵⁷ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 486.

with England or embrace any practise to the disquiett of the same'. Annoyed, Huntly requested to be dismissed from Court and 'retired discontented to his contrye', accompanied by one of his close associates, David Graham, laird of Fintry. Before he departed, however, the king made his displeasure with Huntly clear, informing the earl 'that he will heare him in what he hath to debate concerning the realme, but for that the affayres of England towch onlye himselfe he will not be ruled by any of theyre passion therin'.⁵⁸

It appears that the king had finally lost patience with the constant pressure from Huntly and his faction to abandon his Chancellor and his alliance with England – yet he took no steps to address the imbalance in Court or curb Huntly's influence.⁵⁹ Huntly's rebuke may have been a result of James's exasperation or it may well have been designed for English consumption, following the clumsiness of what appears to have been an unofficial, opportunistic proposal. James's reaction completely contradicts the nature of his relations with the emissary selected by Parma and Mendoza for their communication with the king, Robert Bruce. The incident, if it had been accurately reported by Carville, is unusual and almost assuredly did not emanate from the Spanish officials delegated to deal with the proposals regarding Scotland for Bruce had arrived in Scotland at the end of August with an explicit brief, which did not include the above proposal. Nor was it a separate approach made by Philip II through another messenger, for he only ever communicated with Scotland through Parma, Mendoza, Guise, the Archbishop of Glasgow, Colonel William Stewart, Colonel William Sempill or Robert Bruce.

⁵⁸ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 485, 489.

⁵⁹ Moysie refers vaguely to another incident in October when John Smollote and a French cavalier were warded in Edinburgh Castle after being arrested when crossing from Leith to Kinghorn 'to the erle of Huntly, quho wes suspect of ane conspiracie aganis the noblemen in court', *Memoirs*, 65.

Huntly's judgement in the matter was poor, inaccurately assessing the risks of directly introducing an unknown messenger outwith the established framework of communication with the Spanish to the king nor realising the impact it might have on James's wider policy initiatives. It may also be indicative that Huntly misjudged the king's overall objectives in communicating with Spain. The Scottish king's judicious rejection and display of temper with Huntly may well have been an attempt to salvage a highly suspicious situation. Perhaps he was wary that the messenger was possibly a spy, sent by the English because they had begun to suspect something regarding the nature of his real negotiations with Spain.

Robert Bruce had arrived at Loch Ryan in Wigtownshire on 31 August 1587, from where he went immediately to Court and met with the men whom he, Mendoza and Parma referred to as the 'Scottish Catholic lords'. Other than Huntly, Lord Claud Hamilton and Maxwell who were actively corresponding with Spain, this group was never fully identified.⁶⁰ Very few individuals were directly named in connection with the Spanish negotiations; this short list comprises men such as Colonel William Stewart, Colonel William Sempill, David Graham of Fintry, Sir James Chisholm, Mr John Chisholm, Mr Thomas Kerr, Captain Thomas Forster, Mr Francis Aguirre and Charles Bailly (the latter two were described as Scottish pilots employed as couriers). It appears that real caution was being exercised in their written correspondence, with neither simple code names nor pseudonyms employed. Likely to be included in Bruce's group of Catholic lords, however, would have been men such as Erroll, Crawford, Seton, Sir Alexander and Sir John Seton, Home, Ogilvy, Herries, Livingston and Fleming.

⁶⁰ Latterly, Erroll, Crawford, Bothwell and William Douglas, ninth earl of Angus were added to this select group. Bothwell and Angus were Protestants who made contact with Spain.

Through the influence of Bruce's aristocratic contacts, a meeting with the king, which Fintry witnessed, was arranged soon after his arrival. Bruce was received 'very favourably' and actually met with James three times (at Hamilton, Blantyre and Falkland). In Bruce's subsequent report to Mendoza, he intimated that although James had warmly received the letters Philip II had written at the end of March with his offers of aid in avenging his mother's death, the influence of Maitland and Bellenden had subsequently cooled the king's fervour.

James indicated that he would write to Mendoza and the Archbishop of Glasgow in order to establish an understanding with Philip II and Parma. He intended to request that an ambassador be sent to him with 'a good sum of money to enable him to raise troops here' as he would not countenance any plan which would mean foreign soldiers on Scottish soil. James would always happily accept Spanish money and, as with the Scottish nobles in contact with Spain, a major component of his Spanish negotiations was directed at eliciting funds. Mendoza recognised the king's tactics as an attempt 'to know as much as possible about plot and counterplot in all directions, so that he might match cunning with cunning, plot with plot'. Bruce interpreted the king's request for an ambassadorial delivery of money as a strategy 'to draw matters out and apply the money requested to their own uses'.

Both Mendoza and Bruce were correct regarding James's motivations, but were slightly more gullible when it came to analysing the motivations of his Scottish nobles. According to Bruce, James's Catholic advisors, Huntly especially, were in favour of more direct action and 'have tried to induce the

King to ask for aid at once, pointing out ... his present need and danger, and the goodwill of his friends to come to his aid; which goodwill may be dissipated by his coolness or a change of circumstances if he delays too long'.⁶¹ Yet, delay was precisely what James desired, not to the point of the Spanish abandoning faith in him but long enough to prolong the decision-making process and delay real commitment or action. Already, for example, it was too late in the season to execute the plan which Bruce and Parma had agreed upon in April 1587.

From the initial approach by Scots in 1586, Parma had been in favour of sending the requested 6,000 soldiers, and agreed with Bruce in February 1587 to send the troops if the Scots provided the transport, for which he would provide a 10,000 crown subsidy. In April, the two men arrived at the plan where Bruce would freight thirty ships from Scotland to Danzig, from where at the end of July, the captains of five to six escort ships would pilot the convoy to Dunkirk. An additional thirty ships would sail from Scotland to Dunkirk at the end of August. These sixty ships would then ferry the Spanish soldiers to Scotland, where Bruce would have secured Leith. Parma instructed Mendoza in April to give Bruce 10,000 crowns and dispatch him to Scotland immediately to carry out their plan, remarking that 'I am so enamoured of this project, and so sure of its being advantageous to his Majesty's service'.

Parma was also aware of how important it was to curry the favour of the Scots, as an attack on England's northern border, a footing in Scotland and a port were of strategic importance in light of 'the eventualities'. He therefore

⁶¹ *CSP Spain*, iv, 144-6, 159; J.R. Elder, *Spanish Influences in Scottish History* (Glasgow, 1920), 146-7; T.G. Law, 'Robert Bruce, Conspirator and Spy' in P.H. Brown (ed.), *Collected Essays and Reviews of Thomas Graves Law*, 313-19.

thought it was appropriate to give the Scots hope. At the end of May, Bruce and his colleague, Captain Thomas Forster, were ready to embark at Brittany for Scotland with letters from Parma, Guise and Mendoza for the Scottish Catholic lords, concealing the 10,000 crowns in gold in their doublets. Bruce promised Mendoza that he would speak 'very plainly' with James regarding religion.⁶²

Their ship's long delay, however, meant that they had missed their opportunity to put their plan into effect, even supposing they could muster full support for it in Scotland. The availability of ships was poor due to fishing and the pre-winter trade, and ships sent to Danzig would be blocked by winter ice. Bruce was to meet with the Scottish lords in order to discuss an alternative means of transporting troops to Scotland (such as obtaining ships from Flanders or the French coast), but he was sceptical of their true commitment. He informed Mendoza that 'they have made up their minds to ask for help with the real intention of declining it'. James was not alone in employing delaying tactics: for the Scottish lords wanted to send John Chisholm back to Spain with the same proposals, which would delay any possible outcomes until the spring at the earliest.⁶³ Parma conceded to Mendoza on 6 November that the season was too advanced to proceed with any plans, 'although I had arranged all my preparations for it here'. He therefore instructed Mendoza to 'maintain the sympathy and attachment shown by the Catholic lords, in the hopes that if occasion should arise they

⁶² Philip II was decidedly less enamoured with this plan than Parma was and in April instructed him (not for the first time) to offer money instead of troops; nevertheless Parma decided to continue with his plan, *CSP Spain*, iv, 68-9, 75-6, 90; *CSP Scot.*, ix, 686, 691, 692, 693, 698, 704; Teulet, *Relations*, v, 439-52.

⁶³ *CSP Spain*, iv, 144-6.

will give effect to their devotion. For this purpose it will be well for the 10,000 crowns to be retained there in the hands of Bruce'.⁶⁴

The tactics employed by James in his negotiations with the Spanish may have been successful in that he had more information regarding how Spain considered using Scotland in their invasion of England and in that he had successfully managed to delay any real commitment to substantive action. His delaying tactics and lukewarm response, however, were also detrimental to any budding belief the Spanish might have had in James's commitment to implied shared religious and political objectives for his delay provided additional cause for Parma to doubt his sincerity. The Spanish duke decided that since James was 'contaminated by the sect and the English faction', Spain's best hopes therefore rested on Huntly, Maxwell, Lord Claud Hamilton and their fellow Scottish Catholics.⁶⁵

Whilst Parma was dismayed by the influence of the English faction with the king, English officials were conversely becoming increasingly alarmed by the ascendancy of Huntly's faction. In October 1587 Lord Hunsdon informed Sir William Cecil, Lord Burghley that Elizabeth was deceiving herself if she trusted James,

for shewerly hee hathe no good meaning towards her, yf he had power to his mynde – as appeers by his dealinges in theis Border cawses, and as bade a companie aboute him! And I dare assuer [your] lordshypp that hee makes full accompt of some succors to come to him presentlie ether from Fraunce or Spaine.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ *CSP Spain*, iv, 160-61; *CSP Scot.*, ix, 692; J.R. Elder, *Spanish Influences*, 147-8.

⁶⁵ *CSP Spain*, iv, 160.

⁶⁶ *CBP*, i, 282. James had sent Sir James Chisholm to the French king and the duke of Guise in September, receiving a reply from Guise in October, *CSP Scot.*, ix, 482-3; *Warrender Papers*, ii, 55-6.

Bellenden found himself in the unusual position of defending one of the king's 'bad company' in an attempt to allay growing fears about the king's religious, as well as political, steadfastness. He replied to the accusation of "the Earle Huntleys lying in his majestie chambre and preaces papistrie" on two grounds, firstly playing down Huntly's religion and then turning the accusation itself into an insult to the king's ability. Accordingly, he wrote that Huntly may well be Catholic, "but not so precise as he had not rather lyie in a faire gentlewomans chambre then either in the Kinges or yet where he might have ane hundrethe messes". And for his part, the king "is that well grounded in matters of relligion, and that upon perfyte knowledge, that I wold not be afrayed of the learnedest papistes in Europe were hable to brangle him in the smallest poynte thereof". Bellenden next turned the tables, intimating that "I doubte if her majesties chambre be so well kepted as neither papistes doe lyie neither yet hes accesse within the same".⁶⁷

An extremely important issue motivated Bellenden's defence of the king for his obvious favour to Huntly and his tolerance of the earl's Catholicism. Questions raised regarding whether James permitted evangelising within his own chamber were dangerous for Catholicism always carried a political association. If it were believed that the king engaged with Huntly's supposed preaching, then he would also be thought to be receptive to Spanish political overtures – it was a slippery slope to which Bellenden had to deny all access. Bellenden's defence, however, was more than a political exercise: it was also the truth. Huntly had little or no interest in evangelising and the king, however he may have enjoyed theological debates, repeatedly refused to discuss Catholicism with Huntly or any of his Catholic nobles. Bellenden finished his missive by redirecting England's attention to the man whom they

⁶⁷ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 491-3.

were sorely neglecting, but who had the ability to address their fears and to persuade the king to adhere to the Anglo-Scottish amity: Maitland.⁶⁸

Bellenden had made a strong argument, but it was insufficient in the face of the discouraging reports coming from informants on the Borders. One month later, Hunsdon advised Burghley that Elizabeth had delayed too long and it was now too late to recover the king's amity, "as he hathe delte with Spayne so farr, as he cannott calle bake hys promis" and that "he hathe never a man about hyme that ys well affectyd too hyr Majesti or owre amyte, but extremly too the contrary". Furthermore, Hunsdon was certain that financial aid would be sent to James by Candlemas, because the nobility would not tolerate Spanish or French soldiers in Scotland. With such aid, Scotland would be assured of advanced warning of a Spanish attack and be ready to invade England in turn.⁶⁹ Henry, Lord Scrope's report on 14 November confirmed that "the King has and does entertain intelligence with the King of Spain".⁷⁰ Burghley was further informed by Mr Archibald Douglas that Scotland was controlled by 'a Prince grieved in mind' and that the support of the Marians, including those of 'indifferent religion', for the Catholic nobles 'make that party both greater in number of nobility, and stronger in force'.⁷¹

This is strongly indicative of the shift in the balance of the Court which had begun earlier in the year and become more marked once Huntly's dominance in Court politics had become established in the summer of 1587. In evaluating the situation in Scotland, Burghley wrote to Walsingham that

⁶⁸ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 491-3.

⁶⁹ *CBP*, i, 287-8.

⁷⁰ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 505.

⁷¹ Quoted in J.H. Pollen, S.J., *The Counter-Reformation in Scotland* (London, 1921), 64.

there was ‘a great part of the Scotch nobility in favor of the Popish religion and Spanish forces’. He concluded, “[i]t is to be considered whether Her Majesty may do the King of Scots more harm, or he her” – precisely the point that James wanted to make.⁷² This question may have seemed more relevant when he was notified that Parma was meeting with Colonel William Sempill, the Scots mercenary who had betrayed the Dutch town of Lierre to Parma in 1582 and had since worked as a British and Dutch advisor to Spain.⁷³

English anxiety must have been readily apparent for Antonio de Vega, a Portuguese informant and member of Don Antonio’s household, wrote from London that the English were ‘daily becoming more alarmed of his [James] doing harm if he has the chance, and it is said secretly that if the Spanish Armada comes, he will welcome it’. According to a Spanish source, ‘Hunsdon asserts that the duke of Parma has an understanding with Scotland’.⁷⁴ General disturbances and the nature of relations on the Anglo-Scottish Borders only served to adversely affect English opinion further. In early November, Robert Bowes described since his return to Scotland “not onlie a straunge alteracion of state, slidden from the wonted devotion to hir Majestie and hir curse, but allso all men flyinge from intelligence with anie Englishmen – especiallie with my self”. Hunsdon recounted similar experiences: not only would no Scots come near Berwick, but even his own acquaintances in Edinburgh would not associate with him. According to de Vega, Hunsdon

⁷² *CSP Dom.*, 1581-90, 438.

⁷³ *CSP Dom.*, 1581-90, 446; *ODNB*, vol. 49, 744-6; T.G. Law, ‘Colonel William Sempill, the Hero of Lierre’ in P.H. Brown (ed.), *Collected Essays and Reviews of Thomas Graves Law*, 320-7. At the end of November 1587, Philip II decided to send Maxwell back to Scotland. He also decided to send Sempill, ‘another of my Scottish servants’, to Scotland to ascertain the strength of the Scottish Catholics. Philip advised Mendoza that he ‘seems a zealous man, although, doubtless, a thorough Scot’. Sempill arrived in Paris in early December and Mendoza found ‘him better disposed than any of the “cape and sword folk” of his nation that I have met hitherto’. Juan de Idiaquez instructed Mendoza in January 1588 that it was Parma’s decision whether to send Sempill to Scotland, *CSP Spain*, iv, 17, 179, 188.

⁷⁴ *CSP Spain*, iv, 167, 174, 175.

‘was unable to do his business in Berwick, and writes that Scotland is not to be trusted’.

At the beginning of December, spies in Berwick reported Border skirmishes and Hunsdon’s assessment that ‘Scottish affairs are going very badly’. Preparations had also been initiated to defend Berwick’s port, which Hunsdon had identified as a likely landing spot for the Spanish.⁷⁵ Yet, it was Scotland’s participation in any Spanish landing which truly concerned the English government. As one advisor told Burghley, ‘if Spain attempt any invasion in this realm, it will be dangerously countenanced if he had Scotland at devotion, and otherwise, unless the way be made by Scotland, it is not unlike the attempts of Spain will be lame in many points’. Hence, in December orders were issued by the English government that close inquiries be made regarding foreign forces entering Scotland from Spain or Flanders or of any significant musters of Scots themselves.⁷⁶

Towards the end of 1587, English officials were nearly convinced that Scotland was on the brink of supporting Spain. Yet, the reports which led them to this conclusion were strikingly barren of detail. The English intelligence regarding Scotland was based entirely on suppositions, observations regarding the Scottish Court and the generally poor state of cross Border relations. It was accepted that James had contact with the Spanish, yet there was no real knowledge as to what the exact nature of this contact was. Fairly accurate assumptions could be made regarding what Spain offered and expected in return, but there was no real factual basis.

⁷⁵ *CBP*, i, 283, 288, 297; *CSP Spain*, iv, 167, 174, 175.

⁷⁶ *CSP Ireland*, 1586-8, 454; *CBP*, i, 289.

The Scottish king's willingness to enter into a relationship with Spain was likewise based on assumption, predicated on the type of men he favoured at Court – Catholics, Marians and those who opposed the alliance with England – as well as on the deterioration of relations with England since Mary's execution. These points were all part of a general equation which determined English reactions and Huntly was merely part of that general equation. Other than his Catholicism and close affinity with the king, he was not singled out. Carville did connect Huntly with a Spanish messenger, but there was no overt politicisation of Huntly himself within the context of the king's presumed Spanish relations.

The real issue concerning Huntly at this point was his continued presence and domination of the Court. The English interpreted James's favour to Huntly and other members of the growing anti-English faction as a sign that the king was becoming more interested in a Spanish alliance, but Huntly was never connected with the actual Spanish politicking that was being conducted. He was certainly considered a bad influence on the king, but it was what the earl represented rather than what he actually was thought to have done to which the English objected. Huntly was part of a specific environment that not only pandered to Spanish interests but also simultaneously raised English concerns.

Maitland's control of an Anglo-Protestant Council was either overlooked or discounted because of Maitland's own discreditation following his Marian speech to Parliament. Instead, the focus appeared to be on the fact that the political balance favoured the anti-English faction, which dominated the Court and the men close to the king. Huntly may not at this point have been

successful in actually changing the established pro-English government policy, but his presence and relationship with James had adversely affected England's perception of the status of the Anglo-Scottish amity and it affected Maitland's ability to implement his policies. One analyst believed that James's behaviour was motivated by the 'non-performance of some things offered to the King of Scotland and, as he thinketh, deserved by his good carriage in these late troubles, has made more of an impression on him than he makes open show of, whereof those that deal for the King of Spain are not ignorant'. He concluded that although Spain may ultimately harm James, 'it may very aptly serve his present turns'.⁷⁷ A fairly accurate reading of the situation from an English perspective.

It appears that by the end of 1587 that James was trusted by neither the English nor the Spanish and his foreign policy seems to have faltered somewhat. He was now in a position where not only was there no directly beneficial relationship with either Spain or England, but he was also potentially at risk from both if Anglo-Spanish relations worsened. England certainly recognised the point which he desired to make regarding its vulnerability to a combined Scottish-Iberian initiative, but Anglo-Scottish relations were on the verge of moving outwith his control. James could not afford to alienate Elizabeth completely. This may be the reason why he authorised Bothwell to begin conciliatory moves towards England and Hunsdon was contacted to that end in December 1587.

James made no attempt to deny that "he hade grete persuasyons and meanes made untoo hym for too breke with hyr Majesti, yett wolde he nott be inducyd too ytt, yf hyr Majesti wolde deal kyndly and well with hym". To

⁷⁷ *CSP For., Eliz., June 1586-June 1588*, 472. The 'late troubles' refers to Mary's execution.

which Hunsdon replied that Elizabeth would “nott wylyngly lose hym yf she may kepe hym”. With relief, Hunsdon informed Burghley that “the Kyng ys nott so farr gone, butt that yf hyr Majesti wyll deale kyndly with hym, he may be browght bake agayne”.⁷⁸ For the English, ‘kindness’ translated primarily into financial inducements and, if warranted, finding a means of mollifying James regarding his demands to be recognised as Elizabeth’s heir. The desirability of maintaining the alliance with Scotland had been emphasised during the course of the preceding months and it continued to be stressed during these secret negotiations with Hunsdon. The king made it clear that “althohe he hathe byn gretly sollycytyd bothe by France and Spayne with many grete offers and dayly sollycytors about hym, to persuade hym therunto”, he had not yet committed himself to anybody and, furthermore, would repel any foreign troops from Scotland – which was, of course, in his own interests.

When considered, James’s communications with both England and Spain shared a common theme: the advantages of a Scottish alliance, the refusal to countenance foreign soldiers in Scotland (which extended to English troops) and the necessity for financial assistance. But, he was making certain that Elizabeth understood that it would be in her best interests to ensure that she made him a better offer. Hunsdon, unsure as to whether James was being pressured by either France or Spain to make a firm commitment, interpreted the king’s approach as a desire to restore the Anglo-Scottish amity, but he “wolde fayne have ytt cume of hyr”.⁷⁹ Hunsdon’s reading of the Scots’ approach was perceptive. Neither James’s Spanish nor English political

⁷⁸ *CBP*, i, 293, 294-5.

⁷⁹ *CBP*, i, 297-8. The Venetians wondered if the presumed delays in dispatching the Armada had affected James, ‘seeing that he is merely entertained with promises, may change his policy for fear of exposing himself and his kingdom to greater dangers’, *CSP Venice*, 1581-91, 329.

strategies had thus far been successful and he was at an impasse. He had reached a point where the risks out-weighed potential gains, therefore making him receptive to offers from the English.

Despite the clandestine overtures to Hunsdon and the warden's belief in the king's desire to restore the former accord with England, reports regarding domestic politics in Scotland suggested otherwise or, at the very least, indicted the king's ability to implement his professed desires. On 28 December 1587, Hunsdon described a nobility divided by shifting factions, for example: conflict between Huntly and Marischal had been renewed; Lord John Hamilton, a leading Protestant, had aligned with his brother, Lord Claud, to remove Maitland, the Master of Glamis and Bellenden; Lord John Hamilton favoured Maxwell over Angus; there was friction between Bothwell and Maitland, as well as between Bothwell and the Humes; both the king and Maitland disliked and distrusted Mr Archibald Douglas; and even Maitland had been known to have "had as grete interrest yn the northerne lordes as yn the uther".

Although Hunsdon was certain that James wanted peace and amity with Elizabeth, "the northerne lordes who ar all Papystes, beyng many, ar gretly agenste ytt, and those aboute hym that ar of the relygyon, doo nott agre amonge themselves". The king also proclaimed his steadfast adherence to Protestantism and support of the kirk, "yett he deales so indyfferently betwene them, as whatsoever thErle Huntley and hys confederates dothe allow of, that the Kynge those abowte him knolege of, and whatsoever these doo, he impartes ytt too the uthers, whyche ys thowght he doothe for feare of hys owne lyfe".⁸⁰

⁸⁰ *CBP*, i, 298-9; *CSP Scot.*, ix, 531-2.

This, of course, was a convenient excuse for James and, accordingly, provided an equally convenient endorsement for Maitland. Hunsdon identified Maitland as the most assured route to securing a reliable Anglo-Protestant policy in Scotland. Unlike Huntly, Hunsdon did not perceive Maitland as a threat to either the king or to the performance of the king's stated policy preferences. Huntly may have been perceived as clearly more influential at the moment, but Hunsdon recognised that Maitland was the key to returning Scotland to a secure alliance. For the first time since July 1587, an English official was advocating demonstrative support for the Chancellor. Hunsdon urged that if Maitland were “a lyttell hartenyd and myght be sewre of hyr Majestis favor, yt is thowghte verryly that he wolde wholly rune that course”. He further emphasised the need to take the necessary steps to be sure of James, “or els he wylbe an yll neybor” – with the reminder that this was not the time to be parsimonious, “yf he showlde becume eyther Frenche or Spanyshe, yt wolde cost hyr Majesti and hyr realme more yn one yere then wyll sarve too wyne hym and too pay hym ten yere after”.⁸¹

Maitland may have been making progress in terms of recovering English support, but January 1588 heralded the onset of a period of intense faction fighting which was overwhelmingly focused upon the Chancellor. According to one contemporary chronicler, Maitland ‘was Excellent wyis; zit his wit wes trublit now and than: factionis Raisit aganes him first my lord Maxwell’ and next ‘[a]ne greyiter factioun of Enemeis rysis aganes him, The Erllis of

⁸¹ *CBP*, i, 298-9; *CSP Scot.*, ix, 531-2; other examples of Maitland working with Huntly's faction, *CSP Scot.*, ix, 266, 480-81; x, 128. In this report is the first reference to the ‘northern lords’, a group that is mentioned often but never clearly identified. It has been assimilated by historians, again without clarification and without regard to the point that factions were constantly changing and dictated by neither region nor religion. In secondary literature, ‘northern lords’ implies an assumed coalition between Huntly, Crawford and Erroll, usually associated with Catholic, Spanish or Counter-Reformation conspiracy. ‘Northern lords’ has become a not particularly accurate (both in terms of association and purpose) form of shorthand.

Huntlie, Erroll, Crawford, Bothwell, and many others'.⁸² Besides the one high profile incident in August 1587, the remainder of the year had been characterised by an undercurrent of hostility between the Chancellor and Huntly.

It was apparent, however, as the year drew to a close that Huntly had established a leading position in Scottish politics, controlling the Court and heavily influencing the king. Now the earl began to move from this position of strength against Maitland. His attempts to dominate politics and consolidate his position translated into increasingly more aggressive attempts to eradicate Maitland's influence, his policies and indubitably his position as Chancellor. His increased aggression may be attributed to the fact that despite his position and relations with the king, James still adhered to the policies Maitland had put before Parliament and had not abandoned the alliance with England. If the king was being recalcitrant, then Huntly and his faction may have perceived policy change as easier to effect if Maitland – who simply as Chancellor was an offence to the nobility – was removed.

Huntly had gathered an impressive faction about him and was not afraid to employ it against Maitland. The first of a number of conventions of Huntly's faction was reported on 1 January 1588. A well-attended meeting was held in Braemar, with representatives sent by Glencairn, Lords Claud and John Hamilton and 'divers others'. Walsingham's correspondent paid particularly close attention to the Protestant Lord John Hamilton, who was described as 'well agreed' with his brother, supportive of Maxwell in his dispute with Angus, at odds with the Master of Glamis and concluded, 'judge ye if he will

⁸² NAS Warrender Papers, vol. B, 'Chronicle, 1500-1603', GD1/371/3, f. 260r..

favour his sister's son, Huntly, or no'.⁸³ The agendas of the various meetings of Huntly's faction were not revealed, but this one particular rendezvous may have been to plan their strategy against Maitland.

Not long afterwards, Walsingham was informed that Huntly and his faction had already attempted action against Maitland two or three times, but each endeavour had been abandoned when the plans had been found out. The king had finally summoned Huntly from Dunfermline (where Lord Herries remained) to Court, where he compelled the earl to reconcile with Maitland. Huntly complied, but made it clear that that he did not trust Maitland and that he was doing so only because "his majesties word was ane law to him".⁸⁴ This event encompassed many of the components that featured in future confrontations: Dunfermline had become an important base of operations for Huntly in the south, there were repeated large gatherings of his faction, repeated attempts or suspicions of attempts against the Chancellor and all were forcibly reconciled by the king.

The factional friction in January 1588, however, was not just limited to Maitland himself but incorporated resistance to the parliamentary legislation he had put forward in July 1587. Events which might have been otherwise contained to the interested parties, grew out of proportion as the nobility demonstrated their collective opposition to the new legislation and prohibited its implementation. This was precisely what happened when Huntly had been directed to produce William Gordon of Gight on 1 January for legal proceedings against him in Edinburgh for the death of a kinsman of Marischal. He was specifically ordered to appear with a small retinue.

⁸³ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 531-2. Huntly's mother was Anna, third daughter of James Hamilton, second earl of Arran and duke of Châtelherault.

⁸⁴ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 536.

According to Walsingham's unidentified source, it was planned to place Huntly in ward if he came. But, he was sure that 'it will misgive', as Huntly had disobeyed similar commands in the past and neither he, Crawford nor Montrose would travel with a limited company.⁸⁵ To the king's annoyance, Huntly did not present Gight. Crawford and Montrose interceded on Huntly's behalf with James, who finally agreed to speak with him towards the end of January near Lochleven. Although he was informed by Sir John Carmichael of that ilk that the meeting had ended with James still 'greatly offended' with Huntly, Hunsdon told Burghley that "I have herd verey credibly the contrary, which I rather beleve".⁸⁶ Huntly was again ordered to submit Gight and now his uncle, James Gordon, S.J., as well.

By 27 January, the situation had escalated to the point where an impressive convention of Huntly's faction was held at Linlithgow: Lords John and Claud Hamilton, Glencairn, Montrose, Crawford, Rothes, Caithness, Sutherland and Huntly himself were all reported to have attended. Herries and Johnston had supposedly gathered 700-800 horse within three miles of Edinburgh, whilst another report indicates that the Hamiltons, Herries and Glencairn had brought 900 horse to Linlithgow and Huntly had ordered the other nobles to meet at Dunfermline with 600 horse. The troop numbers in either report would appear to be unreliable, especially within the context of James's reaction: he did not muster troops himself and only Herries was charged with raising forces without royal authority. The alleged troops gathered in either Linlithgow or Dunfermline were most likely exaggerated accounts of the aristocrats' combined retinues. Contacted by panicked Anglophiles (who were not named) requesting financial aid in order to raise their own troops,

⁸⁵ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 531-2. Huntly always travelled with a large retinue.

⁸⁶ *CBP*, i, 307.

Hunsdon believed that Huntly's faction "ment to have gotten the King into their hands". He immediately responded with 200 broad angels and raised a further 200 harquebussiers in defence of Berwick.⁸⁷ There was no indication, however, that a rising was intended, but rather that it was a situation that had disproportionately escalated.

James, however, remained calm and recognised that the convention was in response to the renewed orders to produce Gight and Gordon and that the nobles were challenging the government's ability to enforce its dictates. He ordered the nobles to disperse (no mention of troops) and sent a server in his household, Patrick Murray of Gleanis, with 'clois letters' to Huntly. This is the first recorded instance of James using Murray as a private conduit between him and Huntly and was the beginning of the chamber being used as a conduit for two-way communication between Huntly and the king. In the early 1590s especially it was characteristic of the king to use men from his chamber to communicate privately with Huntly or to defuse politically sensitive situations. Murray was publicly instructed to enquire if Huntly would obey the king's command to bring Gight to Edinburgh and to desist from harbouring Jesuits. Huntly's reply was that he would only comply if he was permitted to bring his friends and forces. Sir John Seton of Barns, another member of the king's chamber and a man long associated with Catholic politics, was next sent to Huntly, with the same orders and the earl again refused to obey.

Herries was commanded to be warded for raising troops without the king's authority, but he too refused to yield and simply rode away. Next, Lord John

⁸⁷ A later report indicated that Crawford and Rothes had not attended Linlithgow, but Rothes's son (a Catholic) had, *CBP*, i, 308-09, 311-12; *CSP Spain*, iv, 227-8.

Hamilton was ordered to return home. He complied but made it clear that his participation was based on two grounds: the office of Chancellor being conferred on an inferior person and the December 1587 revocation of all lieutenantry and justice commissions without just cause, which had affected both himself and Huntly. Both Montrose and Home attempted to make representations on Huntly's behalf to the king. Montrose was made to wait for four to five hours, only to receive a sharp reprimand from James and be commanded to return to his lodgings. When he next sought audience, the gates of Edinburgh were barred to both him and Home, without the king's token. When the two men were admitted, they were each limited to six attendants. Huntly was again ordered to attend Court with an escort not to exceed thirty horse. Again, he refused on the grounds that 'he could not come without security'.⁸⁸

Hunsdon was incorrect in assuming that a convocation of Huntly's faction was the beginning of a coup, but it was an error that he and his colleagues would continue to make over the ensuing years as Huntly became more closely associated with Spanish politicking and the Counter-Reformation. Hunsdon's limited understanding of Scottish internal politics prevented him from being able to disentangle contentions regarding Scottish domestic politics from those regarding foreign policy. The historian, Michael Yellowlees, also mistakes the involvement of Huntly's faction in this affair with Catholic politics and ascribes the sequence of events to encouragement from 'the more volatile members of the [Jesuit] mission, such as Crichton' and reduces a cross-religious party to 'the Catholic nobles'.⁸⁹ There is no

⁸⁸ *CBP*, i, 308-09; *CSP Spain*, iv, 227-8; NAS Treasurer's Accounts E.21/66, fos. 93r., 101v..

⁸⁹ M. Yellowlees, 'So strange a monster as a Jesuiste', 115. Yellowlees also links an increase in the numbers of Jesuits in Scotland and Maxwell's rising in the Borders in May 1588 ('another abortive uprising') with this event, but neither were related. He is incorrect in stating that 'the origins' of a 'new league of Catholic and anti-English nobles' lay in this

evidence of Jesuit involvement, other than Huntly's refusal to surrender his uncle. Although the records are silent on how this particular affair was settled, it is clear that the surrender of Gight had become the basis for a demonstration of wider aristocratic discontent and had little to do with Catholicism or Catholic politics, other than the common goal to remove Maitland.

