# POPULAR RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE IN THE ENGLISH REFORMATION, 1533-1642

by

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**ABSTRACT**

The English Reformation was a historic process which reshaped the religion of the country, tearing down one Church and replacing it with another. Such a break with the past generated significant conflict, but popular religious violence has been absent from our understanding, until now. Popular religious violence, defined as physical interpersonal violence committed outside of any official sphere, was a major part of how many people challenged, enforced or participated in the English Reformation, so its absence leaves a major gap in our understanding of this formative period. This thesis rectifies this omission by examining examples of popular religious violence in four contexts: the conservative rebellions of the 1530s and 1540s, conflict over festive culture in the Elizabethan and Stuart eras, anti-Catholic violence from the 1580s until the 1640s, and the escalation of hostilities between differing creeds of Protestantism in the years immediately prior to the outbreak of the English Civil War in 1642. Such examples also show that although acts of popular religious violence were relatively uncommon, the wider attitudes and beliefs which vindicated violence in Reformation England were endemic.

Through this structure, this thesis shows how the nature of popular religious violence evolved throughout the Reformation, from a Catholic understanding based around destroying the bodies of those who attacked the Church, to an embryonic Protestant one, which was directed at anything, or indeed anyone, believed to be leading others astray. Unlike other countries whose Reformations were wracked by widespread bloodshed, England experienced no major protracted domestic conflict in the early modern period, until 1642. This thesis shows how this allowed a much wider range of religious disputes to spiral into violence, unlike the binary divisions which characterised other contexts. In England, Catholics battled other Catholics to defend religious traditions, Protestants fought each other about how they should relate to the pre-Reformation past, and both had to find ways to co-exist, which often only provided more scope for violent conflict. In short, the lack of an open war meant that religious violence was able to persist in England for over a century, and became part of the backdrop of ordinary life in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. England did not experience a conventional military "war of religion", but a "cold war of religion", with many faces and fronts which constantly shifted as the Reformation wore on. This thesis will enrich our understanding of the English Reformation by showing how popular religious violence was a key part of the lived experience of the Reformation and what those who participated in it believed was worth sacrificing everything to uphold.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# ABBREVIATIONS

BL        British Library

Bod.L     Bodleian Library

C           Court of Chancery

CSPV     Calendar of State Papers, Venice

ERO      Essex Record Office

HLRO    House of Lords Record Office

KB        King's Bench

L&P       Letters and Papers

ODNB    Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

PROB    Probate of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury

REED    Records of Early English Drama

REQ      Court of Requests

SP         State Papers

STAC     Court of Star Chamber

TNA      The National Archives

# CONVENTIONS

Bible references: All Bible references and quotations have been taken from the King James Bible.

Dates: Original dates have been preserved, and the year is presumed to have begun on 1 January.

Spelling: Original spelling has been maintained.

# INTRODUCTION: CONCEPTUALISING VIOLENCE IN REFORMATION ENGLAND

The worst day in the life of Dorothy White (née Clopton) probably began like any other. It was July 1549, and she and her husband Matthew White, a Church commissioner, were living in the North Yorkshire village of Seamer near Scarborough.[1] Matthew White's task in the North of England was to assist the government in depriving the Church of England of much of its remaining land. To say they had profited from Matthew's position would have been an understatement; just two months earlier he and Edward Bury, a man in the service of Sir Walter Mildmay, had bought around 150 former Church lands from the government.[2] He may also have been involved in a lawsuit over the manor of Seamer some years earlier.[3] How Dorothy felt about the tremendous gains they had made in the last two years is not recorded. Perhaps she was pleased by their improved financial situation. Possibly she was unnerved, either by the rapid pace of religious change since the death of Henry VIII two years earlier, or the malicious whisperings of the villagers about what they saw as theft from the church.

Yorkshire had remained defiantly and staunchly loyal to the Catholic Church and its traditions despite all efforts to the contrary, throughout the religious upheavals of the past sixteen years, ever since Henry VIII had broken from the authority of Rome in 1533. Just thirteen years earlier much of the county had been roused in the abortive Pilgrimage of Grace in an attempt to stem the tide of the Dissolution of the Monasteries.[4] Matthew was involved in an even larger dissolution, that of the chantries: institutions devoted to securing the souls

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[1] William Page, ed., *The certificates of the commissioners appointed to survey the chantries, guilds, hospitals, etc., in the county of York* (Durham: Published for the Surtees Society by Andrew's & Co, 1894), 515.

[2] David M. Palliser, *Medieval York: 600-1540* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 291.

[3] TNA REQ 2/8/222 (Thomas Doune and his wife Dorothea, Percival Kelke and Katherine Kelke v. Matthew White).

[4] Anthony Fletcher and Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions* (Harlow: Longman, 2008), 42.

of the dead.[5] Whether she and Matthew had any misgivings about their new position or not, they wasted little time in celebrating their success with their friends and family. Staying at their home on the night in question was the aforementioned Edward Bury, a merchant from York surnamed Savage, and Dorothy's brother, all of whom had profited in some way from the Dissolution of the Chantries. In hindsight, gathering together four of the most unpopular men in the area proved unwise. If Dorothy and her guests had looked out that night over the East Riding of Yorkshire, they may have seen that the beacon at Staxton, around three miles away, had been ignited, the first hint of trouble brewing. Later that night, around 3000 men from Seamer and the surrounding area descended on the house and abducted Dorothy's husband and brother, along with Savage and Bury, and took them about a mile outside the village where they killed them. Their remains were initially left in the field where they were murdered, until Dorothy and Savage's wife managed to arrange a proper burial.[6]

Unknown to the unfortunate victims, in the weeks leading up to the horrific murders, Thomas Dale, the parish clerk of Seamer, had been meeting with a yeoman from East Heslerton named William Ambler. The two men had hatched a plot to rouse a county-wide rising against the onslaught of the English Reformation, one of many that occurred across the country that year. Both were present at the murders, but whether they participated in the grisly deed is unclear in contemporary accounts. However, their attempt at violent counter-Reformation proved short-lived and by the end of August the rebellion had collapsed.[7] Dale, Ambler and the other ringleaders were executed in York on 21 September 1549.[8] How Edward Bury, Savage and Dorothy's husband and brother came to such brutal deaths in rural

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[5] John Burbridge, *Late Medieval Chantry Foundations and the Collegiate and Parish Church of Ripon* (Ripon: Friends of Ripon Cathedral, 2008), 6.

[6] John Foxe, *Actes and Monuments of these Latter and Perillous Days, Touching Matters of the Church* (London, 1570), 1538.

[7] Amanda Jones, *"'Commotion Time': The English Risings of 1549"* (PhD diss., University of Warwick, 2003), 295.

[8] Page, *The certificates of the commissioners,* vol 2, 515.

North Yorkshire had its roots in events that had taken place sixteen years earlier, over 200 miles away in London, with the dramatic collapse of a royal marriage. Although the European Reformation had begun in 1517, the forces for religious reform in England were galvanised through Henry VIII's quest to end his first marriage, even if the king himself would prove devoted to many of the old ways.[9] While England did escape the widescale slaughter seen in much of Europe during this period, instances of violence over religion did take place across the country at various intervals throughout the Reformation.

This thesis will study instances of popular religious violence which took place between the break from Rome in 1533 and the outbreak of the English Civil War in 1642. Defining what specifically constitutes an act of popular religious violence is not straightforward.[10] What is considered violent is inherently a social construct and is often defined at least in part by context.[11] For example, the maiming of defenceless animals was considered hilarious in seventeenth century France, but would be considered abominable in modern times.[12] For my purposes, popular religious violence will be defined as an act of physical harm committed without official sanction, and which was motivated primarily by religious sentiment, be it zeal, hatred or both. This does not preclude the involvement of other motivations, such as economic oppression or social tension, but religion be a primary factor. This study will also include incidents of threatened violence in specific circumstances: it occurred alongside an act of physical violence, the threat was clear and precise and aimed at a

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[9] Peter Marshall, *Heretics and Believers: A History of the English Reformation (*New Haven and London: Oxford University Press, 2017), 164.

[10] John D. Carlson, "Religion and Violence: Coming to Terms with Terms", in *The Blackwell Companion to Religion and Violence,* ed. Andrew R. Murphy (Chichester and Malden, Mass: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 7-22.

[11] Eddo Evink, "On Transcendental Violence", in *Phenomenologies of Violence,* ed. Michael Staudigl (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 65-80, 73.

[12] Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), 85.

particular person. All these factors indicate how genuine the threat in question was, and how likely it was to be carried out.

My definition can include acts which involved just a couple of people to larger groups and mob attacks, but does exclude other forms of violence such as formal battles, and those which do not involve human victims, such as iconoclasm.[13] Although verbal aggression, such as insults, were also considered forms of violence in early modern England, solely spoken forms of antagonism will not be included in this thesis, as physical violence was the most extreme manifestation of popular religious conflict, therefore solely verbal examples of violence will only be included where they accompanied physical acts of conflict.[14] Violence against suspected witches could also be considered examples of popular religious violence due to the view of witchcraft as heretical devil worship, but these will also be excluded, as often those accused of witchcraft were suspected because they violated social expectations or gender ideals, rather than any explicitly religious deviation. Examples of violence where the details are too brief to warrant examination have also been excluded.[15]

This study will also exclude acts of violence committed by people regarded by contemporaries and historians to have acted primarily as a result of mental disturbance, such as William Flower who attempted to murder a priest in 1555, or Enoch ap Evan who beheaded his brother and mother in 1633.[16] This is because it is difficult to show how much the actions of someone suffering from mental illness were the result of religious fervour. The

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[13] This does not mean that iconoclasm will be wholly excluded from this thesis, as there are important points of overlap between violence against objects and against people, see Chapter Three.

