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Reformation London and the Adaptation of Observed Piety

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ABSTRACT

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In reformation London, the shift of the governed religion enabled laymen to recognize individuality in their faith, to read scripture in the vernacular, and to exercise their faith outside of mass. Therefore, the overall perception of personal piety took a turn from being exercised communally to becoming something reflective of the individual. Analyzing gender dynamics, language, religious orders, and theology reveal this transition and help gain a holistic understanding of transitioning perceptions of piety. This thesis contributes to the rich historiographical conversation in understanding Reformation studies. By adopting elements from top-down and bottom-up approaches, this thesis further develops on the understanding of perceptions of religious piety in reformation London.

DEDICATION

Dedicated to those who inspired the work but will never read it.
You, too, have and will continue to make history.

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And to my husband,
whose own piety I deeply respect.

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CHAPTER 1
A BRIEF HISTORIOGRAPHY OF ENGLISH REFORMATION STUDIES

"In the sixteenth century England acquired a whole suite of ruins... the agonizing sign of wholesale destruction supported people into activity—even those whose Protestant convictions made them wholly endorse the process at large."[1]

-Margaret Aston

The medieval English Church was comprised of exquisite parish cathedrals, a hierarchical and highly complex leadership, liturgical and cryptic masses, and a rich doctrinal and ritual tradition. By 1538, this was laid against a stark contrast of a broken order and a religious system when the reformations occurred in England. This particular religious reformation brought about a rejection of exterior organized group religion and a newfound emphasis on inward faith and personal piety. Historians have widely embraced the physical destruction of altar tables, torn manuscripts, and whitewashed church walls; however, this destruction ran deeper than the material.[2] Previously unquestioned societal norms and constructs were broken down and destroyed which gave rise and agency to individual piety. The growth of moderate Catholic Humanism gave life to this movement through encouraging individuals to ask questions about deeply personal issues surrounding faith and seek answers themselves rather

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[1] Aston, Margaret. *Lollards and reformers: images and literacy in late medieval religion* (London: Hambledon Press, 1984), 108.
[2] See Duffy, Eamon. *The Stripping of the Altars*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992. & Walsham, Alexandra. *The Reformation of The Landscape: Religion, Identity, and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
for books of this historiographical persuasion.

than through their local priest or bishop as before. The primary barriers broken down and explored through this research are gender roles, religious orders, language, and theological principles.

The shift of the governed religion enabled laymen to recognize individuality in their faith, to read scripture in the vernacular, and to exercise their faith outside of mass. In the past, historians have viewed the changes that occurred in English churches as a superficial effort to please the crown that eventually morphed to everyday habitual behavior. Any revolts against this change were squelched by the crown and the resulting destruction from any grievances were seen as the aftermath of a period of change. However, a closer examination of the individual proves otherwise. The devotional lives of layman were shaped and constructed by factors other than proclamations from the crown. Also, if records such as these include church leaders and bishops ready and teaching a theological change, perhaps the religious change was more organic and natural in light of what was going on in the remainder of Europe.

When referring to this concept, historians often use terms interchangeably such as *personal piety* or *inward devotional life*. Any individual regardless of social status or gender could be spoken of as a pious person. Piety had little to do with one's position in life but more other's perception of their faith and their adherence to it. Therefore, though one might perceive what must be done to be such a person, pious is an adjective used to describe and individual and therefore is primarily based upon perception. For the historian, this is very convenient when studying primary documents as descriptive terms for these are easy and ample to locate. This study specifically addresses laymen and the elite's piety within London and can be traced in the period before and surrounding the theological reformation. Therefore, shifting concepts of piety under both Catholic and Protestant mindsets will be explored. This will include not necessarily

how an individual felt about their own piety but rather a study of general perception of the practices of *pious* individuals.

When discussing layman, it is necessary to understand that men, women, children, the upper class, and working class can and is often included in this term.[3] Indeed, the laymen of this generation were every church attending member in the population that was not considered a part of the religious positioned or hierarchy. The broad nature of this term implies that the study must be inclusive of several aspects in which piety was practiced and exercised. Specifically, in this study that will be though gender roles, religious houses, language, and theological practices. Investigating this devotional life implies an examination of the relationship of the individual with the parish church, God, and themselves.

I reluctantly use the extremely broad and generic term *reformation* during this study as more recently historians have come to recognize this as not one change that occurred but a highly complex series of changes that were deeply connected but not one in the same event. Many historians have mistakenly over periodized the study and have missed transitions and connections to be discussed such as in this study. Christopher Haigh's *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society Under the Tudors* discusses the previous err of historians in compartmentalizing the Reformation as a single event in the larger picture of a history comprised merely of eras. This oversimplifies the intricate system of cause and effect that lead to this large transition and reduces it to a simple story of a monarch's desire for total control and agency. Haigh's original concept of this was not that it was an "inexorable process" of conversions but rather part of "a succession of contingent events which, in total, tended towards the Protestant

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[3] Schen, Claire. *Charity and Lay Piety in Reformation London, 1500-1620* (Abingdon on Thames: Routledge, 2017), 18.

victory."[4] He broke these eras of reform into three large political reformations that occurred

from 1530-1538, from 1547-1553, and from 1559-1563. These everyday politics prompted

furthered individual agency among the powerless and powerful. Today, historians broadly accept

the idea of multiple reformations occurring. Eric Ives stated, "The Reformation was a Europe-

wide phenomenon, but the way religious issues played out was not uniform. Each country or

region had its own distinctive reformation."[5]

In 1538, Henry VIII left the Catholic Church and declared himself as religious leader of

the Church of England. Shortly after in 1549, Edward VI officially rejected Catholic practices

and institutionalized the Church of England as doctrinally Protestant. However, Edward died an

untimely death in 1553 at the age of 15 and Mary Queen of Scots asserted herself over Lady Jane

Grey as the new Queen of England. Though Mary was never able to officially rejoin England

with the Catholic Church, her personal Catholic beliefs were largely reflected in her rule as she

had countless Protestant church leaders burned for their beliefs. Had Mary lived longer, her

Catholic rule might have taken hold of England but soon after her death, many of Edward's

policies were reinstated during the Elizabethan Religious Settlement. Religious unrest in

England for half a century created a generational loss of traditional and succinct Catholic belief

and thus had a splintering effect, diversifying and scattering practice. Thus, individuals had a

larger array of avenues to exercise their personal piety.

However, the modern understanding is that the large religious reformations previously

discussed continued to impact modern Britain. A more recent vein of this historiography rejects

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[4] Haigh, Christopher. *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society Under the Tudors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 6.
[5] Ives, Eric. *The Reformation Experience: Living Through the Turbulent 16th Century* (Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2012), 73.

this broad periodization and includes an understanding of the reformation and its extended effects late into the seventeenth century. Unfortunately, this brief study cannot encompass that broad of a period without making large generalizations and will focus on the first concentrated years of change and unrest in hopes of shedding light into the extended years after and therefore understanding the reformation as not merely an era but as a widely occurring transition.

Yet, the specific change found in the devotional life and personal piety of the individual within sixteenth century London is a single amongst many reformations that occurred. In short, this study encompasses a single religious reformation amongst diversity of lay piety in the larger story of the reformations that occurred simultaneously in sixteenth century England. Therefore, when using the term *reformation* in this study, the reader should understand it as this single reformation rather than preconceived notions of a singular era or event.

The top down verses bottom up methods have been a broad conversation that has dominated reformation historiography for the past 60 years. Having a firm grasp concerning these approaches and their historiographical role aid in understanding the importance of this particular study and how it contributes to the current conversation reformation historians are having. Up until the 1960's, the historiography of the English Reformation had been studied primarily from one direction because the previous top-down approach understood the reformation as solely initiated and perpetuated by the role of the monarchy and elite in power. It was a political event that was comprised of political decisions, parliamentary statutes, laws, and government dictations. The historian's ability to categorize religious change into specific events that connected from one to the other restricted the academic community from asking different questions. For them it was very chronological, definable, and based upon cause and effect.