The men who supported Huntly's defiance did so to make manifest their collective refusal to heed the legislation requiring them as landlords to be ultimately responsible for their tenants' legal compliance. Huntly was not the only one openly refusing to obey the new laws: Herries was put to the horn on 31 January 1588 for failing to bring two of his tenants, Richard and Robert Herries, before the Privy Council concerning an action dating from 1 August 1587.⁹⁰ Also manifest in this event was the government's inability to enforce this legislation and the distinct lack of trust between the Council and the aristocracy, as evidenced by Huntly's repeated refusals to attend the king in Edinburgh without a significant escort – of course, it also exhibited which party held the balance of tangible power and the government's reliance upon aristocratic co-operation.

The whole affair, however, was not just centred upon this one issue, but incorporated associated concerns. Lord John Hamilton raised the two foremost points of contention: the appointment of Maitland himself and how the Chancellor was exercising his authority. The nobles had made their point regarding the fact that Maitland may have succeeded in effectively excluding them from the core of government by curtailing their participation in the

dispute. This faction, which also encompassed anti-Maitland motivations, had been slowly coalescing since August 1586 (see above).

⁹⁰ *RPC*, iv, 202, 244; Moysie, *Memoirs*, 65.

Privy Council, but their conformity to its policies or to legislation such as this (which was closely associated with Maitland) could not be compelled. Hamilton's objections to the revocation of lieutenantry and justice commissions was not just based on personal deprivation, but again reflected the nobility's wider concerns with the central government's attempts to limit their purview.

The king had agreed to take Hamilton's complaints under consideration, perhaps as a means to de-escalate the situation. He may very well have considered Hamilton's complaints for it had been made patently clear at the end of January that the government could not function without the goodwill of the nobility. An amicable settlement must have been reached at the very least between James, who had realised that no threat had been personally intended towards himself, and the nobles in Huntly's faction for the following month there was another convention at Linlithgow, although no repercussions for Maitland or the government followed. On 16 February 1588, the Court was apprised of the assembly of Huntly, Lords John and Claud Hamilton, Herries, Glencairn 'and the rest of their associates'. James again dispatched Patrick Murray, 'one of his speciall courteours', to Huntly, who 'declaired he had no evill intentioun, ather to relligioun, or to the present estatite, and [wold] come quyetlie to his Majestie'. Under the pretext of going hunting, the king met Huntly, accompanied by ten to twelve horse, at Cramond and both returned to Holyroodhouse. Huntly spent the night in James's bedchamber, 'well lyked of by the king' and, later the same night, Herries was granted an audience with the king in his chamber.⁹¹

⁹¹ Calderwood, *History*, iv, 676-7; Moysie, *Memoirs*, 66; Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 368; *CSP For., Eliz.*, June 1586-June 1588, 554; *RPC*, iv, note 254.

The fact that Huntly was willing to return with James to Holyrood with only a small escort illustrates that at the end of January his refusal to do just this lay in his distrust of a Council controlled by Maitland and underlines the point that the events in January were founded upon challenging domestic policy. It had not been intended as a coup attempt nor did it have any serious religious objectives. Although James would not have been pleased with Huntly's refusal to obey his commands, he did recognise that the event was a product of domestic politics and, as February demonstrates, it did not adversely affect their personal relationship or the levels of trust between the two men. Despite previous occurrences and the challenge to the Chancellor and his government, the king still overtly favoured Huntly over Maitland.

The Privy Council, however, was not as sanguine as the king and on 19 February forbade unauthorised public or private assemblies on the grounds that the purpose of previous convocations had been 'pairtlie for the caus of religioun and pairtlie for som otheris particular actiounes'.⁹² Although there was no evidence of any current activities other than the known Catholics and priests in Scotland or proposed plans against Kirk, the clause regarding religion represents the increasing fears about the Spanish Armada. Huntly's own public profession of Catholicism and his close connections with his Jesuit uncle only further fuelled these fears, causing links to be made between the gatherings of his faction regarding domestic politics and collusion with Spain and the Counter-Reformation.

Although a general sense of alarm was spreading connected with the idea that there were more Jesuits in Scotland supported by Catholic nobles ardently preparing for the arrival of the Spanish navy, very little had changed since the

⁹² *RPC*, iv, 253.

Privy Council had finally issued a proclamation on 28 November 1587 enforcing the July 1587 parliamentary act against Jesuits, secular priests and their resisters. The ten priests to be brought to justice included James Gordon, S.J. (Huntly's uncle). According to Spottiswoode, the proclamation stemmed from the fact that despite the representations made to him by the Jesuits and Catholic nobles to use a Spanish landing in Scotland as an opportunity to avenge Mary, James did not trust 'that the Spaniard would take the pains to conquer for him the crown of England' and 'refused to give ear unto such motions'.⁹³ Both the proclamation and a promise by James to the kirk concerning adequate provision of stipends for ministers were undermined, however, by the king's favour to Huntly. Father Gordon was known to be at the earl's residence in Dunfermline and was to be kept in custody in Edinburgh until he was deported. Huntly's own arrival in Dunfermline prevented any action against Gordon. Furthermore, the earl was given the gift of the stipends for the kirks north of Aberdeen, valued at approximately 20,000 merks per annum.⁹⁴

It may be because of this wider context that Huntly used his uncle as a means of alleviating the situation resulting from the events on January 1588. Huntly's faction had seriously challenged the government in January, but neither side wanted a full confrontation. Perhaps as a peace-offering and

⁹³ *RPC*, iv, 233-34; NAS Treasurer's Accounts E.21/66, fos. 93r.-94v.; Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 378-9. The other priests were Edmund Hay, S.J. (brother of Peter Hay of Megginch), Gilbert Brown, former abbot of New Abbey, John Dury, S.J., William Crichton, S.J., Alexander McQuhirrie (who entered the Jesuit noviciate in the spring of 1588), Mr Alexander Meldrum, Mr James Seton, Mr James Cheyne and Mr John Morton (the latter four were secular priests and Cheyne is most likely the priest from Pont-à-Mousson sent to Scotland in 1584 by the Archbishop of Glasgow). Gordon, Hay, Brown, Dury, McQuhirrie, Crichton, Meldrum and Seton did not leave and were still in Scotland in February 1588, Calderwood, *History*, iv, 658-9; *BUK*, ii, 716-7, 720, 722; Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 380; Forbes-Leith, *Narratives of Scottish Catholics*, 197; J.H. Pollen, S.J., *The Counter-Reformation in Scotland*, 48-9.

⁹⁴ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 536; Calderwood, *History*, iv, 658-9; *BUK*, ii, 717.

compromise, Huntly agreed to bring Gordon to the king with the proviso that the priest would be allowed to leave Scotland unharmed. On 5 February 1588, Gordon attended Court and James 'received him kindly, lodged him in the palace, and ordered Patrick Murray, gentleman of his chamber, to provide for him in everything that he required'.

This was not Gordon's first stay at Court, as he had previously debated with James and several ministers in 1585 and had remained at Court for two months, even accompanying the king hunting.⁹⁵ The king held a five hour debate with the Jesuit in the presence of all the officers and gentlemen of the Court, as well as a number of principal ministers whom this time James had commanded to remain silent. The disputation encompassed a number of controversial points of belief which they had previously discussed, such as the invocation of saints, communion in both kinds, justification by faith and predestination; both men were impressed with the other's knowledge. James concurred with Gordon regarding justification and predestination, but asserted that the latter was not a Catholic doctrine.

This debate, however, revealed more than the king's love of theology and intellectual discourse, his willingness to engage the Jesuits directly or perhaps his desire to make a point to ministers who doubted his theological integrity. James's preliminary remarks provide an important insight into his personal toleration of Catholicism. Often, this monarch's Catholic policy is explained by historians in political terms or it is posited that his toleration of individual high-ranking Catholic nobles such as Huntly was a by-product of his personal relationships. But the king's tolerance of Catholicism throughout his realm was based, he explained to Gordon, on his belief that

⁹⁵ Forbes-Leith, *Narratives of Scottish Catholics*, 202-04.

‘there were many persons who held heretical opinions out of simplicity and want of understanding as to what they ought to believe. He would not harm such people, he said, but would wait until it pleased God to show them truth’.

It may have been a calculated political remark designed to appeal to Catholics across Europe and the British Isles as James knew that the debate would be widely reported, but James’s general treatment of Catholics bears testimony to the underlying truth of the statement as well – as does his repeated replies to ministerial complaints about individual Catholics that the blame was theirs for failing to convert them. With regards to Gordon, James kept his word and he was safely dispatched to Seton, to await a ship. The priest, however, never embarked and merely made his way north to his nephew’s protection once again.⁹⁶

It is remarkable that Gordon’s reception at Court and his debate with the king did not draw a direct response from the Kirk, especially considering that a General Assembly convened in Edinburgh the following day (6 February 1588) and that the expressed purpose of the Assembly was to address the dangers that Jesuits and Catholics posed in Scotland. The General Assembly was an outcome of the belief that the Spanish Armada’s objectives were not limited to England and that Philip II intended to restore Catholicism to Scotland as well. The Jesuits in Scotland were taken as proof and the ministers sought ‘the readiest means for quenching of the fire of papistry kindled through the whole country’. This encompassed greater support for the Kirk itself in the form of, for example, improved stipends, the appointment of ministers to parishes throughout Scotland and the physical

⁹⁶ *CSP Spain*, iv, 260, 260-61; Moysie, *Memoirs*, 65; *CSP Scot.*, ix, 583.

repair of kirks, as well addressing the dangers of priests and those who sheltered them.

To this end a delegation from the Assembly met with six members of the Privy Council, including the Chancellor. They urged that James Gordon, S.J. and William Crichton, S.J., known to be in Edinburgh, be apprehended and that anybody known to reset priests, regardless of their station, be punished according to the law. Maitland agreed to order the two Jesuits to leave Scotland and replied that regarding the nobility, ‘the king did mean to use them more calmly, as he had begun with the earl of Huntly (of whose conversion there were good hopes), so he would proceed with others of that degree’.⁹⁷ It was a typical Jacobean reply, which, as the ministers were aware, would yield very little.

The General Assembly’s response was a comprehensive inventory broken down according to region of priests (both Jesuit and secular), where they were known to be operating, the Catholics who were sheltering them, known Catholic practices in the area and the condition of the Kirk in the area, such as the number of parishes with ministers, stipends and the state of church buildings. From the Assembly’s perspective, the audit was grim and the prospects of the Kirk being able to withstand the anticipated Catholic onslaught were bleak. Numerous influential and prominent Catholics were identified in each region, public celebrations of the mass, baptisms, weddings, funerals, celebrations of saints’ days, feasts days and pilgrimages were noted throughout the country and the state of the Kirk was abysmal, with stipends withheld and seemingly more parishes vacant than filled.

⁹⁷ Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 379-80.

The north and the southwest were by far the worst, with Huntly identified as a serious threat. Of the thirteen priests identified, six were in Aberdeenshire. It was further noted that under Huntly's lieutenancy, Jesuits in Ross 'had libertie to pass through the countrie' and that his influence was extended to Fife when he was granted Dunfermline Abbey, where 'he bringeth with him flocks of Papists, Jesuits, and excommunicated Papists, as Mr James Gordoun, Mr William Crichtoun, the Laird Fentrie'.⁹⁸

The General Assembly's own assessment is supported by an analysis conducted by Burghley which indicated that one-third of the Scottish nobility in 1588 were Catholic and the majority of Scottish Catholics resided in

⁹⁸ *BUK*, ii, 716-24; Calderwood, *History*, iv, 657-664; Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 380-81; A.R. MacDonald, *The Jacobean Kirk, 1567-1625: Sovereignty, Polity and Liturgy* (Aldershot, 1998), 40-41. The priests identified by the General Assembly were: James Gordon, S.J., Edmund Hay, S.J., Alexander McQuhirrie, John Scott, Alexander Meldrum, Arthur Panton (all in Aberdeenshire); William Crichton, S.J. (in Edinburgh, as was Gordon and Scot occasionally); John Dury, S.J., Gilbert Brown, abbot of New Abbey, Gilbert Kennedy, a monk formerly from Crossraguel Abbey (in the Southwest); Andrew Clerk (in the Borders); Andrew Naismith (in Erskine); William Chisholm, bishop of Dunblane, was in Scotland from October 1587 to circa June 1588. Various historians have stated that Robert Abercromby, S.J., William Ogilvy, S.J. and George Dury, S.J. had arrived in Scotland in February 1587; however, there is no evidence to support this, albeit exact dates are difficult to ascertain for these three men and for William Murdoch, S.J.. Abercromby and Ogilvy travelled together from Poland to Scotland and, according to Abercromby, George Dury was already in Scotland when they arrived. The omission of these priests from the comprehensive audit in February 1588 would imply that Abercromby, Ogilvy and George Dury did not arrive until after this audit was conducted, late February and March 1588 – a date consistent with Abercromby's account, but there is no contemporary evidence or references to their presence in Scotland. McQuhirrie left Scotland in the spring of 1588 (possibly accompanied by John Scott, who died on the Continent) and Yellowlees states (unreferenced) that McQuhirrie was replaced by William Murdoch, S.J. and George Dury, S.J. (which contradicts Abercromby). Murdoch did not return to Scotland until briefly in 1592. There were seven Jesuits in Scotland in 1588, which dropped to six after John Dury died in October 1588; the number of secular priests were reduced with the departure of Dunblane, McQuhirrie and Scott. By 1592, there were four Jesuits in Scotland and only Abercromby remained in 1596, M. Yellowlees, 'So strange a monster as a Jesuiste', 109, 115; T.M. McCoog, S.J., *The Society of Jesus in Ireland, Scotland, and England*, 241; A. Bellesheim, *History of the Catholic Church in Scotland*, iii (Edinburgh, 1889), 341; M. Murphy, 'Robert Abercromby, S.J. (1536-1613) and the Baltic Counter-Reformation', *IR*, 50 (1989), 65; P.J. Shearman, 'Father Alexander MacQuhirrie', *IR*, 6 (1955), 25-9; J. Durkan, 'William Murdoch and the Early Jesuit Mission in Scotland', *IR*, 35 (1984), 3-5; Forbes-Leith, *Narratives of Scottish Catholics*, 204-05; W.J. Duncan (ed.), *Miscellaneous Papers Principally Illustrative of the Events in the Reigns of Queen Mary and King James* (Maitland Club, 1834), 42-56; *ODNB*, vol. 1, 92-3; vol. 17, 411-12; vol. 39, 817-18; vol. 17, 411-12.

Sutherland, Caithness, Inverness, Moray, Aberdeen, Angus, Wigtown and Nithsdale.⁹⁹ It is therefore understandable from this investigation alone why, considering its beliefs regarding the Spanish Armada, the Kirk was so concerned about Catholicism in Scotland and why they projected their concerns about Spain onto prominent Catholics such as Huntly, assuming a correlation between the high numbers of Jesuits in his earldom and his high profile, increasingly active anti-English or 'Spanish' faction. Their concerns about the ease of a Spanish victory were heightened by the proximity of Catholics to the king and the influence of Huntly at Court.

One of the preventative measures that the Assembly instigated was prevailing upon the nobility to sign the Confession of Faith, thus hopefully drawing the country together in a common defence with England. At Holyroodhouse on 25 February 1588, therefore, James, Lennox, Maitland, Huntly and ninety-five others subscribed the Confession.¹⁰⁰ Huntly's subscription is significant in that it was the first time that he supposedly repudiated Catholicism, but it was purely a matter of political expediency – as was every other time that he signed. Huntly was neither committing himself to Protestantism nor to the defence of England. He was predominantly bowing to pressure from James and, within a climate of heightened anti-Catholicism, attempting to protect his position.

James certainly did not waste the opportunity Huntly's signature presented: using it as proof to the ministers that his personalised, 'calm' approach to Catholic nobles worked and as an overture to England, demonstrating that he

⁹⁹ P.H. Brown, *History of Scotland*, ii, 206; J.H. Pollen, S.J., *The Counter-Reformation in Scotland*, 63.

¹⁰⁰ BUK, ii, 724; Calderwood, *History*, iv, 677; RPC, iv, note 254; J.R. Elder, *Spanish Influences*, 149-51.

was committed to Protestantism. William Ashby, the ambassador sent by England in mid-July, appeared to have been positively influenced when he was informed of James's activities that February. He told Walsingham of the king's religious 'zeal', having disputed with James Gordon, S.J. and 'confuted him [without] the help of anie minister' and that James had "brought the Earle of Huntlye to be a con[vert], confessing his error, and haith subscribed, submitting himselfe to the churche".¹⁰¹

James attempted to turn the debate with Gordon and Huntly's subscription into a propaganda exercise, but Ashby was apparently the only one convinced of Huntly's sincerity. Nobody else believed in this otherwise surprising conversion and suspicions regarding Huntly grew as the year progressed. Huntly himself later admitted following his second subscription to the Confession of Faith in November 1588 that he was compelled to do so for his own safety. He told Parma that 'I found myself menaced on all sides, and pressed in such sort by our King that I was forced to yield to the extreme difficulty of the moment and subscribe with his majesty (not at all from the heart) the confession of their faith'.¹⁰²

Robert Bruce confirmed this and explained Huntly's subscription as political and 'to avoid the manifest dangers of all those who call themselves Catholics, partly to keep himself in the favour of his King, who urged him strongly to sign the confession of the heretics'. Bruce concluded that Huntly's 'heart is in no wise alienated from our cause'.¹⁰³ Huntly was not the only Catholic to follow this course. According to Bruce, Lord Claud Hamilton contended that

¹⁰¹ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 583. J.H. Pollen, S.J. misread this as James debating a second time with Gordon in July 1588, *The Counter-Reformation in Scotland*, 68.

¹⁰² *CSP Scot.*, ix, 693.

¹⁰³ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 687; NAS Warrender Papers, vol. B, GD1/371/3, f. 85v..

he too did not sign 'voluntarily, but did so to escape further persecution' and that the Protestant policy compelling subscription was designed 'to finish the Catholics, and preventing them from receiving foreign aid'.¹⁰⁴

The Kirk's preoccupation with Catholicism and foreign connections would only grow over the ensuing months as fears concerning the Spanish Armada increased in both Scotland and England. The king's domestic policy of favouring both Maitland and Huntly continued, with Catholics still playing a significant role in the Court and the king's favour. The ambiguous signals of his domestic policy reflected on his foreign policy and Huntly's prominent position in Scottish politics concerned both the English and their allies in Scotland. As the summer of 1588 approached, it was still unclear from James's domestic policy whether he would support England in their conflict with Spain.

¹⁰⁴ *CSP Spain*, iv, 427.

Chapter Five:
THE BRIG O' DEE AFFAIR
MARCH 1588-DECEMBER 1590

The spring of 1588 was marked by increased concerns by both the Kirk and the English about the impending intentions of Spain regarding the Protestant British Isles. Increasingly close attention began to be paid to possible links between Scottish Catholics and Spain and James's domestic and foreign policy was scrutinised in order to determine where his intentions lay – whether he would aid and abet the Spanish in their campaign against England or stand firm by the Anglo-Scottish alliance of 1586. The worries of the Kirk in early 1588 about the connections between Catholicism and foreign aid intended to undermine the Protestant alliance, therefore, were not restricted to the prominent Catholics such as Huntly, but were extended to James as well by virtue of his close associations with Catholics and men known to have connections with France or Spain. At the end of January 1588, Henry Carey, lord Hunsdon challenged the secret intermediary sent to him from James via Francis Stewart, fifth earl of Bothwell about the king's receipt of foreign aid. Hunsdon also declared his related doubts regarding James's religion, as evidenced by “his inward dealinges with thErle Huntley and other great papistes of Scotland – his tolloracion of the mase in sondrie places of Scotland, and allmoste commonly in the northe – the suffering of the Bisshoppe of Dunbleane and a nombre of Jessewittes within his realme”. This, of course, was completely denied.¹

English scrutiny of Scottish associations extended abroad and, based on his known connections with James, Maxwell and assorted Catholic aristocrats,

¹ *CBP*, i, 307.

Colonel William Sempill had been closely observed throughout January 1588. His affiliations with Alejandro Farnese, duke of Parma and Bernardino de Mendoza were noted and trouble was anticipated from his suspected return to Scotland with John, eighth Lord Maxwell the expectations being that ‘he will bring matters to pass according to the lords of the north’s desire’. Despite this and other vague references to the northern lords or the Spanish faction, English intelligence was still unaware of Huntly’s – or any other noble’s aside from Maxwell – contact with Spain. Sir Edward Stafford, the English ambassador in France, predicted that ‘there is some practice of importance in Scotland atreating by the Spanish faction’ when Maxwell travelled to Paris to see Mendoza and James Beaton, archbishop of Glasgow. When Hunsdon identified a servant of Colonel William Stewart’s passing through the Border with a passport from Maitland, he determined that James was waiting for his return in order to avenge his mother. He no longer trusted James, writing that “‘what faire speches or promises soever is made of him, her Majesty shall find it but playne dissemblacion”’.

This appeared to be confirmed by the report in February about Spanish preparations in Dunkirk and that ‘Scotland is the mark they shoot at’. Another report in March indicated that Maxwell, now in Lisbon, had offered a safe Scottish port to Spain. An English task force set up to prepare for the expected Spanish invasion made specific provisions for an army on the border in case forces from Flanders disembarked in Scotland.² In early February, Hunsdon again had cause to be concerned about James. He had reason to believe that Sempill had replaced Stewart as the Spanish liaison

² *CSP For., Eliz.*, June 1586-June 1588, 489; *CSP Scot.*, ix, 533; *CBP*, i, 305; *CSP Dom., Eliz.*, 1581-90, 461, 471, 480. According to a Venetian diplomat in France noting Maxwell’s frequent meetings with Mendoza, Elizabeth ‘dreads danger from Scotland only’, *CSP Venice*, 1581-91, 337.

and was to return to Scotland in order to deliver to the king a packet from Philip II and 200,000 ducats; in April William Cecil, lord Burghley was informed of Maxwell and Sempill meeting secretly with Parma.³

His informant may have been incorrect regarding the details, but Hunsdon made an important deduction in the identification of Sempill as a key player in the Spanish intrigues in Scotland during 1588. Furthermore, Sempill was personally selected by Philip II to not only ascertain the conditions in Scotland (particularly the strength and position of the Catholic nobility) but also to make direct representations to James in order to secure either his neutrality or his support.⁴ This was an important change for previously Philip II, Parma and Mendoza had only dealt directly with Huntly, Maxwell, Lord Claud Hamilton and Robert Bruce. There are indications that Philip II had dispatched letters to James through the means of the Archbishop of Glasgow or Robert Bruce and that James had a limited knowledge of his nobles' correspondence with Spain through Stewart – Burghley even suspected in April 1588 that the Scottish nobles acted with the privity of the king and Chancellor, 'but not so as to embrace it as earnestly as it seems they have done'.⁵

Sempill, however, was the first direct emissary between the two kings.⁶ When Mendoza was informed that James had intimated to the Bishop of Dunblane that he intended to send Sir John Seton, 'who is a servant of your Majesty', to Philip II, he was decidedly sceptical. It did not correlate with the

³ *CBP*, i, 309-10; *CSP For., Eliz.*, June 1586-June 1588, 577, 672.

⁴ *CSP Spain*, iv, 171, 179, 188, 201-02, 230-31, 241, 255-6; K.M. Brown, 'The Making of a *Politique*: the Counter-Reformation and the Regional Politics of John, eighth Lord Maxwell', *SHR*, 66 (1987), 164-5; *ODNB*, vol. 49, 745.

⁵ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 556.

⁶ For example, *CSP Spain*, iv, 230.

reports of the king's repeated refusals to grant Dunblane an audience and Mendoza wondered if it was an attempt by James and Maitland to discover the full extent of the Spanish plans. He therefore warned Sempill and Maxwell to be wary of any such bait when they met with the king.⁷

From Philip's perspective, Sempill's mission was to gather information, to placate Parma and Mendoza in their desire for military action on the Anglo-Scottish border if the opportunity should be presented and to demonstrate, if required, that he had attempted to accommodate James in his quest to restore Catholicism to England. Although Philip II endorsed Sempill's mission and provided him with public and private commissions, he did nothing to ensure that his mission was a success. The Spanish king had little interest in creating the diversionary action on the Anglo-Scottish borders that Parma craved; he wanted to ensure the continued support of Huntly, Lord Claud Hamilton, Maxwell and others in their faction in case he had need of them, but had no plans to implement their proposals. Philip was proceeding on the assumption that James was unlikely to convert, adopting plans for the English succession that excluded the Scottish king and incorporated his own imperial objectives in the British Isles.⁸

Thus, his secret commissions to Sempill were designed to guarantee the failure of his embassy: in short, James was asked to renounce his right to the crowns of England and Ireland in return for 100,000 crowns before Spain invaded England and money or troops or both during the war, plus a resident

⁷ *CSP Spain*, iv, 255-6. Although there is no supporting evidence, it may be Sir John Seton who is referred to in the report of 4 June 1588: 'these last few days an agent of the King of Scotland has been here in secret. He has had an interview with the King at Escorial where he now is; and has received letters to take to his master. He left at once', *CSP Venice*, 1581-91, 361.

⁸ See, for example, G. Donaldson, *Scotland: James V – James VII* (Edinburgh, 1965), 185.

Spanish ambassador; conversion to Catholicism was compulsory; the Scottish king's first son would be sent to Spain; an offensive and defensive alliance, with James sending 10,000 paid soldiers first to the Netherlands, then to Turkey.⁹ It was impossible that James would accept such terms as Philip was well aware, but the fact that the proposals were made at all demonstrates the importance of Scotland's position in Anglo-Spanish politics and that neither side was sure of James's sympathies. At the end of April, for example, Stafford reported that English Catholic expatriates in France who were involved in the Spanish plotting were 'afraid that the Scots will play ... a Scottish trick, and be glad to compound with the Queen'.¹⁰

Sempill had a long history of involvement in Spanish politics, first as a mercenary in the Netherlands and then as an advisor to the Spanish government on Scotland and England, having gained the trust of Philip II and his advisors. He concurred with Parma and Mendoza that the proposals from Huntly, Maxwell and Lord Claud Hamilton had a better chance of success than an attack on England that did not involve Scotland. Parma expected that Sempill would secure Leith and lead a border diversion, directed to act only when Elizabeth was 'pricked' elsewhere – which, the duke emphasised, Maxwell must adhere to as it was vital to Parma's own success. Sailing from Dunkirk in order to avoid French suspicion, Sempill and Maxwell (without James's licence) arrived in Dundee in April 1588. Robert Bruce was authorised to spend the 13,000 crowns he had been holding since May 1587 in support of their mission – as Parma explained to Philip II in May, 'it is

⁹ SCA 'Clase de papeles del Colonel Sempill', 1587, CA4/10/10; SCA 'Por partidos que el Rey de Escocia ofrece a su Mag[esta]d Cath[olics]. Por el bien de entramos [sic] reys', CA4/9/15, CA4/9/16; for English translations, see C. Sáenz-Cambra, 'Scotland and Philip II, 1580-1598: Politics, Religion, Diplomacy and Lobbying' (unpublished University of Edinburgh PhD thesis, 2003), 124-6.

¹⁰ *CSP For., Eliz.*, June 1586-June 1588, 598.

only right that they should be held in account, and aided with money, etc., in order that they may not be lost’.

On their arrival, they promptly met with Huntly, Lord Claud Hamilton and others of their faction. Huntly immediately agreed that they would not act until aid arrived and they were specifically ordered to do so by Spain; Maxwell was the lone dissenter.¹¹ Huntly had absolutely no desire nor intention to raise his forces in order, as Maxwell urged, to compel Spain to send aid. To do so would be counterproductive: Huntly’s Spanish correspondence was designed to elicit monetary aid, with which he would reinforce his domestic position against the Anglo-Protestant party.

English intelligence may have been aware of Sempill’s arrival in Scotland with Maxwell, but they were oblivious to the letters from Huntly and Lord Claud Hamilton which contributed to the decision to send the two men. The purpose of the correspondence initiated in 1586 had been to persuade the Spaniards of the viability of their proposals and of their sincerity; by 1588, however, the Scottish correspondence had begun to be characterised primarily by requests for monetary support, an emphasis on their exposed positions, a degree of temporising and, to a certain extent, suggestions or requests which the writers knew could not be fulfilled. The responses from Spain differed little from when Huntly, Maxwell and Lord Claud Hamilton had first made contact and the requirement to ‘maintain them in their good intentions and devotion’ to Philip II was foremost.¹² The Scots were continuously encouraged, but also repeatedly told that Spain was not yet in

¹¹ *CSP Spain*, iv, 230-31, 241, 254-5, 273, 277, 287, 297, 313, 351; *CSP Scot.*, ix, 558; *CSP For.*, *Eliz.*, June 1586-June 1588, 598; *HKJVI*, 235; Gordon, *History of Sutherland*, 209-10; K.M. Brown, ‘The Making of a *Politique*’, 164-6.

¹² *CSP Spain*, iv, 197; see Chapter Two above.

the position to act and, most significantly, that they were not to act independent of direct orders from Spain.

In February 1588 discussion was resumed regarding the plan for the Scots to hire ships to ferry Spanish troops from Dunkirk to Scotland. The scheme had been postponed in August 1587 because the season was too advanced. Now, six months later, Huntly and Hamilton regretfully informed Parma of the 'impossibility of their sending ships to carry the reinforcements over, in consequence of the suspicion it would arouse in the heretics'. If Parma were to send the forces directly, they could secure Leith with notice. But, if delay was necessary, then Huntly and Hamilton requested 50,000 crowns to enable them to withstand their Protestant opponents.¹³ This was a tremendous sum when it is considered that all Spain had sent thus far was the 13,000 crowns held by Robert Bruce to pay for the transport ships, that the vast expense entailed in the assembly of the Armada was not unknown and neither was the economic impact of the English navy's attacks on Spanish shipping (both from the Indies and on the coasts of Spain).

Bruce confirmed the difficult position that Huntly, Hamilton and other Catholics were in, but assured Mendoza that despite the increased pressure against them from the Anglo-Protestant party, they remained true to their original resolution. He stressed the need for support, even if it was limited to money; if this was not received 'the Catholic lords will be obliged to defend themselves prematurely under overwhelming difficulties, and to the great risk of the cause'.¹⁴ Huntly and his fellow correspondents continued to put pressure on Spain to provide financial assistance over the subsequent six

¹³ *CSP Spain*, iv, 204.

¹⁴ *CSP Spain*, iv, 210.

years, always maintaining the military posturing yet never asking for achievable outcomes. It was not dissimilar in some respects from Philip II's commission to Sempill in 1588: the king was willing to engage in diplomacy with James in order to achieve set objectives, but he certainly did not think feasible the alliance which was the alleged purpose of the embassy. Likewise, Huntly discussed military plans and objectives, but recognised that money was the realistic request – not troops. Both Philip in his overtures to James and Huntly in his Spanish correspondence made it as difficult as possible for their opposite numbers to fully realise the proposals under discussion. In Huntly's case, he was assisted in this by the fact that the Spanish king was not keen on the militant plans involving Scotland.

Huntly and Lord Claud Hamilton portrayed a very different picture of Scottish domestic politics from what the Kirk perceived or what was seen as happening by England. Domestic and foreign politics in Scotland were conflated by an English administration increasingly preoccupied with Spain. Hence, the English saw the beginning of Huntly's more aggressive campaign against Maitland as intertwined with James's Spanish affiliations. Any action taken by Huntly's faction was interpreted within the framework of confessional politics rather than analysing the faction's secular objectives. Neither did Huntly and his colleagues feel any compulsion to keep foreign politics distinct from domestic and deliberately harnessed their domestic political goals to their Spanish negotiations.

Huntly was using his Spanish support as a means to enhance his own position and to bolster his domestic faction. But, if he were to continue to do so, he needed to explain the membership of this faction in order to maintain

his credibility with Spain. His faction was loosely based on anti-government, anti-Maitland, anti-English sentiment and crossed the religious divide. It also employed the traditional political standby of seeking government reform.

At the end of February 1588, Bruce, led to believe that the faction was required to mask its intentions with the subterfuge of domestic political reform, informed Mendoza that the

Catholic lords, the better to defend themselves and divert suspicion, have formed a league with divers earls and barons, who, although heretics, are discontented with the present management of affairs. Reform in the administration is now the professed aim of all our enterprise until the arrival of your support enables us to promote openly the Catholic religion. The elder Lord Hamilton [John] especially displays great fervency in the defence of the earl of Huntly, his nephew, and has brought with him for that purpose a great following of heretics, who will embark with us so far ... that they will be unable to turn back when it becomes a question of our holy Catholic religion.¹⁵

Bruce, who was going to Court the next day, concluded his missive with the plea for the support necessary to implement their intentions, which ‘in case it cannot be sent at once, we beg you to send a good sum of money to help us to hold out’.¹⁶

It was a very clever ploy by Huntly to explain his subterfuge to Spain and to marry his diverse commitments. It also illustrates that Huntly’s faction and their actions were not motivated wholly by confessional politics or the cause of Spain, but their primary orientation was to achieve domestic outcomes. This does not mean that the goal of removing Maitland or revising policy concerning England would not be politically favourable to Spain – the two

¹⁵ *CSP Spain*, iv, 224-5.

¹⁶ *CSP Spain*, iv, 224-5.

were not mutually exclusive – but Huntly’s faction was not galvanised to seek these changes purely on that basis and the changes to policy they sought to implement extended beyond foreign policy or religious considerations. Perhaps emboldened by Sempill’s mission and the authorisation to Bruce to spend the 13,000 crowns, March and April 1588 was marked by the determined strides towards achieving a change in government by Huntly and his faction.