[14] For more detail behind the use of insults, especially their gendered aspects, see Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers: women, words and sex in early modern London* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

[15] An example of this would be what occurred in the Warwickshire village of Napton in early 1642, when there were a series of violent assaults in the parish church, but little details are given as to what actually occurred, and there was no mention of why fights were taking place in the church with such frequency: Sidney C. Ratcliff and Harold C. Johnson eds., *Warwick County Records,* volume 6, (Warwick: L.E. Stephens, 1941), 63, 65, 67.

[16] John Stow, *A summarie of Englyshe chronicles* (London, 1565), 233: Stow called Flower a "desperate peson"; Richard L. Greaves, "Enoch ap Evan (c. 1599–1633)", *ODNB,* last modified 3 January 2008, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/67788.

wide chronology of this study is necessary, as although popular religious violence in England was not an aberration, it was relatively infrequent. It also enables this study to find longer-term patterns and changes in how such violence evolved over the course of the Reformation.

My research will seek to understand popular religious violence in the context of Reformation England by examining a number of case studies that demonstrate the different ways violence manifested between 1533 and 1642. A case study approach is most appropriate, partly because instances of such violence were relatively uncommon, so a more quantitative approach would be of little use. Examples of violence also require a precise knowledge of religious and political circumstances, and national and local contexts to be understood. This study will focus entirely on England because popular religious violence reflects the fault lines of the Reformation, what contemporaries saw as most important and worth fighting over. These differed in the four countries that make up the British Isles. In Scotland intense political conflict drove the Reformation as much as religious fervour.[17] In Wales the Reformation failed to take hold until the publication of the Bible in Welsh.[18] Ireland took a very different course: the native Irish remained fiercely Catholic throughout the Reformation, as much out of resistance to English occupation as for reasons of genuine devotion.[19] The popular religious violence in these countries would reflect these different points of conflict and detract from the singularity of the English context.

The dates of 1533 and 1642 have been chosen to border this study because both dates were turning points in the course of the Reformation. In 1533, the Church of England formally broke from the authority of Rome, kickstarting the first wave of religious reform.

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[17] Alec Ryrie, *The origins of the Scottish Reformation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 2-3.
[18] Glanmor Williams, *The Reformation in Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991), 26-30.
[19] Christopher Maginn, *William Cecil, Ireland, and the Tudor State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 166; Felicity Heal, *Reformation in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Samantha A. Megis, *The Reformations in Ireland: Tradition and Confessionalism, 1400-1690* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997).

Whilst England had experienced religious controversy prior to this point, the Reformation was completely unprecedented. This study will end with the outbreak of the English Civil War in late 1642, as warfare can be expected to have consumed popular violence and regurgitated it in a new form. The years after the English Civil War also saw a plethora of new religious minorities emerge, such as Quakers, which would require analysis in their own right. Although there were some non-Christians in England prior to 1642, such as Jews and Muslims, the thesis will focus on the fallout of the Reformation and on violence between and among Catholics and Protestants.[20] Popular religious violence often went unrecorded, and so the instances throughout this thesis probably represent the most dramatic tip of a much larger iceberg.

However terrible the murders at Seamer in the summer of 1549 were, it is worth pointing out that compared to the violence of the French Wars of Religion, such as the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre, in which thousands of Protestant men, women and children were murdered in a single day, the events in Seamer may seem insignificant. Why England was spared such horrors is a complex question, but there are several possible explanations. In France and later Ireland, two countries which saw some of the most extreme outbreaks of popular religious violence, the collapse of the state was much more profound than in England. France was racked by civil war between 1562 and 1598, which heightened tensions and fears between religious groups and desensitised the population to violence.[21] Ireland was subjected to brutal occupation throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries which doubtless stoked the flames of resentment in the native Irish against the English occupiers.[22]

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[20] Eva J. Holmberg, *Jews in the Early Modern English Imagination: A Scattered Nation* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012); Robert J. Topinka, "Islam, England, and Identity in the Early Modern Period: A Review of Recent Scholarship", *Mediterranean Studies* 18, 1 (January 2009), 114-130.

[21] Mack Holt, *The French Wars of Religion, 1562-1629* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 76.

[22] Sean J. Connolly, *Divided Kingdom: Ireland 1630-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 4; John McGurk, *The Elizabethan Conquest of Ireland: The 1590s crisis* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 5.

Another deeper reason behind the comparative rarity of violence in England is related to the religious dynamics in all three countries. In France and Ireland, the worst examples of violence were committed by Catholics against Protestants. Natalie Zemon Davis, whose research has defined the study of early modern religious violence for almost fifty years, has argued that the Catholic understanding of violence was based on destroying the bodies of heretics, so by its very nature, Catholic violence was brutal in the extreme.[23] However, in England, Protestantism was dominant, at least politically, after 1558 and only became more so as the Reformation wore on. The full implications of this will be examined later, but suffice to say, Protestants had a very different understanding of violence, one based on the removal of malign influences. The result was that Protestants did not enact the sort of comprehensive slaughter seen in countries where Catholics retained political power or numerical supremacy. However, English Catholics also showed considerably more restraint than their co-religionists in France. This was likely a result of several factors, such as the ambiguous religious divides early in the Reformation and the lack of an open conflict in England.[24]

This thesis will examine popular religious violence in England in four contexts. The starting point will be the violence of the conservative rebellions of 1536 and 1548-9, which demonstrate how the medieval Catholic construction of heresy, as embodied in the person of the heretic, continued to shape religious violence in the early Reformation. Chapter Two will move forward to the Elizabethan and Stuart periods to study conflict over popular festive culture between zealous Protestants, and the much broader demographic of individuals who wished to maintain cherished cultural traditions. It will demonstrate how embryonic Protestant popular violence was primarily aimed at removing what they saw as dangerous

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[23] Natalie Z. Davis, "The Rites of Violence: Religious Riot in Sixteenth-Century France", *Past & Present* 59, 1 (May 1973), 51-91, 77.
[24] This will be examined in depth in Chapter One.

influences. It will also examine how contempt for such zealous moral improvement justified violence in favour of festive rituals. Chapter Three will examine conflict between Catholics and Protestants from the 1580s to the 1640s. It will highlight how violence was justified during peacetime, and the interconnectedness of both anti-Catholic prejudice and the general toleration of Catholics in post-Reformation English society. The final chapter will make its focus the dramatic rise of violence among Protestants in the five years preceding the outbreak of the English Civil War. It will show how violence against both zealous and conservative Protestants was facilitated by a polarised religious context and escalating political instability. It will demonstrate that violence against zealous Protestants was based around mockery and humiliation, whilst violence against religious conservatives demonstrated how Protestant violence had ripened, retaining its focus on perceived dangerous influences, but extending beyond mere objects to those they believed were leading others astray.

This structure, which combines a chronological with a thematic approach, will enable this thesis to show how popular religious violence in England evolved, from a Catholic understanding to a Protestant one, reflecting the changing demographics of the country as the Reformation reshaped England's confessional allegiances. English Catholic violence was based on finding and destroying the bodies of those they considered heretics. They were the heirs of the medieval view of heresy as a disease, the only solution being, if a heretic proved stubborn, to purge them from society by killing them.[25] This was embedded in a view of heresy as a choice. By contrast, as this thesis will show, Protestant violence evolved to remove anything considered to be obfuscating the path to salvation. This was rooted in an entirely different view of sin. Protestants, especially those on the zealous end of the spectrum, saw sin as part of human nature, and therefore involuntary. More zealous Protestants also

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[25] For example, see Robert I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 14-5; Ian Forrest, *The Detection of Heresy in Late Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 146.

believed that confronting sin was a key part of the path to redemption.[26] Therefore, their acts of religious violence addressed anything, or indeed anyone, they believed to be encouraging sinful behaviour, to which all were vulnerable. Protestant violence took direction from Biblical condemnations of idolatry and how Biblical characters destroyed supposed idols and false gods, and punished their adherents. However, as their goal was to remove impediments to salvation and cleanse the Church of idolatry, their violence did not require the death of the victim. This is the major reason Protestant violence appears less extreme.

Another vital argument of this thesis is that popular religious violence in England was uniquely multifaceted; both inter-confessional and intra-confessional violence were key features of the Reformation landscape. Violence against zealous Protestants by their more moderate co-religionists rarely had overtly religious connotations, but had a distinctive script, one influenced by pre-Reformation rituals of mockery and with elements peculiar to the carnival tradition.[27] Such violence was triggered by fundamental disagreements over what constituted a religious matter. It will also make clear how popular religious violence was defined by context; each chapter shows how different religious conflicts, political dynamics and more ephemeral aspects, such as individual personalities, could all influence violence.

