

CHAPTER 7

THE PROTESTATION

As a result of the King's speech on Saturday 1st May 1641 and the discovery of the Tower Plot on the 2nd and 3rd, the House of Commons appointed a committee (including Hampden) to "prepare a Declaration of the unanimous consent and resolution of this House for the defence of religion and the King's person"¹, while at the same time sending for the alleged participants in the Tower Plot. (see chapter 3) Hampden moved for sending for Wadsworth who was charged with being at the Portuguese ambassador's house on Sunday night (2nd May) with the excuse that the soldiers being gathered by Suckling were being recruiting for service in Portugal. The ambassador denied all knowledge of this.

The committee came back quickly with a version of the Declaration but it was referred back as not mentioning popish innovations and the doctrine of the Church of England. Meanwhile the House was ordered to keep their seats and none to leave without permission and the doors to be locked². When the amended version of this 'Protestation' was delivered it was agreed and immediately taken by the speaker and the 378 members present (including Hampden). A preamble was then added³. It was then taken to the Lords who endorsed it and subscribed to it. The fact that Hampden took the Protestation at the first opportunity indicates his approval of it.

The next day Maynard was ordered to prepare a bill by which the Protestation would be taken by all the King's subjects; a petition from the clergy and citizens of London in support was read⁴. This required a few amendments and explanations, and was finally passed on 30th July⁵, and it was ordered that anyone not taking it was "unfit to serve in church or commonwealth". It was then taken in churches across the kingdom and records kept of those who took it. These are available in the Protestation Returns 1641-1642 by Gibson and Dell in the House of Lords publications.

THE PROTESTATION

I, A.B. do, in the presence of God, promise, vow, and protest to maintain and defend, as far as lawfully I may with my life, power and estate, the true reformed Protestant religion expressed in the doctrine of the Church of England, against all Popery and popish innovation within this realm, contrary to the said doctrine, and according to the duty of my allegiance, I will maintain his Majesty's royal person and estate, as also the power and privilege of Parliaments, the lawful rights and liberties of the subjects, and every person that makes this Protestation in whatsoever he shall do in lawful pursuance of the same. And to my power, as far as lawfully I may, I will oppose, and by all good ways and means endeavour to bring to condign punishment all such as shall by force, practice, counsels, plots, conspiracies or otherwise do anything to the contrary in this present Protestation contained. And further, I shall in all just and honourable ways endeavour to preserve the union and peace betwixt the three kingdoms of England, Scotland and Ireland, and neither for hope, fear or any other respects, shall relinquish this promise, vow and protestation.