Following his subscription to the Confession of Faith at the end of February, Huntly, ‘weill lykkit of his Majestie’, journeyed from Edinburgh to Aberdeen in order ‘to quenche ane contentioun’ between the town council and the Sheriff Depute of Aberdeen, John Leslie, laird of Balquhain. Deciding in Balquhain’s favour, the earl had returned to Court by the end of March 1588.¹⁷ Huntly was joined, amongst others, by Lords John and Claud Hamilton, David Lindsay, eleventh earl of Crawford and John Graham, third earl of Montrose. Hunsdon immediately analysed the composition of the Court in foreign policy terms, informing Burghley that whilst James had shown more inclination towards England than any other nation, there was “nott one mane aboute hym of accownte or awtorryte, that doothe harden hym theontoo, or sekis to annymate hym theryn, but all too the contrary”. He worried that encouraged by these adverse influences, the king would accept the offers made to him by ‘foreign princes’.

¹⁷ Moysie, *Memoirs*, 66; *CBP*, i, 315-16; *CSP Spain*, iv, 260. John Leslie, tenth laird of Balquhain was described in 1594 as ‘deeply devoted to the three Catholic earls’, *CSP Scot.*, xi, 402. In June 1588, Huntly exchanged bonds of manrent and maintenance with Gilbert Menzies of Pitfodells, Provost of Aberdeen (on whose behalf Huntly had intervened in the contested elections for Provost in 1587) and his brother, Thomas Menzies of Durne, for themselves and their kin, NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/13/7/33; J. Robertson (ed.), *Illustrations of the Topography and Antiquities of the Shires of Aberdeen and Banff*, iii (New Spalding Club, 1847), 279-80; *Spalding Miscellany*, iv, 240; Wormald, *Lords and Men*, 292-3.

Hunsdon agreed with Sir John Carmichael of that ilk that England was “very slow aboute our busynes, butt the Devyll slepes nott amonge them”. Burghley was equally apprehensive that ‘if these men be not stayed before the duke of Parma give them succour, the state of Scotland for our purpose will be dangerous’. Hunsdon was also anxious that England was about to lose its strongest advocate, Maitland. According to Hunsdon, “ther is att thys present, a grete cowrte of nobell men, wherof Hambelton and Huntley arr the chefe, to whome the Chancelor fearynge hys owne lyfe hathe joynde hymselfe, and doothe run theyr cowrse”.¹⁸ Maitland had just cause to be concerned, but there is no other evidence that he aligned with Huntly’s faction, although he may well have tried to do so or attempted to reach an accommodation with them for in April Huntly’s faction was utterly focused on the Chancellor’s removal.

Huntly, Crawford, Montrose and the Hamiltons’ first appeal to the king at the end of March to have ‘some officers of estat to be changed’ was flatly refused. Augmented by Andrew Leslie, fifth earl of Rothes, Alexander, master of Livingston and possibly John Stewart, fifth earl of Atholl in early April, they decided on an alternative approach and Huntly invited James to a banquet at Dunfermline in the second week of April. Again, the king was petitioned for ‘ane imedyatt chang of thoffycers in curte’, proposing that Lord Claud Hamilton be appointed Chancellor, Colonel William Stewart assume control of the royal guard and that Huntly become Captain of Edinburgh Castle. James repeated his refusal and ‘red away to Burley malcontented’, where he stayed for several days before returning to Edinburgh via Dunfermline and Kinneil, where he was feasted by Lord Hamilton. On his way into Edinburgh on 14 April, the king made a show of supporting his Chancellor and Maitland

¹⁸ *CBP*, i, 321; *CSP Scot.*, ix, 556; *RPC*, iv, 268-9.

‘mett him weill accompanied at the Queen’s Ferrie, being advertised so to doe’. But Robert Bowes predicted to Walsingham that Huntly’s faction would prevail, “yett presently the Kyng yeldes nott so fully to this alteracion as they hoped or desiered”.¹⁹ Huntly’s influence and favour may have been sufficiently marked to raise English concern, but he was not in a position to dissuade the king from his adherence to Maitland – despite his determination to do so.

In the face of the king’s continued resistance, the determined onslaught against Maitland continued. At the end of April Huntly, Crawford ‘and others that are Catholic in heart are now in court, in favour with the King’. Huntly’s faction even dominated the poorly attended Convention of Estates held at Holyrood on 4 April. Burghley was correct in detecting that Huntly’s faction were “more moved with a particular dislyk of the Chancellor than with any comen cause”,²⁰ but the question of whether the Scottish king would ultimately support England whilst Huntly was in ascendancy at Court and pressuring James to change his policy, was of serious concern to Elizabeth and her government. James was not about to abandon his policy of maintaining both Maitland and Huntly, especially not on the eve of the Spanish Armada and not having received satisfactory offers from either Spain or Elizabeth.

Such was England’s uncertainty about Scotland that Archibald Douglas, eighth earl of Angus’s petition to become Elizabeth’s pensioner was granted. Angus had first approached England in mid-February 1588 when he feared that because the disapprobation of James had descended upon him following

¹⁹ Moysie, *Memoirs*, 66; Calderwood, *History*, iv, 677; *CBP*, i, 322.

²⁰ *CSP For., Eliz.*, June 1586–June 1588, 598; *CSP Scot.*, ix, 556.

his interference in Argyll, he would be ruined by the king without support from Elizabeth. In return, Angus promised to 'kindle such a coal of fire in Scotland at her Highness' will and pleasure, so keep the King occupied with stirs and troubles, as he should have little leisure to hearken after foreign practices, nor attempt anything with Spain or France, which might disturb her Majesty or her dominions'. Burghley had previously discussed a pension of £200 per annum for Angus and it was now granted – at the end of March it was hoped that Angus, sworn to Elizabeth, would receive his pay by Easter.²¹

Elizabeth never had the need to call upon Angus's services, but it is telling that the need was felt to engage them. By the time that the earl would have received his first payment, the Scottish king had begun to temper his policies – not enough to revive English confidence but sufficient to kindle hope. Perhaps when Sempill revealed his commission from Philip II, James realised that the time for equivocation would soon be past and his decision may have been taken as much to protect his realm as it was to support Elizabeth. The king began with the appointment of Angus as the warden of the West March, replacing William Maxwell, fifth Lord Herries.²² The unauthorised return of Maxwell in April 1588 provided James with an ideal opportunity to begin his policy initiative.

On 7 May 1588 the Privy Council issued a proclamation ordering all lieges to be ready to resist an invasion from abroad. A Convention of Estates on 20 May ordered all Jesuits and seminary priests, particularly James Gordon, S.J., Edmund Hay, S.J., William Crichton, S.J., John Dury, S.J., Alexander McQuhirrie and Gilbert Brown, to surrender to the Provost of Edinburgh

²¹ *CSP Ireland*, 1586-8, 478-9, 503.

²² *RPC*, iv, 188, 247-8, 257-9; Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 381-2; Moysie, *Memoirs*, 67.

within ten days and the resetting of any priests was prohibited. This was followed by a muster to attend the king in the West March.²³ The king's military exercises in the West March from May to June 1588 was framed within the context of responding to the religious threat which Maxwell allegedly posed but Maxwell's rebellion was a solitary undertaking.

Maxwell did not receive the support of his fellow Catholics, who hastened to distance themselves from him. Even Herries abandoned Maxwell. Huntly promptly indicated that he was 'ready to yield to the King's disposition' and, according to Bowes, '[t]he bruit of the coming of the Spaniards into the realm is clean quenched' and '[neither] is there now such expectation of violent attempts to be enterprised as lately were thought should have been hastily put into execution'. He further commented that he was sure of both Lord John Hamilton and Crawford; regarding Huntly's faction and its goal to oust Maitland, he commented that 'the association is thought to be broken or so shaken that they will not hastily put in execution such things as were looked for at their hands'.²⁴

Scottish Catholics and Huntly's faction were not the only ones withholding their support as even Mendoza remarked that Maxwell 'followed his own opinion instead of my instructions'. Parma was not even aware of Maxwell's rash rebellion until the end of July, when he informed Philip II that against the advice of Sempill and other Catholics, Maxwell 'insisted ... in precipitating matters'.²⁵ The king's forces, with James in attendance, quickly gained

²³ A proclamation prohibiting the reset of Maxwell was issued on 25 April and the sureties given by Herries and Sir John Gordon of Lochinvar were ordered to be paid since Maxwell had broken his bond, *RPC*, iv, 274-5, 277, 284-5; Moysie, *Memoirs*, 67. The priests ignored the charge to surrender themselves.

²⁴ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 559.

²⁵ *CSP Spain*, iv, 351, 369-70.

control of the Southwest and by 24 June the rebellion was decreed to have ended, with Maxwell being placed under close ward in Edinburgh Castle for the next fifteen months.²⁶

The king's dramatic actions against and the imprisonment of a prominent Catholic lord, whom the English clearly perceived as a real threat, combined with his orders to expel the Catholic priests (shortly after entertaining and debating with the most notable one) had clearly made the impression for which he had hoped. Elizabeth was relieved, writing in July that James 'shows himself well disposed to embrace our amity and friendship, we knowing how greatly it imports us both'.²⁷ She dispatched William Ashby as her ambassador to Scotland, who arrived in mid-July, in order to convey her gratitude to James.²⁸ Bowes was perhaps less impressionable and suspected, however, that the errant lord's treatment would be lenient because "yt is looked that the intercession of the Duke of Lenox syster, with others, intending to sew to the kyng for Maxwell; and greatt sute and offers wilbe made to the presentt cortyers in this behalfe, so as the kyng shalbe moved on every syde for hym".²⁹ He was correct in so much as Maxwell was never forfeited.

Ludovic Stewart, second duke of Lennox's sister was Henrietta Stewart, Huntly's fiancée, who had recently arrived in Scotland from France with her sister, Marie, at the end of May 1588. This early foray into Scottish politics would prove to be characteristic of Henrietta's career, as she embraced her

²⁶ K.M. Brown, 'The Making of a *Politique*', 165-8; Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 384; Calderwood, *History*, iv, 678-9; Moysie, *Memoirs*, 67-9.

²⁷ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 580-81.

²⁸ Moysie, *Memoirs*, 69; P.F. Tytler, *History of Scotland*, ix (Edinburgh, 1843), 19; *Warrender Papers*, ii, note 71.

²⁹ *CBP*, i, 326.

political influence as a powerful countess, beloved cousin of the king and, following James's marriage in 1590, close confidante of Queen Anna. Henrietta would intervene not only on the behalf of her husband throughout their long marriage, but in favour of various other noblemen as well. She would prove to be influential in her own right and a significant ally to her husband as they brought their combined influence to bear on Scottish politics.³⁰

The welcome news in England regarding Maxwell's apprehension was soon followed by the less pleasant news in July of Huntly's impending marriage to Henrietta Stewart, by which the earl would be related by marriage to the king. Walsingham was informed that it was 'to be solemnized as soon as may be, but "not befor they geive declaratioun of their faith, for his majesteis minister Mr. Craig refused to proclame thair bandis of matremony untill that tyme"³¹ Huntly's recent subscription was not deemed sufficient and Henrietta's Catholicism was beyond doubt. The Presbytery of Edinburgh forbade ministers, especially Patrick Adamson, archbishop of St Andrews, from marrying the couple until Huntly had subscribed the Confession of Faith. But, royal patronage can overcome many obstacles, and, on 21 July 1588, Adamson married Huntly to Henrietta in Holyrood Chapel, 'at quhilke tyme thear wes great triumphe, mirthe and pastyme'.³²

³⁰ See R. Grant, 'Politicking Jacobean Women: Lady Ferniehurst, the Countess of Arran and the Countess of Huntly, c. 1580 – 1603' in E. Ewan and M.M. Meikle (eds.), *Women in Scotland, c. 1100 – c. 1750* (East Linton, 1999).

³¹ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 587.

³² Moysie, *Memoirs*, 69; Calderwood, *History*, iv, 686-7; *RPC*, iv, 297; Row, *History*, 137; *Calendar of Fearn: text and additions, 1471-1667*, ed. R.J. Adam (SHS, 1991), 140. Adamson was later called before Edinburgh Presbytery but, pleading illness, did not appear. The General Assembly in August again directed ministers 'to crave of the Erle of Huntlie subscriptioun to the Confessioun of Faith' and the Edinburgh Presbytery was empowered to call before them all Catholics at Court or residing in Edinburgh, especially Huntly, Seton, John Chisholm and Colonel Stewart, Calderwood, *History*, iv, 691; Row, *History*, 138.

James, taking it upon himself to act in the capacity of father of the bride, was responsible for the festivities following the wedding. Determined to make it a memorable event, earlier in the month the king had written a circular letter to the gentry of Scotland, informing them of the approaching marriage and that he intended to 'haif it anserabill in all solemiteis baith to our honour and the parteis awin estaits'. Yet, this was proving difficult because of a lack in the markets which the king then requested his correspondents to fill by sending to him for the wedding victuals such as venison, wild fowl, capons and 'sic utheris as ye eather haif or may recover'.³³

The king also extended his efforts to the guests' entertainment and wrote his only masque in honour of Huntly and his wife, 'An Epithalamion upon the Marques of Huntlies mariage'. It was most likely never completed and only a fragment remains, indicating 'a slight piece, giving speches to traditional gods and nymphs, it touches on the particular relationship between the king and the bride and groom, and the presenter's speech seems designed to be spoken by James himself'.³⁴ The marriage secured Huntly's position at Court, and cemented the already close relationship between James and Huntly. Henrietta played a significant role in maintaining this closeness between them, especially during Huntly's more turbulent domestic political period in the 1590s.

Henrietta was described as 'a vertuous wyff and prudent lady; who providentlie governed her husband's affairs, and carefullie solicited his

³³ NAS Abercairny Muniments GD/24/5/57/15.

³⁴ S. Carpenter, 'Early Scottish Drama' in R.D.S. Jack (ed.), *The History of Scottish Literature*, i (Aberdeen, 1988), 203; *Poems of King James VI of Scotland*, ii, ed. J. Craigie, (Scottish Text Society, 1948-52), 134-45; R.J. Lyall, 'James VI and the Sixteenth Century Cultural Crisis' in J. Goodare and M. Lynch, (eds.), *The Reign of James VI* (East Linton, 2000), 67-9.

bussines at home dureing his banishment from Scotland, after the battell of Glenlivet [1594]'.³⁵ She proved not only to be a force in her own right, but she represented her husband's interests in either the Court or the locality when he was unable to do so and was the means through which the king and the earl could communicate when it was prudent for James to appear not to be doing so. Just as importantly, the countess's own relationship with the king and queen sheltered them, both individually and as a couple, from religious and political demands alike.

The ramifications of the marriage between Huntly and Henrietta Stewart, however, extended beyond Scotland. Huntly himself had strengthened his French connections whilst James had also tied himself more closely to Catholic politics through his now personal affiliation with the man who was increasingly becoming identified as the leader of the Scottish Catholics and suspected of Spanish sympathies. Although Maxwell's imprisonment had earned James credit at the English Court, concerns regarding an imminent attack by Spain brought his subsequent actions and his overt favour to Huntly and his French Catholic cousin into suspicion, casting dubiety once again upon where his true sympathies lay.

Even before the Spanish Armada had set sail for England on 12 July 1588, rumours began to spread that its destination was Scotland and that James would provide a port.³⁶ Elizabeth and her government were still highly uncertain regarding James's allegiance and his ability or willingness to respond to any potential rising on behalf of Spain. At the end of June

³⁵ Gordon, *History of Sutherland*, 208. In June 1588 when Patrick, master of Gray tried to persuade the king to take Dunfermline Abbey from Huntly and re-grant it to himself, the king refused, 'for the [friendship] of a yonge lady his doughter, and beloved of his blud', Gray, *Letters and Papers*, 168; *CSP Scot.*, x, 109.

³⁶ *CSP For., Eliz.*, July 1588-December 1588, 1, 85.

Walsingham was informed that the ‘northern lords ... [are] fully concluded that they are to receive the Spaniards looked for to come into Scotland’. Further, the majority of the country would join their cause – with or without the king’s approbation. Reports such as this would have only heightened English anxieties, especially when it was learned that Huntly and Lord Claud Hamilton, amongst the wider nobility, had already raised troops. What was overlooked, however, was that the troops were raised in response to the king’s orders in preparation against a Spanish landing.³⁷

On 27 July 1588, the day before Lord Howard of Effingham launched fire ships against the Spanish navy off Calais, a Convention of Estates was held at Holyrood. Once again, indications that Scottish support was forthcoming were made through orders for better administration of the Borders and the Highlands and the appointment of a commission to execute the laws against priests and Catholics. The commissioners had justiciary powers and extensive authority to apprehend and try rebels or priests; commissioners could also be subject to a £1,000 penalty for negligence.³⁸ On 1 August, the Privy Council issued orders to be prepared to resist a Spanish landing should the Armada be seen off the coasts of Scotland and to resist any ‘domesticque seditioun and rebellioun’. Further, in an act probably emanating from the Convention, special commissioners were appointed to advise the king and to direct the resistance. Huntly was appointed the commissioner for the shires of Cromarty, Nairn, Elgin, Forres, Banff, Aberdeen and Inverness (excepting the lands between the waters of Inverness and the Spey, for which James

³⁷ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 575; BL Cotton, Caligula, D.i.302; *CSP Spain*, iv, 333; NAS Abercainry Muniments GD24/5/57/16.

³⁸ *RPC*, iv, 298-302; W. Fraser, *The Chiefs of Grant*, i (Edinburgh, 1883), 164-5. The priests named were James Gordon, S.J., Edmund Hay, S.J., William Crichton, S.J., John Dury, S.J., Alexander Macquhirrie and Gilbert Brown.

Stewart, second earl of Moray was appointed commissioner). Further orders for armed musters to resist the Armada were issued on 10 August.³⁹

In a speech to the Convention of Estates, the king made his allegiances clear. He told the assembled men that although he believed Scotland to be safe and that religion was only the pretext for the Spanish assault on England, yet if religion was a factor, then Scotland was in the same position as her neighbour. With consideration to his claim to the English throne, he did not believe that the Spaniards would countenance it, nor did he accept that it was the opportune time to avenge Mary. He declared that he would ‘not be so foolish as to take the help of one who is mightier than myself; nor will I give such liberty to mine own passions, as therefore to neglect religion and cast in hazard both this kingdom and those others that belong to me after her death’. The Chancellor concurred and proposed that Scotland be in defensive readiness. Bothwell, who sought revenge for Mary, raised the only objection, but he ultimately acquiesced.⁴⁰

This was the clearest indication of James’s support for England yet, but Elizabeth still entertained her doubts as the Spanish Armada circumnavigated Scotland, having been defeated at the battle of Gravelines on 29 July 1588. What appeared to give her pause was not so much what the king said or did, but the men with which he surrounded himself – among whom Huntly was a prominent figure – and the number of Catholics in Scotland. Following his intimation of the Spanish Armada, Melville wrote in his memoirs that ‘then also wer entred about his Maieste a new faction, wherof the Erle of Huntly was cheiffest, wha had laityly married the Duc of

³⁹ *RPC*, iv, 306-08, 314; Calderwood, *History*, iv, 681.

⁴⁰ Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 385.

Lenox sister' and that this faction, which now included Bothwell, 'wald have bene nerest about his Maieste at the incommyng of the Spaniardis'.⁴¹

Ashby, the newly arrived English ambassador, was concerned about Huntly. He informed the king of the advertisements sent to him by Walsingham regarding 'the intelligence that the north[ern] lords have had a long time with the Duke of Parma, and she[wed] by name those who were mentioned in your honour's letter'. James replied that 'Huntly shall not stir from him; and over the rest he [will be] vigilant and has given commandment ... that no favour or relief be showed to them'. The response did little to abate English fears, especially when Ashby also advocated an increased pension to prevent James being drawn away from the English amity by factions or foreign princes and reported that the king would be unable to resist Spain unless he was provided with money to pay for 1,000 foot and 1,000 horse.⁴²

On 1 August 1588, an intelligence report from Berwick again cast doubt on James's actions: '[a]lbeit the King apparently travaileth earnestly to suppress papists and papistry in his realm, yet the great papists still lie there safely and have great hope to get shortly their hearts' desire through the Spaniards'. The writer was also concerned about the intentions of Sempill, 'lurking' near Glasgow, and advised that many feared the outcomes of the leniency to Maxwell, 'the oversight given to the papists presently looking to triumph, and the discovery that many are ready to embrace the Spaniards, who, they think, are at hand'.⁴³ By 10 August, Ashby was anxious that the 'northern lords' who 'have had intelligence this long tyme with the Prince of Parma', would be aided by the passing Spanish ships and that James, 'having so many

⁴¹ Melville, *Memoirs*, 361.

⁴² *CSP Scot.*, ix, 592; BL Harleian 4647, f. 55v..

⁴³ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 588.

malcontents and papists in his realm, and the stranger now ready to countenance them, will be in great peril without relief in money from England to keep about him 1,000 horse and foot of this country'. To make sure of James, Ashby again advocated a pension and that the king be granted the English lands which had belonged to his grandmother, Lady Margaret Douglas.⁴⁴

Worries regarding the Catholics in Scotland and their influence were only increased when Colonel Sempill was captured by Carmichael following a clandestine meeting with mariners from a Spanish pinnace in Leith. Huntly, residing with his wife in Edinburgh near Holyrood, compelled Carmichael to release Sempill, but that afternoon the king returned to Edinburgh from Falkland and commanded that Sempill be taken into custody once again and placed in ward in Robert Gourlay's (an Edinburgh merchant) Edinburgh townhouse. By this point, James had committed himself to an Anglo-Protestant policy and despite his letters of protection to Sempill, the colonel's arrest was seen as consistent with that policy and would be viewed positively by the English. That evening, Huntly, having bribed the guards with four hundred crowns from the Spanish money held by Robert Bruce, facilitated Sempill's escape once again. James was annoyed with Huntly, 'yet was loath to use the nobleman with rigour, having matched him so lately with his cousin; only he discharged him to come into his presence'. On 12 August Huntly travelled to his own lands in the north.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 593.

⁴⁵ Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 386-7; Calderwood, *History*, iv, 680-81; *CSP Scot.*, ix, 594, 595, 689; *CBP*, i, 328, 329; NA SP59/26; NAS Warrender Papers, vol. B, GD1/317/3, f. 87v.; Forbes-Leith, *Narratives of Scottish Catholics*, 369-70; *CSP Spain*, iv, 405, 425. Sempill's letter of protection from James was dated 2 August 1588, 'to be unhurt unharmit unqueirellit invadit callit or persewit be any man, before quhatsumever juge ... spirituall or temporall for quhatsumever cause or occasioun', SCA CA4/1/5. Sempill sailed to the Continent soon thereafter and never returned to Scotland, *ODNB*, vol. 49, 745-6. Huntly was admitted back into James's presence at the end of the summer.

Elizabeth was not impressed when she learned of Sempill's exploits and Huntly's role in his escape. She used it as another opportunity to warn James of the dangers in entertaining Huntly. Instructions to Sir Robert Sidney intimated that the Spanish ambassador and the Papal Nuncio in France publicly "assure themselves of a great partie within that realm of Scotland, and doe not stick to name bothe the Erle Huntley and the Lord Claud Hamilton with ther followers" and that Huntly's late proceedings against Carmichael "dothe confirme the speches given out by the said bushop [Dunblane] and ambassador". Elizabeth could not but warn him of the hazards tolerating men such as Huntly implied and besought him to restrain those who "manifestly shewe them selves to seeke the overthrowe and destruction both of the relligion within his realm and of his person also, howsoever they may for the tyme abuse hym by such dissimulation as the papistes do commonly use".⁴⁶

The queen's concerns were heightened by the frequent reports of the Spanish fleet's progress and supposed attempts to land in the Moray Firth⁴⁷ and by the fact that the Scottish king was providing aid to the distressed mariners coming ashore from their wrecked ships.⁴⁸ Sidney bore a letter to James which she personally wrote on 14 August about the Spanish ships off Scotland's coasts,

I dout not the shal receave smal succor and les welcome; vnles thos lordz that, so traitors like, wold belie ther owne prince, and promise another king reliefe in your name, be suffred to live at

⁴⁶ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 605-06.

⁴⁷ *CBP*, i, 328, 329, 330-31, 332, 332-3. At one point, it was even suspected that Moray, whose father had been a Catholic, would rendezvous with Spanish troops.

⁴⁸ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 635, 640-41, 644; C. Sáenz-Cambra, 'Scotland and Philip II', 138, 140; C. Bingham, *James VI of Scotland* (London, 1979), 110. Scottish aid to the Spanish mariners was not just an example of James's Christian piety, but a strong demonstration in *realpolitick*.

libertye, to dishonor you, peril you, and aduance some other (wicke God forbid you suffer them live to do).⁴⁹

In addition to Ashby's petitions, Henry Hastings, the earl of Huntingdon also stressed the importance of James's friendship and warned of the "suspicions laytly conceyved of th'intentions of Huntley, Claud Hamylton ... and others noted to be favourytes of Spayne", fearing that "there evill dispositions shalbe found as great as the danger of there courage and powers to execute the same". He expressed the wish that "some spedy comforth" could be sent to James to encourage him to a pro-England course, later writing that "[i]t is reported there is good stoore of there gould amonge the noble men of Scotland, as with Huntley, Bothwell, and others".⁵⁰ This comfort – an indication of the level of English concern – arrived in the form of £3,000 sterling on 9 September 1588. The sum may have brought the total subsidy that James had received for the year to £5,000 sterling,⁵¹ but money was not all that the king was seeking and he was to be seriously disappointed, with repercussions which reached well into the future.

Soon after he had arrived in July, Ashby, panicked over what he perceived to be the advancing Spanish navy, had promised James more than he had been authorised to do in return for his alliance. According to Conyers Read, it was likely that Walsingham may have directed Ashby 'that if occasion seemed to

⁴⁹ J. Bruce (ed.), *Letters of Queen Elizabeth and King James VI of Scotland* (Camden Society, 1849), 53; L.S. Marcus and J. Mueller (eds.), *Elizabeth I: Autograph Compositions and Foreign Language Originals* (Chicago and London, 2003), 83; L.S. Marcus et al. (eds.), *Elizabeth I: Collected Works* (Chicago and London, 2000), 358; *CSP Scot.*, ix, 596-7.

⁵⁰ *CBP*, i, 331, 332. Huntly and Bothwell were again rumoured to have received gold from the Jesuits in early October and John Chisholm was thought to have brought 10,000 crowns to Robert Bruce in mid-December, *CSP Scot.*, ix, 622, 642, 646; Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 390.

⁵¹ This was preceded by £2,000 sterling on 8 July 1588. *CSP Scot.*, ix, 613, 620; *CBP*, i, 332, 334; J. Goodare, 'James VI's English Subsidy' in J. Goodare and M. Lynch (eds.), *Reign of James VI*, 115.

warrant it he had better not to scruple to exceed his instructions'.⁵² Ashby did just this and promised James a £5,000 sterling per annum pension, salaries for a royal guard of fifty men at arms and officers, money to pay 100 men to police the Borders and the long sought for English dukedom, with associated revenues.⁵³ Ashby began to seriously regret this by 12 August when the extent of the Spanish defeat became clear, soon followed by the admonitions of his superiors who had no intention of honouring his commitments.

This caused a serious breach of faith between James and Elizabeth, which had not been resolved by the time of the Brig o' Dee Affair in April 1589. The goodwill that the king had begun to demonstrate towards the English began to dissipate and James seemed less inclined to pursue actions which would have pleased Elizabeth. Maitland sought to warn the English government of the seriousness of its mistake, writing to Burghley on 20 September 1588 that although in the past they had striven for a "perfect amitye" between the Scottish and English crowns, progress towards this end had been "by incidentis and injurys of tyme unhappely interrupted". He described James as "zealous in religioun, a well-devoted kinsman to the Quene" and 'as anxious for the security of England as of Scotland'. The king would spare neither crown nor life 'if he is so treated "that he with honour and his subjectis with afectioun" may make common cause with your Queen'. He concluded that he was certain that Burghley would use his influence to see that James 'is treated as well as his "kyndlye dispositioun" deserves'.⁵⁴ Maitland was desperately trying to salvage the declining relations between

⁵² C. Read, *Mr Secretary Walsingham and the Policy of Queen Elizabeth*, iii (Oxford, 1925), 322-3; *Warrender Papers*, ii, note 71.

⁵³ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 589-90, 596; J. Goodare, 'James VI's English Subsidy', 114, 116; C. Bingham, *James VI of Scotland* (London, 1979), 108.

⁵⁴ *Warrender Papers*, ii, 82-3; for lack of resolution of the matter in June 1589, see 105-107.

the offended James and Elizabeth, but to little avail as neither side would compromise. By 26 November, Ashby intimated to Walsingham that Maitland, 'who hath endangered himself among the nobility and malcontents, groweth weary of the course he hath held, finding so cold correspondence from England, and his King so lightly regarded'.⁵⁵

In addition to English anxieties about Huntly and the Spanish Armada, at the end of August Sidney also reported a supposed plot by Huntly, Crawford and Colonel Stewart to kill Maitland. The plot was apparently foiled by Maitland being forewarned. As with all previous plots, the king reconciled Huntly and his Chancellor once again.⁵⁶ Reports that Huntly, Montrose, Lord Claud Hamilton, Seton and Fintry and other 'papistes and discontented persons' had attended the marriage of Sir John Seton to the daughter of John, eighth Lord Forbes only heightened apprehensions once again. Few believed that their attendance was the innocuous celebration of a friend's wedding and thought that it was predicated on yet another plot "as shall both trouble th'estate and also endanger some particular persons, chiefly the Lord Chancellour".⁵⁷ Although there was no tangible factional outcome from those attending the wedding, Huntly's faction became very active following its respite from anti-Maitland activities during the Armada crisis.

At the end of the summer of 1588, '[a]ne greyiter factioun of Enemeis rysis aganes him [Maitland]. The Erllis of Huntlie, Erroll, Crawford, Bothwell, and mony utheris' formulated 'dyuers conspyracies to sley the chanceler, and sic

⁵⁵ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 637.

⁵⁶ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 601, 603.

⁵⁷ *CBP*, i, 333; *CSP Scot.*, ix, 613, 614, 616. Forbes was not one of Huntly's dependants in the locality and the two men had been at feud (see Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 52-3, 69, 110-12); friction between the two markedly increased in the 1590s when Forbes joined Moray in his feud with Huntly.

as had assisted him to be removed'.⁵⁸ The faction was determined to remove Maitland and undermine his government and although James had resisted their previous efforts to this end, 'they hoped yet to succeed, the King's liking for the society of Huntly and Bothwell being more manifest than ever'.⁵⁹ Intelligence from Scotland in September advised that James 'is minded to run the course of England, chiefly to keep him in good liking of the world. There have been many plots to alter that course; chiefly by taking away the Chancellor, and they rest not to accomplish that wicked turn' and that '[t]hey will not rest till they have cut off the Chancellor'.⁶⁰

October 1588 was a month marked by fierce competition between Huntly and Maitland. There were reports of each seeking further leverage with the king and rumours began that the factions would try to rehabilitate Captain James Stewart, the former earl of Arran, and Patrick, master of Gray in order to shift the balance of power, but neither Maitland nor Huntly could prevail over the other with the king.⁶¹ The situation escalated in mid-October when James, leaving behind his Council, went to Stirling accompanied only by Lennox and the gentlemen of his chamber. Huntly and Lord Claud Hamilton went to the king, 'hoping to have made some changes in the court'. Hamilton was ordered home forthwith, commanded to remain true to religion as he had promised. Huntly lingered, trying again; he 'stayed a few days, but was ordered by the King to go to the North, and as he would regard his favour so to conform himself both in Religion and to the course the King designs to follow, in governing the state'.

⁵⁸ NAS Warrender Papers, vol. B, GD1/371/3, f. 26or.; Melville, *Memoirs*, 361.

⁵⁹ *RPC*, iv, note 332.

⁶⁰ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 621.

⁶¹ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 622, 623-4; BL Harleian 4683, f. 14v.. Maitland's party sought the rehabilitation of Arran and Huntly's faction sought that of the Master of Gray.

The principal Catholics and 'discontented persons' were reported to be Huntly, Montrose, Lord Claud Hamilton, James Cunningham, sixth earl of Glencairn, James, fifth Lord Ogilvy, the Master of Gray, David Graham of Fintry, Sir John and Sir Alexander Seton. Bothwell, Crawford and Alexander, sixth Lord Home were thought neither to be trusted by the Catholics nor 'beloved' of the Protestants because they were considered to be 'licentious and inconstant'.⁶²

Although James had removed Huntly, Lord Claud Hamilton and Sir John Seton from Court, the atmosphere of sustained animosity between Huntly's and Maitland's factions continued. Walsingham was informed that the 'Chancellor of Scotland rests in great danger, for they daily practise against him'.⁶³ By 6 November, Huntly was petitioning the king from the north, writing 'a letter to the King of submission, promising obedience in religion and otherwise, craving pardon, and offering submission to the church'.⁶⁴ He wrote again and on 8 November Aston reported that Huntly was 'offering himself in religion and all other things at the King's pleasure, "and that he will withowtt epocrise satesf[ye] the Kerke"'.⁶⁵ But it was insufficient to satisfy James.

Huntly had finally gone too far in his campaign against the Chancellor and his faction was suffering as a result as well: 'Sir John Seton is "clere descowrted". The papists are not so forward as they were' and by 13 November it was indicated that "no papes shall be in the Kings houes".⁶⁶

⁶² BL Harleian 4683, fos. 14v-14r.; *CSP Scot.*, ix, 623-4. Maitland's supporters included men such as the earls of Mar, Angus, Atholl, Marischal, Lords John Hamilton, Forbes, Ochiltree, the Master of Glamis, Carmichael and Bellenden.