This thesis will also reflect on the wider significance of popular religious violence in the English Reformation. The performance, suffering or witnessing of violence were key in how many formed religious identities during the Reformation. Violence was a major part of the lived experience of the Reformation for many people; religious divisions tore into parishes, communities and families. This thesis demonstrates that the English Reformation was of paramount importance to the people of England. They were far from passive followers

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[26] Alec Ryrie, *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)*, 31, 38, 50-2, 56-7.

[27] For more analysis of the carnival tradition see Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe (*Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), Chapter Three "Carnival and the lower body", 85-116.

of the monarch and state; indeed, many were unafraid to challenge the religious direction of their communities or even the nation itself. Others used violence to support the religious stance of the state, which also demonstrates a level of popular agency, as well as both support for and opposition to religious change. Overall, this thesis will show how the Reformation plunged the people of England into a perpetual state of tension that required only the right, or the wrong, confluence of elements to erupt into violence.

To reach its conclusions, this thesis will approach each case study from the perspective of understanding who the perpetrators and victims were, how their religious convictions shaped their behaviour and what their violence was intended to achieve. Due to the wide range of contexts in which popular religious violence unfolded, this study must utilise a broad range of sources. These vary from chronicles such as that of Raphael Holinshed, and religious histories, most importantly that of John Foxe, to popular petitions and court cases, most prolifically from the Court of Star Chamber. The Court of Star Chamber grew out of the Privy Council, but became a powerful force under Henry VIII's first leading advisor, Cardinal Wolsey, and survived his downfall.[28] After the execution of Thomas Cromwell in 1540, the court became fully separated from political dominance and had a clear area of authority, presiding over cases involving such offences as rioting, unlawful assembly, assault, forcible entry, imprisonment and trespassing.[29]

Like most legal documents in which a plaintiff must persuade their case to be heard, Star Chamber documents were primarily intended to construct a suitable narrative.[30] To bring a case before the court, a plaintiff had to submit a Bill of Complaint to some appointed

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[28] John A. Guy, *The Cardinal's Court: The Impact of Thomas Wolsey in Star Chamber* (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1977), 6, 139.
[29] John A. Guy, *The Court of Star Chamber and its records to the reign of Elizabeth I* (London: H.M.S.O, 1985), 7, 53.
[30] Natalie Z. Davis, *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and Their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 3.

commissioners tasked with deciding whether the complaint was viable and which court should hear the case.[31] This means that complaints were often written to conform to the purview of the court rather than to report events accurately; plaintiffs could exaggerate the actions of the defendants or misrepresent their own to manipulate the court process.[32] Once the complaint arrived before the councillors of the court, the defendant/s would be required to submit a reply to the charges, and called to attend the court to answer any interrogatories.[33] Star Chamber records have been valuable resources throughout this thesis as the court's area of jurisdiction meant that instances of religious violence were submitted to it, and multiple accounts of events provide useful insight into instances of violence and the complexities of religious allegiances. However, these cases are often incomplete due to poor survival, or as our early modern forbears were far more litigious, plaintiffs often filed multiple suits in different courts so cases in Star Chamber could be stopped. Personal memoirs, letters, coroners' inquests, quarter sessions records and popular literature have also been employed where necessary. All these sources have different strengths and limitations and, as each chapter uses different sources, these will be noted where relevant. The twin tyrannies of time and space mean that this study cannot claim to be comprehensive, but it utilises a sufficient breadth of material to study the evolution of popular religious violence over the course of the Reformation.

This thesis will also seek to understand the connections between popular religious violence and the wider culture. For this, the thesis will utilise printed sermons, books and official documents to study how broader trends legitimised and encouraged such violence, although this was almost always veiled. Of particular importance will be pollution rhetoric,

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[31] Guy, *The Court of Star Chamber,* 10.

[32] Heather Falvey, "Relating Early Modern Depositions", in *Remembering Protest in Britain since 1500: Memory, Materiality and the Landscape,* eds. Carl J. Griffin and Briony McDonagh (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 81-106, 98.

[33] Guy, *The Court of Star Chamber,* 37-9.

the various contexts where it appeared and how it was utilised throughout the Reformation. Pollution rhetoric describes the depiction of a given entity as a contamination within society. This could be done in all manner of ways, from accusations of inexorable carnal immorality to literally portraying the target as a contagious disease. The use of pollution rhetoric shows what an author, and by extension, society, saw as most objectionable. How this most inflammatory of polemics was used by Catholics and Protestants, as well as how its use changed over time will be a key point of understanding the wider perspective of popular religious violence. This will reveal that violence was the ultimate expression of religious and cultural attitudes and beliefs pervasive in early modern England. By studying both individual instances of violence and the wider trends they represented, this thesis will produce a new understanding of the role and importance of violence in the English Reformation.

Dorothy White left little record of her life after the destruction of her family, but she was able to keep much of the land and money she and her husband had gained through the Dissolution of the Chantries. She also took a second husband, Richard Vavasour.[34] The experiences of this ordinary woman show how the violence of the Reformation was able to reach far beyond the gallows and the battlefield and into the most intimate of spaces. Violence was committed in streets, dining rooms and parish churches, between strangers, neighbours and friends. It seems an example of supreme tragic irony that the process of religious change set in motion in part by the collapse of the marriage of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon turned out to be of such magnitude that it instigated the destruction of hundreds of other families across the country. This introduction will go on to set the study in context, reflect on how other researchers have approached the topics of religion and violence outside the discipline of history and within it, and show how this study challenges and builds

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[34] William Page, *The Inventories of Church Goods for the Counties of York, Durham, and Northumberland* (Durham: Published for the Society by Andrews & Co, 1897), 114; TNA C 1/1332/55-56 (Burye v. Vavasour).

upon ideas from the work of others to create a specifically English understanding of religious violence.

**Grand Narratives: Theories of Violence Across Time and Space**

Before turning our attention to the specific context of violence in early modern England, we must first examine how historians and those from other disciplines have approached and theorised violence, religion and the relationship between the two. Violence is a fundamental part of human nature and history, and one discipline which shows this is evolutionary psychology. Evolutionary psychologists seek to understand human behaviour by focusing on how evolution shaped our primitive ancestors to develop mechanisms to aid survival.[35] Examples of evolved responses can include the fight or flight instinct, empathy and reciprocal altruism. The work of evolutionary psychologists on violence has yielded some key insights for historians. Perhaps the most important is the recognition that violence is an inherent aspect of human nature and so cannot be entirely removed by society or culture.[36] This does not mean that we are doomed to be violent, but that violence is one of several responses people can use to react to external pressures.[37] Physical interpersonal violence does appear to be a predominantly male affair.[38] Evolutionary psychologists have explained this as the result of competition for resources between men in prehistoric times, which resulted in men evolving both a greater psychological disposition and physical ability for conflict.[39] The vast

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[35] "Evolutionary Psychology", *Psychology Today,* accessed 22 July 2020, https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/basics/evolutionary-psychology.

[36] John Carter Wood, "Future Agendas for Research on Violent Crime: The Challenge to History from Evolutionary Psychology", *Crime, Histoire & Sociétés/Crime, History & Societies*, 21, 2 (July 2017), 351-359, 353.

[37] Ian Armit, "Violence and Society in the Deep Human Past", *The British Journal of Criminology*, 51, 3 (May 2011), 499-517, 500.

[38] Katherine D. Watson, "Introduction", in *Assaulting the Past: Violence and Civilisation in Historical Context,* ed. Katherine D. Watson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1-19, 3; According to a 2013 UN report, 95% of those convicted of intentional homicide in 53 countries are male, and 79% of homicide victims are male: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Study on Homicide 2013: Trends, Context, Data* (2013), 13.

[39] John Carter Wood, "The Limits of Culture? Society, Evolutionary Psychology and the History of Violence", *Cultural and Social History* 4, 1 (January 2007), 95-114, 104; Aaron T. Goetz, "The Evolutionary Psychology of Violence", *Psicothema* 22, 1 (February 2010), 15-21.

majority of victims and perpetrators in this thesis are male, which suggests that this evolved capacity for violence in men may partially account for this overrepresentation. Evolutionary psychology by its very nature takes a broad, long-term perspective, meaning the discipline is largely blind to the specificity of violence across different contexts. Often, violence is driven by impetuses without such clear evolutionary origins; most importantly for our purposes, religion.[40] The discipline of evolutionary psychology therefore offers this thesis a basic understanding that violence is inherent to human nature and how the evolutionary past has shaped some of the contexts in which violence could break out.

A major argument of this thesis is that popular religious violence increased dramatically during times of unrest, and this thesis begins and ends with two periods of intense civil conflict. The work of sociologists has provided some explanations for why civil conflict and popular violence go hand in hand. A good example can be found in the work of Randolph Roth, which shows humans have a dual nature. On the one hand we have the capacity for positive qualities such as empathy, cooperation and forgiveness, but these are contingent upon favourable circumstances. When communities become less stable, these qualities can be muted in favour of violent competition for resources and control and instances of violence dramatically increase.[41] Although religion is absent from Roth's analysis, his work does show how during a period of unrest, violence of all kinds surges in occurrence and intensity. The work of Roth provides a building block for one of the key arguments of this thesis: that the most severe acts of religious violence were catalysed by civil unrest.