Sir Geoffrey Elton was considered the great doyen and true epitome of top-down reformation studies. Haigh stated that he "has presented the reformation as one aspect of the great reform programme which was initiated and carried far by Thomas Cromwell in 1530's."[6] Elton's paradigmatic work told a story that few historians challenged but rather attempted to further discuss and fill any yet to be researched gaps. For Elton, the political reformation of the period sought to nationalize the church while the religious reformation merely intended to rid the church parishes of superstition. Therefore, these changes were encouraged from deliberate and intentional government action through carefully crafted sermons as well as distributed propaganda. This was also backed by enforcement through increased anti-treason laws as well as reports of deviants to Thomas Cromwell and his team for proper investigation.[7] Elton often agreed with fellow historian A.G. Dickens stating in the beginning of *Reform and Reformation* that Dickens and him, "have long been well agreed on the age of Henry VIII and Thomas Cromwell."[8]

However, in 1964 Dicken's *The English Reformation* rejected this approach and adopted a new methodology that emphasized the agency of the masses. This ushered in a decades-long conversation of the true instigator of change within the religious reformation. His suggestion was that the reformation was much more complex than this and was progressed by Protestant grassroots movements through the use and demand of the vernacular scripture in devotional and ecclesiastical life. Because Dicken's work was so monumentally respected in the field, for years few challenged it and the primary points of his work remained largely undisputed. For example,

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[6] Haigh, Christopher. "The Recent Historiography of the English Reformation," *The Historical Journal* 25, no. 4 (December 1982): 998.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Elton, Geoffrey. *Reform and Reformation, England 1509-1558* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), vi.

Dickens argued that the spread of reform was broad and extremely prompt and that Lollardism, anti-clericalism, and a reaction from a Catholic past all allowed the doctrines of Luther quickly permeate the land. [9] However, as previously discussed, historians today now understand the Reformation to be an event that's effects have trickled into the 17th century.

Other historians have seen Dickens and Elton as a backboard for effective reactionary works. Many of these historians were able to build upon one another in a progressive, symbiotic relationship through close relationships with one another. For example, Christopher Haigh viewed the reformation as something begrudgingly accepted by the laypeople as it was forced upon them through royal decrees, laws, and often times violence. In turn, this transition did very little to change the everyday lives of people. His *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society Under the Tudors* intended to seek out and explain the stories found within the "lesser events" that came to make up what historians defined as the English Reformation. Haigh, like many historians of his period, agreed that multiple reformations occurred on several levels to make up what is termed at large as the *English Reformation*.

While it is a general rule that an older generation of historians took the top down approach and that new and progressive historians are now studying the bottom up approach, there are two large exceptions in Eamon Duffy and Diarmond MacCulloch. Duffy argued in his monumental work *The Stripping of the Altars* that the religious reformation became a calamitous event that shook the small communities across England and brought violence and chaos. This study demonstrated the physical damage that took place across the English countryside amongst

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[9] Wabuda, Susan. *Preaching During the English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1.

the diversifying of beliefs. His focus on ritual highlighted the use of a repetitive practice amongst a tumultuous season of change.

Diarmond MacCulloch's research on the Reformation has been widely accepted and spread through the use of televised series based upon his works. Therefore, his popular and broad histories are a clear reflection of how the educated world outside of historians understands the Reformation. His series *The Reformation: Europe's House Divided 1490-1700* published in 2003, has a modern understanding in weaving the long-term changes occurring across Europe into a larger picture of what is understood as the Reformation. However, his perpetual use of history's prominent characters and events widened the gap in the public's understanding of people of lower rank within this period. Unfortunately, powerful rulers and scandalous stories of Henry VIII and his many wives overshadow much of what could be taught in the lives and happenings of lay individuals. Since the reformation gave way to increased individuality and agency, this form of study though riveting stories and accessibility to a popular audience forgets to include much of what made this period unique and crucial in aiding to understand the diversity of religion in society today.

According to the top town approach, when Henry VIII made a break from the Catholic Church out of his desire for an annulment from Catherine of Aragon, lay people overtime adjusted their lives and slowly transitioned at the command of the king. Therefore, from this perspective, all *significant* change happened from the top down. However, this can be problematic because it makes an a priori assumption that all significant change in society is related to government and those in power. This leaves out transitions of personal piety and insinuates people had little agency apart from the rule of those governing them or even worse, that the lives of the elite are the only that matter enough to be investigated. Therefore, if this

movement can be proven to have made an impact on the shifting of piety, then the top-down

approach is thus proven insufficient to provide a full and total explanation for this phenomenon.

There are advantages to the top down approach as well. This form of study well employs the

largely accessible primary resources and information for simple study. In fact, only through

investigating individual congregations, prayer books, and letters can a glimpse of the actual

change outside of the government during this reformation be witnessed. Therefore, this research

serves as both a reaction and contribution to the large historiography of the English Reformation.

The top-down approach has its strengths and limitations as well in study. However, by

repeatedly emphasizing the rule of the elite and failing to mention lay individuals, a rift has been

widened from historical fact and perception as this group of lay people have been forgotten. To

retain a semblance of understanding this forgotten and marginalized sect, a blatant effort had to

be made to bring them back to the historiographical conversation. However, in its attempt to

empower the social, political, and economic low, this approach can ignore blatant influences

from the state. This group was more preoccupied with how the inhabitants of England

understood and acted up on the new religious world they found themselves in both before and

during these transitions. Questions concerning personal religious identity and actual practice

became forefront in prominent scholarship.

It is evident that Dicken's and Elton's revolutionary research opened the door for new

questions to be asked. Patrick Collinson implemented this new approach as a central

understanding in his research and was an authority of this period during the 1980's and 1990's.

His most prominent work was *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* and Collinson understood this

religious movement as instigated and legitimately desired by those who initiated it. Therefore,

these Puritans were not satisfied with the initial reformation and called for a further reformation

and purification of the church. Collinson's understanding of the origins of these greater movements was largely before his time and foreshadowed the general direction this field took in understanding the bottom up approach in discussing reforms.

Caroline Litzenberger initiated a further transition to this mentality in her book, *The English Reformation and the Laity: Gloucestershire, 1540-1580.* She thought that this group of historians had mistakenly taken the paradigm of studying the elite and theological intelligentsia and forced it on the study of lay people. Litzenberger stated, "Thus they have continued to employ a 'top-down' and even denominational approach to the study of sixteenth century religious change, despite their apparent 'bottom up' perspective."[10] The ruling elites desired a reformed population to adopt a rigid classification of theology.

Clair Schen agreed with Lizenberger by stating that Haigh's *English Reformations* called for a new "from below" approach but overlooked lay piety. Though advanced for his period of research, he resorted to high politics for evidentiary support. Schen even disagreed with Lizenberger's approach by stating that her analysis primarily rested on previous historiographical periodization even though her "from the pew" approach was novel.[11] However, Litzenberger, Schen, and most current reformation historians have rebelled from this paradigm in search of a more organic approach.

Alexandra Walsham's *The Use of Script and Print* and *The Reformation of The Landscape: Religion, Identity, and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* embrace this same form. The latter was said by Andrew Hopper to be a, "represent[ation of] the crowning

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[10] Litzenberger, Caroline. *The English Reformation and the Laity: Gloucestershire, 1540-1580* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 23.
[11] Schen, 7.

glory of a new turn in Reformation historiography."[12] Rather than attempting to answer

questions concerning origins and speed of the movement, she made a sophisticated argument of

explaining the physical changes that occurred across the landscape of Great Britain. Much like

Duffy's *Stripping of the Altars*, this work studies the effects the reformation had on special

arrangements. Like her advisor, Collinson, this was all done through the lens of a bottom up

approach.

 A holistic approach taking advantage of the strengths found within both arguments

suggests that somewhere in the middle of this historiographical dichotomy is where the truth lies.

In her groundbreaking book, *London and the Reformation*, Susan Bridgen took this approach.

She argued that Londoners found themselves engaged in a reformation that was not originally

their making but shifted over time to be something made up of the rise of the individual. Through

the initiated change from the monarchy, social change was given rise to have agency and

movement.

 In keeping with this new holistic vein of historiography, the individual parishioner

possesses agency to diversify in their practice and beliefs while still being influenced by

government decisions and the elite. Unfortunately, there are many exceptions to understanding

this as a complete freedom in religious practice. This study is not imply that the religious climate

of reformation England was welcoming or open minded to new practices and ideas. However,

the religious climate precipitated from introducing the newness of Protestantism allowed for a

splintering effect that increased the diversity amongst belief of lay parishioners. Unfortunately,

this diversity did lead to unrest, persecution, violence, and xenophobic reactions all across

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[12] Hopper, Andrew. "The Reformation and the Landscape: Religion, Identity, and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland," *Rural History* 23, no. 1. (April 2012): 76.