⁶³ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 627.

⁶⁴ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 628.

⁶⁵ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 629.

⁶⁶ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 629, 634.

Although England's correspondents noted the adverse affects on Catholic members of Huntly's faction at Court, this was about domestic party politics as much as it was about religion. Despite his offers to conform to the Kirk, James only allowed Huntly's rehabilitation at the end of November when he finally 'revealed to the King the plots of taking away the Lord Chancellor so as now a full reconciliation will be presently made betwixt them'.⁶⁷ Although Huntly did conform to the Kirk as well on 30 November, which 'did not a little content the King and best affected here, for he was the head and chief pillar of the papists and malcontents here',⁶⁸ this was also about the king attempting to reassert control over Huntly's faction. James had required Huntly to accept not only just the established church, but the established government as well. Once Huntly had fully acknowledged to the king his faction's plans to remove Maitland, James once again effected a reconciliation between the two men and Huntly returned to Court.

Huntly was rewarded for his compliance at the end of November by being appointed Captain of the King's Guard, replacing the Master of Glamis. From that point onwards he was in nearly continuous residence with the king until February 1589. He employed thirty horse and thirty foot of his own choosing, which when combined with his position as Chamberlain, translated into Huntly influencing who had access to the king, as well as Court appointments and who resided at Court and in the king's chamber. His influence even extended to the stable to those men at Court who were offered sinecures there. He was in perhaps one of the most influential and powerful positions of his entire career, '[w]ith such unrivalled influence in the chamber and at court, and with his enormous regional power, which included the lieutenancy

⁶⁷ BL Harleian 4683, f. 15r.; *CSP Scot.*, ix, 638.

⁶⁸ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 640, 642, 646.

of the north, he was in a position of strength which made him second only to the king'.⁶⁹ Huntly's power, however, for the first time extended beyond his sweeping remit within the Court into government itself. Aided by Elizabeth's unwillingness to appease James and to curry favour with Maitland, Huntly was able to seize the opportunity to make inroads on the government's official pro-English policy. Combined with his regional power, his control of the Court and chamber, his attempts at wider policy influence marked this short period as the pinnacle of Huntly's power.

Although Huntly had just been reinstated following his plots against the Chancellor, he and his faction still 'dealt earnestlie with the king to remove from the court the Chancellor, Treasurer, and other officers of estat, or ellis to change them; but could not as yitt perswade him'.⁷⁰ Despite his inability to remove the Chancellor, his influence was brought to bear on his rival, affecting both Maitland's relations with England and his pro-English policy. Huntly spent December consolidating his position and restoring his faction to their positions of influence and favour within the Court, much to Maitland's detriment who felt compelled to reach an uneasy accord with Huntly. Aston found 'all m[en ex]ceedingly cold towards England, and the Chancellor among the rest'.⁷¹ Furthermore, Huntly was 'growing in great credit; the Chancellor and he are all one. The Spanish faction begins to grow in great

⁶⁹ Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 145.

⁷⁰ Calderwood, *History*, iv, 696; Moysie, *Memoirs*, 71; *CSP Scot.*, ix, 647, 653, 655; NAS Warrender Papers, vol. B, GD1/371/3, f. 15r.; BL 'A Historical Discourse on Scotland from the year 1031 to 1600' by Sir W.C., Add. MS. 35,844; Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 118.

⁷¹ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 642, 653. The Master of Glamis, who was a long-standing advocate of the English amity, was the more likely target rather than the Treasure Depute, Sir Robert Melville of Murdocairny, who actually controlled the money.

credit. Crawford is come to remain in court; Montrose is here, and so are Claud Hamilton, Sir John Seton, Colonel Stewart, with many others'.⁷²

When asked why these factions had advanced, Maitland replied that 'her majesty was the cause thereof in that no care was taken either of him or others who were most willing to run her course, so that of necessity he was forced to provide for his own surety'. Aston believed that Huntly's faction would either force the Chancellor to 'yield to their own course, or else they will cut him off after they have the King's ear, as they have almost already'.⁷³ By the end of December, Thomas Fowler wrote to Walsingham that Maitland had informed him that he had risked his life for English policy, but 'her majesty's dealing is such that he will deal no farther that way'.⁷⁴ By the end of 1588, Huntly and his faction were, following their brief exclusion in October and November, paramount in Scottish politics. A reason behind their elevation can be discerned from James's comment to Roger Aston that "the more he ded to plesse the Quene the les regard she had of him". The English informant concluded that 'I fear Huntly and his faction will draw him upon some course against his will and profit'.⁷⁵ It was a striking point being made to the English, demonstrating that if Elizabeth did not value James's friendship, then there were others who would – to her detriment.

The assassination of the duke of Guise in October 1588 brought to the fore the changing attitude prevailing in Scotland towards England. According to Thomas Fowler, Maitland informed him in January 1589 that Guise's death

⁷² *CSP Scot.*, ix, 646, 655. Sir John Forster reported from the Borders that Huntly, Crawford and Bothwell 'bear such sway at court that no justice can be gotten for them of Liddesdale' and that the 'King is now led by those who are more French than English', *CSP Scot.*, ix, 649.

⁷³ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 647.

⁷⁴ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 655.

⁷⁵ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 656.

would only cause Spain to “seeke my master and esteeme him more than before” and that Philip II’s best means to harm Elizabeth was through James, “with whose ayde he may any England more”. When Fowler pointed out that Scotland would thereby lose the goodwill of England, the Chancellor replied that such action, however, would preserve the goodwill of the Scottish subjects “for they in the south partes take lyttell care for them in the northe part” and insinuated how easy it would be for the king to put Elizabeth to great expense in Ireland.⁷⁶

The death of Guise, the leader of the French Catholic League, changed the nature of the relationship that Scotland had with Spain, now that the intermediary between the Scottish Catholic nobles and Spain was no longer extant. Scotland’s link with Spain was now absolute and direct. Furthermore, with Guise no longer part of the political equation, Spain no longer had to worry about alienating the duke or arousing his suspicions regarding its true motivations regarding Scotland or England and the English succession. Most importantly, however, from James’s perspective, one of the strongest European advocates (the other being Henry III) for the Stewart succession to the English crown was now silenced.

Perhaps Philip II would ‘esteem’ James more highly, but the Scottish king was now more reliant on the Scottish Catholic nobles – Huntly, Lord Claud Hamilton, Maxwell and their associates – to keep the Scottish claim to the forefront of European Catholic politics, with regards to both public debates regarding the English succession and any future militant ventures against Protestant England under discussion. Because the Scottish Catholics now played an even more important role in James’s European political strategy,

⁷⁶ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 665-6; Moysie, *Memoirs*, 72.

the leniency meted out to Huntly, Francis Hay, ninth earl of Erroll and Crawford preceding and following the Brig o' Dee affair in the spring of 1589 is more readily understandable. It was vital for James to ensure that his wider, long-term interests were represented.

Factional disputes still dominated the Court in February 1589 when it was reported that “[t]he factions here growe jelious on of another, and ... combine for their better strenght”, each seeking greater favour with the king. The dominant members of Huntly’s faction were said to be Crawford, Montrose, Lord Claud Hamilton, Moray and Seton; whilst Maitland’s consisted of Lord John Hamilton, the Master of Glamis, John Erskine, seventh earl of Mar and George Keith, fifth Earl Marischal. Bothwell was sought by both sides, but he was “feared of both sides, trusted by neither”. Rumours also spread that the “discontented parsons wourke secretlie what thei can both with Spayne and Parma”.⁷⁷ On 17 February these rumours were given substance when the English ambassador presented James with deciphered copies of intercepted letters from Huntly, Erroll, Crawford, Maxwell, Lord Claud Hamilton and Robert Bruce to Parma; Bothwell was also fully implicated. The letters professed regret that Spain did not use Scotland in its attack on England, but the military loss could be salvaged if Spain would consider launching a two-pronged attack on England from both Ireland and Scotland.

In a separate letter from Huntly to Parma, the earl excused himself for signing the Confession of Faith in November 1588. Under extremely heavy pressure from the king and lacking any monetary support from Spain, he had

⁷⁷ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 677, 678. It is unlikely that Moray was a member of Huntly’s faction. William Crichton, S.J. named eight different factions in his letter dated 10 January 1589, NAS Warrender Papers, vol. B, GD1/371/3, fos. 89r.-90r..

no option but to do as the king desired, '[b]ut if, on the one part, I have failed, by the apprehension of dangers that threatened my ruine, I sall, on the other part, endeavour myself to amend my fault'. He then attempted to restore his credibility through pointing out the potential of his new position in Court: the king 'hath brokin his former guardes, and caused me to establishe others about his persoun of my men, be the moyen of whom, and their captans, who are also myne, I may ever be maister of his persoun' once support from Parma arrived.⁷⁸

The letters that the English intercepted were not the first that had passed between Huntly, Bruce, Mendoza and Parma since the summer of 1588. What differed, however, from the previous letters was that the Scots had actually suggested a plan to the Spanish, rather than limiting themselves to requesting aid urgently, either military or, 'at the very least', monetary. Without Spanish aid, the Scots asserted that they simply could not maintain their position.⁷⁹ Why the content of the Scots' letters differed in January 1589 is uncertain, but it is likely that they were attempting to prove their fidelity (especially Huntly following his subscription) to the Spanish cause and thus ensure the continued flow of funds from Parma. Robert Bruce had just received from Parma, via John Chisholm, roughly 10,000 crowns which had yet to be distributed to the Scottish Catholic lords and was proving

⁷⁸ Calderwood, *History*, v, 6, 7-8, copies of the letters, 8-35; *CSP Scot.*, ix, 682-97 *passim* for copies of the letters and the English ambassador's instructions; Moysie, *Memoirs*, 72; Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 390-91; *RPC*, iv, 361, 821-2; Gordon, *History of Sutherland*, 212. For a detailed analysis of events from the discovery of the letters to troops raised at Brig o' Dee in April 1589, see R. Grant, 'The Brig o' Dee Affair, the Sixth Earl of Huntly and the Politics of the Counter-Reformation' in J. Goodare and M. Lynch (eds.), *The Reign of James VI*; Lee, *John Maitland of Thirlestane*, 181-8; C. Sáenz-Cambra, 'Scotland and Philip II', 148-53; R.G. Macpherson, 'Francis Stewart, Fifth Earl Bothwell', 168-74; M. Yellowlees, 'So strange a monster as a Jesuiste', 118-19.

⁷⁹ *CSP Spain*, iv, 351-2, 361, 361-2, 426-9, 429-30, 476-7, 478-9.

reluctant to distribute it in thirds to Huntly, Lord Claud Hamilton and Maxwell, as they wished.⁸⁰

Despite their suggestion regarding the Spaniards opening two fronts in Ireland and Scotland, the Scots knew that Philip II was simply unable to do so. The extent of the damage to the Spanish navy was now known and Parma himself had informed them that there was no possibility of troops in the near future and that the amount of money requested was simply unaffordable.⁸¹ The letters written in January 1589 and intercepted by the English were therefore more posturing by the Scottish Catholic nobles in an attempt to continue to solicit monetary aid from Spain. Huntly and his associates were so concerned about funding that one chronicler remarked that Huntly, Erroll, Bothwell, Crawford and Montrose had all 'solemnly swore by the crosse of the pistolett'.⁸²

James's reaction to the letters was decidedly mild, expressing outright disbelief at first, and Huntly responded that the letters were forgeries – unwilling to admit that James's knowledge of his negotiations with Spain had extended further than the king had realised or perhaps authorised. Some of his faction even professed that he had been set-up by Maitland or England or both, 'dewysed by enemies therby to put him in disgrace with his maister'.⁸³ The friction between Huntly and Maitland was what dominated the sequence

⁸⁰ NAS Warrender Papers, vol. B, GD1/371/3, fos. 85v.-88r.; BL Harleian 4682, fos. 85r.-88r.; Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 390. Huntly and Hamilton received no money from Bruce in January 1589, whilst Maxwell was given a small amount as consolation for being imprisoned.

⁸¹ *CSP Spain*, iv, 456.

⁸² BL 'An Oulde Stoary of the Brigg of Dee', Royal MSS 18A.xvi, f. 3v..

⁸³ NAS 'The Brig of Dee', Warrender Papers, vol. B, GD1/371/3, f. 15r; BL 'A Historical Discourse on Scotland from the year 1031 to 1600' by Sir W.C., Add. MS 35,844, f. 17; BL Cotton, Caligula, D.i.41, f. 153; Gordon, *History of Sutherland*, 212-13; Moysie, *Memoirs*, 72; *CSP Scot.*, ix, 700-01, 702, 703, 704. The English were so concerned that they hastened to send the man who intercepted the letters to Scotland to provide testimony.

of events which led to Brig o' Dee, not, as the English maintained, the fear of a Spanish landing or of the Counter-Reformation in Scotland. English paranoia spread to Scottish Protestants and it was their combined fears and objections to Huntly which have dominated the historiographical interpretation of the intercepted correspondence and the resulting sequence of events. Very little mention was made in contemporary accounts other than by the English of either religion or Spain; the emphasis was entirely upon secular, factional politics and the tension between Huntly and Maitland. The English did identify the conflict as one between Maitland's and Huntly's factions, but they framed these factions as the Protestants versus the Catholics.

All of Huntly's actions and objectives did not embody the Counter-Reformation, but they did illustrate the power of factional politics when they increasingly spiralled out of the king's control. James's mild reaction may have stemmed from the fact that he was already aware of the Scottish nobles' contacts with Spain, which to a degree he was involved with, as well as the need to protect their link with Spain as the Scottish lords now provided the only direct representation to Philip II of the Scottish crown's rights in the English succession. Finally, James was in no mind to appease Elizabeth, who wrote 'complaining of his remissness in punishing these treacheries'.⁸⁴

Huntly voluntarily warded himself in Edinburgh Castle for eight days, with free access to his wife, friends and servants. Even the king visited him daily, 'where Huntly not only kept his place in familiarity with him, but gave him an

⁸⁴ Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 394; Lee, *John Maitland of Thirlestane*, 182. This was also the first time that a link was made between the priests in Scotland and politics, but there was still a distinction between those who restricted their activities to evangelical or ministry work and those who were politically involved. No link was made, however, between these priests and the Scottish Catholic lords, *RPC*, iv, 358-9.

extraordinary shew of favour' and, on one occasion, when dining with Huntly, 'kissed him often, and protested he knew he was innocent'. On the night of his release, 7 March, Huntly slept in the king's bedchamber and resumed control of the royal guard, creating an increasingly volatile situation at Court.⁸⁵ James's personal reaction can be discerned in a lengthy letter the king wrote to Huntly in February 1589 in which he evaluated the situation within a domestic, factional context and clearly saw Huntly's correspondence with Spain as an extension of his personal rivalry with Maitland. The letter only made one direct reference to the foreign letters. Instead, the king concentrated entirely upon Huntly's past solicitations and attempts to remove Maitland from power. With regards to religion, James was personally aggrieved at Huntly's apostasy, but did not extend to it a political or Counter-Reformation context.⁸⁶

The king's lavish favour to Huntly and open demonstrations of affection to the earl made not only the English uneasy but Maitland as well, who was concerned with his own safety. To placate the Chancellor, the king established an alternate guard of 100 men under Maitland. This, however, only escalated an already volatile situation as each grew increasingly jealous of the other despite the king's attempts to reconcile them until Maitland finally vowed 'that one of them would be both discouraged and disgarded', which "putt the Kinge in a grett brangle, for he had grett love to Hontle". Huntly, however, was discharged of the royal guard and in an atmosphere of open hostility left the Court for Dunfermline.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Gordon, *History of Sutherland*, 212-13; Calderwood, *History*, v, 36; *CSP Scot.*, ix, 701, 701-02, 702, 706, 708, 709; x, 6, 7-8; Moysie, *Memoirs*, 72.

⁸⁶ G.P.V. Akrigg (ed.), *Letters of King James VI and I* (Berkeley, California, 1984), 89-91; *CSP Scot.*, ix, 699-700.

⁸⁷ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 710, 702, 703, 705, 706, 708, 709; x, 1-3, 3-4, 4-5, 7-8, 9, 13. Maitland 'regarded the exposure of the earl's treachery as a heaven-sent opportunity to ruin him' and

On 13 March 1589, the day after he left Court, Huntly invited the king to a morning of hunting followed by a banquet in Edinburgh. Whilst hunting, Huntly was informed of a plot by Maitland's faction against him planned for when he returned for the banquet. It was reported that Edinburgh was in arms and that Angus, Mar, William Douglas of Lochleven, the new earl of Morton, Marischal, the Master of Glamis, Maitland and their followers had advised the Provost of Edinburgh to be ready in arms and to slay Huntly upon his arrival in the town. James returned for the banquet, 'but his host durst not enter to entertain him'. Although there is no other evidence to verify the existence of or the extent of Maitland's supposed plot, the news caused Huntly to decide to return to Dunfermline and the next day to depart for Strathbogie, via Perth.

The king remained in close contact with Huntly, sending on his arrival in Edinburgh 'twoe of his owne servantes in all haist unto Huntley.... And every day sence, the kyng sendes to Huntleye'.⁸⁸ When travelling through Perth, Huntly was again forewarned that John Stewart, fifth earl of Atholl, Morton and the Master of Glamis 'haid conweneined forces, to intrap them within Sanct Jhonstown' and, in a counter-move, captured the Master of Glamis. In an explanatory letter to James, he clarified that he acted in order 'to discouuer the secreit of our onfreindis menis touarts us' and solicited the king 'to tak sic ane resolution as may not tend to the wrak of your nobilitie be the particular instigation of ane privat factioun'.⁸⁹

attempted to persuade James that 'he had no personal animus against Huntly, that his hostility was purely political', Lee, *John Maitland of Thirlestane*, 183-4.

⁸⁸ *CSP Scot.*, x, 1-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8; *CBP*, i, 335-6; Moysie, *Memoirs*, 73.

⁸⁹ Gordon, *History of Sutherland*, 213; BL Add. MS. 19,401, fos. 166-7; *CSP Scot.*, x, 44, 68, 93, 102; Colville, *Letters*, 90; Gray, *Letters and Papers*, 157-8, 166.

The political rivalry between Huntly and Maitland dominated the period from Huntly's release from ward until his return to the north, just as much as it coloured the preceding period and the king's reaction to the revelation of the Spanish letters. The news of armed plots against Huntly in both Edinburgh and Perth escalated the rivalry between Huntly and Maitland to the point that Huntly felt compelled to defend himself vigorously. The king could not compel Maitland and Huntly to reconcile as he had previously done and by April 1589, he had completely lost control of the situation. By the time Huntly had returned to his own lands, James was unable to stop Huntly from raising his own men-at-arms in response to the perceived threat from the Chancellor. When Huntly, Erroll and Crawford raised troops, the Catholic letters and schemes, indeed Catholicism itself, had long ceased to be over-riding issues and the Catholic party was far from homogeneous. It is important to note that the rebellion was not undertaken to promote Catholicism by Scottish Catholics nor was it instigated by Spain – indeed, they were under instructions not to act unless directed to do so by Spain. Brig o' Dee was not a manifestation of the Counter-Reformation. When Mendoza informed Philip II about Brig o' Dee in July 1589 he placed the events in a purely political context and mentioned only that Huntly's surrender would cause the dissipation of the Catholic party in Scotland.⁹⁰

On 6 April James was informed that Huntly, Crawford and Erroll were raising troops in the north and that Bothwell had declared that action would be taken against the Chancellor. The king hastily mustered an army of approximately 2,000 men and marched north, reaching Fife by 10 April. One week later, the king's army had reached Aberdeen. On the evening of 17 April it assembled on the field of Brig o' Dee, outside of Aberdeen and came face to

⁹⁰ *CSP Spain*, iv, 479, 528, 548.

face with the army of Huntly, Crawford and Erroll. James kept watch with his troops that night and on the morning of 18 April discovered that the opposing force had completely dispersed. Huntly withdrew further northwest into the Aberdeenshire countryside and on 22 April the Master of Glamis was released to bring Huntly's offer of submission to the king, who had ventured with his troops into the lands surrounding Huntly Castle but had found himself at a stalemate. Huntly surrendered himself on 26 April and by 4 May he was travelling south with James to Edinburgh. The Brig o' Dee affair had ended.

The situation was the result of a factional dispute which had quickly spiralled out of control, additionally fuelled by both religious and foreign concerns. The troops raised by Huntly and his colleagues were not in response to royal actions, but were in direct response to Maitland and his faction. Events prior to the earls taking the field certainly did not precipitate rebellion against the king. The earls were protesting against Maitland's position and his policies, couching their position heavily upon the rivalry between Huntly's and Maitland's factions. Arms were raised in response to the perceived threat from the Chancellor and, once assembled, they claimed that troops had been raised solely in order to remove Maitland from power. This was an action against the Chancellor – Bothwell even accused Maitland of treason. The rivalry between the two factions that had been building since 1587 finally came to a head when Huntly's and the king's troops assembled on the field of Brig o' Dee outside Aberdeen.⁹¹ The king raised his troops as the only means

⁹¹ For Brig o' Dee and its aftermath, see *CSP Scot.*, x, 1-142; Moysie, *Memoirs*, 73-5; Colville, *Letters*, 90-94; Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 396-8; Calderwood, *History*, v, 1-93; *HKJVI*, 224; Gray, *Letters and Papers*, 155-8, 166, 168; Gordon, *History of Sutherland*, 213; BL Royal MSS 18A.xvi, fos. 3-14v.; BL Add. MS. 35, 844; BL Add. MS. 19, 401, f. 156; BL Cotton, Caligula D.i.41, f. 153; NAS Warrender Papers, vol. B, GD1/371/3, f. 260r.; NAS Treasurer's Accounts E.21/67, fos. 138v.-139v..

to reassert control, but he himself bore partial responsibility for the dangerous levels that the situation between Huntly and Maitland had reached.

The king sent mixed signals to both factions, which added to the growing hostility and for once he could not compel the two men to reconcile, as he had done so many times in the past to avoid an escalation to open conflict. James publicly supported Maitland and dismissed Huntly from the guard and from Court on 12 March 1589, yet he continued to surround himself with Huntly's men. At the end of March, Thomas Fowler reported that there was 'not one in the chamber or of the stable, "who two sortes of people ar nerest attendinge on the Kinges person" but are Huntly's' and that '[t]hese men have the King's ear and work great effect for Huntly, and the Chancellor cannot mend it, for the King will not change his servants, he loves them so well'. Perhaps in an attempt to defuse the factional crisis, the king took men such as Seton, Livingston and James Chisholm, amongst others, to Aberdeen with him in April, but this concerned an English informant who indicated that he hoped that 'the King's company be true, for they believe that they have many friends about him'. On 23 April, Fowler intimated that numerous earls and lords favoured Huntly's faction.⁹²

When the king was informed on 6 April that the earls had mustered troops, his anger was directed primarily against Bothwell, but James's reluctance to break Huntly stemmed from more than their close relationship. If he broke Huntly, then a power vacuum in the north would be created far worse than when Mary had encountered his grandfather, the fourth earl, at Corrichie in 1562. He would also destroy the balance of power within the central

⁹² *CSP Scot.*, x, 17, 44, 46; Colville, *Letters*, 90-91.

government and the counter which Huntly provided to the nebulous Stewart faction which Bothwell was cultivating, a growing complication in Court politics which would prove problematic for Huntly in the early 1590s.

The king contributed to the rapid escalation of events through his either genuinely ambivalent or calculatedly ambiguous stance on the religious or Spanish associations of the discovered correspondence. The king may have correctly perceived events as a manifestation of factional politics, but his unwillingness to break either faction or to deal effectively with the issues raised by Huntly's Spanish letters enabled the situation to be interpreted within a purely religious framework. Once events had spiralled out of his control, the king may have tried to derive some beneficial outcome from the situation and attempt to take advantage of the propaganda value of the power struggle, playing upon the fears of both the English and the Scottish Protestants, as well as upon the rivalry between Huntly and Maitland.

James's responses may also have been fuelled by the king's continuing anger, offence and sense of betrayal at Elizabeth's refusal to keep her ambassador's promises on the eve of the Armada. Lee makes the point that in refusing to punish Huntly following the discovery of the letters, 'James was motivated by more than his affection for Huntly'. He argues that when in late March the king sent an emissary to Elizabeth requesting the fulfilment of Ashby's promises in 1588, '[t]he implication was clear: Elizabeth had to fulfil these promises before James would punish Huntly'.⁹³ To a certain extent Brig o' Dee may have reinforced both Maitland's and James's strategic importance to

⁹³ Lee, *John Maitland of Thirlestane*, 185.

Elizabeth, for in May 1589, the queen sent James a £3,000 sterling subsidy, followed by a further £3,000 sterling in September.⁹⁴

On 26 April 1589, Huntly peacefully surrendered himself to James at Strathbogie and was warded in Robert Gourlay's townhouse in Edinburgh when the king returned to the city at the beginning of May; his wife and servants were allowed full access. Crawford submitted on 10 May and Bothwell on 11 May, whilst Montrose and Erroll remained at large.⁹⁵ Huntly pleaded guilty to the charges of treason and "shewed him selfe a most semple man and tymorous"; his wife, the Master of Glamis, Lord John Hamilton and brother-in-law, Lennox, pleaded his case to the king. In return for his confession, Huntly received extremely lenient treatment. He was placed in open ward in Borthwick Castle on 6 June, whilst Crawford and Bothwell were more rigorously kept in St Andrews Castle and Tantallon Castle respectively. Their punishment was left to the king's pleasure, which was never declared.⁹⁶

James then embarked upon a progress in the north in July, presiding over justice ayres in Aberdeenshire, 'to fyne suche as had beene at the Bridge if Dee, who as yitt had not beene taikin order with'. He had raised £4,671 13s. 14d. for the justice ayre in the sheriffdom of Aberdeen. James returned to

⁹⁴ J. Goodare, 'James VI's English Subsidy', 115. This was the second highest subsidy that he received; in 1602, he was given £7,500.

⁹⁵ *CSP Scot.*, x, 69-70, 71.

⁹⁶ Huntly was permitted to ride five to six miles from the castle with his warder. Calderwood, *History*, v, 57-8; *CSP Scot.*, x, 84, 85, 90, 102; Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 397-9; *RPC*, iv, 389; R. Pitcairn (ed.), *Ancient Criminal Trials in Scotland*, vol. i – part 3, 1584-1596 (Edinburgh, 1833), 172-4; NLS 'Summons against George Gordon, earl of Huntly', Adv. MS 19.1.35, f. 3.. Montrose was denounced as a rebel in June, but was never called to account and Erroll was pardoned on 4 August 1589, *RPC*, iv, 394, 406; BL Add. MSS, 23,241, f. 27v.; *CSP Scot.*, x, 131, 132, 137.

Edinburgh in August.⁹⁷ Having made sure of the north, the king resolved the whole Brig o' Dee affair in September 1589 when, having been fined 2,000 crowns each, Huntly, Crawford and Bothwell were all released from ward and returned to their normal freedoms and status. Maxwell was freed as well. With little fanfare, the Brig o' Dee affair was officially over.⁹⁸ Even the resolution of the affair, however, reflected his remaining anger towards Elizabeth, to whom James wrote in June 1589 that he had good cause to expostulat with the Quene and thame that he hes not bene so kyndly delt withall as he houped and as his desert and behaviour did requyre, whiche breades more grief to him then it is convenient he should utter' and that 'being so lytle respected, so coldlye delt withall by the Quene of England, he is moved to show the lesse rigour toward his rebellis.⁹⁹

On 22 October 1589, the king departed for Norway for his marriage to Anna of Denmark, accompanied by Maitland, amongst others. In his absence, Lennox was appointed Governor of the realm, assisted by Bothwell in Edinburgh and Lord John Hamilton in the Borders.¹⁰⁰ Huntly 'retired agane to the north, from the contentious factions of the court to settle his privat effirs at home, and resolved to build a castell at Riffen [Ruthven] in Badzenoch, neir vnto his hunting forrests'.¹⁰¹ Huntly remained predominantly in the north, tending to the affairs of the locality, until after the king returned with his wife to Leith in May 1590. Despite the Master of Gray's attempts to draw him into litigation over Dunfermline Abbey, he was not drawn south at all.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ Calderwood, *History*, v, 59; NAS Treasurer's Accounts E.21/67, fos. 92v., 168r.; *RPC*, iv, 405-06, note 407; *CSP Scot.*, x, 115-16, 131, 132, 137; BL Add. MSS, 23,241, f. 27v..

⁹⁸ *CSP Scot.*, x, 146; *RPC*, iv, 412, note 413; Calderwood, *History*, v, 59.

⁹⁹ *Warrender Papers*, ii, 106-07.

¹⁰⁰ Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 403-04; Calderwood, *History*, v, 67-8.

¹⁰¹ Gordon, *History of Sutherland*, 214.

¹⁰² *CSP Scot.*, x, 202-03, 204; BL Egerton 2598, f. 175v..

Huntly's building plans brought him into conflict with Lachlan Mackintosh of Dunnachton and Clanchattan, 'which they thought a great prejudice to them and to their familie, iff Huntlie should have a fort there, as it wer to danton them and ther families and followers'. They hindered it as much as possible, even though they were Huntly's vassals and dependants. This clash with Mackintosh and the later friction which developed between the Gordons and the Grants 'wes the original cause of much trouble'.¹⁰³ As well as problems with Mackintosh, during Huntly's prolonged stay in the north, an old feud between the Gordons and Forbeses was also renewed and there was growing friction with the earl of Moray.¹⁰⁴ Huntly may have escaped Court politics, but he was becoming embroiled instead in the politics of the locality, which over the next few years would draw him into a prolonged bloodfeud which would seriously impact on his local lordship.

¹⁰³ Gordon, *History of Sutherland*, 214.

¹⁰⁴ *CSP Scot.*, x, 186-7, 191, 196.

Chapter Six:

THE POLITICS OF COURT AND LOCALITY AND THE BATTLE OF GLENLIVET, 1590-1595

Following the Brig o' Dee affair in 1589 and the departure of the king to Denmark, Huntly remained in the north until well after James and Anna had returned to Scotland. There were repeated warnings by the English of Catholic plots in Scotland, but there was no substance to any of the reports. Huntly had temporarily disengaged from international politics whilst exiled from the Court and his attention was increasingly focused on the politics of the locality, in particular the escalating disputes with Lachlan Mackintosh of Dunnachton, James Stewart, second earl of Moray and John Stewart, fifth earl of Atholl. These separate disputes would soon become irrevocably intertwined within the devastating feud that Huntly conducted with Moray and, after Moray's murder in February 1592, the Stewarts who took up his cause. The locality and Court figured dominantly in the politics of the 1590s as Huntly paid little attention to the international connections he had cultivated in the late 1580s.

Equal attention to the centre and the region was an important aspect of Huntly's career and enabled him to wield considerable power on a national as well as regional scale. Yet he never held an office of state and built his influence solely upon the ascendancy of the chamber, his relationship with the king and his vast regional power. Whilst he assiduously built and extended his local networks, Huntly never neglected his connections in the centre and established an impressive array of men who were loyal to him in key positions and close to the king. Huntly may have been at his most

influential at the end of 1588 through to early 1589 when he affected government foreign policy and was both Chamberlain and Captain of the Royal Guard, but his power in the early 1590s was far from negligible even though he himself held no position of authority and was periodically excluded from Court. The network of men he had established within the Court (untouched following Brig o' Dee) ensured that not only was his voice heard and his interests protected, but also that he always had a direct conduit to James. In addition to this, his wife played an important role in personally representing his interests in the centre when he himself was prevented from doing so; her long stays at Court, frequently attended by men from Huntly's local coterie,¹ often elicited protests from Huntly's antagonists.

The focus of this chapter is the development of Huntly's influence in the centre and how he wielded this power in his protracted bloodfeud with Moray and his affiliated supporters from 1590 to March 1595. An analysis of the course of the bloodfeud and the local events comprising it will not be undertaken as it has already been comprehensively evaluated by several historians.² Whilst events in the locality were undoubtedly pivotal to the escalation of the bloodfeud, Court politics was also an important component and one at which Huntly excelled. Huntly's use of the Court is the focus for discussion of the bloodfeud and the earl's response to the developing Stewart faction in Scottish politics. He aggressively used his influence at Court and favour from James to his advantage in the locality and to curtail the power of

¹ Men such as John Gordon of Pitlurg, George Gordon of Carnbarrow, William Gordon of Gight, John Gordon of Newton, Francis Cheyne, John Gordon of Buckie, Sir Walter Ogilvy of Findlater, Gordon of Knockespak, Alexander Gordon of Lesmoir and John Gordon of Cluny, described in March 1589 as a 'chief counsellor to Huntly', *CSP Scot.*, ix, 701.

² Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 144-82; Wormald, *Lords and Men*, 117-21; H. Potter, *Bloodfeud: the Stewarts and Gordons at War in the Age of Mary, Queen of Scots* (Stroud, 2002), 107-243; E.D. Ives, *The Bonny Earl of Murray: the Man, the Murder, the Ballad* (East Linton, 1997), 11-74.

his various antagonists, such as Moray, Atholl and Archibald Campbell, seventh earl of Argyll. Huntly's success in the centre directly affected his successes and failures in the region. He cultivated his influence in the centre just as he assiduously cultivated his regional network, often infringing on the lands of Moray, Argyll and Atholl

Huntly's actions and policies during the height of his feud with Moray have directly contributed to his long-standing negative reputation in historiography.³ His reputation has also been influenced by the propaganda of the Stewarts and the Kirk following Moray's death (the most outstanding example being the death portrait commissioned by the earl's mother), the publication of Protestant histories by authors such as Calderwood and Spottiswoode and the advent of the eighteenth century ballad.⁴ Huntly used the advantages provided him by the king's favour and Moray's absenteeism to pursue the protracted feud vigorously, with high human casualties and loss of livestock, crops, material goods and housing.