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[40] Philip Dwyer, "Violence and its Histories: Meanings, Methods, Problems", *History and Theory* 56, 4 (December 2017), 7–22, 17.
[41] Randolph Roth, "Biology and the Deep History of Homicide", *The British Journal of Criminology*, 51, 3 (May 2011), 535-555, 536, 543-4.

A crucial theme of this thesis is the intentional mimicking of official violence and one of the most influential thinkers on this topic is Michel Foucault. In *Discipline and Punish*, he argued that the official punishment of criminals evolved from horrific public executions in the early modern era to the system of prisons that we see today. The most important theme for this study is the changing role of the audience. The logic behind gruesome public executions was that spectators should act as the witnesses to justice being performed, and be warned to obey the sovereign's laws by the sobering display of death. However, audiences could prove a double-edged sword. Spectators often seized a more direct role: protesting if an execution were done privately, punishing the executioner if he failed to execute the condemned to their standard, or delaying and even stopping the execution itself.[42] The willingness to intervene shows that under the right circumstances, ordinary people felt entitled to act, specifically when they felt the authorities had failed to do so appropriately. This is echoed in the findings of many social historians of the early modern period, to which we will return later. Executions were designed to subject the convicted to the anger of the people as part of their punishment and the monarch's vengeance for law-breaking. Central to the early modern notion of justice was the publicity of the punishment.[43] This essential aspect of publicity is a key finding, as throughout this thesis, we will see perpetrators of violence seeking to give their violence the same legitimacy as state executions by deliberately emulating their public nature. Some will even commandeer acts of state or even supposedly divine violence to legitimise their own. In short, the performance of violence in public to send a message was a key choice by perpetrators of violence throughout this thesis. Foucault presented the conventions of official violence used by governments to punish wrongdoers, and this study will show how these were used by their subjects for their own ends.

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[42] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1977), 7-9, 52-3, 58.
[43] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 9, 59.

Many attempts to answer broad questions about violence neglect to include religion in their analysis. One exception is the French anthropological philosopher René Girard, whose work suggested religion and violence existed in a symbiotic relationship. In his 1972 work *Violence and the Sacred*, printed in English in 1977, he argued that religious violence was the result of what he called the scapegoat mechanism.[44] He argued that this occurred when a given archaic society was divided by conflict and sought to resolve it by projecting their neuroses, tensions and blame for their current crisis onto one person.[45] This person became the scapegoat, and when they were undeservedly killed by their society the tension they represented was relieved and they were celebrated as a saviour.[46] Girard based his analysis on readings of creation mythology, European literature and the Bible, as well as psychological insights from Sigmund Freud, meaning that his work is essentially ahistorical. His theory that violence was performed to assuage powerful emotions such as fear has some merit, but his reliance on mythology and religious texts, alongside outdated Freudian psychoanalysis, misdirected his evaluation, at least as far as the Reformation is concerned. This thesis will show that perpetrators throughout the English Reformation committed violence because of deep-rooted hatred for, or fear of, wrongful religion. The victims of such violence were not arbitrary objects of rage, but were the offenders themselves, their attackers believing them pollutants of the community, potential rebels or Trojan horses for their enemies.

One theory of violence which has been argued across many disciplines is the civilising process, which takes its name from an eponymous work of 1939. This was the magnum opus of German sociologist Norbert Elias, but the theory did not receive widespread

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[44] Michael Kirwan, *Discovering Girard* (London: Darton Longman & Todd, 2004), 39.

[45] René Girard, "Generative Scapegoating", in *Violent Origins: Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation,* ed. Robert G. Hamerton-Kelly (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 73-148, 78.

[46] René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred,* trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 8.

attention until it was translated into English in 1969.[47] Elias argued that from the seventeenth

century onwards, Europe underwent a process of "civilisation", a key part of which was the

significant reduction of violence in mainstream society. To substantiate this argument, he

used his understanding of medieval and early modern European history, particularly of

France, Germany and England, and an in-depth study of changes in manners and behavioural

standards amongst the nobility. He argued that these changes were the result of several long-

term shifts, such as competition for influence between the old nobility and the new

bourgeoisie. The result was that aspects of behaviour such as self-control and repression of

emotions became prized, and others, such as shame, became heightened. He ascribed great

importance to the rise of absolutism and the accompanying formation of states, which

monopolised the exercise of violence. This at least is largely supported by much

historiography of the early modern period. Elias portrayed the medieval nobility as hedonistic

sybarites who committed violence for pleasure or benefit with little impulse control. Those

beneath them were no better. He argued that in the seventeenth century, the nobility, having

lost their power of violence to the absolutist monarchy, had to compete for royal favour

through their manners and behaviour. Elias rejected any idea that religion played a role in

civilising such people, as he believed it reflected the society which practised it.[48]

  This argument has proven enormously influential, being adopted by historians such as

James Sharpe, criminologists such as Manuel Eisner and psychologists such as Steven Pinker.

However, there are some significant criticisms of this theory, both of Elias himself and the

work of others subsequently. Such studies often depend on a caricature of the medieval

period as abounding with casual violence, dominated by ruthless lords and reckless peasantry.

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[47] Stephen Mennell, "Elias, Norbert (1897–1990)", *ODNB,* last modified 6 January 2011, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/40673.

[48] Norbert Elias, *The Civilising Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations* trans. Edmund Jephcott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 45-142, x, 333, 422, 424, 188, 277, 162-4, 168, 180, 241, 405-6, 190-1, 252, 169.

More modern attempts to validate this theory use statistics, usually for murder rates across Europe, to argue that rates of such violent crime dramatically decreased between the fourteenth and twentieth centuries.[49] This opens up such analysis to the criticism that data from the medieval period is unreliable at best and non-existent at worst, which critically undermines the analysis done in support of this theory.[50] Steven Pinker in *The Better Angels of Our Nature,* which brought this concept to a much wider audience, generally refers to the plays of William Shakespeare to prove that early modern England was innately cruel.[51] This suggests that the basis of the argument that early modern Europe was intrinsically brutal, has more basis in fiction than fact.

Strangely, scholars who argue for this theory rarely provide a definition for what they deem to be violence in their research. Violence has no fixed definition and can be applied to an extremely wide range of behaviours and actions, perhaps to the point where it has little value without being clearly defined. Elias seemed concerned mainly with violence committed by the nobility, either against each other or their subordinates. The most common working definition today, at least judging by the evidence such academics use to support their arguments, is lethal criminal violence. This is a valid definition, but has limitations when being used to evidence arguments about the entirety of European society evolving in a positive way. It ignores more subtle aspects of modern life that could also be viewed as violence, such as systemic inequality and corporate disregard for human health. Steven

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[49] For examples see: Manuel Eisner, "Modernization, Self-control and Lethal Violence: The Long-term Dynamics of European Homicide Rates in Theoretical Perspective", *The British Journal of Criminology* 41, 4 (September 2001), 618-638, 624; James A. Sharpe, *A Fiery and Furious People: A History of Violence in England* (London: RH Books, 2015); Gerd Schwerhoff, "Criminalized violence and the process of civilisation a reappraisal", *Crime, Histoire & Sociétés/Crime, History & Societies*, 6, 2 (January 2002), 103-126, 107-8.

[50] Richard McMahon, Joachim Eibach and Randolph Roth, "Making sense of violence? Reflections on the history of interpersonal violence in Europe", *Crime, Histoire & Sociétés/Crime, History & Societies* 17, 2 (December 2013), 5-26, 9-10.

[51] Gregory Hanlon, "The Decline of Violence in the West: From Cultural to Post-Cultural History", *The English Historical Review* 128, 531 (April 2013), 367-400, 374.

Pinker does not define violence in his work, but this is because he intends his analysis to apply to all forms of violence, a purview too broad for any book to possibly encapsulate.[52]

Another issue, both in Elias' work and since, is that such research also appears to ignore events of vast historical significance which could cast doubt on their conclusions about the development of civilisation. Elias' claims that the medieval nobility were far more violent than any modern state seems incongruous alongside the horrors of the world wars of the twentieth century, which Elias lived through.[53] Manuel Eisner in his essay "Long-Term Historical Trends in Violent Crime", argued that rates of violence committed by the French nobility decreased significantly during the eighteenth century, without any reference to the French Revolution. This would be logical if his research was concerned primarily with criminal homicide. However, this is not the case, as he uses statistical analysis of homicide rates to substantiate a much broader argument about the development of European civilisation.[54] This shows how statistical analyses can be useful, but they can obscure much wider points about violence and its relationship with its context.

Stuart Carroll has called such work "comfort history", implying it lionises the present and engenders a form of moral complacency that modern-day issues fade in comparison to the savage past.[55] Others have suggested that decreasing murder rates could have as much to do with the advances of medical science as anything else, and have argued that violence oscillated corresponding to context.[56] Focusing on the quantity of violence also neglects potentially more meaningful qualities of violent acts, such as the form they take, when they erupt, who commits them and who is victimised. This is not to invalidate the in-depth

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[52] Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: A History of Violence and Humanity* (London: Penguin, 2011).