Europe and not just England. The world today is in such a state with globalization and the introduction to new beliefs. The hope and meaningful purpose of this study is that the reader can gain a sense of the wrongs in the past when accepting religious diversity and move towards a hopeful and peaceful approach in practice for the future.

This study will be limited by several factors. First of all, temporal. This study spans from Catholic England beginning in 1500 to Henry VIII's departure from the Catholic Church in 1529 and up until the end Mary's rule in 1558. During this period, England went through three large religious transitions as far as the government's approach. Also, this study is limited spatially to London for several reasons. The first is that change can be more markedly detected in London due to it being the seat of power. London was the first location that experienced the growth, concentration, and distribution of printing during this time due to its urban nature. The only other counterparts in England that also had printing access at the time were Oxford and Cambridge.[13] Because of its exposure to the printing press, there was also a rapid spread of accessible vernacular scripture. Though this is where the change spread from, it cannot be seen as a representation of the larger spread across England. The events elsewhere in England occurred under unique circumstances and situations. Some regions remained rather peaceful while others were overturned in violence and destruction. Rather, the focus on specifically London is intended to more directly address the relationship between personal devotional life and that of the larger governmental religious shift during the period.

The aim of this study is to bring this parishioner to life by understanding how this large change affected their ability to exercise agency in their personal belief practices. Visible

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[13] Crick, Julia and Walsham, Alexandra, ed. *The Uses of Script and Print, 1300-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 6.

transitions in this personal agency will be chronologically addressed throughout this study. By tracing this in Catholic England, during the theological reformation, and lastly the post-reformation legacy, this research will connect the dots between changing state religion and personal belief. This personal agency lead to a splintering and spread of religious perspectives in a short period of time that would not have been condoned by the head of the Church of England. The reader should walk away from reading this research understanding that the reformation mattered deeply. Through the rise of the individual, the increases in literacy and access to scripture, and the rejection of mass, this study will aim to shed light on those so cruelly blotted out by history's exclusive scope.

CHAPTER 2
CATHOLIC ENGLAND- 1500-1526

Deep tradition and group piety underlay ecclesiastical experience in Catholic England. The Catholic Church in England at this time could best be understood as a large organization of individuals with an emphasis on group culture and cluster belonging within religious identity. Church leaders that started new practices soon had a following behind them that turned into eventual orders. Individual piety was not necessarily discouraged or looked down upon, it was just not conceived of in this manner. Piety was understood to be best practiced when pursued alongside other followers of Catholicism. Much of this can be found rooted in the medieval Catholic strong value of passed down tradition and repetition. Legitimacy was found not through trailblazing but rather through time's attesting to a tradition's long standing past. Therefore, perceived piety was passed down. Communal piety did not mean an exclusion of personal piety. Rather, the individual perspective of personal piety was present, but simply exercised in a particular communal manner in pursuing faith with others of similar belief.

In the lives of the most elite this principle was reflected. In 1521, Henry VIII openly seemed like the least likely European monarch to reject such a Catholic Church. He wrote a novel length excoriation titled *Defence of the Seven Sacraments* stating that Luther was, "a venomous serpent, a pernicious plague, infernal wolf, an infectious soul, a detestable trumpeter of pride, calumnies and schism."[14] He began to write in during 1519 while reading Martin Luther's *Attack on Indulgences* and he argued directly against him. Over twenty volumes of it were published in the sixteenth century and it was widely publicized. In turn, Pope Leo X named

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[14] Henry, VIII. *Assertio Septem Sacramentorum, or, Defence of the Seven Sacraments*. Edited by Louis O'Donovan and James Gibbons (New York: Benziger, 1908), 14.

him Fedei Defensor, Latin for Defender of the Faith. Luther later responded with a work titled

Against Henry, King of the English.[15] At this point, Henry had Thomas Moore write *Responsio*

ad Lutherum in defense.[16] Henry's scholarly but public correspondence with Martin Luther

placed him as a national icon and verbose upholder of the Catholic faith.

The model of communal versus personal piety stands firm in the language of the

document as well as specific arguments throughout. When arguing for transubstantiation through

communion, Henry was angered that the body and blood of Christ under Luther's model was not

dispensed to the laity all at one time. Also, the singling out of only *one kind* of laity for Luther

was considered an abomination. Henry stated, "… one kind taken away from the laity in the

communion, and is nothing at all mov'd that children should be debarred from both. For he

cannot deny that children in the primitive times did receive communion."[17] For Henry, the most

important sacrament argued for was the Eucharist. His lengthy defense of it revealed the

indispensably of transubstantiation almost as vehemently as his defense of the communal nature

of the Eucharist.

As previously mentioned in *Defence of the Seven Sacraments*, Henry compared Luther to

a serpent but he also followed by referring to him as a "rotted and separated member." For

Henry, a vehement insult of Luther was not only to connect him to Satan by implying he was a

corrupt and sneaky serpent but also to point out his separateness from the remainder of the

church body.[18]   Therefore, Luther was previously considered a member of something much

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[15] Luther, Martin. *Against Henry, King of the English* (1552), 1.
[16] More, Sir Thomas. *Responsio ad Lutherum.* Edited by John M. Headley (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1969), 1.
[17] Henry VIII, 14.
[18] Ibid., 18.

larger than himself but being separated from that came naturally with his diversion from the Church's primary teachings and seven sacraments.

Lastly, Henry pointed out in speaking of mass the general practice of the laity as a group dispensed grace out of the hands of the priests. Sins to be forgiven and covered by grace were viewed as a large group rather than a personal burden to carry by an individual laymen. Henry stated, "How dim of sight is he himself, and how he endeavours to spread his darkness over the eyes of others, when he sees not that there is difference in the case, that now the laity receives out of the priests' hand, as the apostles did first from Christ."[19] In this statement, *priests* is plural and not possessive but *hand* is singular. Therefore, there is implied one symbolic hand by which all priests dispense grace to their laity. But not just priests were referred to in that implied manner. Henry also spoke of Christ's sacrifice, "which is always offered for the sins of the people."[20] Therefore, Henry conceived of sin as something the Church carried together. While in comparison to Luther, sin was something to be seriously taken and a weight personally handled by the individual. Luther in comparison stated, "He died for me. He made His righteousness mine and made my sin His own; and if He made my sin His own, then I do not have it, and I am free."[21] Therefore, the manner in which Henry referred to this practice in the context of a large group in comparison to Luther's individual is striking to the reader.

And in the context of his role of King of England and Defender of the Faith, Henry did defend the Catholic faith vehemently. However, he soon found that his faith tied to Rome invaded on his personal life and desires when he wished to have an annulment to Catherine of

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[19] Ibid., 38.
[20] Ibid., 30.
[21] Luther, Martin, *On Christian Liberty* (1520), 34.

Aragon so that he might wed his mistress, Anne Boleyn. Catherine had given him no prospect of a son and Henry was obsessed with Anne's allure as well as promise for a legitimate heir to provide security for his family's rule. When the church repeatedly refused his request out of protection of Catherine's home country Spain as well as their loyalty to the institution of marriage, this was the primary splintering point of Henry with the Catholic Church. Henry was complacent with his identity as Defender of the Faith so long as the faith defended his wishes. However, now that his wishes did not rest well with the remainder of the group, Henry branched off individually and created a new title for himself—Supreme Head of the Church of England.

Though Henry serves as an extreme example of the elite in piety, Christian piety during this period was closely tied with being a good subject for the thousands in London under his rule. One's piety was largely visible because it was done around others and in plain sight. As Euan Cameron stated, "One could tell who was a 'good Christian' by whether or not they: learned the Lord's Prayer and Apostle's Creed; stopped working on Sundays, and went to church to hear mass."[22] He continued that they, "confessed their sins once a year, before receiving the communion at Easter…and stopped work to take part in worship on the festival days of the saints."[23] Therefore an individual's family unit, their parish priest, fellow church attenders, and even coworkers had a clear understanding of someone's piety without a word ever being said. It was very much an active sort of community piety, requiring upkeep and repeated practice.