He possessed significant resources and, as in other political ventures, believed in its unstinting application to achieve his objectives. Huntly had a characteristically heavy-handed approach to politics: ranging, for example, from never travelling without a large armed retinue, to the point in January 1588 when he refused the king's demand to appear unattended,⁵ his use of significant numbers of his own horsemen to assist the king in enforcing the regime change in June 1583,⁶ his appearance in April 1587 in Edinburgh with

³ H. Potter, *Bloodfeud*, has attempted to redress this; see Introduction above.

⁴ See E.D. Ives, *The Bonny Earl of Murray: the Man, the Murder, the Ballad* (East Linton, 1997).

⁵ *CSP Scot.*, ix, 531-2; *CBP*, i, 308-09; *CSP Spain*, iv, 227-8.

⁶ *CSP Scot.*, vi, 559.

300 armed men,⁷ his control of the King's Guard with his own men in November 1588, with whom he informed Philip II 'I may ever be maister of his [James] person'.⁸ When combined with his undertakings during the Moray feud and the Protestant portrayal of him as a militant saboteur of the Kirk, it is not surprising that Huntly has been characterised with a thuggish reputation.

The discovery of the Spanish Blanks at the end of 1592 was another key event in the period which impacted directly upon Huntly. This episode in Scottish history has also been thoroughly analysed⁹ and discussion within this chapter is confined to how the blanks impacted on Huntly's position at Court, his relationship with the king and his political affiliations and opponents. The Spanish Blanks were politically significant in that it united the Kirk and an embryonic Stewart faction in their pursuit of Huntly. This proved to be an essential factor in James's acquiescence in mustering troops against Huntly in the autumn of 1594.

This chapter, rather than encompassing a wider discussion of the politics of the period, is tightly focused on the series of events through the 1590s which culminated in the battle of Glenlivet in October 1594 and Huntly's exile in March 1595. A consistent theme throughout the 1590s was how Huntly's regional policies and the intentional overlap of region and centre impacted on domestic politics, the shifting political factions and his relations at Court. Huntly's focus on building and extending his powerbase in the locality, which began in the late 1580s, and his encroachment on the territories of his

⁷ *CBP*, i, 255-6.

⁸ Calderwood, *History*, v, 6, 7-8.

⁹ F. Shearman, 'The Spanish Blanks', *IR*, 3 (1952); T.G. Law, 'The Spanish Blanks and Catholic Earls' in P.H. Brown (ed.), *Collected Essays and Reviews of Thomas Graves Law, LL.D.* (Edinburgh, 1904); Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 162-8.

neighbouring Stewart earls contributed greatly to the escalation of events through the early 1590s.

Huntly's dominant interest in the locality was building his powerbase and increasing the number of men who depended upon him. This was particularly important in light of the history of the sixth earl's two predecessors, whose actions had been severely detrimental to the Huntly powerbase. The rebellion and death of the fourth earl in October 1562 at Corrichie made the Gordons vulnerable to encroachments by James Stewart, first earl of Moray. The forfeited fifth earl was eventually restored and in 1566 was appointed Chancellor. He had insufficient time to repair the regional damage; he fought resolutely for the Marian cause and Gordon influence suffered further during James's minority. It was only with the rise of Esmé Stewart and the return of the sixth earl in 1581 that Gordon influence began to wax once again. Huntly faced a tremendous task not only to reconstruct, but to expand the Gordon powerbase in the north. To that end, he embarked upon a sustained period of taking bonds of manrent, taking advantage of the current vacuum of power in the north and northwest.

In March 1586 (which coincides with the beginning of Huntly's major policy initiative in Continental Catholic politics) Huntly began to contract bonds outwith his own territories, deliberately beginning to encroach on the support base of the absentee earl of Moray. Out of five bonds of manrent and one bond of maintenance and manrent contracted in 1586, all but two were contracted at Elgin (the remaining two were at Wemyss and Bog of Gight).

Significantly, Huntly even received a bond of manrent from James Dunbar of Cumnock, sheriff of Moray – with only the king excepted.¹⁰

Huntly seized the opportunities proffered by the weaknesses of his neighbouring earls – Moray through his absenteeism and the minority politics in Argyll which had started dividing the Campbell kindred in 1584 – to begin his own territorial expansion. Huntly's lieutenancy gave him the advantage of an existing influence in the regions outwith his own and he used this to expand his personal powerbase considerably outwith the northeast, within the parameters of his lieutenancy. With effective deputies such as the laird of Auchindoun, he offered active, attentive lordship and the stability that was lacking in both Moray and Argyll as an inducement for men to contract personal bonds. In Atholl, he took advantage of inherent internal disputes, dissent and friction to wean away the earl's dependents. The overall pattern of Huntly's bonds from 1586 to 1609, therefore, was one of general western and southwestern extension, impacting on Moray, Argyll and Atholl – a point of contention which would prove a factor in his later feud with Moray and the Stewarts in the early 1590s and in the battle of Glenlivet in 1594.¹¹

During the Moray feud Huntly entered into a variety of bonds within the locality, bonds of manrent and maintenance as well as bonds of friendship, in order to secure the advantage over his adversaries. It was a somewhat erratic undertaking, the contracting of bonds not necessarily correlating with key

¹⁰ For this and the other 1586 bonds, see NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/13/7/29; NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/13/8/39; NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/13/9/2; NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/13/9/3; NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/13/9/1; NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/13/7/28; W. Fraser, *Chiefs of Grant*, iii, 165; *Spalding Miscellany*, iv, , 234-5, 235-6, 236, 236-7, 238; Wormald, *Lords and Men*, 291, 291-2.

¹¹ See Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 144-7.

events during the feud nor necessarily connected with events in the locality. For example, in 1590 Huntly granted only one bond and it was at the behest of the king. James's desire for his favourite to have a title and land demonstrated the interplay between regional politics and Court politics. In return for manrent, Huntly granted Alexander Lindsay, Lord Spynie lands in the bishopric of Moray.¹² A small local concession on Huntly's part yielded great dividends not only from the king's gratitude, but also from Lindsay, an extremely influential person within the Court. In January 1591, Lyndsey was described as "the King's especial minion, and one much favoring the Erle of Huntlay".¹³ Lindsay became a staunch advocate for the earl and an important ally during the tumultuous years of feuding that lay ahead. The bond with Spynie was an example of how Huntly utilised his local resources as means to cultivate further influence at Court in order to counter the moves made by Moray to garner support in the locality and by Francis Stewart, fifth earl of Bothwell to create a Stewart faction.¹⁴

In marked contrast to the preceding year, in 1591 Huntly contracted five bonds, which corresponded to rising local demand in response to the escalating feud with Moray.¹⁵ As the Moray feud escalated and they were increasingly assaulted by Huntly without protection from Moray, two of the earl's leading supporters, John Grant of Freuchy and Lachlan Mackintosh of Dunnachton, entered into a bond of friendship with Huntly at the end of

¹² NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/13/7/34; Wormald, *Lords and Men*, 294. Patrick Murray of Gleanis witnessed the bond. Lindsay was created Lord Spynie on 4 November 1590 and the temporal lordship of Spynie was erected into a regality on 5 June 1592, NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/8/13/8.

¹³ *CSP Scot.*, x, 451.

¹⁴ Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 151-2.

¹⁵ NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/13/9/9; NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/13/9/10; Wormald, *Lords and Men*, 294-5.

October 1591.¹⁶ Their defection was followed by others, with Huntly contracting bonds of manrent specifically promising assistance to Huntly in his feud with Moray with John Sutherland of Duffus (who had entered into a bond of friendship with Moray and Atholl in 1590), Patrick Dunbar of Blair and five others at Forres.¹⁷ The most remarkable bond of manrent, however, was the one Huntly contracted at Forres with the barons of Moray in which they promised their allegiance in the 'deidlie feid' with Moray. Signed by eight men, it is indicative of the absentee Moray's inability to defend his territories or to inspire the confidence of his traditional dependants.¹⁸ In 1592, however, Huntly himself seemed to have become more preoccupied with his network outside the region and only contracted two bonds of manrent.¹⁹ At the height of the feud, in April 1593, Huntly contracted a bond of friendship to withstand the advances of the feuding Stewarts with William Douglas, tenth earl of Angus and the earl of Erroll.²⁰

Huntly's attention to the locality and the decision to extend his bonds of manrent, maintenance and friendship that he implemented in the 1580s had immediate repercussions which would also have a pronounced impact on him in the 1590s, both in the centre and in the locality. Many of the bonds of manrent which Huntly received were decidedly uncontroversial in that the men granting them were either traditional Gordon dependants or ones who were not strongly tied to any house. However, Huntly's policy of expansion

¹⁶ W. Fraser, *Chiefs of Grant*, iii, 180-81; Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 156.

¹⁷ NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/13/7/35; Wormald, *Lords and Men*, 295; *Spalding Miscellany*, ii, 246-7.

¹⁸ NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/13/7/35.

¹⁹ NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/13/7/36; NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/13/9/11; Wormald, *Lords and Men*, 295.

²⁰ NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/13/9/12. There are thirteen remaining bonds in the archive: the next bond was contracted in 1597; in 1598, again, only one bond; in 1600, five bonds; in 1603, three bonds; in 1604, two bonds; and the remaining bond was contracted in 1609.

did mean that he actively sought bonds from outwith the borders of his own earldom, such as with Archibald Campbell of Lochnell in 1587 who was dissatisfied with Ardkinglass and Cawdor assuming control of Argyll's minority administration.²¹ Argyll himself was not in a position to respond to Huntly's encroachments immediately, but his identification with the Stewart cause in the 1590s and his leadership of the royal forces at Glenlivet were partially derived from his resentment of Huntly's influence in Campbell territory.

The consolidation and expansion of power that Huntly began in the north of Scotland at the end of 1585 was unquestionably successful. So successful, however, that the earls he had encroached upon – Argyll, Moray and Atholl – would all join forces at the beginning of the next decade under the umbrella of the Moray feud, the Protestant cause and Bothwell's attempt to form a Stewart faction beginning in early 1590.²² Meanwhile, shortly after the arrival of James and Anna of Denmark in Scotland in May 1590, for which the king sent written instructions at the end of March 'that the horsemen for there ordinarie service in attending one his majestes person be provided of gilt holbardis after the fashion of suche as were taken up by the Erle of Huntlie',²³ Huntly began what was to be a long campaign to be admitted back to Court.

²¹ NAS Gordon Muniments GD44/13/9/4; *Spalding Miscellany*, iv, 238-9; Wormald, *Lords and Men*, 292. Huntly also entered into a bond of friendship (excepting the king and Argyll) with Duncan Campbell of Glenorchy in 1588, NAS Gordon Muniments GD 44/13/7/32; NAS Breadalbane Muniments GD 112/1/290; *The Black Book of Taymouth*, ed. C. Innes (Bannatyne Club, 1855), 244; Wormald, *Lords and Men*, 293. For wider discussion of the Campbells, see E.J. Cowan, 'Clanship, Kinship and the Campbell Acquisition of Islay', *SHR*, 58 (1979), 132-57.

²² *CSP Scot.*, x, 259-60, 264, 279.

²³ *CSP Scot.*, x, 261.

His return to favour was steadfastly opposed by the English ambassador, the Kirk and the Stewart faction who kept reminding James of his infractions at Brig o' Dee and his failure to satisfy the Kirk. Suspicions were high that Huntly and Erroll still intended the overthrow of Maitland and planned a Catholic plot, but the earls recognised that on the path back to favour lay reconciliation with the Chancellor but not necessarily religious conformity.²⁴ The divisions within the centre, particularly between Maitland and Thomas Lyon, master of Glamis, the lack of any dominant party or person at Court and the king's unpopular restriction of access to the king's chamber²⁵ made their job seem somewhat easier, but it would be almost a year before Huntly was received by James and returned to his previous influence.

During that period there were constant suits on his behalf. The first to present Huntly's letters before the king was a gentleman of the chamber, Alexander, master of Elphinstone at the end of May 1590 – they were rejected outright by James, tired of Huntly's fair words, but it was still predicted that 'in the end he will probably receive Huntly to favour'.²⁶ Huntly at the same time was currying favour with Alexander Lindsay, 'being in the King's chamber and in special favour with him. It is said that Lindsay shall sell his interest to Huntly' and by the end of October it was indicated that he 'has shown many good offices towards Huntly'.²⁷ Another influential person in the chamber favourable to Huntly was Ludovic Stewart, second duke of Lennox, who replaced Bothwell as First Gentleman of the Chamber in June 1590.²⁸ In June, Huntly sent his servants, Alexander Duff and John Drummond, 'to solicyte his cawses in cowrt' and 'to solicit his friends to

²⁴ *CSP Scot.*, x, 295-6, 298.

²⁵ *CSP Scot.*, x, 298-9.

²⁶ *CSP Scot.*, x, 298.

²⁷ *CSP Scot.*, x, 298, 411.

²⁸ *DNB*, vol. 53, 197.

travail with the King'; he even raised the possibility of him and his wife, Henrietta, Lennox's sister, going abroad.

By the end of June it was reported that '[s]o many of Huntly's friends have dealt with the King in his favour ... as they hope to find grace at the King's hands'. Huntly offered to reconcile with Maitland, 'seeming now willing to do all that shall be enjoined' but the Chancellor refused his overtures on the basis that Huntly had often broken his promises with him.²⁹ By mid-July 1590, it was reported that Huntly had secretly come to the Canongate with Patrick Murray of Gleanis, one of the servants in the king's chamber, waiting for an opportunity to speak with James and Maitland. He was unsuccessful, but he did manage to persuade Alexander, sixth Lord Home, who was prominent in the chamber, to support his cause.³⁰ Also favouring Huntly was Sir George Home, Master of the King's Wardrobe.

In October 1590, Huntly was still seeking to reconcile with Maitland, and was still being refused on grounds that he had not settled his offences against the state and the Kirk. It was postulated that Huntly would most likely be admitted back to Court but not to any office.³¹ By the end of the month, much to Bowes's dismay and his ardent efforts to prevent it, Huntly had 'obtained the King's leave to know the King's pleasure'.³² In a concession to Bowes at the end of November, James promised that although Huntly was to come to Kinnaird in Angus 'seeking to be admitted to his presence with such number, and to depart at suches tyme, as the King should appoint, yet he

²⁹ *CSP Scot.*, x, 325, 330-31, 332, 334-5.

³⁰ *CSP Scot.*, x, 359, 365, 371.

³¹ *CSP Scot.*, x, 401.

³² *CSP Scot.*, x, 408-09.

would restraine Huntlaie from his presence' until Elizabeth might be notified.³³

Huntly may have been disappointed regarding James, but he received unexpected overtures from Maitland who sent John Graham, third earl of Montrose to Kinnaird to effect a reconciliation between Huntly and himself, 'letting Huntlay knowe that he should not nede to seeke any othere meane for him to come to the King's presence then the helpe of the Chancelour'. Huntly was most assuredly making progress on his path back to the Court. By early December it was reported that he and Maitland had 'agreed' and the Chancellor informed Bowes that the king (once again) had commanded him to reconcile with Huntly.

Following his reconciliation with Maitland, Huntly received a remission for Brig o' Dee and 'had great court and all doune at his plesour'.³⁴ On 11 December his request to come to Court was granted regarding the escalating disputes with Moray, John Campbell of Cawdor, the Grants and Mackintosh of Dunnachton; specifically concerning Huntly's recent attempt, possessing a commission from James, to arrest John Grant, sheltered in Moray's house at Darnaway, for murder. In the process, one of Huntly's dependants (John Gordon of Cluny's brother) was fatally shot. In addition to Huntly, his wife was also making her way to Court in order to present her sister, Marie, to the queen's service and to offer her own attendance upon Anna. Bowes suspected

³³ *CSP Scot.*, x, 420. This is a markedly different response to James's June 1589 letter to Elizabeth when he informed her that after 'being so lytle respected, so coldlye delt withall by the Quene of England, he is moved to show the lesse rigour toward his rebellis', *Warrender Papers*, ii, 106-07; see Chapter Five above.

³⁴ *CSP Scot.*, x, 424, 434, 438, 439, 443; Moysie, *Memoirs*, 85.

“under the shadowe of her abode about the Quene that her husband shall gitt longer tyme to abide here and in courte”.³⁵

The incident at Darnaway was resolved by all parties having to give caution, but the countess of Huntly's presence at Court bore fruit and at her request her husband's bond was suspended for fifteen days, ample time it was feared to ply his advantage against his adversaries in the north.³⁶ This was the first, but assuredly not the last, of numerous incidents when Huntly used the Court to his advantage over Moray and his associates – it was to become a key component of his strategy in the years of feuding that lay ahead. Huntly was also able to exploit his rapprochement with Maitland and whilst Atholl, Moray and their colleagues were retained in the south but denied access to the king, the Council agreed to allow Huntly to return to the north in January 1591, as the Chancellor had ‘promysed to the said erle that advantage vpon his enemy’.

Upon his arrival, Huntly ‘tryumphed and tok sindre advantages vpon the Erle of Murreys dominions, geving the Erle of Murrey occasion to complain; bot getting na redress’, resulting in Moray allying with Bothwell, prior to Bothwell being accused of witchcraft (Huntly would later be granted a commission against Moray because of his alliance with Bothwell).³⁷ The Council also approved of Huntly's actions at Darnaway and Huntly was described as ‘countenanced by the King, comforted – as is believed – by the

³⁵ *CSP Scot.*, x, 428-9, 433-4; Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 152-4. All parties were ordered to ward, Huntly in St Andrews, Moray in Stirling and Atholl in Perth, NAS Treasurer's Accounts E.21/68, f. 71r..

³⁶ *CSP Scot.*, x, 437.

³⁷ Melville, *Memoirs*, 406-07; *CSP Scot.*, x, 450. Moray and Atholl were not permitted to return to their lands until February 1591, *CSP Scot.*, x, 460.

Chancellor and the Chamber'. He increased his retinue by fifty men, including Captain Thomas Kerr, and pursued the feud with vigour.³⁸

In April 1591, Bothwell was accused of intriguing against the king through witchcraft³⁹ and Huntly promptly took advantage of Moray's and Atholl's associations with the earl, with whom the king was furious. Huntly would benefit greatly from James's preoccupation with Bothwell over the ensuing years. Huntly returned to Court in July 1591, accompanied by his wife, for his first sustained period since returning to favour and became 'an earnest suitor to the King for the lieutenancy in the north; it is flatly denied by the King, but he trusts by the help of his friends in court to obtain his desire'.⁴⁰ Partly as a result of Moray's and Atholl's aid to Bothwell, Huntly did not have long to wait and was appointed Lieutenant of the North in August.⁴¹

It was also noted that 'Huntly is become a very great courtier, and has made such liberal offers to serve the King and "kepe his quarterage against the King's rebelles" that the King much cherishes him for the same' and that he

³⁸ *CSP Scot.*, x, 469, 497; *CBP*, i, 376; Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 154-6. Kerr was an important man in Huntly's coterie. The first reference to Kerr's service with Huntly was in 1571 when he was serving Adam Gordon of Auchindoun as a captain during the Gordon-Forbes feud. In February 1583 he was described as one of Huntly's household servants and in 1584 attended parliament as a commissioner for Aberdeen. In October 1585, Kerr was acting as Huntly's lieutenant-depute and holding court in Inverness. His importance in Huntly's service rose and by May 1587 Huntly was employing him in national politics. In September 1587, Kerr was described as having "the chefe rule and credit about the Erle Huntlie" and that he was "in good favour with the Kinge him selfe". It was Kerr who warned Huntly on 1 March 1589 whilst he was hunting with James of the plan to attack him upon his return to Edinburgh and of the Master of Glamis's plans to attack him in Perth on 22 May 1589. Kerr took the field in 1594 against Argyll and was declared a traitor. See *ODNB*, vol. 31, 424-5; *CBP*, i, 270.

³⁹ Calderwood, *History*, v, 127-8; E.J. Cowan, 'The Darker Version of the Scottish Renaissance: the Devil and Francis Stewart' in I.B. Cowan and D. Shaw (eds.), *The Renaissance and Reformation in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1983).

⁴⁰ *CSP Scot.*, x, 547.

⁴¹ *CSP Scot.*, x, 557-8, 572, 573. In November 1591, Sir Patrick Gordon of Auchindoun, Huntly's uncle and former tutor, was described as the Lieutenant Depute, Moray District Archives, Elgin Account Books, ZBEL C60/1 (unnumbered folios).

was someone 'whose profit the King will not hinder'.⁴² By September, Bowes reported that James was 'accompanied by no nobleman except Huntly' and by mid-December Huntly was named as one of four men who guided the king.⁴³ The countess of Huntly's presence at Court raised concerns in November 1591, for 'fear to find no good fruit in religion coming by her company to the Queen'.⁴⁴ The couple were still at Court in December when Bothwell attempted to raid Holyrood. Lennox and Huntly were given a commission to pursue Bothwell, who was harboured by Moray at his mother's house in Donibristle. Included in this commission was the pursuit of Moray as Bothwell's supporter.⁴⁵

Huntly spent the month of January in pursuit of Bothwell and his adherents. In February he turned his attention to Moray, who was at Donibristle at Andrew Stewart, second lord Ochiltree's behest supposedly in order to reach an agreement with Huntly regarding their feud.⁴⁶ With forty men, on 7 February 1592 Huntly besieged the house and demanded that Moray render himself. He refused and the house was surrounded by fires in order to compel the men within to come out. When Moray escaped, he was killed by a number of Huntly's men, with Huntly himself purportedly being forced to strike Moray in order to share complicity for his death. Huntly later claimed that he was acting under the king's commission.⁴⁷ The response was

⁴² *CSP Scot.*, x, 552, 557, 565.

⁴³ *CSP Scot.*, x, 569, *CBP*, i, 390. The other three men were Maitland, Alexander Lindsay and Sir James Sandiland.

⁴⁴ *CSP Scot.*, x, 591. At the end of November, she agreed to be instructed by the ministers Peter Young and David Lindsay, 594. There is no evidence that she ever conformed.

⁴⁵ *CSP Scot.*, x, 593, 632; Gordon, *History of Sutherland*, 205, 216; Moysie, *Memoirs*, 88; Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 419; Melville, *Memoirs*, 407.

⁴⁶ Ochiltree, as a kinsman to Moray, was asked to deliver a letter to Moray regarding negotiations for a peaceful settlement of the feud, Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 156; H. Potter, *Bloodfeud*, 171-2.

⁴⁷ Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 419-20; Gordon, *History of Sutherland*, 216-17; Calderwood, *History*, v, 144-6; *CSP Scot.*, x, 633-6, 637-8; *HKJVI*, 247-8; Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 156-60; H. Potter, *Bloodfeud*, 171-180.

generally one of palpable anger, especially from the Stewarts and the Kirk, but the 'crown's reaction to the murder was one of official outrage and actual indifference'.⁴⁸

The decision to pursue Huntly was postponed twice, the first time so that James could pursue Bothwell and the second because Huntly offered to undergo trial.⁴⁹ This did little to satisfy those who sought revenge for Moray's murder and '[a] coalition of interests was thus forming for which Moray provided a symbol of unity, and whose diverse aims included vengeance on Huntly, a Protestant crusade, and the restoration of Bothwell, all of which were in opposition to the king's own wishes'.⁵⁰ James himself wrote to Huntly, whose favour was still intact,

[s]ince your passing heerfra, I have beene in suche danger and perrell of my life, as since I was borne, I was never in the like, partlie by the grudging and tumults of the people, and partlie by the exclamatioun of the ministrie, whereby I was moved to dissemble. Alwise I remaine constant. When yee come heere, come not by the ferreis; and if ye doe accompanie yourself, as yee respect your owne preservatioun. Yee sall write to the principall minsters that are heere, for thereby their anger will be greatlie pacified.⁵¹

Although Huntly made no attempt to appease the Kirk, he did enter into ward in Blackness Castle, where he was assured that 'he sould incurre no danger'. To be sure, Huntly brought sufficient of his own men with him in March 1592 that 'he and his servants kepted the castell in effect' and 'Huntly has so many of his servants in Blackness that he is thought to be master there at his will, and that he rather takes his pastimes than endures any imprisonment'.⁵² He

⁴⁸ Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 157.

⁴⁹ *CSP Scot.*, x, 636, 648-9.

⁵⁰ Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 158.

⁵¹ Calderwood, *History*, v, 146-7.

⁵² Calderwood, *History*, v, 148-9; *CSP Scot.*, x, 654, 656, 658; *CBP*, i, 391; NAS Treasurer's Accounts E.21/68, f. 119v..

stayed at Blackness for little more than a week. The result of these actions or lack thereof was the rejuvenation of the Stewart faction, who in April 1592 found ‘the credit and means of Huntly’s friends in the King’s chamber to be so great and prevailing that they begin to despair of getting redress’.⁵³ Atholl even refused to attend James in Perth in mid-April, “fering his enemyes in Courtt, chefly the enemyes who are al for Honttle” and the king was said to ‘prefer the safety of Huntly before the requests of the Stewarts seeking justice for Murray’s slaughter’.⁵⁴

In the summer of 1592, Huntly was so focused on the efforts of his men at Court on his behalf that he began to neglect his regional network. He concentrated on pursuing his advantage at Court and exchanged daily letters with the king.⁵⁵ At the end of June, aware of the calls for reform of the chamber aroused by his dominance, Huntly even offered to go abroad in order to deflect some of the pressure from his Court network. He even went so far as to draw up a memorandum for Patrick Murray to present on his behalf, which included confirmation that his son would receive his lands and letters of credit for travelling to Denmark and Germany. His petition was granted by James, which angered the Stewarts even further as they believed that voluntary exile was an inappropriate form of punishment for the severity of the crime.⁵⁶ The Stewarts, however, were not the only men who were unhappy with Huntly’s proposals. Huntly had made a remarkably serious mistake in his considering to not only sacrifice his most loyal servitors, men such as Cluny, Auchindoun and Buckie, but to seemingly abandon the interest of his friends, kindred and dependants, by proposing to go abroad.

⁵³ *CSP Scot.*, x, 663.

⁵⁴ *CSP Scot.*, x, 668, 670.

⁵⁵ *CSP Scot.*, x, 701.

⁵⁶ *CSP Scot.*, x, 705, 740-41, 742-3, 748, 752, 760.

In July 1592, it was reported that Cluny, William Gordon, laird of Gight, John Stewart, sixth Lord Innermeath and others armed themselves and sought out Huntly

and showed themselves much grieved that he suffered all of them to be out to the horn for the slaughter of Murray, done for him, and he continued still in the King's grace. It was answered that whilst he was not at horn he was able to do for them and hitherto they possessed without loss all their goods and gear, but yet they desired to be either released from the horn by his means or else they would leave him and seek their own remedy.⁵⁷

The fact that Huntly, as Sheriff of Aberdeen, did not enforce these hornings was insufficient and these men even went so far as to declare that they would 'choose the Laird of Auchenden for their chief if Huntly will not both enter into the band and also give assurance that shall "partye" them in all their causes'.⁵⁸ Auchindoun had been acting as Huntly's deputy in the locality since his minority. Cluny, Gight and Innermeath were making it clear to Huntly that Auchindoun perhaps understood the responsibilities of local lordship better than Huntly, whose loyalties seemed divided.

In alienating the men key to the successful implementation of his regional policies, Huntly had broken one of the cardinal rules of good lordship. Following the slaughter of Moray, Huntly's ability to balance his commitments in the centre with those in the locality drastically declined. What once had been a successful policy deteriorated to the point where Huntly was unable to juggle the demands of either. His tentative proposal to go abroad brought the two sets of Huntly's supporters into direct conflict: to

⁵⁷ *CSP Scot.*, x, 719-20.

⁵⁸ *CSP Scot.*, x, 729-30.

those in the locality the proposal was a betrayal of Huntly's bond to maintain and to protect them; while those in Court saw Huntly's presence as prejudicial to not only the bloodfeud, but, amidst cries for their removal, to themselves as well.

Huntly was in a difficult position, seeking to find the means to protect himself from possible prosecution and to keep his two networks intact. In short, unable to appease either side, Huntly attempted to wait the storm out, unwilling to leave the Court until he was certain that his men in the chamber were not going to be removed. Once sure that his position in Court was secure, Huntly returned to the locality to placate the men whose patience and loyalty he had sorely tested. It was during this period of lengthy feud, particularly 1592 to 1593, that Huntly's lordship was not only severely bruised, but virtually fell apart in the face of his inability to manage the demands of these two very different spheres of influence.

By August, the rift between Huntly and his men in the locality had mended sufficiently so that not only was Huntly able to launch a new attack on the Grants and Mackintoshes in the locality,⁵⁹ but by the end of September men of his inner coterie were once again attending the countess at Court.⁶⁰ The feud in the north was pursued so vigorously and viciously by Huntly, Atholl and now Argyll that James could no longer ignore the situation. In November 1592 he granted Atholl a commission to implement justice in Moray's lands, but Huntly was so angered by what he considered an encroachment upon his rights that he made it impossible for him to implement his commission.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 161. He started what Brown describes as a 'regional civil war'.

⁶⁰ *CSP Scot.*, x, 782. Henrietta had gone to Court in early August in order to attend the marriage of her sister, Marie, to John Erskine, seventh earl of Mar, 752, 765, 780.

⁶¹ *CSP Scot.*, x, 801-02.

The king then appointed the inexperienced, Catholic Angus as Lieutenant of the North on 9 November – the Gordons were excepted from his jurisdiction, however.⁶² Angus was instructed to mediate between the feuding earls. Huntly responded to his overtures and agreed to ward in Aberdeen at the end of November – perhaps confirming the fears that Angus was favourable to his co-religionist. At the same time, Angus received instructions from James that he was to deputise Huntly in order to better restore order to the north. Surprisingly, Atholl agreed to ward in Perth and, with assurances signed by Huntly, Atholl and Mackintosh, an uneasy truce descended upon the war torn north at the end of 1592.⁶³

Attention was temporarily diverted from the feud in the north when on 27 December 1592 Mr George Kerr was arrested on the isle of Cumbrae by Mr Andrew Knox, minister of Paisley and later bishop of the Isles, as he was waiting to take ship to Spain. Kerr was sent under heavy guard to Edinburgh Castle. Upon examining the letters in his packets, the Privy Council discovered eight blank sheets subscribed individually as well as severally by the earls of Huntly, Erroll and Angus and Sir Patrick Gordon of Auchindoun; eight of the earls' seals were also included. In addition to these blanks, there were also a number of relatively innocuous letters from known Jesuits and Catholics in Scotland directed to others of the same ilk on the Continent and to officers in the Spanish government. James, who was staying with Mar, was immediately informed and solicited to return to Edinburgh by the Council, who urged the king to take up arms against the three earls. The day before James arrived in Edinburgh, the unsuspecting Angus, returning from his

⁶² *RPC*, v, 19-20; W. Fraser, *The Chiefs of Grant*, i, 171; W. Fraser, *The Douglas Book: Memoirs of the House of Douglas and Angus*, iii (Edinburgh, 1885), 301-04, 304-06; *CSP Scot.*, x, 811-12; Calderwood, *History*, v, 186.

⁶³ *CSP Scot.*, x, 820; W. Fraser, *The Douglas Book*, iii, 309-10, 310-11; iv, 37.

commission in the north, was apprehended and warded in Edinburgh Castle – despite his protests of innocence.⁶⁴

Despite cries of a Spanish plot and disastrous predictions by the Kirk, there was very little of substance with which to convict either the bearer of the letters and blanks or the earls themselves. There simply was no evidence of a Spanish conspiracy. Francis Shearman has argued compellingly that the blanks themselves were designated for Kerr's own use once he arrived on the Continent, to be completed as letters of credit whilst travelling – a practice which was common in Europe, but unusual in the British Isles.⁶⁵ Whether there was evidence that the blanks were intended for subversive political use in Scotland or not, was of no substance to Huntly's, Erroll's and Angus's accusers for they merely used the letters from January 1589 instead for proof of the earls' nefarious intentions.

According to Protestant accounts, both Scottish and English, there appears to be a period of sustained crisis from the discovery of the Spanish Blanks at the end of December 1592 until the battle of Glenlivet in October 1594. Considering that in the early modern mind Spain was indeed synonymous with the Counter-Reformation, if a Spanish invasion of Scotland, followed by England was a viable, if not immediate threat – as perceived by the Kirk and the English ambassador – why did the Scottish government not adopt a more forceful policy against men prepared to facilitate not only a political innovation, but a religious one as well? Perhaps the answer lies less in the inability of the government to effectively achieve a forceful resolution of the

⁶⁴ *CSP Scot.*, x, 828-9, 829-30, 831-3; xi, 3-15; Calderwood, *History*, v, 192-213; Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 425-6; Gordon, *History of Sutherland*, 218-20; *RPC*, v, 33-6; Moysie, *Memoirs*, 101. See F. Shearman, 'The Spanish Blanks'; T.G. Law, 'The Spanish Blanks and Catholic Earls'; Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 162-8.

⁶⁵ F. Shearman, 'The Spanish Blanks'.

perceived threat involving one of the strongest magnates of the realm, i.e. the earl of Huntly, but more in the fact that the evidence to substantiate this Protestant theory simply was not there.