[53] Mennell, "Elias, Norbert (1897–1990)", *ODNB.*

[54] Eisner, "Long-Term Historical Trends in Violent Crime", 117, 127.

[55] Stuart Carroll, "Thinking with Violence", *History and Theory Special Issue: Theorizing Histories of Violence* 56, 4 (December 2017), 23-43, 25.

[56] McMahon, Eibach and Roth, "Making sense of violence?" 9-10.

research done in support of this argument; for example, James Sharpe demonstrated compelling evidence in *A Fiery and Furious People* that popular and legal attitudes to different forms of violence have changed over time.[57] However, arguing that these shifts in attitude represent a process of civilisation more generally, can obscure more complex issues. If humans are capable of progressing, surely the violence they commit will progress with them.

My research both supports and challenges aspects of this theory. The severity of violence in the English Reformation does appear to have decreased over time. For example, the number of religious murders did decline throughout the early modern period, suggesting there could have been a change in views of the most serious forms of violence. However, this could also be partly due to the shift in the religious identity of perpetrators from Catholic to Protestant, the implications of which will be examined later in this introduction. Norbert Elias argued that a key point in the "civilising process" was the development of absolutism in sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe, which monopolised violence to sustain itself.[58] Yet my research shows that less dangerous religious violence increased in the mid-seventeenth century, which suggests, at least in England, that the seventeenth century was not as much one of transition as Elias maintained. In fact, the imperious behaviour of Charles I contributed to the widespread conflict in England during his reign and to the eventual Civil Wars of the 1640s. Elias also set great store in manners and their role in civilising people, but one of the case studies in this thesis occurred at a dinner party after an argument got out of hand. This admittedly single incident suggests that the correlation between mannered behaviour and decreasing violence is weaker than Elias believed. Perhaps the greatest challenge my research poses to the linear template this theory places on the past is structural.

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[57] Sharpe, *A Fiery and Furious People,* for example, for a detailed analysis to the prosecution and legal definition of infanticide see "Mothers and Infanticide", 197-221.

[58] Eisner, "Modernization, Self-control and Lethal Violence", 619.

My research shows that religious violence ebbed and flowed according to the context, rather than followed a linear progression.

Many academics from all manner of disciplines have studied violence and attempted to create comprehensive theories about its history, few of which integrate religion. However, as we have seen, approaches that take a broad methodology usually fail to appreciate specific contexts and differences dependent on region, culture and religion. Evolutionary psychology assumes modern-day behaviours have roots in the prehistoric past. The work of René Girard used outdated psychoanalysis and mythology to argue that religious violence is driven by scapegoating and emotional catharsis. The "civilising process" argument uses flawed statistics to contend that all violence has been on the decline since the seventeenth century. In short, these broad theories, which attempt to force the past into one linear paradigm, ignore its infinite variations and differences. I will not attempt to compel my material into one broad linear narrative, but will examine religious violence in individual contexts throughout the English Reformation, to show that the main shift was in the form of violence and the confessional identities of the victims and perpetrators. With this in mind, comparing how historians themselves have studied religious violence, and its manifestations in different contexts, may be more fruitful. The historiography of one such country has yielded some of the most exciting findings on this subject: France.

**Historiographies: How Historians Have Approached Religion and Violence**

Religion has often been overlooked as a catalyst for violence in many disciplines, and until the 1970s the study of early modern France was no exception. This changed when Natalie Zemon Davis, a historian influenced by cultural anthropology, ethnology, literary criticism and a growing interest in rituals of passage, published her pivotal essay "The Rites of Violence" in 1973. This essay studied many of the same violent riots that previous historians

had portrayed as class conflict, and revealed that in fact they were deeply rooted in religion.[59]

Using Catholic and Protestant accounts of various atrocities committed in France during the

Wars of Religion, she demonstrated that both Catholic and Protestant mobs carried out

methodical and organised, if brutal, acts of violence intended to achieve a variety of aims, all

of which were deeply permeated by religion. To do this, she studied how crowds performed

violence, what they intended to achieve and how they legitimised their behaviour, as well as

the surrounding religious climate in sermons and popular literature, much of which

contributed to the intensity of the violence. Her core arguments were as follows: French

Catholics and Protestants committed acts of violence against each other with four possible

intentions or agendas. These ranged from defences or affirmations of the true faith and

challenges to religious opponents, to more visceral aims of cleansing their communities of

heresy and appeasing God. However, the violence manifested in different ways depending on

the confessional stance of the perpetrators. Catholic crowds used violence to purify the body

social of the pollution of heresy, and preserve the traditional order of society, by attacking

and often killing Protestants. Protestants themselves primarily used violence to eradicate

superstitious objects from their community either by demonstrating their lack of power or by

destroying them, and if they did commit violence against people, they usually targeted

priests. Davis found that acts of religious violence intentionally mimicked acts traditional for

one of four sources of authority. The first was Biblical examples of violence, such as the

widespread use of fire to purify people or objects, in imitation of the Book of Deuteronomy.[60]

Another source for rituals of violence was the liturgy, such as in the disposal of the remains

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[59] Davis, "The Rites of Violence", 89, 54, 55, 57-9, 57-8, 60, 77, 82, 72.
[60] For example, Deuteronomy 12:2-3: "And ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place."

of murdered Protestants in rivers in a grotesque imitation of baptism.[61] The third was popular folk justice; for example, Protestants forcing a Catholic priest to ride backwards through their town on a donkey, a traditional ceremony of public humiliation. Davis also intimated that the inclusion of such celebratory traditions assisted the perpetrators in disguising their actions and enabling them to commit violence without remorse. The fourth source from which perpetrators of religious violence in France drew for their violent acts was official punishments. One notable example of this was a mock trial held by a group of Catholic schoolboys over how they should dispose of the corpse of an executed Protestant.[62] Davis' essay powerfully demonstrated how deeply religion was the catalyst, justification and guide for much of the extreme violence seen in France throughout the Wars of Religion.

Davis' essay had a seismic impact on the historiography of early modern France. Her work formed part of a new movement to "put Religion back into the Wars of Religion", alongside other historians such as Mack Holt, Denis Crouzet and Barbara Diefendorf.[63] Diefendorf in particular has spent much of her career studying the nature of religious prejudice and violence in sixteenth century France.[64] Of particular interest for this study was her finding that much of the violence of the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre was personal, the perpetrators and victims knowing each other; in her words the Parisian Protestants were "marked".[65] This is important because in England, perpetrators and victims were also usually personally acquainted. Davis' conclusions about the ambiguous relationship between the

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[61] Natalie Z. Davis, "Writing 'The Rites of Violence' and Afterward", in *Ritual and Violence: Natalie Zemon Davis and Early Modern France,* eds. Graeme Murdock, Penny Roberts and Andrew Spicer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 8-29, 8-11.

[62] Davis, "The Rites of Violence", 84-5, 64.

[63] Holt, *The French Wars of Religion,* 2.

[64] For example, see Barbara B. Diefendorf, *Beneath the Cross: Catholics and Huguenots in Sixteenth-Century Paris* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); *The Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2009).

[65] Barbara B. Diefendorf, "Prologue to a Massacre: Popular Unrest in Paris, 1557-1572", *The American Historical Review* 90, 5 (December 1985), 1067-1091, 1089-90.

authorities and popular violence has also been examined in more detail by Philip Benedict.[66] The 2012 volume *Ritual and Violence* highlights the colossal impact of this essay on the historiography of early modern France, all the essays within it both celebrating and extending Davis' findings.[67] Therefore, the work of Natalie Zemon Davis, and those historians who have followed in her footsteps, have created a whole branch of scholarship studying the connections between religion and violence in Reformation France, a historiography which has yet to be developed in England.

This does not mean that Davis' analysis has proved beyond criticism. Janine Estebe, one of the historians who argued for a more class-based assessment, continued to argue that economic factors were the key causes of popular violence in France.[68] Mark Greengrass has demonstrated that political conflict could also contribute to religious violence, and not every act was necessarily ritualistic.[69] The dichotomy Davis suggested, that Catholics principally attacked people and Protestants objects, has been challenged by Allan Tulchin, whose study of the Michelade in Nîmes in 1567 demonstrated when they were the majority, Protestants could prove violent in the extreme. This suggested that French Protestants were less violent towards Catholics because they lacked the power of the majority.[70] However, even in this example, the murders were far from the indiscriminate horrors that characterised some

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[66] Philip Benedict, "The Saint Bartholomew's Massacres in the Provinces", *The Historical Journal* 21, 2 (June 1978), 205-225, 205, 216.

[67] For example, Barbara Diefendorf looked at attempts at reconciliation in France after episodes of violence and war: Barbara B. Diefendorf, "Rites of Repair: Restoring Community in the French Religious Wars", in *Ritual and Violence: Natalie Zemon Davis and Early Modern France,* eds. Graeme Murdock, Penny Roberts and Andrew Spicer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 30-51, 34; Mack Holt studied why just as many if not more communities in France managed to avoid violence: Mack Holt, "Religious Violence in Sixteenth-Century France: Moving Beyond Pollution and Purification" in *Ritual and Violence*, 52-74, 54; Penny Roberts studied the proliferation of violence against women: Penny Roberts, "Peace, Ritual and Sexual Violence during the Religious Wars", *in Ritual and Violence*, 75-99, 98.