Amongst lay people not within the political elite, this communal piety was prevalent as well. Because of the nature of group piety, these lay individuals are often hard to find written records by them since this was before viable access to printing. The financial records from

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[22] Cameron, Euan. *The European Reformation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 12.
[23] Ibid.

London's St. Mary at Hill reveal multiple examples of this sort of devotion and piety. Records reveal a regular practice of parishioners providing loans to the Church for unexpected expenses and later being repaid.[24] This free-flowing exchange of money reveals a communal sense of meeting needs as they are seen.

Of course, there will always be exceptions and fringe activity to this communal and traditional nature to piety. For example, Caroline Bynum's work *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* primarily argued that women individually practiced their piety through the use of extreme fasting and communion. For Bynum, women found their personal piety and individuality through these food practices and not necessarily as a group practice. However, the women she specifically researched were often known widely and considered to be the idealized goal for religious women and held as a standard. Many of them were even later canonized for their extreme acetic and self-depriving practices. When a few women started exercising their piety through their relationship with food, so did many other women, thus creating a following. Therefore, though individuality can always be highlighted in scholarship through focusing on single persons, for medieval Catholic belief, it was practiced and followed communally with masses following direct leadership and examples set before them. Therefore, early piety is best understood as being rooted in community piety.

To discuss community piety within Catholic England, the primary elements of piety broken down and explored through this research are gender roles, religious orders, language, and theological principles. These will aid in providing the reader a well-rounded perspective of piety

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[24] Littlehales, Henry, ed. *The Medieval Records of a London City Church (Saint Mary at Hill) A.D. 1420-1559* (New York: Kraus Reprint Co, 1972), xxxiii.

in its context towards gendered and religious groups as well as the quickly shifting concept of language and the slowly changing perspective on theology.

Within Catholic England, men and women exercised their religious piety in varying manners. This was because gender was used as one on the primary dividing factors in aiding to group individuals together. Though mass was often both genders mixed, there were many aspects of the Church that specifically used gender as a simple barrier in which to group individuals for communal lifestyles.

The study of women in this field has been largely constricted for several reasons. Prominent scholars such as Dickens, Haigh, Duffy, Walsham, and MacCulloch have analyzed and fully explored the conservative resistance and evangelical progress during this period. Though a majority of their research pulled from the works of early modern men, there were several prominent women whose writings and documentary evidence surrounding their lives were accessible and widely explored such as Anne Boleyn, Katherine of Aragon, Katherine Willoughby, Mary I, Elizabeth I, and others or their noble rank. Thus, they have become the primary focus of scholarship and lower ranking women have been swept to the side. This is not on purpose but merely out of lack of documentary evidence.

However, laywomen have been brought to the forefront of study through findings of more primary sources. A few of these women were Elizabeth Barton, known as the Holy Maid of Kent, and Margaret Clitherow, referred to commonly as the butcher's wife. [25] Because these accounts are difficult to find, they unfortunately cannot be understood as representative of their class that has largely lost their historical voice. However, they serve as symbols reminding

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[25] Chappel, Julie and Kramer, Kaley, ed. *Women during the English Reformations: Renegotiating Gender and Religious Identity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 4.

historians of women whose lives and the intricacies of them certainly remain unknown. The shroud of mystery surrounding these people whose lives might have been so mundane in the day to day but also so erratic in their response to great religious and political change certain makes them great characters of interest.

For example, Margaret Clitherow, was a butcher's wife from York. She was pressed to death and was the first women to die for refusing to conform along with the masses under Elizabethan anti-recusancy laws in 1586. She had used her home as a safe haven for Catholic priests in northern England and her allegiance to Catholic piety within reforming England is striking. Though her death was during the reformation, her marked words are a remnant of Catholic piety and the struggle found within the transition. In her prayer before her execution in front of all it was said by witnesses that, "first she prayed for the Catholic Church, and then for the Pope's holiness, Cardinals, and other fathers which have charge of souls, and then for all Christian princes."[26] Rather than praying for herself, Clitherow used her last breaths to pray for her Catholic community.

Women and men both had the alternative option of living life in devotion to God in religious houses. For women, this option of marriage to God was highly encouraged as an alternative to marriage to a man. There were several options for women at the time. They could get married, go to a nunnery, become a prostitute, or carry on as a spinster and perceived burden to others. In an era before open women's activism, this system of options was accepted with little protest. Though hard for the modern reader to understand in light of current events, these had been the options for centuries upon centuries and women found a way to make their

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[26] Lee, Guy Carlton. *Leading Documents of English History* (Great Britain: George Bell and Sons, 1900), 312.

individual lives fit within a larger picture or group. For these nuns, their religious and gender identities were comprised within this one role. Their religious belonging to a larger structure was a defining element at the very core of their personal belonging. Julie Chappell argued this same system in her *Women During the English Reformation.*[27]

Women's piety in pre-reformation England was largely rooted in the cult of the saints as well as the cult of the Virgin. Therefore, there was a large emphasis on following the example of women before them in attributes of purity, holiness, and asceticism. Sainthood was a large cult in Catholic England. According to Helen Parish and her work *Monks, Miracles, and Magic: Reformation Representations of the Medieval Church*, hagiography holds the key to understanding the largest practices of piety within Catholic England. Pilgrimages, relics, and goals of personal piety related to the lives and sacrifices of saints. Catholic history as it was conceived in England was centered around the lives of these figures and their accomplishments in furthering the Church. Qualities practiced by these women, such as virginity and asceticism, were intended to be emulated by others. These were easily exercised within the confines of religious houses in group settings.

Because language and the communication of ideas are so directly connected, the study of it can be used as a gauge by which to measure the spread of religious ideas and piety in this context. The language and the use of it during this era is extremely accessible due to the spread of print in texts. Print spread texts differently than manuscript because it multiplied them instead of slowly adding to the number of accessible texts. This in turn widened the social milieu within their broad circulation.[28] Wisdom transmitted by word of mouth was deemed untrustworthy,

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[27] Chappel and Kramer, 1.
[28] Crick and Walsham, 20.

hence the arrival of the *term old wives' tales*—a gendered phrase that was a result of the growing unpredictability of oral tradition.[29] Therefore, as oral tradition decreased in reliability, the written and ultimately printed word grew quickly in authority. This would prove to be a downfall in the Church's rhetoric as they had a *second source* of tradition and truth of equal importance to scripture and the written word.[30]

This authority would become a threat to Catholic values as the role of the priest during this era was a crucial balancing act. The priest practiced the Eucharist alone daily and his job was to present the Gospel to his parishioners in Mass and during his sermon. However, this was all to be done in conjunction of protecting the holy nature of the elements from the foul nature of their sinful audience. Therefore, the text of the Bible was to be distributed to their congregation sparingly and discerningly so that people could be assisted in understanding its mysterious nature but also that the dignity of the sacred would not be polluted.[31] It was also intended to stay in the holy language of Latin as directed from the papacy The balance between sharing and maintaining holiness in the job of the priest was already difficult to maintain, but the increased use of the printing press and the new availability of scripture and this balance was totally overthrown, thus nullifying the role of the priest in small communities.   Walsham put this tension well. "The anxieties which surrounded the publication of translations of the Bible, among some early Protestants as well as medieval and Tridentine Catholics, attest the recognition that the press had the capacity to lift sacred knowledge and scriptural exegesis out of the hands of the clerical elite and, to create, as never before, a priesthood of believers."[32]

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[29] Ibid., 21.
[30] Cameron, 89.
[31] Walsham and Crick, 9.
[32] Ibid., 20.

Though the primary language of the church was largely stabilized across England, vernacular dialects within England varied greatly. In 1522 a man from Cumberland went to Kent to reside and was accused of being an "alien Scot" due to his accent.[33] Foreigners were simply people that were not from one's immediate area. Travel was difficult and people of a kind seemed to stick together in forms of sustenance living.[34] If any region was centralized with a common vernacular language it would have been London, but even today the city is filled with varying dialects and accents, making a very regional emphasis even within London's boroughs.