Neither the blanks subscribed by the earls nor the letters written by various Catholics and Jesuits contained incriminating evidence of a planned invasion. The evidence itself, therefore, was exceedingly slight and contained nothing of a political nature. The confessions of George Kerr and David Graham of Fintry (obtained under torture) which indicated that the Spanish Blanks were to be used to satisfy Philip II's stipulation that before he undertook an invasion he must be provided with proof that it would be supported by prominent Catholics, was again insufficient – Fintry's execution on 16 February 1593 also precluded this testimony from being used in the earls' trial, as did Kerr's later recantation.⁶⁶

The Act of Abolition granted to the earls in November 1593, therefore, was not symbolic of a weak government making empty gestures, but was an act of appeasement to those clamouring for action from a government simply unable to bring the earls to trial, primarily because of the lack of evidence. It is also evidence of the lack of power and influence of those opposing Huntly as they simply were unable to compel the government to action against the earl. Instead, they had to accept the crown's rationale of lack of evidence for its inaction against Huntly.

What was incriminating, however, was a memorial found on Kerr which had been drawn up in the summer of 1592 by James: it carefully weighed in his

⁶⁶ Sir J. Balfour of Denmilne, *Historical Works*, i (Edinburgh, 1824), 393; *HKJVI*, 267-8; Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 426; *CSP Scot.*, xi, 38-40; Calderwood, *History*, v, 223-4.

own interests the balance between the benefits and disadvantages of a Spanish invasion of England. According to its endorsement, it was withdrawn when Kerr was arrested ‘for the safety of his Majesty’s honour’.⁶⁷ Although the memorial does not mention support for the Catholic cause, it ‘goes far to justify the statements of Fintry and Kerr, and give ground to the suspicions of the clergy and people, that the conspirators “doubted not the King’s consent to their enterprise,” or “perceived him inclined that way, whereupon they have presumed”’.⁶⁸ It was not the first, nor would it be the last time that the king had used loyal men such as Huntly to pursue a covert political course which was in direct opposition to his public commitment to the English amity.

On the part of the Protestant king, and perhaps on the part of Huntly, Erroll and Angus, dealings with the physically ailing Philip II were a means by which James was keeping his political options open, while the earls were ensuring that their political usefulness in Scotland and the monetary aid from Spain were maintained, thus protecting their relative freedom of conscience. This, of course, does not mean that Huntly, Erroll or Angus did not have any ulterior motives themselves for in this period the Catholics focused more on receiving a measure of religious toleration than political motivations. It is important to note, however, that Spain had certainly not encouraged any moves on their behalf by Scottish Catholics and there is no evidence of further contact between the Catholic nobles and Spain until 1594. Nor is there any evidence of independent activity by the Scottish Catholics to affect a religious revolution.

⁶⁷ HMC, *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Most Honourable the Marquis of Salisbury*, iv (London, 1883-1923), 214; Calderwood, *History*, v, 251; T.G. Law, ‘The Spanish Blanks and Catholic Earls’, 267-72.

⁶⁸ T.G. Law, ‘The Spanish Blanks and Catholic Earls’, 271-2.

If the events of 1593 are seen against this domestic background of fear, faction and intense rivalry, in court and out of it, we come much closer to seeing the business of the Blanks for what it really was - a move, one of many, made not by Catholics, but by their opponents, in the struggle for control of Scotland.⁶⁹

If, therefore, there is no evidence for the Spanish Blanks being part of a Counter-Reformation plot, a point underscored by the possible implication of the king, then why has the affair been given an overwhelmingly religious gloss? One cannot presuppose Counter-Reformation involvement by merely setting up a Catholic versus Protestant scenario whereby the 'Catholic earls' were once more plotting for the overthrow of both state and religion – yet this is precisely what the Protestants did. If it was contemporaneously recognised that there was insufficient evidence to convict Huntly, Angus and Erroll – as James was advised by his advocate, David MacGill – then why was it still perceived as a wholly Catholic enterprise, culminating in the battle of Glenlivet in 1594?

This can be partially answered by examining the Protestant mind of the period, as exemplified by a tract published soon after the Spanish Blanks were discovered. Entitled, *A Discoverie of the Unnatural and Traiterous Conspiracie of the Scotisch Papists against God, His Kirk, etc.*, the tract was printed under royal authority by the king's printer, Robert Waldegrave; it was immediately reprinted in London. The tract printed in full only four out of the seventeen letters found on Kerr; the remainder was devoted to the letters found in *January 1589*, ending with the missive from Robert Bruce to the duke of Parma.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ F. Shearman, 'The Spanish Blanks', 85.

⁷⁰ *Criminal Trials in Scotland*, i, Part 2, 317-35; for the letters of January 1589, see Calderwood, *History*, v, 6, 7-8, 8-35; Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 390-91; *RPC*, iv, 361, 821-2; *CSP Scot.*, ix, 682-97, *passim*; xi, 53-7; Row, *History*, 145-8; see Chapter Five above.

The Protestants, therefore, made an explicit link between the correspondence of 1589 and the blanks of 1592, 'the letters of 1589 give the presumptive evidence, the colour and force, which are rather wanting in the letters and blanks of the later conspiracy'.⁷¹ To the politically aware Protestants, therefore, any correspondence with Spain was detrimental to both the ecclesiastical and secular state: if there was insufficient evidence in 1592, then that from 1589 was equally valid in demonstrating the malicious intent of the Catholics. It was this blurring of distinctions between the two incidents which provided fuel for those whose anxieties concerning a seeming increase in Jesuit activity since 1591 were mounting. Yet, even the more explicit correspondence in 1589 had failed to escalate to the proportions of that following the Spanish Blanks.

The reasons for the latter escalation were twofold: firstly, the pervasive paranoia of a Kirk acutely aware of its inability to reach the unconverted masses, especially in the northern hinterland, and therefore haunted by the threat of the re-Catholicisation of Scotland posed by illicit communication with Spain; and, secondly, the embroilment of the affair with the bloodfeud between Huntly and those seeking justice for the murder of Moray in 1592. The king's unwillingness to impose justice on Huntly, despite the blatant case of hamesucken,⁷² led the earl's frustrated antagonists to make common cause with those who persistently placed the Spanish Blanks within a Counter-Reformation context. This was facilitated by the fact that the chief advocates on the late Moray's behalf, Atholl and Argyll, were both Protestants and were willing to make common cause with the Kirk, which was seeking punishment of Huntly for his part in the Spanish Blanks.

⁷¹ T.G. Law, 'The Spanish Blanks and Catholic Earls', 257.

⁷² The crime of committing an assault on a person in his or her home.

Huntly's antagonists therefore became united in their pursuit of the earl and it was their combined political agitation which ultimately compelled the king to take military action against Huntly in 1594. The resulting battle of Glenlivet, therefore, was engendered not by the militant Counter-Reformation activities of Huntly, Erroll and Angus, but by the projections of a beleaguered Kirk and lengthy bloodfeud. A third point, however, explains why the king's army finally marched twenty-two months after the blanks were discovered: the Protestants and the advocates of the late Moray took advantage of James's fixation on bringing the fugitive Bothwell to justice. In return for wider cooperation in apprehending Bothwell, James agreed to muster his forces against Huntly, Erroll and Angus.

Before the king reluctantly agreed to muster his forces in October 1594, however, very little was done to prosecute or punish the earls for the Spanish Blanks. The duke of Lennox, still a young man, was appointed in early 1593 as the commissioner to examine Huntly's 'treasons', yet his age and the fact that he was so 'nearly allied to Huntly' made the king's commitment to discovering the truth appear rather questionable, as did the king's reception of the laird of Pitlurg who made representations on Huntly's behalf. Huntly denied signing the blanks and, with Erroll, refused to enter into ward.⁷³ On 6 February 1593, Huntly, Erroll, Angus and Auchindoun were denounced rebels and the king made preparations for a northern progress in mid-February.⁷⁴ In the interim, Angus escaped from Edinburgh Castle 'by the connivance of the keepers' and journeyed north.⁷⁵

⁷³ *CSP Scot.*, xi, 28, 29-30, 35.

⁷⁴ Calderwood, *History*, v, 240; *CSP Scot.*, xi, 48-9.

⁷⁵ Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 429.

On 18 February, James began his ride to the north. Once in Aberdeen, he received the countesses of Huntly and Erroll and ‘grantit the mentenance and keaping of their speciall and princepall howsis and rents, without any compt or rakning of the rents thareof to be maid to his Majestie or to his treasurer for the transgressions of thair husbands’.⁷⁶ Besides posturing, James’s progress achieved little other than the taking of cautions from some minor dependants of Huntly and Erroll, who had themselves withdrawn to Caithness. He had returned to Edinburgh by 13 March while ‘little or nothing was done’ and ‘the Earls yet lurk and are neither driven away nor can be taken’.⁷⁷

Elizabeth was concerned by the lack of decisive outcome from James’s northern progress and by, once again, his leniency with the Catholic earls. She despatched Thomas, Lord Burgh to make her views known to the king. James’s response in March 1593 to her apprehensions regarding Huntly and Erroll was typical, requesting that Elizabeth ‘consider if she have not as great need to help stay the Spaniard from putting his foot in this country as either in France or in any part of the Low Countries’. He solicited funds to pay for soldiers to augment his personal guard, ‘having so many great men now to be our rebels’, to pay for soldiers in the rebels’ own lands to prevent any risings, and to employ men ‘in hunting out conspirators’. These soldiers would also be used ‘to resist, as far as in them lay, to the landing of any foreign forces in case they came’. He was once again highlighting the potential security concerns posed by the Scottish Catholic earls and their Spanish connections, especially if Elizabeth did not provide James with tangible support.

⁷⁶ *HKJVI*, 261; Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 429; Calderwood, v, *History*, 238.

⁷⁷ Calderwood, v, *History*, 238; *CSP Scot.*, xi, 60, 68, 71.

For the first time, however, James made the implied threat implicitly clear when discussing the queen's responses to Bothwell. He requested Elizabeth to punish those who received Bothwell and for her to deliver the earl to James. If Bothwell were to 'be received or comforted hereafter in any part of her country, I can no longer keep amity with her, but, by the contrary, will be enforced to join in friendship with her greatest enemies for my own safety'.⁷⁸ Hitherto, Elizabeth had been made well aware by her own advisors, informants, Maitland and James himself (as well as by his actions and lack thereof) of the Scottish Catholic threat, its implications for English security and the king's continued allegiance to the Anglo-Scottish alliance.⁷⁹ Although more than likely a bluff, it is remarkable that James now clearly articulated this threat so clearly. It would not be Huntly who would compel him to switch allegiance to Spain, but Elizabeth herself. This was beyond policy, funds or recognition in the English succession; Bothwell had become personal for James.

By the poorly attended Convention of Estates in May 1593, the king's perspective on the state of Scottish politics and his feelings towards Huntly were made adamantly clear. When a comparison 'in wickedness' was made between Bothwell and Huntly, 'the king sought a whinger to throw' at the man who had made the suggestion.⁸⁰ James's sentiments were also reflected in the Court and men closest to the king, such as Lord Home and Sir George Home and the fact that 'almost the whole court are professors of papistrie'.

⁷⁸ G.P.V. Akrigg (ed.), *Letters of King James VI and I* (Berkeley, 1984), 120-21.

⁷⁹ See, for example, *CSP For., Eliz.*, July 1583 – July 1584, 113, 475; *CSP Scot.*, vi, 545, 547; vii, 1, 225-6, 231; ix; 637, 646, 655, 647, 656, 665-6; *Hamilton Papers*, ii, 702; Calderwood, *History*, iii, 735-8; Row, *History*, 103-05; Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 304; *Warrender Papers*, ii, 82-3, 106-07; Moysie, *Memoirs*, 72.

⁸⁰ Calderwood, *History*, v, 249. A whinger was a short stabbing sword which normally hung from the belt. Following his failed raid on Falkland Palace in June 1592, Bothwell had received refuge in England, much to the king's fury.

Further, Captain Thomas Kerr, 'Huntly's chief servant, continues here and has good countenance in Court'.⁸¹ James made his political course clear to the Convention, however, when he declared that 'without provision of some order for his [Bothwell's] apprehension and surety for the execution thereof, he would not proceed in any cause against the Papists, rebels or matters of estate'.⁸² It was also reported that Angus, Erroll and Huntly 'seek by their friends in Court and otherwise to assure the King' that they would not be like Bothwell and attempt an enterprise against either the king or the estate and still stood on their innocence. It was thought that 'they are not without hope to find favour'.⁸³

The arrival of the countess of Huntly in Court towards the end of May exacerbated worries that Huntly would escape any punishment for the blanks and ultimately return to favour. Bowes and the Kirk were persistent in their petition 'for the removing of the Countess of Huntly, now come to the Court with greater train and busier heads than are fit to be continued here, and to do offices (as it is suspected) full of danger'. The campaign on behalf of Huntly even extended to Captain Kerr soliciting the deacons of the crafts in Edinburgh on the earl's behalf. Pitlurg even made overtures to Bowes.⁸⁴ 'With no little difficulty', Bowes prevailed and Henrietta finally removed from Court to Leith in the second week of June, but the queen, Mar and numerous courtiers promptly visited her before she continued her journey north. According to Bowes, the king himself 'marvelled to find me so earnest for the removing' of the countess, whose 'abode at Court' had been facilitated by Lennox, Mar and the queen. But, 'the favour of the King of Scots towards

⁸¹ *CBP*, i, 457, 460; *CSP Scot.*, xi, 86.

⁸² *CSP Scot.*, xi, 89.

⁸³ *CSP Scot.*, xi, 89.

⁸⁴ *CSP Scot.*, xi, 91; Calderwood, *History*, v, 250.

Huntly is not quenched, and the same is greatly nourished by the Duke, Mar, Spynie and others'.⁸⁵

The countess's sojourn at Court was successful, for towards the end of June Bowes intimated that 'the rebellious lords enjoy such favour amongst the courtiers and possess such friendship in the nobility that it shall be hard to banish them from this realm'.⁸⁶ The Parliament that met from 16 to 21 July 1593 was certainly favourable to Huntly, Angus and Erroll. Although Bothwell was forfeited, it was argued by the King's Advocate, David MacGill, 'that the summons and libel against the earls [was] not by law sufficiently proved' and they therefore could not be forfeited. No action was taken against the earls and '[i]t is thought that the King's affection to Huntly is not yet abated' since he was still receiving letters from him.⁸⁷

By September, it was postulated that Huntly "is thought will not only get court againe, but also be greater then ever he was, and be made lieutenant generall in the northe" and that 'the King is altogether "addict and enclyned" to Huntly and his faction'. It was also rumoured that Huntly had met secretly with James at Falkland, whilst hidden in the Wardrobe by Home.⁸⁸ The countess of Huntly, however, was publicly received at Court and entertained 'with great favour. She is lodged in the Court, and there are sundry opinions of the cause of her coming, for albeit the Queen wrote for her, yet it is said that she did so to please the King'.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ *CSP Scot.*, xi, 96-7, 99.

⁸⁶ *CSP Scot.*, xi, 101.

⁸⁷ *CSP Scot.*, xi, 121, 127, 704; Calderwood, *History*, v, 254-5; Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 437-8; *CBP*, i, 475.

⁸⁸ *CBP*, i, 498; *CSP Scot.*, xi, 176, 180, 183, 185.

⁸⁹ *CSP Scot.*, xi, 181. The countess returned to Court in October.

The Kirk, however, was distinctly not pleased. At the end of September 1593 the Synod of Fife excommunicated Huntly, Angus, Erroll, Home, Auchindoun and Sir James Chisholm (also implicated in the blanks). Angered at the government's inaction and the distinct lack of repercussions for Huntly, the Kirk took action instead and declared it 'a speciall meane of preventing extreme danger threatened both to kirk and commoun weale, and bringing forfaultrie and exile upon the enemye'.⁹⁰ The king was 'highlie offended with the excommunicatioun of the lords' and told Lord John Hamilton that there was 'no man in whom I may trust more than Huntlie'.⁹¹

The earls' response was an uncharacteristic solicitation to Elizabeth requesting her intercessions with the Kirk so that it would refrain from troubling the quiet state of the two kingdoms

by compelling men to swear all the particular heads of their religion before we be persuaded thereto. We crave no liberty in public use of any other religion than is professed in this realm, but only that no compulsion be used to men's conscience, and that by her Majesty's assistance a public law be made of this for our greater surety. If any man by his traffick trouble the present estate of both realms, let him be punished. The taking away of the cause that may move men to seek remedies, which compel them to be "mensworne" or be exiled and lose their livings, shall make them content, being free in conscience, to live quietly in their native country.⁹²

The letter was misguided if the earls believed that Elizabeth would provide a sympathetic audience. It did little to placate the beliefs that their actions were motivated by the overthrow of the reformed religion in both Scotland

⁹⁰ Calderwood, *History*, v, 263; Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 437-8; *CSP Scot.*, xi, 182. There were later disputes over Fife's jurisdiction, but only the General Assembly could annul or change the sentence once passed. Fife claimed jurisdiction over Angus, Erroll and Hume since all attended St Andrews University and married in Fife, signing the Confession of Faith; over Huntly and Auchindoun because the murder of Moray occurred in Fife; and Chisholm because he was their chief accomplice, Calderwood, *History*, v, 267-8.

⁹¹ Calderwood, *History*, v, 268-9; *HKJVI*, 282.

⁹² *CSP Scot.*, xi, 197-8.

and England since freedom of conscience was perceived as a slippery slope towards Counter-Reform. The earls' letter appears to explain their position clearly and succinctly, an appeal to find a peaceful settlement to a moral and ethical dilemma that existed for both parties. Although the appeal itself was most likely genuine, it was accompanied by a subtle threat. As long as there was a 'cause that may move men to seek remedies', then the existing church and government would always be under threat by men such as themselves who, however regretfully, were left no other recourse.

The earls sought to remedy their position more directly with James. On 12 October 1593 they intercepted the king, who was on his way to join a Border muster, at Fala. Huntly, Angus, Erroll, Auchindoun and Chisholm presented themselves on their knees in the road and craved to be granted a trial. Appearing at first to be angry, James acceded to their wishes and the men were directed to withdraw and await their trial in Perth.⁹³ The trial was set for 31 October in Linlithgow and the 'affairs of the king and of the church were now direct and [op]posite and repugnant to ane another' for it was perceived that the king was intent on restoring the earls.⁹⁴ James himself made it clear to Huntly that he was still firmly in his favour, writing to him after Fala that he was not 'to misinterpret my exterioire behavioure the last daye' and that 'your honouring of me serued to counteruaile the dishonouring of me be otheris before'. Further, he informed Huntly

[a]lluayes assure yourself and the rest of your marrouis that I am earnister to haue your daye of tryall to haulde forduart then yourselfis, that be your seruices thaireftir the tirranie of thir mutins may be repressit; for I profess, and hatis thaire presumptuouse and seditiouse behaiouire, and for your pairt in particulaire I trou ye

⁹³ *CSP Scot.*, xi, 200-01, 202, 210; Calderwood, *History*, v, 269-70; *CBP*, i, 506-07; *HKJVI*, 283; Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 438-40; Moysie, *Memoirs*, 105-06.

⁹⁴ BL Cotton, Caligula, D.i.41, f. 151r..

haue hadd prooffe of my mynde towardis you at all tymes, and gif of my fauoure to you ye doubt, ye are the onlie man in Scotlande that doubtis thair of, sen all youre ennemies will needis binde it on my bake. To conclude, halde forduart the suiting of youre tryall as the berare will inform you, and use the aduice that I haue commandit him to giue you in youre proceedingis.⁹⁵

The Convention at Linlithgow established a commission under Maitland to examine the treason of Huntly, Angus and Erroll. On 26 November, a Convention of Estates in Edinburgh passed the 'Act of Abolition' in favour of the earls, Auchindoun and Chisholm. The men had until 1 January to decide between two options. If they agreed to conform in religion, give caution for their behaviour, keep a minister in their homes, remove Jesuits from their company and be responsible for the religion of their tenants, then they 'should be unaccusable of the crimes contained in the summons'. If they chose not to accept those conditions, then they were to go into exile, but their lands would be reserved for their heirs.⁹⁶ By 1 January 1594, however, no response had been received by the earls. On 18 January, a Convention of Estates acknowledged that Huntly, Angus and Erroll had failed to accept the Act and therefore declared it null. Charged to enter in ward, Angus in Blackness, Huntly in Dumbarton, Erroll in Edinburgh and Auchindoun in Tantallon, the men refused to do so.⁹⁷

During March and April the king became overwhelmingly preoccupied with pursuing Bothwell and scant attention was paid to Huntly, Angus and Erroll

⁹⁵ *Spalding Miscellany*, iii, 213-14. The king also surrounded himself with men in his chamber favourable to Huntly, *CSP Scot.*, xi, 217.

⁹⁶ Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 444-5; Calderwood, *History*, v, 282-8; *CSP Scot.*, xi, 229; *RPC*, v, 108-09; *APS*, iv, 46-8; Moysie, *Memoirs*, 108-09; *HKJVI*, 294-5. Elizabeth was incensed at the act and dispatched a special ambassador to Scotland, Lord Edward Zouche, *CSP Scot.*, xi, 239-41. The Act of Abolition, however, was not without precedent as the Ruthven Raiders had been granted one in 1583, as had the Stirling lords at the fall of Arran in 1585; Bothwell had even recently tried to obtain one following his 'successful' raid on Holyrood.

⁹⁷ Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 447; Calderwood, *History*, v, 291-2; *CSP Scot.*, xi, 259-60, 284, 293; *RPC*, v, 52-3.

until James had difficulties obtaining his main objective: the reduction of Bothwell. On 2 April 1594, Bothwell gathered an army of 400 horse and, accompanied by Ochiltree, appeared in Leith. Determined to raise sufficient troops to counter the earl, the king was forced to compromise. Attending the morning sermon, James vowed that if Edinburgh were to support him against Bothwell, he would then pursue Huntly, Angus and Erroll, 'if the Lord give me victorie over Bothwell, I sall never rest till I passe upon Huntlie and the rest of the excommunicated lords'. His terms were agreed and Lord Home defeated Bothwell in a skirmish, but Bothwell escaped across the Border back to England.⁹⁸

There were doubts expressed, however, about how well James would fulfil his promise, especially in light of the futility of his last progress to Aberdeen in February 1593, 'bot the chief courteores being thair speciall freindis, what sincerite can be expected in that doing moir was at the last raid maid on thame'.⁹⁹ The length of time which passed between the king's promise and any action taken against the earls must have made these doubts all the more potent.

In mid-April, the earls were summoned to appear before Parliament at the end of May. In the interim, one of Huntly's servants, William Troupe, 'diligently' interceded on his behalf in Court and when the countess of Huntly left Court '[h]er rewards in the Queen's chamber were liberal and far exceeding the common order and proportion used here'.¹⁰⁰ It was reported that Huntly, Angus and Erroll had met in Brechin and dissuaded Huntly from

⁹⁸ Calderwood, *History*, v, 296-7; *HKJVI*, 303-04; Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 450; Gordon, *History of Sutherland*, 224-5.

⁹⁹ Colville, *Letters*, 260.

¹⁰⁰ *CSP Scot.*, xi, 309, 321.

his inclination to enter into ward and 'it is thought that Thomas Erskine (one of the King's chamber and in especial credit with the King) was sent to travail with Huntly and the rest therein'. Mar, described as "confederat" with Huntly', also met with Huntly on 2 May near Stirling.

Many nobles were loath to go to Edinburgh 'whilst the King's guard is so extraordinary and strong and governed by persons expected to favour overmuch the excommunicated Earls'. Huntly himself was said to have 'levied and waged many soldiers not only in the country adjoining, but also in Edinburgh to serve him, and presently these Earls show great hope of success'.¹⁰¹ Huntly's opponents were further alarmed by reports that a ship had arrived at Montrose at the end of April with gold, 'which was caried to the enemeis' and thought to be shared amongst the earls in the north. Bowes predicted that 'foreign forces shall shortly follow this gold' and action taken by Huntly, Angus and Erroll was anxiously anticipated, with the forces already reported as gathering being used as proof.¹⁰² The fact that these forces were also being used in the still aggressively pursued bloodfeud, which Argyll had now entered in earnest, was ignored.¹⁰³

The Parliament that met on 30 May 1594 was attended only by three earls and six lords. Forfeiture was pronounced upon Huntly, Angus and Erroll, but the 'nobles suspended there voyces, becaus the popish lords intentions were not proven judicialle'.¹⁰⁴ The reluctance of the nobles to vote against the

¹⁰¹ *CSP Scot.*, xi, 331, 336-7.

¹⁰² Calderwood, *History*, v, 306, 310-13; *CSP Scot.*, xi, 326-7, 329-30, 332, 336; Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 452; Colville, *Letters*, 104. There is no evidence that Huntly received any gold.

¹⁰³ Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 165-6.

¹⁰⁴ Gordon, *History of Sutherland*, 225-6; *RPC*, v, 116, 130, 134, 140; *APS*, iv, 55-6; Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 445; Calderwood, *History*, v, 330-2; *CBP*, i, 534; *CSP Scot.*, xi, 358, 361-2.

three earls and the king's lack of credible action 'arose from an unwillingness to become too firmly committed to the English-Presbyterian interest which was still closely identified with Bothwell, and from an unwillingness to plunge Scotland into religious warfare'.¹⁰⁵ It also was derived from a distinct unwillingness to become involved in the extremely violent bloodfeud between Huntly and the Stewarts. Any raid against the earls was postponed until the end of August after the baptism of Prince Henry, who was born on 19 February 1594.¹⁰⁶

Huntly's response to the forfeiture was to send his wife to intercede with James towards the end of June. The king made a public show of attempting to stop her arrival at Court, but the countess 'was seen passing out of the Court gates in base array'. Huntly had convened his forces in anticipation of a raid by Argyll and in 'all these matters, and in their resolution for their abode [in] and departure out of this realm, they depend wholly ... on the success of the Countess of Huntly'. If James were to agree to take their dependants into his protection, then the three earls would travel abroad.¹⁰⁷ At the end of the first week of July, Bowes intimated that Huntly, Angus and Erroll 'wholly depend on the advertisement of the Countess of Huntly, as yet "resyant" here, and who has lately written at great length to her husband'.

The countess had petitioned the king for the possession of her husband's lands for herself and her children, which had been granted to her under similar circumstances in the past. To bolster her request, she reminded James that he 'had given her in marriage to Huntly as the King's own

¹⁰⁵ Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 165.

¹⁰⁶ Calderwood, *History*, v, 332; *CSP Scot.*, xi, 359; NAS Treasurer's Accounts E.21/70.

¹⁰⁷ *CSP Scot.*, xi, 363-4. Earlier in June, ministers had met to discuss ways to prevent the countess from gaining access to Court and to the king, Calderwood, *History*, v, 336.

daughter, with promises for advancement of her and her children'. Her emotional plea was unsuccessful for the king denied her suit until Huntly had either given full obedience or departed from the country. The queen then championed the countess's cause and, when she failed, attempted to obtain the grant for herself. On 6 July, Henrietta was ordered to leave Edinburgh within four days. She journeyed to Seton and left for Fife on 10 July.¹⁰⁸

Alarm spread through the Protestant and Stewart opponents to Huntly in mid-July 1594 when reports reached the south of a ship docking in Aberdeen bearing James Gordon, S.J., two to three other men and a supply of gold. Two of Gordon's companions were William Crichton, S.J. and George Sampiretti, the Papal Nuncio, who bore a large sum of money intended for James plus the promise of 10,000 ducats per month if he permitted liberty of conscience in Scotland.¹⁰⁹ Aberdeen town council promptly imprisoned Gordon and his companions, as well as placing the ship under embargo. They refused Angus's and Erroll's demands to release their prisoners and the ship from their custody. On 18 July, Huntly, Angus and Erroll with 200 horse and a small number of foot again demanded that the town release the men, stating that they had come to Scotland from other Christian princes 'to suite maist humblie of his Majestie sum ease of our distressit estaitis'. If they did not heed their request, then the earls would besiege Aberdeen and 'it sall remayne as a perpetuall debait'. In the face of such overwhelming odds, the town released its prisoners and the cargo of the ship, amongst which there were four barrels in which the earls were particularly interested.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ *CSP Scot.*, xi, 370, 375; *CBP*, i, 543.

¹⁰⁹ Forbes-Leith, *Narratives of Scottish Catholics*, 222.

¹¹⁰ *CSP Scot.*, xi, 378, 379, 380, 382, 384-5, 385, 394; *CBP*, i, 542, 543; Calderwood, *History*, v, 340-41; *HKJVI*, 331-2; Colville, *Letters*, 108, 111; 'Acknowledgement by Fr. James Gordon, S.J. of Payments from the Papal Treasury to the Scotch Catholic Nobles, Aug. 5, 1594' in A. Bellesheim, *History of the Catholic Church in Scotland*, iii (Edinburgh and London, 1889), 449-50, I am grateful to Gavin Armstrong for the translation of this document from Italian;

The news of Father Gordon arriving in Aberdeen with a large supply of gold only added further urgency to the Protestant plea to take action against the excommunicated earls – to them the threat was mounting daily – and the action was cast now more than ever within a religious context. Although justice for Moray's death was also part of the propaganda used by those lobbying for action against Huntly, it had become secondary in the petitions to the cause of religion.

Despite the apprehension caused by the news of the Jesuits' arrival and the influx of gold, the only response from the king was in August to postpone the muster for the raid against the earls from the end of August after the baptism to the end of September.¹¹¹ The king was seeking more support and money to raise the 1,000 waged soldiers he desired in addition to the normal muster for the raid.¹¹² Colville was scathing, asking Sir Robert Cecil what support did James require in order to imprison 'sum of Huntleyis most secreit servandis, daylie hanting at Court' and, further, why did he not ride with as much zeal to Aberdeen when he heard of the ship carrying Gordon and the gold 'with suche zeall as he dois aganis Bothwell'?¹¹³ He also reported that there were 'letters weeklie going betwix' James and Huntly.¹¹⁴

Huntly also sent to Edinburgh his two trusted servants, William Troupe, 'his old and busy solicitor' and Alexander Duff, supposedly bringing with them a supply of gold, which 'has fallen into some coffers in Court' in order to

NAS Warrender Papers, vol. B, Chronicle, 1593-1600, GD1/371/3, fos. 231v.-r.; Aberdeen City and Grampian Regional Archives, Dean of Guild Account Books, 1453-1650, i (unnumbered folios); *Extracts from the Council Register of the Burgh of Aberdeen*, ii, ed. J. Stuart (Aberdeen, 1848), 92, 92-3.

¹¹¹ Colville, *Letters*, 111; *CSP Scot.*, xi, 394; *RPC*, v, 163-4.

¹¹² Calderwood, *History*, v, 391; *CSP Scot.*, xi, 443, 449.

¹¹³ Colville, *Letters*, 110; *CSP Scot.*, xi, 387.

¹¹⁴ Colville, *Letters*, 112; *CSP Scot.*, xi, 395. One of the couriers was Patrick Murray.

persuade the king to allow them to live quietly at home with freedom of conscience or else be permitted to go abroad.¹¹⁵ The two men told James ‘all the secrets of the Earls, and that thereon the King, by means, has made it known to some that golden hills are offered to him, and that large portion of gold is proffered to be delivered to him at his pleasure’.¹¹⁶ By the beginning of August, Bowes reported that ‘the Earls have not lost their means in Court, and shall find some means to ease themselves’.¹¹⁷ On 10 August, Colville intimated that all were ‘in gret diffidence of the sinceritie of the Court’ as the king would not permit any intercession for Bothwell, yet there were ‘frequent messages ... betuix him and the Papist Lordis’, mentioning the ‘continewall intercours of Patrick Murray betuix his Majestie and Huntley’.¹¹⁸

The king did, however, at the end of July, grant commissions of lieutenancy to Argyll, Atholl and John, eighth Lord Forbes. Although Colville thought it ‘superficial’,¹¹⁹ it may have been sufficient to give Huntly cause for concern. On 12 August 1594, he and Erroll wrote to Philip II of Spain asking for ‘prompt aid to uphold and establish their Catholic faith’.¹²⁰ The combined political and religious pressure brought to bear on the earls had succeeded in elevating what was essentially the repercussions of a violent and out of control bloodfeud onto the stage of the Counter-Reformation. This is the only evidence of any exchange between the earls and Spain and if any aid was forthcoming, particularly monetary to further augment their forces with waged soldiers in addition to what the Pope’s money had bought, there is no

¹¹⁵ *CSP Scot.*, xi, 391, 414.

¹¹⁶ *CSP Scot.*, xi, 393, 396, 401, 415; Colville, *Letters*, 117, 262; *CBP*, i, 544.

¹¹⁷ *CSP Scot.*, xi, 402.

¹¹⁸ Colville, *Letters*, 118-19.

¹¹⁹ Colville, *Letters*, 116; *CSP Scot.*, xi, 390, 393, 394, 400.

¹²⁰ *CSP Spain*, iv, 613. Erroll and Angus sent further missives to Philip II in October and November 1594, 613, 613-14, 615.

evidence of it. Committed in France and the Netherlands, the Spanish simply did not have anything to spare the Scots.¹²¹

Out of desperation rather than desire, contact was made between the earls and Bothwell and an uneasy alliance was drawn between them wherein Bothwell's role would be to draw the king south. News of this leaked out in September and Bothwell explained to the Edinburgh Presbytery that he had been approached in order 'to put into practice the lovable custom of our progenitors at Lauder, whereunto I most willingly assented'.¹²² Colville, unhappy with Bothwell's defection, rationalised it: 'the good pepill will admit no excus of the King if he go not on these Papists, and I do think he shalbe the moir willing'.¹²³ Finally, on 11 September, a proclamation for a muster at the end of the month was issued for the king's northern raid. Argyll, with his army, was to journey towards Inverness where he would rendezvous with the king.¹²⁴

Argyll, who had begun to prepare his army at the end of August, 'at the instigacion of sum of the Ministry who ar presentlie with him',¹²⁵ began his journey on 21 September. Argyll was motivated by a personal stake in the feud, as well as by religion, since discovering that Huntly was complicit in the murder of his leading kinsman, the laird of Cawdor.¹²⁶ Argyll's forces were between 6,000 and 12,000 strong but were predominantly foot with very few horse. Atholl himself refused to take the field, but sent 400 foot to Argyll;

¹²¹ A document tentatively dated circa May 1595 indicates that Philip II had last promised aid in 1593, *CSP Spain*, iv, 616.