[68] Janine Estebe, "The Rites of Violence: Religious Riot in Sixteenth-Century France. A Comment", *Past & Present* 67, 1 (May 1975), 127-130, 128-30.

[69] Mark Greengrass, "The Anatomy of a Religious Riot in Toulouse in May 1562", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 34, 3 (July 1983), 367-391, 389-91.

[70] Allan A. Tulchin, "The Michelade in Nîmes, 1567", *French Historical Studies* 29, 1 (January 2006), 1-35, 1, 34.

Catholic massacres, suggesting Protestants used their violence in a far more targeted way, against those they saw as a clear threat to their power and religion. Nevertheless, Davis' binary argument has remained in circulation, such as in Benjamin Kaplan's 2007 study of toleration.[71] Davis' arguments about popular religious violence have also been considered by historians of other national Reformations, such as Judith Pollmann's study of the Netherlands, which found that even with intense religious divisions, popular religious violence was not inevitable. She demonstrated how the political climate and strategies adopted by the Catholic clergy in the Netherlands curtailed much of the potential for such violent conflict.[72] This illustrates that however stark religious divisions are, popular religious violence is not inevitable. Natalie Zemon Davis never intended her analysis to apply to any place other than France. Regardless, this essay remains the only major point of reference historians of Reformation England use and continues to dominate the field.

With this in mind, it is worth considering how Davis' arguments relate to what this thesis will establish in more detail. Some of her arguments do apply in the English context. Religious violence was shaped by many of the same influences: the Bible, religious services, folk justice and official punishment. This does not mean that English religious violence was simply a facsimile of that seen in France. Despite the best efforts of Allan Tulchin, the now traditional dichotomy about religious violence, that generally Catholics attacked people whilst Protestants targeted objects, has stubbornly remained.[73] In this thesis, however, it will be demonstrated that Protestants inflicted by far the most violence. This is not to exclude Catholics, who on the rare occasions where they did so, were much more vicious. This supports the wider argument that Catholics did have a stronger sense of the embodiment of

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[71] Benjamin Kaplan, *Divided by Faith: Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 77.
[72] Judith Pollmann, "Countering the Reformation in France and the Netherlands: Clerical Leadership and Catholic Violence 1560-1585", *Past & Present* 190, 1 (February 2006), 83-120, 119.
[73] Kaplan, *Divided by Faith,* 77.

heresy. Still, for the most part, Protestants far exceeded Catholics in the number of violent acts they performed throughout the English Reformation; Chapters Two, Three and Four all see Protestants using violence against perceived enemies. The form of such violence also suggests that there is some validity in Davis' argument that Protestants primarily directed their violence against objects.[74] However, this thesis will also indicate how English Protestant violence was more complex than the binary understanding suggested by Davis, and more dependent on context than her analysis of France suggested.

Historians of religious violence usually focus on conflict between religious groups; for example, "The Rites of Violence" focused upon Catholic versus Protestant violence exclusively, because this was the dominant dynamic in France. Nevertheless, in this thesis, two chapters will reveal that violent conflict between different creeds of Protestantism was at least as significant in the English Reformation as inter-faith conflict between Protestants and Catholics. This suggests that the Protestant monopoly on power for much of the English Reformation allowed tremendous conflict within the community of the faithful about what a truly Reformed Church and country should be. It also suggests that there is some merit in Allan Tulchin's argument that it was the religious group in the majority that was more likely to inflict violence.[75] This means that this thesis offers the unique opportunity to analyse Protestant violence freed both from the oppression and minority status that their French counterparts suffered, and how it manifested against both Catholics and fellow Protestants. In Reformation England, the patterns and themes of violence sometimes match and in other ways contradict those elucidated about other countries, and these differences could illuminate some key truths about the English Reformation. Davis found that acts of religious violence in France tended to centre on religious ceremonies, whereas in England, the immediate context

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[74] Davis, "The Rites of Violence", 57-8, 64.
[75] Tulchin, "The Michelade in Nîmes, 1567", 2.

was often more disparate. In particular, this thesis will show that the most influential circumstances for instigating violence in the English context were civil turmoil.

The way in which popular violence is examined in early modern England mirrors the situation Natalie Zemon Davis found in France in the 1960s and 1970s.[76] English historiography has a long tradition of social history, prompted by Marxist historians such as E.P. Thompson. Thompson's work was aimed at recovering the experiences of the British working classes, and his argument that crowd actions were organised protests based in moral outrage proved enormously influential on historians of early modern Europe, including Davis.[77] Much of the work done on conflict in early modern England, particularly in the seventeenth century, comes from this branch of historiography. Historians such as Keith Wrightson, John Stevenson and Anthony Fletcher have studied popular disturbances, which often included violence, from political and economic perspectives, which although valuable can obscure the role of religion.[78] They have demonstrated that violence was far more likely to occur if those in a given community felt the government, either local or national, had failed them, and so they felt obliged to act in its stead, echoing some of the findings of Natalie Zemon Davis, and an important theme throughout this thesis.[79] More recently, Andy Wood

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[76] Davis, "Writing 'The Rites of Violence' and Afterward", 11.

[77] Edward P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century", *Past & Present* 50, 1 (February 1971), 76-136.

[78] Keith Wrightson, *English Society, 1580-1680 (*London: Routledge, 1982), 150; John Stevenson, *Popular Disturbances in England 1700-1832* (London: Longman, 1992), ix; Anthony J. Fletcher and John Stevenson, "Introduction", in *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England,* eds. Anthony J. Fletcher and John Stevenson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 1-40, 26; Rory Rapple has advocated for such an approach in the historiography of early modern Ireland, see Rory Rapple, "Writing about Violence in the Tudor Kingdoms", *The Historical Journal* 54, 3 (September 2011), 829-854.

[79] John Walter and Keith Wrightson, "Dearth and the Social Order in Early Modern England", in *Rebellion, Popular Protest and the Social Order in Early Modern England,* ed. Paul Slack (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 108-128, 119.

has done extensive research on rebellions in the sixteenth century, but as his interest is primarily in popular politics, his analysis leaves little room for the role of religion.[80]

The most important exception to this rule can be found in some of the work of John Walter. In some ways John Walter is a social historian in the tradition already elaborated, and has accordingly published work on crowd action, power dynamics and popular political violence.[81] However, there are some exceptions. In his 1999 book *Understanding Popular Violence in the English Revolution,* Walter studied in depth the brief but widespread outbreak of pillage and plunder in rural Essex in August 1642, the victims of which were largely local gentry and clergymen. His argument was that the crowds who undertook this prevalent campaign of looting and occasional violence were politically cognisant, deliberately choosing their victims and organising their attacks.[82] This remains the only major study of popular violence in early modern England. Walter did consider the role of religion in chapters about the various attacks on local ministers and Catholic gentry, both in the book and elsewhere.[83] He detailed the building suspicion and resentment towards them from the general populace of Colchester and the surrounding area, and the many libels printed against them.[84] However, given the majority of the book focused on popular politics and local economics, by implication religion appeared less important.

Even so, religion is more prominent in some of Walter's other work. In two articles in the early 2000s, he studied the rising religious tensions of the early 1640s. One focused on

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[80] Andy Wood, *Riot, Rebellion and Popular Politics in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 39; Andy Wood, *The 1549 Rebellions and the Making of Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 168.

[81] For example, see John Walter, *Crowds and Popular Politics in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006); John Walter, "Grain riots and popular attitudes to the law: Maldon and the crisis of 1629", in *An Ungovernable people: the English and their law in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,* eds. John Brewer and John Styles (London, 1983), 21-46.

[82] John Walter, *Understanding Popular Violence in the English Revolution: The Colchester Plunderers.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 6-7.

[83] For example, see John Walter, "Anti-popery and the Stour Valley riots of 1642", in *Religious Dissent in East Anglia III,* ed. David Chadd (Norwich: Centre of East Anglian Studies, University of East Anglia, 1996), 121-140.

[84] Walter, *Understanding Popular Violence*, 161-200, 201-234.

popular iconoclasm, and the other on the Essex village of Radwinter which experienced dramatic waves of religious violence during the same period, which we will visit later.[85] His analysis has suggested that some of the points made by Natalie Zemon Davis do apply to England. One particularly important point is his argument in "Abolishing Superstition with Sedition", that Protestants primarily targeted objects for violence and that they displayed their contempt for such religious objects by using them for profane purposes, much like French Protestants did.[86] The most relevant publication in approach is his chapter in the 2015 book *Ireland 1641: Contexts and Reactions.* Walter used the depositions made by victims of the Irish Rebellion of 1641 to examine the popular violence committed by the Catholic Irish rebels. His focus was on finding the "dramaturgy" of violence within this context, analysing in detail what acts of violence were intended to show in the eyes of the perpetrators, victims and witnesses and how they were shaped by religious rituals and cultural and legal attitudes. He also showed how the extreme violence was justified; for example, by dehumanising the victims and mimicking official violence. He highlighted the importance of the performative nature of popular violence, which was not just intended to humiliate, hurt or kill the victim, but to send a message to the victims, observers and even the perpetrators themselves.[87] This approach aligns with that of this thesis, which will show how English violence was as complex as that of the Irish Rebellion. However, due to the Catholic Irish being the perpetrators of violence, Walter's analysis skews heavily toward Catholic violence, whereas a focus on the English context also allows an analysis of that committed by Protestants.