When considering religious orders, piety was understood to be best practiced when pursued alongside other followers of Catholicism. Parishioners, monks, and nuns alike found themselves a part of various sorts of religious orders such as a religious house or a specific congregation. Because this communal aspect was emphasized, passed down religious orders as well as monasteries and abbeys flourished. Churches were commissioned by the papacy and passed down as well. St. Mary at Hill was founded in 1336 and is still present and active today on Lovat Lane EC3 in Eastcheap, London.[35] As previously discussed, religious orders provided an ideal communal group setting in which individuals could practice personal piety. Women had the option of identifying socially and religiously as a nun, giving her belonging and purpose. However, these monasteries and convents served a much greater role in Catholic England. They were sources of lodging, medical care, and especially education. In a society where education was not easily accessible, medieval monasteries often ran schools out of their doors and while some were directly connected with Oxford and Cambridge.

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[33] Ives, 14.
[34] Ibid.
[35] View a stunning 360 degree look at this church as well as study the architectural structure at http://in360degrees.co.uk/wrenchurches/data/018StMaryAtHill/.

Piety took a communal form in the lives of laymen and those in religious orders as well. For example, far before the religious reformation was a thought, in 1084 Saint Bruno of Cologne located a nook in the valley of Chartreuse where he built a hermitage with log cabins. Their primary values were eremitic and coenobitic lifestyles.[36] This meant that there was a focus on a hermitic existence in seclusion from outside society in combination with a small and close community amongst one another of common belief. Six friends soon came out to join Bruno and from there the order grew and remained thriving until an avalanche destroyed the cabins and killed 7 monks in 1132.[37] From here, it did not take long for followers to establish other branches of this order, primarily in Britain.

Therefore, the individual of Saint Bruno was not what held the group together but rather it was retained through a common cause and place of belonging from tradition passed down. The Carthusian order founded by Saint Bruno remained strongly active in Britain and Scotland until the dissolution of the religious houses in the 1530's. The priory in London known as the London Charterhouse was a large complex constructed in 1371. Here, over 25 monks lived a communal lifestyle with their own living quarters and garden. When the monastery was closed in 1537, Prior John Houghton was hanged, drawn, and quartered. In addition to that, ten monks were taken to Newgate Prison where nine starved and the ten was executed later at Tower Hill. This group became known as the Carthusian Martyrs and their unified and centralized activity for almost 500 years in England serves as a reflection of the values of the life of the medieval church and the means through which personal piety was practiced.

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[36] "Collections." The Charterhouse. Accessed March 3, 2017. http://www.thecharterhouse.org/collections/.
[37] Ibid.

These religious orders had a function outside of themselves. They were of educational and medicinal purpose as well as sanctioned by the king. The relationship of king and church for Catholic England was directly tied if not synonymous under their concept of the divine right of the king. Therefore, there was a large felt respect for the monarchy that was encouraged as parishioners attended mass regularly. In 1509 when Henry VII passed away of tuberculosis, the congregation of St. Mary at Hill gathered together and used torches to contribute to his funeral procession. Torches were also used when one of their own priests passed away and this gesture for the king was to imply that he was one of their own in the group belonging.[38]

However, religious houses had their place in Catholic England but they were only a venue, not a community in which laymen could join. To serve this role, open ended brotherhoods called *confraternities* were in full trend by the end of the fifteenth century and into the sixteenth.[39] These could easily be joined based upon one's trade or societal status or really any unifying factor and an individual could and was often encouraged to be a part of many at a time. These confraternities would practice mass together and were viewed as a way in which parishioners could look after one another. Their rich helped the poor and their living tended to their dead by raising support to pay for costly burial services as well as through actively praying for their souls.[40] A confraternity would typically have a patron saint and would hold masses specifically in vernation of them. These saints were typically the Virgin Mary or St. Anne, her mother, but there was also the occasional local saint. These societies were not difficult to find in

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[38] Littlehales, 266.
[39] Cameron, 15.
[40] Ibid.

London but rural ones often joined in with more urban areas, therefore unifying parishes with communities outside of their immediate contact.[41]

One specific confraternity located in Soho, London, met at St. Patrick's church and referred to themselves as The Confraternity of Our Lady of Sorrows. In their manual of devotions, their prayer of consecration to the Virgin Mary stated, "I firmly resolve to love and serve thee henceforth, and to do all in my power to make others love and serve thee too."[42] Their self-stated mission was to, "nourish a loving sympathy with our Blessed Mother in her sufferings, and with her, and through her to unite ourselves with Jesus bleeding and dying for us."[43] Therefore, they were a cohesive unit whose primary objective was to unite themselves through Mary and Jesus and to pursue this as a unit and not necessarily as individuals. By referring to their efforts as accomplished by *us*, they are bringing to light this unique Catholic aspect of communal piety.

For Catholic England, preaching and the and the effort of understanding and gaining salvation had made a resurgence from medieval teaching. God's grace was manifested through the completion of the seven ordained sacraments: christening, confirmation, marriage, anointing of the dead, entering holy orders for clergy, confession and penance, and ultimately through communion.[44] The understanding was that the very same body and blood of Christ that hung on the cross was physically present at this sacrament through transubstantiation, and this idea was central to understanding the existence and purpose of the church. When a congregation gathered

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[41] Ibid., 16.
[42] London St. Patricks, Soho, Confraternity of Our Lady of Sorrows, *Manual of Devotions, for the Use of the Members of the Confraternity* (London, 1861), 2.
[43] Ibid., iii.
[44] Wabuda, Susan. *Preaching During the English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 7.

together to practice communion, it was then that this ultimate gift of salvation was bestowed. Therefore, salvation was a gift administered through actions and through the pursuit of God through a clergy member or as a collective unit. Sermons were only supplemental during Mass and all other beliefs and practices where dependent on the communion feast.[45] The main event always took place at the communion and everything else was set up to frame and complement it or even another sacrament as the primary event.

Therefore, if a Mass was intended to spur confession, the sermon would focus on morals, ethics, and the principles that must be followed to make one a worthy Christian. For pre-reformation Catholics, sanctity, or purification, was a collective and lifelong pursuit. The Christian walk was a cyclical repetition of sin, pardon, and penance. Active church parishioners were required to attend confession at least once a year as sin was assumed to be a natural attribute of the church parish.[46] Once the priest provided penance, they would perform acts of expiation. Therefore, faith was something that had to be actively maintained to grow and flourish. There was always an inner battle of the desire to please God and the innate sinful nature. Prominent bishop and cardinal who was later canonized, John Fisher once stated to his congregation, "the persone which hath all thre partes of penaunce, contricyon, confssyon, and satysfaccyon is neuer begyled but doubtles he goth in the right path that ledeth the waye vnto euerlastynge blysse."[47] Therefore, required confession through a priest reflected a need for the church body to practice piety.

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[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Fisher, Saint John. *English Works of John Fisher: Bishop of Rochester* (Charleston, SC: Nabu Press, 2010), 26.

This communal aspect of piety unified the Church in many ways. There were several ecclesiastical schools of thought when it came to teaching laymen. Forerunners of these theories within England included Thomas Aquinas and William of Ockham. Though they had many technical theological disagreements, they had a strong belief that they should not be aired out to the public, "especially if they threatened the authority of the Church," for a, "disagreement between the learned was not to be allowed to erode laymen's faith in the church."[48] Cameron's argument suggests that the unified nature of Catholic piety was an attempt to stabilize the authority of church power.[49]

Charity in Catholic England was tied in a direct relationship with the concept of purgatory.[50] Charitable works, especially in aiding the widows, orphans, and poor, were encouraged to be done in the name of a loved one in order to shorten time in purgatory. The direct motivation of charity was to aid not only individuals on earth but also in purgatory. In the records from St. Mary at Hill, it is revealed that a man named John Porth died in October of 1525 and left a letter for the church that directed that, "three shillings and fourpence shall be paid to the poor the parish every halowentyde for five years."[51] In being beneficial to both the passed soul, the recipient, and the giver, this encouraged a communal practice of parishioners taking care of one another in community. In turn, the practice of charity was highly institutionalized and accounted for in order to keep record. It was an effort to allow those of elite status and wealth to actively reach out to others of similar faith. By joining together benefactor with the

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[48] Cameron, 83-84.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Schen, 21.
[51] Littlehales, xxix.

recipient, the Catholic Church took an active role in meeting their parishioners needs while encouraging a specific sort of charitable piety.