¹²² He was referring to the hanging of James III's favourites at Lauder Bridge, *CSP Scot.*, xi, 429, 433; Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 457; Calderwood, *History*, v, 347.

¹²³ Colville, *Letters*, 126.

¹²⁴ Calderwood, *History*, v, 346-7; *CSP Scot.*, xi, 443, 444, 449.

¹²⁵ Colville, *Letters*, 120.

¹²⁶ Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 165-6; E.J. Cowan, 'Clanship, Kinship and the Campbell Acquisition of Islay', 132-57; H. Potter, *Bloodfeud*, 181-5.

'[t]his army marching without guard of horsemen is much scorned in Court and thought easy to be overthrown by Huntly'.¹²⁷

Huntly himself began to gather his forces to meet Argyll, but concentrated on raising horsemen, offering liberal pay. Angus and Erroll also worked 'earnestly to join their forces with Huntly', but for all three earls it was 'not looked that they will show any force against the King'.¹²⁸ Upon learning that Argyll planned to take Strathbogie, Huntly boasted 'that he will "rubb his cloake in Argyles pladd"', even though his forces did not exceed 1,000 horse and foot. His small forces were a reflection of the fact the 'few' other than Gordons, dependants and 'near friends' to Huntly 'will "partye" him against the King's lieutenant'.¹²⁹ It was even more of a reflection, however, of the devastating effect the feud had had on his lordship. Years of warfare had taken its toll and few men were willing to commit even more to what appeared to be an ever escalating but never ending cause.

There was an even more telling reason behind Huntly's recruitment rate. In invoking Catholicism, Argyll effectively turned the battle – and support for it – into a fight for or against that very religion. The earl of Argyll therefore hoisted the banners of both the fight for local justice and that against the forces of militant Catholicism. In focusing on Catholicism, Argyll hoped to draw a much wider basis of support and avoid the perennial Scottish problem of studied neutrality. What he succeeded in doing, however, was to turn the battle into a brilliant piece of propaganda for Protestant and Catholic alike.

¹²⁷ *CSP Scot.*, xi, 450.

¹²⁸ *CSP Scot.*, xi, 450, 452.

¹²⁹ *CSP Scot.*, xi, 453.

According to one chronicler, since the primary charge raised against Huntly was his Catholicism, it not only discouraged many from joining Argyll, believing 'bloodshed ane unfitting mean to worke any man's conversion', but it also galvanised Catholics who would have otherwise remained neutral to take up arms on Huntly's behalf, 'thinking it might thereafter be their own call'.¹³⁰ Although Huntly had not turned this into a battle about religion, it worked to his benefit as his recruitment rate was poor due to the devastation of the bloodfeud. Argyll's propaganda drew men to his ranks who would have otherwise stayed away.

On 27 September 1594, Argyll attempted to take Ruthven Castle in Badenoch, which was held for Huntly by the Macphersons, but he failed. He continued north, his army keeping to the high ground as their best defence against horse. On 2 October, they were sighted by Auchindoun and Huntly and Erroll decided to join battle before Argyll was joined by Forbes. On 3 October, Huntly's army encountered Argyll's high on the slopes of Ben Rinnes. Their field pieces taking Argyll by surprise, Erroll charged with between 200 and 300 horse in the vanguard. Seeing that Erroll was almost surrounded, Huntly flanked Argyll's army with his 700 to 1,000 horse and routed his opponent, leaving almost 500 dead in their wake. The battle lasted two hours and Argyll was said to have been led from the field weeping.

For their part, Huntly and Erroll were both wounded and lost twelve landed men, including Auchindoun, and numerous horses. The victors sang the *Te Deum Laudamus* on the field and the sixty wounded were escorted to Auchindoun's towerhouse, where the remainder of the army dispersed. Huntly and Erroll withdrew to Sutherland, awaiting the king's arrival in

¹³⁰ 'Account of the Battle of Balrinnes, 3 October 1594' in *Spalding Miscellany*, i, 262.

Aberdeen.¹³¹ It was a decisive victory but the earls refused to pursue the advantage and were adamant that they would not meet the king on the field – their quarrel was with Argyll and Atholl, not the king. The Kirk’s propaganda may have overtaken the real cause behind the battle, but the root cause remained the bloodfeud.

On 4 October 1594, the king and his army began their journey north and one day later learned the news regarding Glenlivet. James hastened to Dundee, where he was met by Argyll and arrived in Aberdeen on 16 October, where all Gordons were summoned to give caution for good behaviour and ‘counsel was taken for the demolishing of the house of Strathbogie, Slaines and Newton’. Many of the men accompanying the king wanted to spare the houses of the rebels, but Andrew Melville and Patrick, sixth Lord Lindsay prevailed ‘that at last the king taketh upon him contrarie to the minde of the greater part, to conclude the demolishin and undermyning of the hous, and gave charge to the Maister of the Worke to that effect’. Although it was reported that the pioneers worked two days on Strathbogie and that ‘[n]othing thereof is left “unhocked”, saving the great old tower, which shall be blown up with powder this day, 29 Octobris. The house being fourteen years in building, shall be cast down and made “equal” with the ground in two days’, architectural evidence suggests otherwise. The tower was untouched and it would appear that the main wing was not substantially damaged.¹³²

¹³¹ ‘Account of the Battle of Balrinnes, 3 October 1594’, 261-9; NAS Warrender Papers, vol. B, GD1/371/3, fos. 9v.-10r., 233r.-236v.; *CSP Scot.*, xi, 348-54, 456-60; Calderwood, *History*, v, 348-54; Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 458-60; Moysie, *Memoirs*, 119-21; *HKJVI*, 338-43; Gordon, *History of Sutherland*, 226-9; *RPC*, v, 175-6; Forbes-Leith, *Narratives of Scottish Catholics*, 224-6; P. Marren, *Grampian Battlefields: The Historic Battles of North East Scotland from AD84 to 1745* (Aberdeen, 1990), 128-37.

¹³² *CSP Scot.*, xi, 456, 468-9, 470, 474; Spottiswoode, *History*, ii, 460; Calderwood, *History*, v, 353-7; *HKJVI*, 342-3; *CBP*, i, 551; Aberdeen City and Grampian Regional Archives,

With insufficient victuals to remain in the field, the king returned to Aberdeen and an intercepted letter from Huntly, who was still in Caithness, to Angus was brought to James, 'who is stirred with the scornful words of Huntly declaring his raid to be but a "goykis storme"'.¹³³ He appointed Lennox (Huntly's brother-in-law) Lieutenant, and Sir Robert Melville of Murdocairny and Sir John Carmichael of that Ilk, with 100 waged horse and 100 waged foot, to assist him. The duke held justice courts and punished the lesser personages involved in the earls' action, 'but componed easilie with the assisters of the rebels. He had avaritous and craftie counsellors left with him'.¹³⁴ In January, Lennox pardoned Cluny and Gight. Before leaving Aberdeen on 9 November, the king appointed the fees from Huntly's lands to the earl's trusted advisor, Sir John Gordon of Pitlurg.¹³⁵

At the end of November, Huntly was still in Caithness and in mid-December it was reported that Angus, Huntly, Erroll, Bothwell, Caithness and Sutherland 'have been together, but without such forces as has been given out'. Huntly appeared to be determined to do nothing which would raise suspicions about his intentions. His brother was negotiating with James for Huntly's children and to confirm himself tutor to the children and custodian of Huntly's living, as well as to obtain easy conditions so that Huntly would only be banished. Apparently, he 'has had good countenance secretly, but as yet prevails little'.¹³⁶ 'Highlanders', dependants of Argyll and Mar, were reported as making bold incursions into Huntly's territories in early January

Aberdeen Guildry Book, October 1594-October 1595, entries for 15 January 1595, 13 February 1595 (unnumbered folios).

¹³³ *CSP Scot.*, xi, 473, 478, 479.

¹³⁴ Calderwood, *History*, v, 357; *HKJVI*, 343.

¹³⁵ Calderwood, *History*, v, 357, 358; *CSP Scot.*, xi, 476; 'The Straloch Papers' in *Spalding Miscellany*, i, 9; Colville, *Letters*, 137. Pitlurg was knighted at Prince Henry's baptism and would later play a pivotal role in the reconciliation between the king and Huntly in 1596. James returned to Stirling on 14 November.

¹³⁶ *CSP Scot.*, xi, 479, 497, 497-8, 499.

1595. Facing repeated spoils without Huntly's protection, the people 'wish that Huntly were again amongst them'.¹³⁷

By the end of January it was indicated that Huntly was periodically 'quietly' in Aberdeen and discussions regarding the earl going abroad were initiated. The Council in the north tried to persuade the countess of Huntly to prevail on her husband to travel abroad or otherwise be prosecuted 'with all kind of rigour' and Lennox told the countesses of Huntly and Erroll that unless their husbands went abroad, 'he will be the greatest enemy he shall have' and that either wife would 'get no part of the living unless she comes south'. Roger Aston informed Bowes (now residing in England) that the earls would agree to go into exile 'if they might get favour to their wives and children. Huntly has secret dealing here for him'.¹³⁸

By mid-February it was intimated that Gight and Cluny had persuaded Huntly and Erroll to go abroad and for that reason had been given their remissions by Lennox. The earls agreed to a £40,000 caution each and to leave Scotland by 15 March 1595. Their agreement was authorised by the Privy Council on 17 February.¹³⁹ Huntly's and Erroll's livings were given to Lennox 'by way of factorie', who then made the earl's wives intromitters and their livings were therefore retained for their own use.¹⁴⁰ On 22 March, it was confirmed that Huntly and Erroll had left Scotland. They would remain

¹³⁷ *CSP Scot.*, xi, 504-05, 506, 509.

¹³⁸ *CSP Scot.*, xi, 511, 514, 520; Colville, *Letters*, 137.

¹³⁹ *RPC*, v, 207-08; *CSP Scot.*, xi, 534, 535, 540, 546; Calderwood, *History*, v, 357; *HKJVI*, 343-4; NAS Warrender Papers, vol. B, 'Chronicle, 1593-1600', f. 235v..

¹⁴⁰ Calderwood, *History*, v, 363; *CSP Scot.*, xi, 553. Lennox, his waged men deserting for lack of pay, returned to Edinburgh at the end of February.

abroad until the summer of 1596, travelling in Flanders, Germany and Italy.¹⁴¹

The years 1590 to 1595 were eventful for the earl of Huntly and ones which were markedly different from the nine years preceding the period. Huntly's career, until 1590, had been marked by an abiding interest and role in national and international politics, playing a key part in the king's foreign political agenda. He played a major role in the Court and challenged the ascendancy of Maitland, who died in 1595. By contrast, the first five years of the 1590s saw Huntly's attention diverted from the national and international arena to the locality. He used and exerted influence in the Court in order to advance his own interests in the locality and to obtain leverage in his exceedingly vicious and extended bloodfeud with Moray and with the Stewarts. But that was as far as his interests in the centre were able to extend. His wife played a pivotal role in this period protecting and promoting her husband's interests and the influence of both the earl and the countess was evidenced in the advantages that they were granted over their enemy.

Religion also played a less central role in this period than hitherto, with Huntly refraining from using his Catholicism to further his secular aims. It was not until the Kirk forced the issue and excommunicated the earl in 1593, making the reduction of his Catholicism common cause with the pursuit of justice for Moray's slaughter, that religion returned to the political agenda. The Kirk's political agitation was so successful that it was able to engender a set-piece battle, with great loss of life, based on Huntly's conformity – for them, justice for Moray was secondary. Yet, in examining the battle itself and

¹⁴¹ *CSP Scot.*, xi, 554, 559, 561-2, 562, 563, 570, 576, 580-81; Colville, *Letters*, 149, 150-51; NAS Warrender Papers, vol. B, 'Chronicle, 1593-1600', fos. 235v, 243r.; *CSP Spain*, iv, 616; *HKJVI*, 344.

its aftermath, from recruitment to lack of follow-up by Huntly and Erroll, it becomes clear that although the battle of Glenlivet may have been fought for a religious pretext, it actually was the culmination of the bloodfeud between Huntly and the Stewarts. Once the religious veneer is stripped away, the driving force behind Glenlivet was what had occupied Huntly for the previous three years: factionalism and bloodfeud.

Huntly returned to Scotland in 1596, following a letter from James which made it clear that unless he was willing to submit to the Kirk and make amends for his role in Moray's death satisfactory to the Kirk, he would never be able to reside in Scotland again.¹⁴² In June 1597 Huntly agreed to conform to the Kirk, his confession of faith embodying not only his acceptance of the reformed faith, but the banishment of Jesuits from his company and the public expression of grief for the death of Moray. On 26 June 1597, Huntly and Erroll signed their confessions of faith at an exceedingly well attended public ceremony in the Auld Kirk of Aberdeen. They both made public confessions of their former apostasy and newly found faith. Further, Huntly requested the mediation of the Kirk in achieving reconciliation with Moray's supporters. The bishop of Aberdeen relieved them of their excommunication and the sacrament was celebrated.¹⁴³ The ecclesiastical pageantry gave way the next day to the civil, when at the Market Cross Marchmont Herald proclaimed their pacification and peace and the king's commissioner gave them the wand of peace. Huntly and Erroll were embraced by the ministers, Aberdeen Provost, baillies and magistrates and 'an orgy of forgiveness'

¹⁴² James's letter is printed in P. Tytler, *History of Scotland*, iii (London, 1887), 308.

¹⁴³ *BUK*, ii, 897; iii, 919; *CSP Scot.*, xii, 550; H. Potter, *Bloodfeud*, 224-5.

ensued.¹⁴⁴ In February 1598, Huntly, Erroll and Angus were publicly restored at Edinburgh's Market Cross by Lord Lyon, King of Arms.¹⁴⁵

The pageantry and the reception, both political and ecclesiastical, were significant, but Huntly's subscription to his personalised confession of faith bore little religious significance for him personally. Like his first subscription in February 1588, it was required by the king. For Huntly, it was the means through which he would achieve political rehabilitation. Huntly's subsequent relations with the Kirk bore testimony to the lack of conviction in his subscription. Images can speak louder than words and strong evidence of Huntly's faith, however, is the 'the aggressively Roman frontispiece' completed in 1602 during his renovations at Huntly Castle.¹⁴⁶

Following his exile, return and rehabilitation, Huntly would begin a new chapter of his career, resolving his bloodfeuds and abstaining from international politics, assuming the role of an elder statesman with the professed wish to become a private man whose primary interests were his estates, with a marked rise in land conveyancing and the provision of an inheritance for his children. Huntly also engaged in a number of architectural projects. They ranged from extensive renovations at Huntly Castle, as well as renovations at Ruthven, Bog of Gight and his town houses in Old Aberdeen and Elgin. Additionally, he built new houses in Aboyne and the Plewlands of Moray and a hunting lodge at Kean Kaill.¹⁴⁷ He

¹⁴⁴ H. Potter, *Bloodfeud*, 226.

¹⁴⁵ *CSP Scot.*, xiii, 161. The queen attended with the countesses of Huntly and Erroll.

¹⁴⁶ H. Potter, *Bloodfeud*, 226. The vertical panel follows a hierarchical order: immediately over the doorway are the arms of Huntly and his wife; the panel above features the arms of James and Anna; the Catholic imagery, including the five wounds of Christ, are in the penultimate panel; on the apex of the ogee arch is the figure of St Michael overpowering Satan. The religious imagery was defaced by the Covenanters.

¹⁴⁷ See the Inventory of Writs, parts 1 and 2 in NAS Gordon Muniments GD 44; Gordon, *History of Sutherland*, 231, 480.

intermittently attended Privy Council, but his primary political interest and activity between 1597 and 1602 was focused on restoring his position with James and, under pressure from the king, resolving his bloodfeuds with Argyll and Moray.

This study therefore ends in 1595, when Huntly was exiled ostensibly for his religious nonconformity and commitment to Catholic politics. From this point onwards it was evident that Huntly was no longer willing or able to link his domestic political activities with international Catholicism as he had done throughout the core period of this thesis. The nature of politics had changed over the intervening years from when he had first engaged Spain in negotiations in 1586. Neither was there sufficient international interest in pursuing a connection in Scotland and nor was there sufficient advantages to be gained in Scottish national politics to make it worth Huntly's while to do so. Most significantly, however, may have been the change in the king's interest in Huntly continuing to cultivate and represent an international Catholic interest in Scotland. His rehabilitation in 1597 marked a confirmed change in Huntly's political stratagems and objectives. He publicly abjured his former beliefs and actions and embarked upon a new political course, with his religious objectives confined to the personal practice of his faith and his political interests shifting to a more local scale.

Huntly's elevation to a marquessate on 17 April 1599 at the baptism of Princess Margaret marked his full rehabilitation with the king. It was a public recognition of the nature of his relationship – both past and present – with James, a sign of his restored favour¹⁴⁸ but not an award for current political

¹⁴⁸ As was the gift of one of only seven copies of the *Basilikon Doron* when the king published it in 1599. Lord John Hamilton also became a marquess in 1599.

activity. The king justified the elevation to protestors as the fulfilment of a promise to Lennox when Huntly had married his sister in 1588 and that it 'would comfort him [Huntly] in that good course of loyalty and conformity of religion, which he doubt[ed] not he would continue'.¹⁴⁹

It did not succeed in bolstering Huntly's adherence to Protestantism, however, as he celebrated his marquisate with a public mass in his Edinburgh town house. The Kirk's wrath compelled him to leave Court.¹⁵⁰ This marked the beginning of the Kirk's increased influence over the earl, with his activities curtailed over ensuing years by his being warded for religious nonconformity with mounting frequency and for longer durations, especially after the reconciliation of the bloodfeuds with Argyll (1601) and Moray (1602), James's ascension to the English throne in 1603 and after the king's death in 1625. Now that neither Huntly nor the king found it beneficial for him to be active in international politics and appeared uninterested in furthering his role in national politics, the Kirk finally manifested the authority over Huntly that it had sought but never obtained during his years of actively engaging in Catholic politics, both at home and abroad.

¹⁴⁹ *CSP Scot.*, xiii, 489.

¹⁵⁰ *CSP Scot.*, xiii, 852.

CONCLUSION

When Huntly returned to Scotland in July 1581 he was nineteen years of age. To analyse his ensuing political career is to chart the development of a politically naive young man whose tentative steps into Scottish politics were first guided by Esmé Stewart, first duke of Lennox. During the early 1580s, as seen in Chapter One, Huntly became a mature, politically sophisticated noble whose political growth had been in tandem with that of James VI. From 1581 to 1583, both he and James were impressionable young men who served a political apprenticeship under Lennox. Although during much of this period Huntly was noted as little more than a courtier with Francophile sympathies, the lessons which he absorbed under Lennox's tutelage shaped his subsequent career. In particular, the object lesson of the duke's own lack of either a local support base or a kin network was too powerful to ignore. Huntly sought to establish a balanced distribution of sources of power: foreign, national and regional sources of influence were all assiduously cultivated. From 1583 to the end of 1585, the earl concentrated on consolidating his position in the locality and developing a profile in national politics, which, as discussed in Chapter Two, he subsequently employed in his opposition to an alliance with England.

In 1586, as seen in Chapter Three, Huntly expanded his spheres of influence in response to the growing power of John Maitland of Thirlestane and made his first independent forays into international politics. From that point onwards, his career was marked by the consistent attention he paid to developing his influence at the regional, national and international levels. Huntly was also introduced to the power of covert politics by Lennox, who

exposed both him and the king to the potential of Catholic politics through his continental and Marian connections.¹ The development of a close, personal relationship between James and Huntly, intertwined with strong political ties, also made for a closer alignment in each man's perceptions of the shifting political balance in Scotland and Europe in the mid-1580s – as well as their perceptions of how to best utilise European politics to further their personal political objectives. James acted more quickly on the duke's lessons than Huntly did, making his first independent overtures into European Catholic politics during the Arran administration from June 1583 to November 1585.

As well as the potential of Catholic politics, Huntly was also introduced to the nascent Scottish Catholic mission in 1581. He was one of a group of Catholic nobles whom the mission priests approached seeking support for their efforts in Scotland. The nobles' response was that they would willingly shelter the priests sent to Scotland, but they would not fund a mission nor take political initiatives on its behalf. The priests also approached the king, who gave them fair words but no promises. Yet it was sufficient to feed the hopes of the missionaries and their European agents, enabling them to construct plans for the Counter-Reformation in the British Isles based on the premise of James's conversion to Catholicism and his future cooperation. Unlike James, Huntly's role, as discussed in Chapter One, in the Scottish mission in 1581 was strictly peripheral; the man who was perceived to be and acted as the leader of the Scottish Catholics was Lord Seton, who played the most instrumental role in organising the newly implemented mission.

¹ For Lennox's administration, see Chapter One above.

Huntly's contacts with the mission from 1581 onwards changed little and were predominantly confined to sheltering mission priests, even when he entered the arena of Catholic politics in 1586. Although limited, this was still an important role and was a key component of the survival of Catholicism in Scotland. He furthered the aims of the mission priests, who focused their mission on the gentry and the nobility, through their protection and by hampering the Kirk's development in the north of Scotland – stipends were not paid, parishes were bereft of ministers and the physical state of many kirk buildings was one of disrepair.² Huntly's role in the Scottish mission, however, was perceived by his opponents to have been greater than it was, perhaps because he was the nephew of one of the leading Jesuit mission priests in Scotland, James Gordon. It was also assumed that all Catholics were thoroughly committed to furthering the political goals of the Counter-Reformation.

Huntly, however, as discussed in Chapter Two, was unlike John, eighth Lord Maxwell who publicly flaunted his faith, who justified his taking such blatant liberties with the law of the land by claiming that James 'had graunted him lycence to use his own consyence in religioun'.³ It was certainly consistent with James's past, as well as future, relations with Scottish Catholics that he could have privately intimated that he would not make an issue of Maxwell's personal religious adherence. James did not, however, tolerate the public celebration of mass at any point during his reign. There is no evidence of Huntly practising his faith in anything but a private venue. According to one

² For wider discussion of this point see M.H.B. Sanderson, 'Catholic Recusancy in Scotland in the Sixteenth Century', *IR*, 21 (1970), 87-107; B. McLennan, 'Presbyterianism Challenged: A Study of Catholicism and Episcopacy in the Northeast of Scotland, 1560-1650', 2 vols. (unpublished University of Aberdeen PhD thesis, 1977), 17, 20-21, 193, 230; M.H.B. Sanderson, 'Service and Survival: the Clergy in Late-Sixteenth Century Scotland', *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, 36 (2006), 73-96.

³ *CBP*, i, 217.

Catholic report in 1596, Huntly 'whilst residing in the royal palace, was always permitted to have mass said in his chamber, although with closed doors, any one he pleased being allowed to assist'.⁴

The open promotion of Catholicism by Maxwell and his fellow Catholic converts was a challenge to royal authority and a public demonstration of the faith which, in the eyes of Catholics such as Huntly, needed to be sheltered in order to survive. As the Jesuit missions recognised, the continuation of Catholicism in Scotland depended on the private faith and patronage of Catholic families, especially the Catholic nobility. According to the *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, Jesuit missions were not aimed at the wider populace, but their missions were more refined and specifically targeted the elite from the monarch downwards, for these were the people in society most able to effect, protect or even enforce change. Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus, posited that 'the more universal good, the more the divine' and therefore 'preference ought to be given to those persons and places which can spread the good accomplished to many others who are under their guidance'. Hence, 'public persons ought to be regarded as more important, since it is a more universal good'.⁵ To bring the celebration of the mass into the public domain was to jeopardise this.

Huntly, as did his Catholic peers other than Maxwell, practised his faith in private, able to distinguish between the dictates of his faith and wider, secular political objectives. His political activities, especially following the fall of Arran at the end of 1585, were not wholly dictated by his religious affiliation.

⁴ A. Bellesheim, *History of the Catholic Church of Scotland*, iii (Edinburgh and London, 1889), 463. Mass may have been said following the battle of Glenlivet in 1594, but not as an open, public affair.

⁵ T.M. McCoog, S.J., "Pray to the Lord of the Harvest": Jesuit Missions to Scotland in the Sixteenth Century', *IR*, 53 (2002), 157.

Huntly may have been a noble who was also a Catholic, but this did not mean that he was a Catholic noble with a proselytising agenda or that he would conform to Protestant expectations of Catholic activism.

The coup which led to the fall of Lennox and the establishment of the Ruthven Regime in August 1582 provided Huntly with his first opportunity for political activism.⁶ Huntly refused Lennox's invitation to accompany him abroad and stepped forward to assume an influential role in the anti-English faction. He became active in the opposition to the Ruthven administration and, working with a group of Catholic and *politique* nobility, helped enforce the regime change following the king's escape from the Ruthven lords in June 1583. His loyalty to the imprisoned king and his actions in June 1583 were fundamental to the relationship which later developed between himself and James, a relationship which profoundly influenced the course of both men's careers. Huntly changed from being merely a welcome companion of an age with the king and a courtier with conservative inclinations to being one of James's most trusted nobles. His companionship was still sought and favoured by the king, but Huntly's role had evolved to encompass much more. Assured of the king's favour, Huntly embarked on a bold career in national and international politics.

The years immediately following the Ruthven Regime, however, were spent concentrating on domestic politics, as analysed in Chapter One. Huntly initially supported the chancellorship of James Stewart, earl of Arran and sought to develop an active role in government. He assiduously attended the Privy Council and supported government policy. Whilst much of his time was spent at Court, Huntly did begin to pay closer attention to the locality, which

⁶ See Chapter One above.

had continued to be tended for him by his uncle and former tutor, Sir Patrick Gordon of Auchindoun. Huntly's interest in the locality stemmed from the need to begin to rebuild and consolidate Gordon power in the region, which had suffered a decline under his father and grandfather. From 1583 onwards, he not only successfully consolidated Gordon power but expanded it to the extent that his influence in the north stretched far outwith the bounds of his own earldom, encroaching on the lands of the earldoms of Moray, Argyll and Atholl.

His outstanding success in cultivating his regional influence enabled him to wield more power in the centre, but his success was not without its pitfalls. Huntly later reaped the rewards of his regional and national position in the 1590s, as argued in Chapter Six, when engaged in a protracted bloodfeud with Moray and latterly his supporters such as Argyll and Atholl. But he would also pay a high price and the vicious bloodfeud was partially derived from resentment of his extended influence and infiltration into lands other than his own. Huntly would also be put in the impossible position of having to protect the opposing interests of his supporters at Court and of those in the locality, with the structure of his local lordship consequently weakened.

By 1585, Huntly had established a solid position in both the centre and the locality. He was sufficiently confident in his position to join the growing opposition to Arran and he secretly aligned with men such as Maitland and his own exiled uncles, Lords John and Claud Hamilton. Huntly followed James's example and made his own first independent foray into Scottish domestic politics. It was no secret from either the king or independent observers that Huntly, amongst many others, had grown dissatisfied with

Arran. He was not alone when in time honoured tradition he withdrew from Court as a sign of his discontent. Huntly quietly pursued his own political objectives, for example corresponding with Lord Claud Hamilton or associating with men who were against Arran, such as Maitland, Patrick, master of Gray or Sir Lewis Bellenden. Huntly also signed Patrick, master of Gray's bond against Arran (along with Atholl, Francis Stewart, fifth earl of Bothwell, Maitland, Sir Robert Melville of Murdocairny and the younger Setons).⁷

The salient point, as argued in Chapter One, is that it was at this juncture towards the end of the Arran government that Huntly began quietly to explore and widen the parameters of his political role in domestic politics. The fall of the Arran government and the return of men such Archibald Douglas, eighth earl of Angus and Thomas Lyon, master of Glamis only encouraged Huntly to continue and to widen his political exploration to encompass international politics as well. In addition, his time away from Court during Arran's latter months only served to increase his comfort levels with being away from Court for extended periods of time.

The fall of the Arran government was swift, but the coup gathering against Arran was not unexpected. Huntly was not part of the coup itself. He had been in the north tending to his duties in the locality and taking bonds of manrent in the autumn of 1585 and was absent from Court throughout the Stirling Coup, perhaps using the outbreak of plague in Edinburgh as a convenient excuse to distant himself from events. Rather than take a stand which he knew he could not win against the widespread alienation from Arran, James adeptly used the Stirling Coup as the means to effect a change

⁷ *CSP Scot.*, viii, 213, 214.

which put to an end the long stream of care-taker governments since his accession in 1567. James was ready to rule in his own right.

During the period from December 1585 to July 1586, which is examined in Chapter Two, the earl assumed an increasingly independent profile, no longer closely affiliated with royal policy. For the first time since July 1581, Huntly and James VI had a noticeable difference in primary political objectives. Their evolving political perspectives resulted in Huntly no longer being a fixture at Court or routinely in its vicinity. Neither was he publicly associated with the current government, nor did he play an identifiable role in implementing the king's policies. This, however, in no way implies or indicates that the two men who had hitherto worked closely together were at odds with each other or that Huntly had fallen out of favour. The security of his relationship with James and the stability of the king's new government during this period enabled Huntly freely to relinquish his role as courtier or royal watchdog and explore the myriad of other possibilities presented to an earl of his abilities and resources.

If there was no role for Huntly in the new government and there was no reason necessitating his presence at Court, there were certainly numerous other legitimate calls for his attention outside of the centre. It had not been unusual for Huntly to return periodically to the locality, but what was unusual was the length of time Huntly spent and the distance he kept not just from Court, but from central politics overall. There is no evidence, however, to support the allegations that this was because the earl, insecure and apprehensive regarding current affairs, turned his attention to conspiring

with other Catholics, such as Maxwell, to effect another government coup and restore Scotland to the papal fold.

Huntly unequivocally supported James, his political philosophy and the political agenda that the king had been formulating and developing over the past four years. The fact that James was now in a position to implement his own policies was due in no small part to Huntly. Unwavering support for James, however, did not necessarily translate into unquestioning support for every individual policy espoused by the king. As could any other Scottish noble, Huntly exercised his right to object to the king's policy. Their differing perspectives on various policies, on how to execute them or on who should implement them, resulted in Huntly withdrawing himself from an active part in the central government.

One important example of their differing perspectives was with regards to the English alliance. Huntly undoubtedly supported James's claim to the English succession; however, he did not support a league with England in the interim. The European connections cultivated by both him and James provided other means and alliances to secure the English succession, especially considering that France was particularly anxious to ensure that Spain was not in a position to pursue Philip II's claim to the English crown. Huntly may have objected to the English amity, but he decidedly did not withdraw his active support for his king or withdraw from his role in James's Catholic politicking, which became more pronounced as the period progressed. By objecting, however, Huntly ventured further into the new, untried territory into which the fall of the Arran regime had catapulted James, Huntly and the rest of the Scottish polity.

With the fall of Arran in November 1585, not only had the government of Scotland irrevocably changed, but so had the *governing* of the country. Twenty years after the deposition of Mary, an adult monarch finally was fully in control of Scotland. The role of those nobles who had sheltered, protected and then shepherded the fledgling king into the full assumption of all his rights, privileges and powers, changed as well. At the end of 1585, the crown and the estates of the realm began the transition from minority and caretaker governance and politics to what should have been the political norm. But few nobles knew what to expect or had experienced long uninterrupted periods of an adult reign or the smooth transition of power from one adult monarch to another; instead of minority rule or care-taker governments being an aberration, they had become the norm since the death of James V in December 1542.

James's ability to wield independently the full power of the crown would certainly have implications for a nobility unaccustomed to it. Undoubtedly, a monarch who had already taken steps towards achieving his articulated philosophy of universal kingship would seek to tackle the growth in power and political scope of Scotland's aristocracy during the course of the previous two decades. Not only did the Scottish polity as a whole have to adjust to the new state of affairs, but for many of the aristocracy it was their first experience of mature monarchy – many of the nobility were nearly as young as their king.⁸ The crown was not alone in facing a steep learning curve.

⁸ See, for example, the list compiled in 1586 denoting the approximate ages of the Scottish earls in Rogers, *Estimate*, 52-3. A more detailed list in 1589 includes the approximate ages of lords and lairds as well as earls, with an appraisal of each, 53-62. For an earlier evaluation in 1577, see 7-28; for 1583, see 29-39; for 1592, see 63-72; for the age structure in 1592, see Colville, *Letters*, 333-43. The large majority of the earls were in their twenties; the next largest group were in their thirties; several were in their fourth decade; whilst only a handful were older (the oldest being the king's granduncle, Robert Stewart, earl of March); four were minors (James Douglas, earl of Buchan, John Kennedy, fifth earl of Cassillis, Argyll and Ludovic Stewart, second duke of Lennox).