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[85] John Walter, "'Abolishing Superstition with Sedition'? The Politics of Popular Iconoclasm in England 1640-1642", *Past & Present* 183, 1 (May 2004), 79-123; John Walter, "'Affronts & Insolencies': The Voices of Radwinter and Popular Opposition to Laudianism", *The English Historical Review* 122, 495 (February 2002), 35-60.

[86] Walter, "Abolishing Superstition with Sedition", 83.

[87] John Walter, "Performative violence and the politics of violence in the 1641 depositions", in *Ireland 1641: Contexts and Reactions,* eds. Micheál Ó Siochrú & Jane Ohlmeyer (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 134-152, 135, 139-142.

Another area of scholarship in which violence has been a subject of analysis is the history of crime. Historians of crime approach the study of lethal violence in a very different way from religious and cultural historians. Historians of crime focus on changes in crime rates, how different crimes were prosecuted over time and popular attitudes to types of crime in print.[88] They often rely extensively on statistical analysis, which means they take a quantitative approach.[89] One of the most important historians of early modern English crime is James Sharpe, whose work often argues for the civilising process, using his evidence of declining crime rates as the basis for his conclusions.[90] This approach is well-suited to studying long-term trends and changes in the many forms criminal behaviour could take and legal approaches to stopping it such as Krista Kesselring's *Making Murder Public,* which studied how legal attitudes to prosecuting murder changed from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries.[91] However, the specific picture of violence can be lost under the umbrella of "crime".[92] Studies that do focus on single examples of violence usually concentrate on elite and high-profile examples, such as the 1613 murder of poet Thomas Overbury.[93] An exception to this is historians of domestic violence, who have used a more cultural and case-study based approach, such as Frances Dolan's study of portrayals of

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[88] For example, see Paul Griffiths, *Lost Londons: Change, Crime and Control in the Capital City, 1550-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 8; Anne-Marie Kilday and David Nash, *Cultures of Shame: Exploring Crime and Morality in Britain, 1600-1900* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

[89] James A. Sharpe, "The History of Crime in Late Medieval and Early Modern England: A Review of the Field", *Social History* 7, 2 (May 1982), 187-203.

[90] For example, see James A. Sharpe, *Crime in Early Modern England* (London, 1999), 137.

[91] For example, see James A. Sharpe, *Crime in seventeenth-century England: a county study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Krista J. Kesselring, *Making Murder Public: Homicide in Early Modern England, 1480-1680* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

[92] For example, see Malcolm Gaskill, *Crime and Mentalities in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

[93] Alistair J. Bellany, *The Politics of Court Scandal in Early Modern England: News Culture and the Overbury Affair, 1603-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

domestic crime in popular literature, and numerous articles about popular views of what constituted domestic violence and how this changed over time.[94]

This thesis is focused on the violent fallout of the English Reformation, which itself has a tradition of historiography that almost completely avoids integrating popular violence into any understanding of its impact. Older histories from the nineteenth century tend to note instances of violence, but leave them out of any argument or analysis of the Reformation itself, a tradition which continues to this day. The various movements in Reformation historiography could be seen to be constructed, inadvertently, to ignore the presence of popular religious violence. In the early twentieth century, Whig history dominated Reformation historiography which, in a manner strikingly resembling the "civilising process" argument, portrayed the Reformation as part of a linear journey in England towards the desirable destination of religious freedom and democratic government, an approach for which religious violence would be a challenge.[95] This view has fortunately been set aside, but the tradition of side-lining popular religious violence has proved stubborn. In the 1960s, Arthur Dickens portrayed pre-Reformation England as riven with resentment towards the Catholic Church and argued when the Protestant movement emerged in the early sixteenth century, it was largely embraced by a grateful population.[96] This view implies that there would have been little need for violent resistance to Protestantism. As a result, Dickens tended to play down the religious motivations of those involved in religious risings in the 1530s and 1540s,

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[94] Frances E. Dolan, *Dangerous familiars: representations of domestic crime in England, 1550-1700* (London: Cornell University Press, 1994); Joanne Bailey and Loreen Giese, "Marital cruelty: reconsidering lay attitudes in England, c. 1580 to 1850", *The History of the Family* 18, 3 (August 2013), 289-305, 294; Marianna Muravyeva, "A king in his own household': domestic discipline and family violence in early modern Europe reconsidered", *The History of the Family* 18, 3 (August 2013), 227-237, 230.

[95] Wilbur K. Jordan, *The Development of Religious Toleration in England: From the Beginning of the English Reformation to the Death of Queen Elizabeth* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1932), 16.

[96] Arthur G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (London: Batsford, 1989), 112.

such as the Pilgrimage of Grace, a rising dedicated, at least in part, to restoring traditional Catholicism in the north of England.[97]

This "traditional" view of the Reformation was overturned in the 1980s by "revisionist" historians such as Eamon Duffy and Christopher Haigh. Both have convincingly demonstrated the entrenchment of Catholic devotion in English religious life and its endurance, even in the decades following the break with Rome.[98] This view can obscure the spectre of popular religious violence in the English Reformation. For example, Eamon Duffy has emphasised the suffering caused by the Reformation, and portrayed it as a traumatic experience forced upon an unwilling population, which prioritises official over popular violence. By contrast, Haigh has sought to minimise religious change and has called the process of reform an "ersatz Reformation" as he argued it lacked popular investment and so was non-violent.[99] Following this was "post-Revisionism": a movement among historians to study and emphasise continuity throughout the Reformation. Historians such as Bill Sheils and Alexandra Walsham have highlighted how those of different religious creeds were able to live alongside each other in relative peace throughout the Reformation.[100] Even Walsham's *Charitable Hatred,* which demonstrated how hatred for religious "others" was considered a Christian duty, downplayed violence. In general, revisionist historians tend to highlight

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[97] Dickens, *The English Reformation*, 148; Arthur G. Dickens, *Reformation Studies* (London: Hambledon, 1982), 71.

[98] Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 155; Eamon Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village* (London: Yale University Press, 2003), 68; Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

[99] Christopher Haigh, "Introduction", in *The English Reformation Revised,* ed. Christopher Haigh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 1-18, 7; Christopher Haigh, *The Plain Man's Pathways to Heaven: Kinds of Christianity in Post-Reformation England, 1570-1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 6.

[100] William Sheils, "'Getting on' and 'getting along' in parish and town: Catholics and their neighbours in England", in *Catholic communities in Protestant States: Britain and the Netherlands, c. 1570-1720,* eds. Benjamin Kaplan, Bob Moore, Henk van Neirop and Judith Pollmann (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 67-83, 68; Alexandra Walsham, *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500-1700* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006); Other examples include Michael Riordan, "Cooperation and Confessional Identity in Mid-Tudor England: Three Berkshire Courtiers", in *Moderate Voices in the European Reformation,* eds. Luc Racaut and Alec Ryrie (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 90-103, 98.

continuity in the English Protestant community, an unwanted consequence of which, has been the minimisation of violent conflict.

More well-documented instances of popular religious violence have on rare occasions been studied in more depth. However, these are usually done with a narrow focus on the instance in question, such as Peter Lake's article on Enoch ap Evan's murder of his brother and mother in 1633.[101] Peter Lake's research represents a distinctive strand of post-Revisionism in that his work often does emphasise religious conflict and disagreement between various religious communities.[102] Other arguments advanced by individual historians have also significantly downplayed the presence and role of popular religious violence in the English Reformation. For example, Ethan Shagan has characterised Catholic resistance to the early Protestant Reformation as essentially passive, and that material gain incentivised the co-operation of the general population.[103] Almost all of these arguments, implicitly or otherwise, reduce or curtail the presence and role of popular religious violence in their analysis of the English Reformation.

Attempts to redress this balance have finally begun to emerge. The work of Peter Marshall has always acknowledged the presence of religious violence; in particular, his 2017 book *Heretics and Believers,* an epic narrative history of the English Reformation, is peppered with references to religious conflict, although these do not play a substantial role in his analysis.[104] However, the reasons behind an omission of this magnitude remain opaque.

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[101] Peter Lake, "Puritanism, Arminianism and a Shropshire Axe Murder", *Midland History* 49, 1 (March 1990), 37-64.

[102] For example, see Peter Lake, *The boxmaker's revenge: orthodoxy, heterodoxy, and the politics of the parish in early Stuart London* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); Peter Lake and Michael C. Questier, *All Hail to the Archpriest: Confessional Conflict, Toleration, and the Politics of Publicity in Post-Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

[103] Ethan H. Shagan, *The Rule of Moderation: Violence, Religion and the Politics of Restraint in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 37; Ethan H. Shagan, *Popular Politics and the English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 91.

[104] Marshall, *Heretics and Believers,* for example, 249, 298, 319, 320, 328, 362, 364, 375, 394-5, 341, 464, 474, 508.