Parish priests began to take on a similar attitude of a general *democratization* of church services.[52] Mass was heard for the dead in each parish and access to all seven sacraments was necessitated. As Cameron stated, "The Church of the late Middle Ages, in short, offered a range of service to everyone."[53] And in this optimistic goal was the ultimate downfall of the Catholic faith in England and allowed the swift entrance of Protestantism. By hurrying to provide a wide range of services to laymen with a large array of masses and services, the church failed to prevent Catholic religion to become merchandised and a part of a *blessed transaction*. Cameron argued that the Church was vulnerable because it took on too large a variety of secondary jobs and lost its primary objective of providing a religious service.[54] He stated in the mechanization of the church, "spiritual goods were bought with worldly ones."[55] Cameron continued, "lay people could final all sorts of offers from the Church to ease their burdens, if only they would believe in them. The point… was for them to depend on, and trust in, the status and legacy of the Church."[56] The very masses that the Catholic church was appealing to as a whole would be the same to overthrow their grip in England on individual at a time.

Though there was once strength in numbers for group piety within Catholic England, this attempt to appeal to the masses spread the church much too thin. The multitude of programs and services offered to laity overwhelmed the ecclesiastical hierarchy and weaknesses within the system began to expose themselves. As Protestant ideals slowly permeated London, the

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[52] Cameron, 15.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid., 20.
[55] Ibid., 18.
[56] Ibid., 83.

perception of piety in practice would gradually begin to shift. This was not an overnight

transition by any means. Rather, this time of unrest contributed to the mass chaos during the

time of transition.

CHAPTER 3
REFORMING ENGLAND - 1527- 1558

Reforming England was a time to continuous transition and change. When studying the multitude of reformations within London, it can often be difficult to single one out for research because they are deeply interconnected and woven together to create a complex picture of what is viewed largely of as the Reformation. The phrase *reforming* communicates that the process was still transitioning during this period. However, a distinct adaptation in observed piety began at the arrival of reformation ideals. The term *adaptation* best describes the phenomenon because it communicates the period of time before the transformation came to fruition. In other words, there was no definitive year of religious reform for England.

Though this change was slow and gradual, this was not an easy process for Londoners. The Catholic Church had made a claim that as an earthly institution, it was linked directly to the heavenly one. This assertion fortified and sheltered the church through some seasons of corrupt practice and disorganization. Cameron stated, "The common priesthood of the Church could not deviate from Christ's ministry; so even a sinful cleric would still offer true and valid sacraments."[57] Therefore, it was difficult for some to justify accepting Protestantism based solely out of a reaction against Catholicism. There must have been another instigator to encourage individuals to step out in a different direction and ultimately view piety differently. The thrust of humanist teachings and values during this period challenged the communal life within the Church.

In 1549 Edward VI officially rejected Catholic practices in form and institutionalized the Church of England as doctrinally Protestant. That same year, Edward commissioned Thomas

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[57] Cameron, 88.

Cranmer to write the first prayer book of the Church of England. It loosely followed generally accepted positions amongst varying Protestant groups. Therefore, to maintain centralized rule as Supreme Head of the Church of England, Edward made it theologically general and wide ranging out of a full knowledge of the independent and fragmented nature of the Protestant movement. Due to ambiguity concerning communion, there was a second edition issued in 1552 before his untimely and young death in 1553. When Mary I came to power, she swiftly shifted the county towards Catholicism due to her personal faith. The religious reigns of Edward and Mary reveal the humanist motivations of even the ruling elite during this short period. Rather than considering the desires of the country at large, religious beliefs nationally swayed and remained in turmoil due to the intermittent nature of monarchical rule. This is a small reflection of the all-pervasive individualism regarding faith that was neither Catholic nor Protestant alone.

Though complex in its origins, understanding England during this period as a *reforming* rather than *reformed* country in this period is crucial to accepting shifting gender roles, increased use of the vernacular, the diversification of religious sects, the meltdown of religious houses, and finally the great variance in theological practice. This period embodied the concept of becoming but not yet. The previous historiographical argument concerning this period was as follows: the religious reformation was a revival that formed out of decay within the Catholic Church. After reading the previous chapter, it is evident that this was simply not the case. Though the reformers did criticize the abuses within the Catholic Church, this does not mean that they reformed because of these failings alone.[58] The change that happened was one in all of Europe, not merely centralized in London or even England at large. These humanist movements towards greater

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[58] Ibid., 9.

agency and mobility for the individual gave reformation ideals the rise necessary to take hold and spread quickly.

The shifting story of women's movements and agency within this era is fascinating. Previously discussed in the last chapter, women's options were concrete and offered much to be desired. For women having been in nunneries, their religious belonging to a larger structure was a defining element at the very core of their personal identity. When Henry VIII began the dissolution of the religious houses, some women in smaller houses gave up their religious identity altogether or simply moved to a larger home if it had not already been filled by other displaced women. However, once this gradual dissolution was complete, it had become evident that these concrete options for women were shrinking and something had to be done to address the growing issue. Sixty percent of these women were living in extreme poverty on pensions of £2 while only six percent of men having left monasteries were living this lowly.[59] The gender gap in opportunities for women was astounding.

Marriage was not an option either. For women that left convents, they were not considered "brides of Christ" anymore and for an entire decade they could not marry a man either because of religious laws set in place. It was not until 1549 that these women were permitted to marry in the traditional sense.[60] For those who did not find suitable husbands, many nuns chose to join together in one home in order to survive—unfortunately often being mistaken for whore houses. The female religious identity found within mysticism and piety dissolved along with the religious houses and as Chappell put it, "How, then, were women to understand, and consequently, redefine themselves in the face of collapsing religious and social spaces?"[61]

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[59] Chappell, 1.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid., 2.

Therefore, these new boundaries forced women to renegotiate her place within an increasingly flexible and open society. The lack of opportunity instigated women to find new avenues and thus, increase their personal agency. Women no longer were going to generally fit into specific molds society had provided, but rather individually make advances to establish themselves. As Chappel stated, "Catholic or Protestant, recusant or godly rebel, early modern women of singular conscience, powerful or powerless in the main, reinvented or reasserted their spiritual or gendered spaces."[62] This group of women were rejected along with Catholic values as they unknowingly became the primary target of Protestant misogyny.[63] For these women, this masculinized form of Christianity attacked the devotion to largely female as well as male saints, the cult of the virgin Mary, and perceived women's carnal nature as a part of their wicked and unchangeable sinful nature.[64]

Margaret Aston observed, "In the sixteenth century England acquired a whole suite of ruins… the agonizing sign of wholesale destruction supported people into activity—even those whose Protestant convictions made them wholly endorse the process at large."[65] The destruction of societal norms and typical constructs gave rise to individuals, including women. Laywomen were largely for the first time becoming individually vocal concerning their religious beliefs. Margaret Clitherow, as previously discussed, served as an example of this activism women took in faith. Through personally taking action by housing Catholic priests, Clitherow sacrificed her life for her personal convictions. Even prestige and gender did little to spare the lives of non-conformist women. The commonly known fate of Mary, Queen of Scots, by Elizabeth I can be

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[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Aston, 108.

seen as a clear example. Altogether, regardless of the often terrible penalty or even if they were

Catholic or Protestant, the destruction of previous societal barriers allowed them to express and

exercise their individual beliefs in a new manner.

Because mainstream Protestantism discouraged the inclusion of women in ministry roles

or civic office, there was little immediate venues through which women could practice faith

vocationally. A handful across Europe went on to write and publish religious pamphlets.[66]

However, this was fairly rare and did not provide a solution for religious instruction to women

on the part of a male church leadership. According to Cameron, Protestant teaching emphasized

a "*personal* obligation to all lay people" to be taught and to grasp religious instruction.[67]

Because women were included in this sphere, reforming clerics opened schools in which younger

girls could be instructed by employed women in religious teachings. This provided belonging

and further enabled women through means of education. Women were considered equals in

eternal perspective to men. One particular catechist stated to husbands that their wives were, "no

dish-clouts,… nor no drudges, but fellow-hires with them in everlasting life, and so dear to God

as the men."[68] Therefore, each individual regardless of their gender identity had equal access to

and affection from God.