For Huntly, however, the transition was smooth. What James required of those who supported him thus far was now different, just as his relationship with them, individually and severally, would necessarily alter. Huntly accepted that and recognised that the political game as a whole had changed and he took the time to step back and to evaluate the situation. Two of Huntly's characteristics were that he took his responsibilities as a magnate seriously and that he knew how to maximise the political mileage out of the advantages of his position. Now that James was reigning in his own right, some of the limitations imposed by political expediency on Huntly were removed thereby enabling him to exercise the full remit of an earl's privileges. Accordingly, it was his responsibility not to support his king blindly, but to serve him through constructive advice and counsel.

The earl had faithfully served James since 1581 in varying capacities, but all limited by the nature of James's own position. Huntly had been a part of James's inner coterie and council for years, he had acted in both informal and formal capacities, had accepted responsibility on wider government institutional levels – membership of the Privy Council or the Lords of the Articles, accepting government commissions such as Lieutenant of the North. But for all of that, his role now was as inherently different as James's role was now that there was no longer another individual whose primary responsibility was formulating, administering and overseeing the general policy of the realm. James's assumption of full government at the end of 1585 did not change the foundation of his relationship with Huntly, but it did change the dynamics of it. Both men now assumed wider responsibilities with different priorities and with wider horizons from which to choose. But

both were still bound by the parameters of the Scottish political system, however much that system may have been in a state of flux.

The effects of change spiralled outwards as well, to encompass Huntly's and James's relationships with the men who had shared their primary ambition to bring James to this point. The cohesion of this somewhat disparate group of men who had supported James through successive regime changes, from Lennox to Ruthven to Arran, and who throughout these governance changes had worked so closely together to realise their goal of protecting not just the institution of monarchy but the person who embodied it, dissolved with their success.⁹ Thus, from Huntly's perspective, the period from December 1585 to July 1586 was marked by redefinition on three different levels: the effect of the change in James's position on their relationship and the role Huntly would play in James's politicking; his domestic political ties or alliances; and the greater freedom to determine and to follow his own political agenda, no longer restricted or governed by the over-riding need to protect the crown.

For both Huntly and James, it was a situation full of challenges and unexplored potential; it was up to them to decide which moves to make and which rules to obey, question, change or subvert. Of course, it would have been much simpler if they had been the only ones concerned, but it was a period of reassessment, realignment and policy determination for all the major political players. Yet, despite all the change and assimilation, it was a remarkably stable period, even with the crisis over Mary, queen of Scots.

⁹ For example, men such as Huntly, David Lindsay, eleventh earl of Crawford, John Graham, third earl of Montrose, John Erskine, seventh earl of Mar, Patrick, master of Gray, Maitland, Colonel William Stewart of Pittenweem and Sir Lewis Bellenden had been close to James since the rise of Esmé Stewart.

From December 1585 to May 1587, the king tolerated a government composed with the perhaps significant exception of Maitland of men who had a collective history of betrayal and treason (dating from the Ruthven Raid in August 1582) because it was the swiftest means to secure an English alliance.¹⁰ Their personal history and convictions assured that they would not be deterred from concluding a treaty and thus achieving the wider foreign policy objectives encompassed within an Anglo-Scottish alliance. From James's perspective, however, the alliance just as importantly would ensure that Scottish nobles malcontent with those in government or its policies would not be supported in future dissent by England as, for example, Angus and the Master of Glamis had been in November 1585 (and, prior to that, in a failed coup attempt in 1584). Thus, the alliance secured to a certain extent a political stability derived from the fact that the English were no longer fostering an opposition faction, providing the basis for the government that Maitland, as Chancellor and as Secretary, would take forward from July 1587.

Stable government, however, does not imply that all policies put forward by the king and his Chancellor were universally accepted and unopposed. James and Maitland did meet resistance which was a part of normal political intercourse and was channelled for the most part within appropriate political mechanisms. This process was assisted by the reduction of English interference in Scottish domestic politics. The long-term policies which Maitland developed elicited widespread aristocratic opposition across the religious and political spectrum to both the man implementing them and to the policies themselves – yet, significantly, England forbore from its previous policy of undermining the Scottish government in order to promote its own security, and trusted in the appointment of Maitland, even throughout the

¹⁰ See Chapter Two above.

period in 1588 and 1589 when Elizabeth and her officials were uncertain of Scotland's adherence to the 1586 treaty.

The reactions within Scotland to the government established at the end of 1585 and to its primary policy of alliance with England were the first real indications of the return to normal political intercourse. As a result, Huntly, amongst others, began for the first time to develop and to pursue a political agenda independent from that of the crown. Having maintained close proximity to the king for the last four years with a reputation as a highly esteemed (albeit politically conservative) courtier, Huntly's withdrawal from the Court until April 1587 marked the beginning of his open opposition to official crown policy and to Maitland in particular. From the periphery, the earl both consolidated and expanded his spheres of influence through domestic and foreign manoeuvring, becoming active for the first time in Counter-Reformation politics through his overtures to Henry, duke of Guise and Philip II in April and May 1586 respectively.¹¹

Huntly's European politicking from 1586 to 1589 was, as argued in Chapters Two through Five, a direct response to the increased influence of Maitland and the Anglo-Protestant support for him. The Catholic politicking which marked this period defined Huntly's role in Jacobean politics, yet it has been little understood by both contemporaries and historians alike. The religious overtones and the immediate association with confessional politics have obscured the underlying objectives of Huntly's decision to enter the political spectrum of the Counter-Reformation in April 1586 and his continued participation until 1595.

¹¹ Teulet, *Relations*, iv, 37-40; v, 349-50; *CSP Spain*, iii, 580, 581. A full account of Huntly's foreign correspondence in 1586 can be found in Chapter Two above.

Prior to 1586, Huntly had refrained from becoming involved in the politics of the Counter-Reformation as the political need to do so simply did not exist. Men such as Maxwell and Lord Claud Hamilton became active in Counter-Reformation politics long before Huntly did, partly due to religious conviction and because it served as a means to counter their political opponents such as Arran, Angus and latterly Maitland. Huntly, however, was always careful to disassociate himself from the overt Catholic politicking of Maxwell. Until the fall of the Arran regime and the establishment of a government which was wholly committed to pursuing an Anglo-Protestant agenda and until Maitland's dominance began to emerge, particularly in the late 1580s, Huntly's existing political resource was sufficient to his needs. Only when he began to realise that he and Maitland both enjoyed the king's support and when he recognised that Maitland was an opponent of such calibre that he needed to cultivate wider political spheres of influence and to strengthen his existing ones, did Huntly turn to Catholic politics.

The domestic and political considerations behind Huntly's decision to initiate contact with Guise and Philip II have been largely overlooked and resulting events such as Brig o' Dee in April 1589 and Glenlivet in October 1594 have been narrowly interpreted by historians.¹² Huntly's sudden involvement with the Counter-Reformation has been traditionally explained by his personal faith and a desire to return Scotland to the papal fold. The earl did possess a strong personal faith and would have welcomed the restoration of Catholicism in Scotland. However, if this was the compelling reason why he contacted Guise and Philip II in 1586 and if the restoration of Catholicism in

¹² For example, see Lee, *John Maitland of Thirlestane*, chapter 8; M. Lee, Jr, *Great Britain's Solomon: James VI and I in his Three Kingdoms* (Urbana, 1990); G. Donaldson, *James V – James VII* (Edinburgh, 1965), 188-90; Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 144-9, 172, 268, is the most insightful, yet he still writes within a Counter-Reformation context with a strict Protestant-Catholic dichotomy.

Scotland was his main objective, then why did Huntly wait until 1586 to do so and why was he careful to disassociate himself from Maxwell? Why not act earlier and why did he not respond more favourably to the approaches of the mission priests in Scotland, having been contacted as early as 1581? It would have been exceedingly easy for Huntly to move into mainstream European Catholic politics. Yet it was not until 1586 that he did so.

Despite Huntly's strong personal commitment to Catholicism, a sudden desire in mid-1586 to be in the vanguard of the Counter-Reformation was not the immediate motivation behind his decision to contact Spain. It was the changing nature of Scottish domestic politics that provided the compelling reason for Huntly's engagement with Counter-Reformation politics. Furthermore, it was the overlap between Huntly's personal aim to remove Maitland and to undermine his policies and the international politics of his king which heavily influenced his Catholic politicking from 1586 to 1589, facilitated by the broader European context of England's war with Spain after 1585.

Huntly's relationship with James, however, was never adversely affected by his opposition to the Anglo-Scottish alliance or to the emerging dominance of Maitland in the central government. Indeed, the more Huntly developed his foreign contacts in order to counter Maitland's support from England, the more valuable he became to James. The covert politicking that Huntly, Lord Claud Hamilton and Maxwell undertook from 1586 onwards, not without the king's knowledge and, to a limited extent, participation,¹³ reflected the power

¹³ See, for example, *CSP Spain*, iii, 637, 681-3; iv, 57-8, 60, 68-9, 84, 90; Teulet, *Relations*, v, 483-8, 439-52, 493-6; *CSP For., Eliz.*, June 1586-June 1588, 454; *CSP Scot.*, ix, 175, 324, 326; *CBP*, i, 249-50, 256; K.M. Brown, 'The Making of a *Politique*: The Counter-Reformation and the Regional Politics of John, Eighth Lord Maxwell', *SHR*, 66 (1987), 163; see Chapters Two and Three above.

struggles in Europe and became a key component of the concomitant political strategising by Spain, France and England. The revelation of the Babington Plot in August 1586 and the execution of Mary in February 1587, followed by the Spanish Armada crisis of 1588, provided James with ideal opportunities to exploit further Catholic politicking over the next decade. The knowledge of Huntly's participation in Catholic politicking also seriously affected how it was interpreted by the wider political and ecclesiastical communities, both within Scotland and abroad. Ironically, it was how his politicking was *perceived* that influenced events more than his activities or the actual content of his correspondence.¹⁴

Despite its defeat, the Spanish Armada in July 1588 amply illustrated not only the power of the Protestants' opponents, but also the willingness to use that power: conjecture was replaced by a potent illustration of fact, providing a real foundation upon which to build the expectations of subsequent attempts. The Armada itself, plus trepidation regarding future plots and action by the forces of the Counter-Reformation, further influenced how Huntly's connections with Catholic Europe were interpreted. Heightened apprehensions during 1588 and 1589 dominated how Huntly's activities were perceived. The dominance of these very real concerns in contemporary sources have subsequently influenced the historiography of the period, obscuring considerations regarding domestic faction politics and eclipsing distinctions between the king's objectives and the earl's.

¹⁴ This point is even more clearly illustrated by the discovery of Huntly's signatures on the Spanish Blanks in 1592: without substantive evidence to prove what was believed to be the intended outcomes of the blanks (namely, to facilitate a Spanish invasion of England via Scotland), the Spanish correspondence intercepted in 1589 was substituted instead. Huntly was expected to conform to the Protestant expectations of Catholics – regardless of lack of proof or even evidence to the contrary. See Chapter Six above for wider discussion of this point.

The sudden identification of Huntly by Sir Francis Walsingham with the new 'Spanish faction' in Scotland in December 1586¹⁵ and the revelation of his correspondence with the leading powers in Catholic Europe in February 1589, created a perception of the earl's role in Scottish politics that has remained virtually unchanged in subsequent historiography. In a period when Spain was synonymous with the Counter-Reformation and Catholicism in England was virtually equated with treason, English paranoia was projected on to Scottish politics. When Huntly was identified with the Spanish faction, he was therefore from that point onwards overtly identified with the Counter-Reformation. Huntly became indelibly cast as a scheming Catholic lord whose primary objective was the subversion of the established Protestant religion and the governments which upheld it in the British Isles. These unchallenged assumptions have particularly skewed interpretations of Scottish domestic politics of 1587 to 1595. The immediate association with confessional politics has obscured the underlying domestic political objectives of Huntly's deliberate decision to enter the political spectrum of the Counter-Reformation in April 1586 and his continued participation until 1595.

The king's foreign policy initiatives launched in 1586, the active role Huntly undertook in Counter-Reformation politics, the appointment of Maitland as Chancellor and the policies he initiated in the July 1587 Parliament provided the impetus for Scottish politics to settle into the patterns and divisions which were to become fairly recognisable throughout the remainder of James's Scottish reign. Maitland and Huntly represented two distinctly different political ideals in 1587 and Chapters Three and Four discuss how as such both were extremely valuable to the promotion of the king's dual

¹⁵ *CSP For., Eliz.*, June 1586-June 1588, 454.

strategies of openly supporting Protestantism and an alliance with England, whilst simultaneously (and with varying degrees of secrecy and intensity) appealing to Catholic interests. Regardless of the nature of his personal relationships with either man, James needed to erect and maintain both Maitland and Huntly in order for this policy to work. Because they balanced each other politically, the king tolerated their escalating faction fighting in the unfulfilled hope that it could be controlled. Yet it was James's own policy of enforced compliance and continuous association within the confines of the Court which further provoked and fuelled their rivalry, as each publicly competed for superiority.

Thus, Maitland, reflecting once again his monarch's greater interests, cultivated wider support from the Anglo-Protestant interests in Scotland and abroad in a bid to overcome his rival; whilst Huntly, similarly representing James's concerns, looked to Catholic Europe. This period therefore proved to be a watershed in Huntly's career as he deliberately utilised his personal faith to bolster both his own political standing and that of his monarch. Whilst James attempted to use Catholic politicking to influence both Elizabeth and Philip II, Huntly's personal efforts were predominantly directed at undermining Maitland and his policies. Huntly, however, was not alone in his opposition to the Chancellor; his faction was composed of men who represented a wide array of the political and religious beliefs in Scotland. It was following the Parliament in July 1587 that his campaign against the Chancellor began in earnest, pursued with increasing aggressiveness until it culminated with the Brig o' Dee affair in April 1589.¹⁶

¹⁶ A full analysis of the Brig o' Dee affair is found in Chapter Five above.

The discovery of Huntly's correspondence with Spain in January 1589 caused a minor stir in Scottish politics, briefly interrupting the intense faction fighting between Huntly and Maitland. The nature of the correspondence, offering Scottish assistance to Spain should it attempt another attack on England and requesting financial assistance, alarmed both the Kirk and the English, strengthening support for Maitland in Scotland. The Chancellor espied an opportunity in the furore caused by the Spanish correspondence and used it to have Huntly removed from his appointment as Captain of the Royal Guard and, ultimately, from Court – thereby ending Huntly's period of greatest political influence when he had briefly influenced the government's relations with England and had served as both Vice-Chamberlain and Captain of the Guard.

The king's favour to the earl, however, continued unabated and the intense faction fighting between his leading Catholic noble and his Chancellor quickly resumed. The situation escalated when Huntly learned of a supposed plot against him by Maitland, which sufficiently concerned him to cause his removal from Dunfermline to his own lands in the north, capturing en route the Master of Glamis and explaining his actions to the king within factional terms. Huntly kept in constant correspondence with James and the sources for the period emphasise the factional nature of the conflict, the growing discord between Maitland and Huntly which the king simply could no longer control.

By the time that the king mustered an army for a raid in the north and Huntly had mustered troops on the field of Brig o' Dee near Aberdeen, the Spanish correspondence and religious concerns were not an issue – the Spanish did

not even learn of the events until that summer. It was precisely because Huntly perceived the conflict as one between himself and the Chancellor that he refused to face the king on the field, dissolving his troops and removing himself further north instead. Calm returned to the north and the king's journey turned into an extended hunting trip, interrupted by justice ayres where he collected cautions from Huntly's kin and extended network. The discovery of Huntly's Spanish correspondence within the climate of heightened concern following the Spanish Armada in the summer of 1588 has obscured the true nature of the course of events leading to Brig o' Dee. Brig o' Dee was the manifestation of the conflict between Huntly and Maitland which had been building earnestly since 1587, but had its roots in 1586.

Whilst engaged in foreign politicking from 1586 onwards and making arrangements for his marriage with Henrietta Stewart in July 1587 with a view towards Court politics and cementing his relationship with James who treated Henrietta as a daughter, Huntly had not neglected his local powerbase. As examined in Chapter Six, Huntly turned his attention to the locality following Brig o' Dee and during the king's prolonged absence from Scotland. Huntly withdrew from international politics and concentrated his attention on the growing friction in the region, particularly his feud with Moray. He spent his time castle building in Ruthven in Badenoch (which increased conflict with the Mackintoshes) and extending his influence through bonds of manrent and maintenance, continuously encroaching on Moray, Argyll and Atholl. When James and Anna returned from Denmark in May 1590, Huntly began his campaign to be received back at Court. Although he would not return to Court until after he had reconciled with Maitland in December 1590, Huntly had in the interim significantly increased his

influence in the Court, both in the chamber and otherwise. Huntly wielded powerful influence in both the Court and the region, using the overt favour from the king to enhance his position and to dominate the bloodfeud.¹⁷

The murder of Moray in January 1592, in which Huntly was implicated, was instrumental in uniting the Stewarts in their opposition to Huntly, taking up the feud on Moray's behalf. The interception of the Spanish Blanks at the end of 1592 added the Kirk to those seeking to impose justice on Huntly. The king, however, declined to prosecute Huntly for either Moray's slaughter or the Spanish Blanks, claiming that a fair assize could not be assembled for the former and that there was no evidence for the latter. Indeed, evidence from the blanks was so flimsy that the Spanish correspondence from 1589 was substituted in their stead. The importance of the Spanish Blanks was that they served to unite a sizeable section of the Scottish polity in its antagonism to Huntly. Huntly's influence at Court was untouched and James's favour to him continued, which the earl used relentlessly to his advantage in the region and in his contention with the Stewarts.

The bloodfeud continued to escalate until in the autumn of 1594, giving in to the combined pressure from the Stewarts and the Kirk, the king mustered an army to go north against Huntly and appointed Argyll as his lieutenant, who mustered his own sizeable army and marched to meet the king at Inverness. The propaganda employed by both Argyll and the Kirk was designed to turn the employment of the king's armies into a fight against Catholicism. As argued in Chapter Six, to a certain extent this worked to Huntly's advantage for those who were loath to compel conversions through bloodshed declined to join Argyll's army and Catholics who feared that they could very well be

¹⁷ See Chapter Six above for discussion of the period January 1590 to March 1595.

targeted next for forcible conversion joined Huntly. This benefited Huntly for his forces were sorely depleted by the bloodfeud, with a significant number of his dependants failing to muster because they saw events as another escalation in the protracted and costly feud. The earl's forces were a fraction of the size that he had assembled at Brig o' Dee in 1589. Huntly and Francis Hay, ninth earl of Erroll met Argyll at Glenlivet on 3 October 1594 and routed the young lieutenant's army. The victors then withdrew to Caithness and once again Huntly refused to meet the king on the field. It is argued in Chapter Six that the battle of Glenlivet may have ostensibly been fought for the cause of religion, but that was an artificial construct and its root cause was the bloodfeud between Huntly, Moray and the wider Stewart faction.

Declining to accept the benefits of the Act of Abolition passed in his favour at the end of 1594, Huntly voluntarily went into exile in March 1595, returning in 1596. In an elaborate ceremony in Aberdeen, Huntly was reconciled with the Kirk in June 1597. From that point onwards, the Kirk ceaselessly held him accountable to vows that he made to conform to religion and the remainder of his life was increasingly marked by periodic wardings and excommunications for failing to adhere to the dictates of the Kirk. Unlike previously in his career, the king only interceded on his behalf on one occasion, when the Archbishop of Canterbury relieved his excommunication in London in 1613. The earl's relationship with James changed on the political front as well. From his return to Scotland in 1596 to his death in 1636, Huntly's engagement in national politics was minimal; he was no longer influential at Court and withdrew entirely from international politics. The role that Huntly had played in James's Catholic politicking came to an

end in 1595 and Catholic politics as a means to achieve his domestic political objectives ceased to figure in the earl's political landscape.

Instead, Huntly turned his attention to the locality, once again focusing on local lordship and castle building – this time rebuilding his regional influence after the Moray feud, which was officially resolved in February 1603, and renovating his main seat, Huntly Castle, amongst other architectural projects. Huntly may well have forsaken Catholic politics, but the impressive armorial panel over the entry of Huntly Castle, featuring the royal arms, the Five Wounds of Christ, the Risen Christ in Glory flanked by the Scottish lion and the twin-headed eagle of the Holy Roman Empire and St Michael graphically illustrated the powerful role that Catholicism played in his life and career. Huntly's relationship with the king may have changed as his political priorities changed, but it remained one built on loyalty, trust and a close affinity between the two men. In 1599, James described Huntly as one of 'my trustiest servands'¹⁸ and at the baptism of Princess Margaret he was created a marquess, one of only two in Scotland.

Huntly's career at the centre of Scottish politics, 1581 to 1595, may have been short in comparison with the length of his life, but it was an extremely influential one. He significantly influenced national politics and, although often described by historians as a rebellious Catholic earl, his more militant demonstrations in 1589 and 1594 were not primarily rebellions against the crown nor primarily motivated by his Catholicism, but were the product of faction politics and bloodfeud. Huntly served his king in a number of capacities, from maintaining law and order in the north to balancing the

¹⁸ *The Basilikon Doron of King James VI*, ii, ed. J. Craigie (SHS, 1944-5), 6. Huntly received one of the seven copies of the first edition of the king's book.

factions, both political and religious, at the centre to playing an essential role in James's attempt to use Catholic politics to ensure his rights in the English succession.

This strong, Catholic earl enabled the king to take advantage of Catholic politics and to explore political alternatives to the alliance with England. Huntly's and James's Catholic politicking kept the Scottish claim to the English throne at the forefront of European politics and served as a shield to protect Scotland from Spanish predation. Huntly's faith, his position in Scottish politics, his favour with James and his European connections (as well as the ability to act upon these connections), were recognised by the Scots and English alike, including men such as Maitland, Aston, Burghley, Stafford, Bowes and Walsingham, as an implicit menace to English security. Elizabeth was made fully aware of her ministers' concerns regarding Scottish threats to the security of her realm, including the possibility that James may have been susceptible to Catholic coercion to abandon the English alliance. James himself, through his actions and lack thereof, as well as through carefully worded correspondence with the queen, further ensured that Elizabeth understood that her security partially rested upon her support of James, through both monetary provision and her recognition of him as her heir. She provided the former, but never the latter. It was not until March 1593, in contention over the queen's support of Bothwell, that James clearly articulated the implied threat that he would 'be enforced to join in friendship with her greatest enemies for my own safety'.¹⁹

For Huntly, Catholic politics was a tool he employed to widen his spheres of influence and to counter the rising dominance of Maitland and his policies.

¹⁹ *Letters of James VI and I*, ed. G.P.V. Akrigg (Berkeley, 1984), 120-21.

His Spanish connections were also a financial resource and Huntly employed the funds he received not to the furtherance of the Catholic cause, but to the promotion of his own domestic political objectives. Huntly was undeniably a devout Catholic who would have welcomed the restoration of Catholicism to Scotland or freedom of conscience, but he was also a political realist and, to a certain extent, a mercenary. He used the politics of the Counter-Reformation to further his own interests and those of his king. The study of the career of George Gordon, sixth earl of Huntly, from 1581 to 1595 is not a study of a man pursuing the ideals of the Counter-Reformation, but, rather, a study of a canny Catholic politician who manipulated Catholic politics in the pursuit of his political objectives in Scotland, namely removing Maitland from government, obtaining influence in the formation of wider government policy for himself and his faction and, ultimately, rupturing the alliance with England.²⁰

Huntly failed in his aims concerning Maitland and the English alliance, but in seeking to obtain his goals he played a highly influential role in the national and international politics of Scotland during the last two decades of the sixteenth century. He employed a wide range of resources in order to augment his own influence, from extending his regional powerbase to tapping into the power of the Counter-Reformation. In an era of confessional politics, Huntly's political struggles and strategies shed light on the interplay between religion and secular politics and how the fears of and threats emanating from Catholic politics could be harnessed to influence both national and international politics. In this manipulation of Catholic politics,

²⁰ Alexander Seton, first earl of Dunfermline, is an example of another successful Catholic politician during James's reign. Unlike Huntly, however, he suppressed his Catholic connections and ostensibly conformed in order to achieve his political ambitions. See M. Lee, Jr, 'King James's Popish Chancellor' in I.B. Cowan and D. Shaw (eds.), *The Renaissance and Reformation in Scotland: Essays in Honour of Gordon Donaldson* (Edinburgh, 1983).

he was joined by his king. In his relationship with James, Huntly both gave and received great loyalty; it was that relationship which truly marked his short career.

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GD44/8/17/10	Inventory of Writs, ii, part 1
GD44/9/3/13	Inventory of Writs, ii, part 1
GD44/9/4/1	Inventory of Writs, ii, part 1
GD44/9/6/2-4 & 14	Inventory of Writs, ii, part 1
GD44/9/7/2	Inventory of Writs, ii, part 1
GD44/9/8/9-11	Inventory of Writs, ii, part 1
GD44/10/1/17	Inventory of Writs, ii, part 1
GD44/10/2/7	Inventory of Writs, ii, part 1
GD44/10/3/5 & 14	Inventory of Writs, ii, part 1
GD44/10/4/1-2	Inventory of Writs, ii, part 1
GD44/11/1/6 & 15	Inventory of Writs, ii, part 2
GD44/11/4/5-9	Inventory of Writs, ii, part 2
GD44/11/6/13 & 16-17	Inventory of Writs, ii, part 2
GD44/12/6/5	Inventory of Writs, ii, part 2
GD44/12/7/20-21	Inventory of Writs, ii, part 2
GD44/13/2/3-8	Inventory of Writs, ii, part 2
GD44/13/4/6-12	Inventory of Writs, ii, part 2
GD44/13/7/25-40	Bonds of Manrent
GD44/13/8/36-40	Bonds of Manrent
GD44/13/9/1-14, 17-21	Bonds of Manrent
GD44/13/9/29	Bonds of Manrent
GD44/15/1/7-13	Teinds of Drumblait
GD44/15/2/3-5	Teinds of Gairtly Glass, Ruthven and Baldornie
GD44/15/2/14-15	Teinds of Kinoir and Dumbenan
GD44/15/3/2-3	Patronages
GD44/15/6/1	Patronages
GD44/16/4/13	Patronages
GD44/16/7/1	Patronages
GD44/22/9 & 33	Lordship of Enzie, Miscellaneous Papers, 1585-1725
GD44/23/14	Lordship of Enzie, Miscellaneous Papers, 1585-1725

GD44/28/11/1	Contract between Huntly and John Grant of Freuchy
GD44/29/24	Marriage contract: George, Lord Gordon and Anna Campbell
GD44/33/2	Discharge by Huntly to Argyll of 44,000 merk tocher
GD44/34/66/3	Charter from Huntly to Henrietta Stewart: Dunfermline
GD44/35/1	Spey Fishings, Miscellaneous Papers, 1590-1753
GD44/36/32	Legal Cases between Huntly and Moray, 1601-1803
GD44/38/67	Patronages, Stipends, Teinds etc. in Moy and Dyke
GD44/38/69	Patronages, Stipends, Teinds etc. in Rafford and Ardelach
GD44/38/80	Patronages, Stipends, Teinds etc. in Spynie
GD44/40/1	General Writs, Miscellaneous Papers
GD44/42/2/1	Miscellaneous Bonds, Discharges and Assignations
GD44/45/3, 9, 11 & 13	Manuscript Histories of the Gordons

GD 52: Forbes Papers

GD52/70	Draft offer by Huntly to Moray of compensation for second earl's death, 1592
GD52/1089	Articles of proposed terms of dispute between Master of Forbes and Huntly, 1589
GD52/1704	Letters by Huntly, Sheriff of Aberdeen, September 1576

GD 112: Breadalbane Muniments

GD112/1/290	Bond of Friendship between Huntly and Glenorchy
GD112/1/291	Discharge by Huntly to Glenorchy
GD112/1/317	Testimony by John Campbell of Ardinglas, July 1594
GD112/1/408	Contract between Huntly and Glenorchy
GD112/16/1-2	Correspondence
GD112/18/13	Correspondence
GD112/23/2/15, 20, 22-23	Cautions, Discharges and Assignations
GD112/39/15/16-17	Correspondence

GD 176: Mackintosh Muniments

GD176/123	Assignment of ward and nonentry of Huntly's lands to Lachlan Macintosh of Dunnachton, May 1581
GD176/126	Extract from APS, November 1581
GD176/129	Bond by Dunnachton to Lochinvar, October 1581
GD176/141	Commission by Huntly as Lieutenant to Dunnachton, May 1586
GD176/150	Commission to Huntly, Dunnachton, Freuchy, Auchindoun and Cluny as Justiciars within Lochaber, May 1588
GD176/155	Bond from Macphersons to Huntly, May 1591
GD176/158	Copy of Parliamentary Act in favour of Huntly, Angus, Erroll and followers, 1592
GD176/162	Bond by Inverness against Huntly, September 1593
GD176/164	Mutual Bond between Dunnachton and Argyll, September 1593
GD176/168	Bond, 1595
GD176/174	Discharge, 1595
GD176/178-179	Bonds of Manrent and Maintenance between Dunnachton and Atholl
GD176/180	Contract between Huntly and Dunnachton, June 1597
GD176/182	Bond of Friendship between Dunnachton and MacKenzie of Kintail, November 1597
GD176/183	Discharge by Huntly to Dunnachton, March 1598
GD176/187	Heads of Argeement between Dunnachton and Cameron of Locheil, July 1598
GD176/250	Summons by Huntly to Dunnachton, February 1615

GD 205: Ogilvy of Inverquharity Manuscripts

GD205/1/18	Letter to meet the king at Brechin, February 1592
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GD 406: Hamilton Manuscripts

GD406/1/43-45	Correspondence
GD406/1/54-56	Correspondence
GD406/1/8362	Correspondence
GD406/1/8364-8365	Correspondence
GD406/9007	Correspondence
GD406/1/10419-10423	Correspondence
GD406/1/10428	Correspondence
GD406/1/10431	Correspondence

GD406/1/10436 Correspondence
GD406/1/10441 Correspondence

JC.2: Court Books, Old Series

JC.2/1-5 October 1576-October 1619

R.H. : Photostats

R.H.1/2/442 Correspondence
R.H.1/2/613 Correspondence
R.H.1/7/2 Correspondence
R.H.2/2/11 Transcriptions of documents of various sources,
1264-1588
R.H.2/7/4-5 Selections from Brockie Manuscript
R.H.2/7/8 Decoded manuscripts between Mary and the
Archbishop of Glasgow
R.H.2/7/9 'Relatio Scotiae'
R.H.2/7/10 Letters from James VI, 1588-1603
R.H.9/2/26-35 Correspondence
R.H.9/2/147 Correspondence
R.H.9/2/180 Letter from William Murdoch, S.J., 1607
R.H.9/5/39 Correspondence

National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh

Advocates Manuscripts

19.1.35	33.1.1	33.1.7
33.2.36	33.3.3	33.7.25
35.5.5a		

National Register of Archives, Edinburgh

NRA/18	Blairs College Muniments
NRA/217	Moray Muniments
NRA/224	Atholl Manuscripts
NRA/925	Errol and Bannerman of Crimongate, sections ii and iii
NRA/1294	Lord Saltoun: Fraser of Philworth Papers

Moray District Archives, Forres

ZBEL B2/3	Elgin Town Council Court Book
ZBEL C60/1	Elgin Account Books
ZBFO B2/1-3	Forres Burgh Court Books

Scottish Catholic Archives, Edinburgh

SM 1: Scottish Mission, 1560-1603

SM1/1/2	Proposal to assist James VI against Elizabeth, 1580/1
SM1/1/3	James VI's sympathies to Catholicism, 1581/2
SM1/1/7	Brief of Pope Sixtus V to the earls and magnates of Scotland, 1587
SM1/2/2, 5-9	Correspondence of William Holt, S.J.
SM1/3/1-2, 4-6	Correspondence of William Crichton, S.J.
SM1/7	Extracts from a letter regarding Scottish Catholics, 1596
SM1/8/1	Jesuit correspondence regarding Scotland
SM1/8/2	Memorial regarding choice of Jesuit envoy to Scotland
SM1/10/2	Names of English recusants
SM1/10/4	Names of Scottish Catholics at home and abroad

JB: Beaton Papers

JB2/6/11-13	Correspondence
JB2/9/3	Correspondence
JB2/9/11	James VI's reasons for his poor regard for Catholics, 1601
JB2/11/7	Correspondence

CA 3: Clase de Papeles del Coronel Semple

CA3/13

CA 4: Scots Colleges, Spain

CA4/1-10	Letters and documents of Col. William Semple, 1554-1636
CA4/9/12	Letter from the duke of Parma to James VI
CA4/9/15-16	Por partidos que el Rey de Escocia ofrece a su Mag[esta]d Cath[olics]. Por el bien de entramos reys
CA4/10/8	Letter from Lord Semple to Col. Semple
CA4/10/10	Clase de Papeles del Coronel Semple, 1587
CA4/1/3	Pensions to Gilbert and William Semple, 1582
CA4/1/4	Letter of protection from James VI to Col. Semple, 1588
CA4/1/5	Safeguard to Col. Semple from James VI, 1588
CA4/1/6	Instructions from the duke of Parma to Col. Semple, 1589
CA4/1/7	Col. Semple's papers, 1596
CA4/1/8	Regarding treaty with Rome and Spain, 1596

CA4/1/9	Papers relating to Col. Semple's pension, 1597
CA4/1/10	Commission by James VI to Col. Semple, 1599
CA4/1/14	Instructions from James VI to Robert, Lord Semple, 1599
CA4/1/15	Letter in favour of Col. Semple, 1600
CA4/1/17	Attestation by Bernardino de Mendoza in favour of Col. Semple, 1601
CA4/1/20	State of Scotland
CA4/2/9	Letter from James VI to Sir William Semple, 1604

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