To no avail, separateness of gender was still attempted to be preserved in much of

reforming England. On bishop stated that, "ther is great disorder amongest the parishioners in

their sittings in the churche that boyes and younge men do place themselves very disorderly." He

continued, "and both women and men, maydens and mens wives promiscue sitt together."[69]

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[66] Cameron, 404.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Peters, Christine. *Patterns of Piety: Women, Gender, and Religion in Late Medieval and Reformation England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 175.

Therefore the gender barrier, despite some clerical resistance, was beginning to break down within church settings.

In the setting of church services, oral tradition decreased in reliability as the written and ultimately printed word grew quickly in authority. Therefore, to publish one's individual opinions in print implied a claim to validity and orthodoxy. It was to assert one's self and opinions into the mainstream. There are two common misconceptions amongst historians concerning the printing press during the reformation era. The first is that it spurred on the reformation out of a newfound ability to spread ideas quickly and in mass. The second is that the printing press was a strictly Protestant and secular contraption while Catholics adhered solely to the use of manuscript. To understand the proper context of how language and piety related during this period, these preconceptions must first be burst so that the reader might have an open mind in accepting the role of the press in both Catholic and Protestant piety.

It is often taught that the printing press allowed reformation ideals to spread quickly, giving life to the movement. However, just because the printing press increased the distribution of scripture did not mean that it was altogether more accessible for the layman. In fact 90% of the general population were considered illiterate at the time and printed text in their native tongue was just as inaccessible as Latin verbally read in Mass.[70] It can only be assumed that the remaining 10% were either a part of the elite or the clergy. Because of this hurdle in widespread illiteracy, the growth of literacy amongst the lay population exploded during the religious reformation in favor of the English language over religious Latin.[71] Early Lutheran rhetoric

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[70] Mitch, David. "Education and Skill of the British Labour Force," in Roderick Floud and Paul Johnson, eds., *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain, Vol. I: Industrialisation, 1700-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 344.
[71] Crick and Walsham, 22.

stated the motto, "Everyman his own bible reader."[72] Walsham stated, "The liberation of

Scripture from imprisonment in an archaic and alien tongue likewise became a rallying cry of the

early reformers…"[73] The combination of humanist ideals and increased availability of printed

text aiding in this newfound longing and use for literacy.

Some Protestants practiced caution concerning the written word because manuscript was

symbolic of a seemingly corrupt scholastic tradition and the very clerical dogmatism that the

religious reformation had attempted to overthrow from the beginning.[74] Though the practice of

the writing of manuscripts was something that had largely faded by the sixteenth century, the

longstanding tradition of the copying of manuscripts made some Protestants feel as though

manipulation and ultimate ownership of religious texts was perpetuated by the Catholic Church.

At the Henrican Dissolution of the religious houses in the 1530's, there was a iconoclastic

destruction of thousands upon thousands of holy texts. Works that that been previously treasured

were "faste nailede up upon postes in all comon howses for easement."[75] Therefore Walsham

stated, "The canon of authority and the community of scholarship which stretched back into the

late antique past through the medium of Latin and the manuscript was irrevocably severed."[76]

This attitude lead to the broad secularization of the printing industry. A practice that had once

been done in group contexts within the walls of religious houses was individualized into small

business.

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[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid., 23.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.

Altogether, some Protestants felt justified in their destruction of a Catholic recorded past.[77] Some Protestant historians, scholars, and bibliographers felt a need to rescue works which could be used to justify their victimization and persecution by the Catholic Church.[78] Therefore the doctrine of *sola scriptura* was born. This served as a massive assault on the Catholic reverence of authority in ecclesiastic traditions that had never been transposed specifically in the Holy Writ. It sought to remove itself from the unreliable spoken word found in oral tradition as well as to completely dissociate itself from Rome while creating a longstanding English understanding of a connection between "oral communication and popish superstition."[79]

Theologian William Tyndale was once rumored to say to a Priest: "If God spare my life, as many years pass, I will cause a boy that drives the plow to know more of the Scriptures then you do."[80] His desire and emphasis on the most lowly having a thorough understanding of scripture was largely reflective of reformation ideals. Tyndale is well-known for his translation of scripture now known as the King James Bible as well as multiple commentaries attempting to put scripture in explainable and accessible terms. Tyndale's devotion to simplicity in scripture inspired him to translate clearly and succinctly, often creating new terms and phrases that have become commonplace in modern language. The translated words *Passover*, *atonement*, and *mercy seat* were all invented by the wordsmith to better describe the original biblical language.[81]

Catholics as well had a complicated relationship with the press and swift spread of

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77 Parish, 67.
78 Crick and Walsham, 25.
79 Ibid., 24.
80 *The Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle* (London: Published by Frederick Westley and A.H. Davis, 1826), 781.
81 Ibid.

information. It sometimes mistakenly assumed that Catholics had an aversion to printing and that

the widespread practice of writing manuscripts continued into the middle of the fifteenth century.

The history of early printing is largely presented as a Protestant if not totally secular enterprise

driven by the demands of vernacular and lay readership.[82] However, clergymen felt that print

could serve as a valuable pastoral and evangelical tool. Jesuit Alfonso Pisa once said in 1582,

"One book is worth more to us than a thousand sermons."[83] He continued, "One Father can only

address a few listeners in one college for an hour, whereas a printed book can reach readers of all

types in a hundred different places forever."[84] Duffy highlights in *The Stripping of the Altars*

that priests really harnessed the power of print both pre-reformation and counter-reformation to

circulate thousands of printed primers as well as printed indulgences and images amongst

England.[85]

To perpetuate the complicated relationship the two groups had with print, Duffy's

understanding of regional presses housed in Benedictine communities calls to question the

typical pairing of "print and Protestantism" and "monasticism and a moribund manuscript

culture."[86] On top of this, the incunabula of the English religious houses contained many early

printed books prior to 1501.[87] The personal accounting book of Prior William More or

Worcester, who was in office from 1518-1536, shows records of the purchase of sixty-nine

printed works from London distributors. For further evidence, it is often forgotten that in the

1530's within the years of the last breath of English monastic life, the only active printing

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[82] Ibid., 74.
[83] Ibid., 25.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Duffy, 40.
[87] Ker, N. R., and Andrew G. Watson. *Medieval libraries of Great Britain: a list of surviving books* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, 1987), 140.

presses outside of the sphere of London were located under the direct patronage of monasteries at St. Albans and at St. Augustine's Abbey in Canterbury.[88]

Catholic monasteries also recognized that printing provided a direct solution to the ever-present problem of supplying students with needed textbooks when they were away from libraries located at the university.[89] In fact, in English monasteries began to replace manuscripts with printed texts much earlier than secular institutions. The University colleges at Oxford and Cambridge were extremely slow to respond to the printing press. While their libraries held the same amount of manuscripts as large monasteries, there were few signs of any acquisition of more affordable printed texts before the 1520's. Later when reformist scholars vocationally inundated the university system in the 1540's, they began to purge their shelves of manuscripts to force the purchase of newly printed editions of texts.[90]

Therefore, if print could neither be categorized as singularly Catholic or Protestant, the function of it within this period must be studied outside of this dichotomy. The story of early printing in England is largely presented as a Protestant if not secular enterprise driven by the demands of vernacular and lay readership. Understanding the complicated perspective of the Catholic and Protestant Churches on printing sheds light and adds context to the understanding of the laymen's concept of the new industry. Through the acceptance of print by both groups, the new industry emphasized individuality through small business and a large rejection of the communal practice of manuscript writing.

The authority of the written word also emphasized the theological authority of scripture. For Protestants, there was also a new-found stress on neither scripture in the form of print or

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[88] Crick and Walsham, 75.
[89] Ibid., 77.
[90] Ibid., 79.

written word nor the traditions of the unified Church as solely authoritative, but rather as, "the voice of the Holy Spirit guiding the Church gave validity to both Scripture *and* church," as stated by Cameron.[91] Therefore, the rejection of the sole authority of Church tradition and hierarchy opened a new door to allowing the perceived Holy Spirit in multiple forms to be trusted as authority, which was open to discretion by the individual. Therefore, the pious individual could more easily come to conclusions on spiritual truths by their own experiences with the Holy Spirit rather than through communal settings.

For Protestants, many traditions that once contributed to laymen working out their own faith were now purposeless. Clerical celibacy, extended pilgrimages, and votive masses were all now null and void. Due to this, religious houses lost their large following and prestige.[92] If there was no purpose in a strikingly difficult and sacrificial lifestyle, there was no longer reason for individuals to remain in celibate and ascetic lifestyles. Also, Henry ruled that these houses be dissolved in 1536 through an act of Parliament. Roughly 800 monasteries were destroyed, the land and wealth were claimed for the crown, shrines were vandalized and demolished, and the religious orders were either expelled or the members arrested at the order of the King.[93]. Though this did not occur overnight, the deeply entrenched system of religious houses throughout England seemed to be overturned rapidly.

The buildings that were once used as monasteries were either torn down or quickly converted to something else. As previously mentioned, the Charter House that was once a Carthusian Monastery was converted into a Tudor Mansion and later a museum intended to

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[91] Cameron, 89.
[92] Wabuda, 10.
[93] Ibid.

reflect its religious past. All within a century and a half, a monastery had gone from being a commonplace element to society, to something unique attempted to be preserved through archival studies and curatorship.

If Catholic England encouraged ultimate religious devotion through religious orders, reforming England encouraged it through individual study within the university system. Instead of encouraging communal lifestyles for increased personal holiness, individuals wishing to vocationally pursue faith started in the library by reading extensively. This was partially encouraged by the growth of the press as earlier discussed but also through a new emphasis on approaching literature with a mindset to personally study rather than to copy a text for society's posterity. During this period, the practice of scholars reading to themselves rather than having a text read outloud to them became normalized. Though this form of study was not accessible to the average lay person, the improved scholastic environment allowed countless pamphlets to be published and widely distributed. In one particular pamphlet, questions and answers concerning theology were systematically approached so that they might be taught easily to all walks of life. It stated, "Why do you not allow public prayer in services in in Latin or a tongue not understood by the people?"[94] The reply was that though people may say a prayer of their own, "The design of public prayer is lost which was to join with the priest or minister the congregation in public devotion."[95]

Reforming theology in London was often a complicated matter. Though it is simple to trace the overarching theological thrust of the reformation, a close-up study reveals many individuals grappling with this gradual transition. Luther's personal ideas concerning salvation

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[94] Gilbert, R. *Questions and Answers Concerning the Respective Tenets of the Church of England and the Church of Rome* (London: F.G. & R. Rivington, 1818), 20-21.
[95] Ibid.

formed from his understanding of moderate humanist Catholicism.[96] From this, he saw and

posed challenges to the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church and their assumed salvific

powers.

As Cameron stated, "The basic principles of the Reformation only make sense if the ideas

which they attacked are understood."[97] Luther scoured the scriptures in an attempt to

theologically understand better where one could obtain salvation. What Luther claimed to have

found was not administered through the Church and elements but rather gained on an individual

basis through faith in God's supreme sacrifice. Mankind was inadequate to gain their own

salvation through works or any personal merit. Christ took sin upon his own shoulders and his

people were called to place their trust in this sacrifice rather than their own personal works.

Therefore according to Luther's conclusion, the rituals through which the Catholic Church

administered salvation were dangerously wrong. Good works were a part of faith and were the

result and not the source. Therefore, Luther was convinced that the entire economy of salvation

formed and perpetuated by the medieval church must be challenged and transformed.

Though not a Lutheran by any means, John Colet was a true London Reformation

Humanist.   Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral from 1509-1515, Colet used his time in power to

advocate for reformed theology and humanist ideals. Erasmus once said of Colet, "When I listen

to Colet, it seems to me I am listening to Plato himself."[98] While still aligning himself with the

Catholic Church and their teachings, Colet called for a deep reform of the piety within the

individual lives of the priests. In his infamous convocation sermon John stated, "Above all, let

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[96] Wabuda, 9.
[97] Cameron, 83.
[98] Erasmus to John Fisher. Erasmus, *The Correspondence, December 5, 1499*. 1: 235. Ed.
Beatrice Corrigan (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 1974), 7.

those laws be recited which concern and pertain to you, reverend fathers and lords of bishop."

For, he continued, "we sometimes certainly have bishops too little spiritual—men more worldly

than heavenly, wiser in the spirit of this world than in the spirit of Christ!."[99] Altogether, John

represented many of London's religious during the period in recognizing the reform that must

occur and encouraging an individualized approach to truly purify the Church one soul at a time.

Therefore, reforming theology had an emphasis on the individual and their relationship with God

over the individual's relationship with one another.

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[99] Olin, John C. *The Catholic Reformation: Savonarola to Ignatius Loyola* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1992), 45.

CHAPTER 4
CONCLUSION

Lay piety within reformation studies is often lost in a sea of historiographical discussions as well as a popular emphasis on the monarchy and racy drama. The particular religious reformation in London discussed brought about a rejection of exterior organized group religion and a newfound emphasis on inward faith and personal piety. This research meshed together the top down and bottom up approaches by studying both aspects of the church laity. Therefore, a new dichotomy was adopted in understanding piety as observed and perceived communally within Catholic England as well as individually within Reformation England.

Historians have come widely to agree that the so-called Reformation was composed of an intricate and complex system of many changes within sixteenth century England— and more largely Europe. In keeping with this recent conclusion, this study also respects both sides of the historiographical argument by understanding that change can and does potential precipitate from both the low and the high. Political decisions instigated the transition, but the actions of laymen allowed the change to continue in the face of political unrest for nearly a century.

As the first chapter argued, perceived Catholic piety was primary centered on community. Communal piety did not mean an exclusion of personal piety. Rather, personal piety was simply yet to be conceived of in that manner and individuals looking to grow in their faith would attempt to do it within the confines of their local parish, a priest, and other Catholics. Henry VIII served as a great example of this communal piety in the language of his *Defence of the Seven Sacraments*. By emphasizing Luther's separateness from the Catholic Church as well as by asserting the importance of Christians practicing the Eucharist together, Henry inadvertently highlights this theological concept. Gender divisions, religious houses, and

confraternities proved to be simple partitions by which to group separately functioning communities. Lastly, further investigation of Catholic theology within London proved sin was conceived of in group settings and should be dealt with by the church at large. Also, charity was intended to function for the group as beneficial for the giver, recipient, as well as the soul by whose name it was given.

This research find's Cameron's solution to understanding the instigator of change within the religious reformation to be most agreeable. He stated, "By the church attempting to be all things to all people within their parishes, there was a large *democratization* if the Catholic Church in which the masses were now able to access the clergy, funeral rites, and regular masses."[100] And though this goal was optimistic, it became the ultimate downfall of the Catholic faith in England and ushered in the swift entrance of Protestantism. The very masses that the Catholic church appealed to as a whole would be the same to overthrow Catholic grip in England one individual at a time.

Then came the second chapter discussing *reforming* England. The phrase reforming in was used to communicate that the process was still transitioning during this period. Through a newfound emphasis on individuality in faith, new positions were expanded for those who previously had little opportunity. The previous gender divisions and religious orders that gave people group belonging were disintegrated, creating individual avenues and belong in a more complexly built infrastructure. Women with no other options were not confined to the walls of the nunnery any longer. Clerical celibacy, prolonged pilgrimages, and ritual masses were no longer purposeful. After the disintegration of the religious houses, a new emphasis was placed on personal study through the university system.

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[100] Cameron, 18.

There are many more avenues in which this study could be further continued and explored. For one, this study was originally intended to encompass the Elizabethan period to further follow the extended reformation effects. However, this was soon proven to be chronologically over-ambitious for a master's thesis. Also, London was a sensible choice for this research due to the availability of primary resources. For the historian with capabilities to travel to European archives, a world of other opportunities open up. Because the government transitions were so blatant in England on the part of Henry VIII and his continued successors, it would be fascinating to study if the same conclusion could be reached within the more disjointed German states. Research should remain open ended and leave the reader with further avenues to explore in order to maintain a growing conversation amongst historians.

The reader should walk away from reading this research understanding that the reformation mattered deeply. The transition aiding in ushering in religious accessibility and individual perceptions of piety seen in the world today. Its example of proving that change can truly occur from those with power as well as those with little serves as an inspiration to all. May those in power rule with a weighty understanding of the long-term implications of their actions, and may the low be encouraged to live boldly knowing their actions and beliefs could very well impact what historians will be motivated to study centuries to come.

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