One possibility is that Protestantism, which over the course of the English Reformation came to be the state religion, is often considered inherently "rational", especially compared to Catholicism. This view is exemplified by the work of Max Weber whose book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* connected the rise of Protestantism, especially Calvinism, with the advance of rational thought and secular capitalism.[105] This view was rooted more in Protestant self-perception than in reality. Elizabethan Protestants prided themselves on their supposed refusal to persecute people on the basis of religious belief, despite hundreds of people being executed between 1558 and 1603 on essentially religious grounds.[106] The vast majority of historians have intellectually rejected this view. However, this perception may have endured in some form as an unconscious influence on what questions are asked of the past, and what subjects are researched.[107]

Not all historians have unconsciously replicated this view; for example, John Coffey has portrayed the Elizabethan persecution of Catholics as a combination of bureaucratic negligence and occasional brutality.[108] Whatever the truth, including popular religious violence in our knowledge of the English Reformation can only deepen and extend our understanding of this momentous period. We have seen that popular religious violence is largely absent from the historiography of early modern England. Popular violence has been studied to some extent by social historians, who have shown that such violence often had a clear purpose and was planned and meaningful, but do not include religion in any substantial

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[105] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (London: Routledge, 2001), 38.

[106] Michael C. Questier, "Elizabeth and the Catholics", in *Catholics and the 'Protestant Nation',* ed. Ethan H. Shagan (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 69-94, 72.

[107] For example, Alexandra Walsham pointed out in "The Reformation and the Disenchantment of the World Reassessed", *The Historical Journal* 51, 2 (June 2008), 497–528, 497: "The tendency to herald the Protestant Reformation as a milestone on the road towards modernity and secularization, a landmark in the narrative of progress that traces the eventual triumph of rationalism over 'superstition' in the age of the Enlightenment, has deep roots in Western European and Anglo-American culture and scholarship and continues to exert considerable influence."

[108] John Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England, 1558-1689* (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2000), 5, 6-7.

way. The historiography of the English Reformation has also not included popular religious violence, the various movements within this historiography largely excluding it for a variety of reasons. This thesis will contribute to remedying this omission and adding a new level to our understanding of the Reformation in England.

One exception to this trend is the study of violence perpetrated by the state, which has received extensive and sustained academic consideration. Ethan Shagan has written about the violence of the Henrician Reformation, which by targeting both Catholic and Protestant agitators, forcefully asserted the king's "middle way".[109] The few radicals executed under Edward VI, such as the Anabaptist Joan Bocher and the Arian George van Parris have also received limited attention.[110] Historians such as Eamon Duffy have studied the burning of some 300 Protestants under Mary I, and debated its relative effectiveness.[111] Elizabeth I's attempt to shroud her government's execution of hundreds of Catholics as political has also been a topic of debate for historians.[112] These studies take the perspective of the state, examining its intentions and goals, and whether their extreme violence against their own subjects yielded the desired result. Indeed, the ability to wield such power was crucial to solidifying the power of the state.[113] Other historians have looked at state violence from the perspectives of its victims or witnesses. James Sharpe has argued that executions of criminals were used as "theatres of punishment" to demonstrate to onlookers the values of the state.[114] Other historians have critiqued this view; for example, Thomas Laqueur has demonstrated

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[109] Shagan, *The Rule of Moderation*, 7, 73.
[110] Andrew Hope, "Bocher, Joan (d. 1550)", *ODNB*, published 23 September 2004, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/2744; Andrew Pettegree, "Parris, George van (d. 1551)", *ODNB,* published 23 September 2004, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/21407.
[111] For example, see Eamon Duffy, *Fires of Faith: Catholic England under Mary Tudor* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2009).
[112] Questier, "Elizabeth and the Catholics", 72.
[113] Andy Wood, "The Deep Roots of Albion's Fatal Tree: The Tudor State and the Monopoly of Violence", *History* 99, 336 (July 2014), 403-417, 416.
[114] James A. Sharpe, "'Last Dying Speeches': Religion, Ideology and Public Execution in Seventeenth-Century England", *Past & Present* 107, 1 (May 1985), 144-167, 156-8.

that for many onlookers, public executions were occasions for celebration, rather than moral contemplation.[115] Onlookers could also attend an execution to express support for the victim, or condemn the crime.[116] Crowds could even become violent towards executioners themselves, or to the surgeons who were allowed to use the corpses of the executed for dissection.[117] Executions could also be an opportunity for their victims to combat the attempts by the state to control the meaning of their deaths, and use their own executions to reinforce the message of their faction, as shown by Peter Lake and Michael Questier.[118] The violence perpetrated by the early modern English state has long been a topic for historians, whilst its shadow, popular violence, has largely fallen through the cracks. This does not mean the two are not connected: in fact, this thesis will show numerous perpetrators seeking to cast their actions as legitimate acts of violence by imitating those of the state. The most prolific example of this mimicry is the choice by almost all culprits in this thesis to perform violence in public. The study of state violence has conclusively shown that executions were used by the government, rebellious subjects and spectators to further a variety of agendas. This thesis will show that the same is true of violence perpetrated outside the official sphere.

Popular religious violence shows how the rapid pace of religious change in Reformation England created a climate of suspicion, fervour and fear which pushed ordinary people to act in extraordinary ways to defend their faith or destroy the adversaries of God. This introduction has shown that broad theories of violence can be valuable, but cannot be

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[115] Thomas W. Laqueur, "Crowds, carnival and the state in English executions, 1604-1868", *The First Modern Society: Essays in Honour of Lawrence Stone,* eds. A.L. Beier, David Cannandine and James M. Rosenheim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 305-356, 305, 309.

[116] Antony E. Simpson, "Introduction: Public Executions, the 'Bloody Code', and English Society", in *Witnesses to the Scaffold: English Literary Figures as Observers of Public Executions: Pierce Egan, Thackeray, Dickens, Alexander Smith, G.A. Sala, Orwell,* ed. Antony E. Simpson (Lambertville, NJ: The True Bill Press, 2008), 7-49, 7, 11, 45.

[117] Peter Linebaugh, "The Tyburn Riot against the Surgeons", in *Albion's Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth Century England,* eds. Douglas Hay, Peter Linebaugh, John Rule, Edward Palmer Thompson and Calvin Winslow (London: Allen Lane, 1975), 65-118, 67, 87.

[118] Peter Lake and Michael C. Questier, "Agency, Appropriation and Rhetoric under the Gallows: Puritans, Romanists and the State in Early Modern England", *Past & Present* 153, 1 (November 1996), 64-107, 69.

applied in a simplistic manner due to the specific nature of popular religious violence in the context of the English Reformation. It has shown that some of the most valuable approaches and assessments have come from historians of the French Wars of Religion. This thesis will follow in the footsteps of these historians and show that popular religious violence was as much a part of the English Reformation as moderation and toleration.

By studying individual cases of popular religious violence over the first century of the Reformation, this thesis will show how such violence evolved from the 1530s until the 1640s. In the beginning, Catholics will dominate its practice, and continue the medieval concept of religious violence as rooting out and destroying heretics. However, as they lose ground, Protestants will take their place, but as its believers took increasingly divergent paths, Protestant violence became increasingly directed inward. The more zealous Protestant perpetrators of violence began in the Elizabethan era by confronting others with their sin and attempting to remove the objects they held responsible for immorality. However, as the Reformation progressed and the political stability of the country deteriorated in the 1640s, Protestants transitioned to a less compromising pattern of violence which targeted both objects and people. Meanwhile, violence against those more earnest Protestants changed little over time, remaining based in mockery and humiliation. Ultimately, this thesis will show that Protestants were no less violent than Catholics, but their view of what violence should achieve meant their acts were less physically brutal. The decline in Catholic violence after 1549 also shows the trajectory of Catholicism from the majority religion of the country to an oppressed minority. The intensity and occurrence of violence followed no linear trajectory, being instead dependent on context. It will show how the forces unleashed by Henry VIII's quest to end his first marriage ultimately were impossible for his subjects to resolve, turning friend against friend, neighbour against neighbour and parishioner against minister. Instead of a conventional binary war seen in other contexts, the Reformation plunged England into a

"cold war of religion": a perpetual but fluid state of tension which required only the right spark to explode into violence, but which also evolved as the Reformation wore on. We will see Catholics trying to preserve their faith, conservative and moderate Protestants attempting to hold the middle ground, and godly Protestants struggling to purge the nation of sin. Popular religious violence has long been left out of our understanding of the English Reformation; this thesis will bring this hitherto marginalised subject into the light, and show what the people of Reformation England believed was worth killing and dying for.

# "WE HAVE SEEN BETTER DAYS": CATHOLIC VIOLENCE IN REBELLION

## Introduction

In the early morning of 13 November 1536, Robert Packington, a prosperous London merchant and former member of Parliament, left his home in Cheapside to attend Mass at the Mercers' Chapel of St Thomas of Acre nearby.[1] As this was a journey he made every day, his family had no reason to suspect that this time he would not return.[2] He and his second wife Katherine (née Dallam), had been married for less than three years; her first husband Richard Collier, a close associate of Packington, had died in the early spring of 1533.[3] Between them the couple had seven children. Robert had five from his first marriage: Thomas, Elizabeth, John, Anne and Margaret, although John may have died young.[4] Katherine had two children from her marriage to Collier: George and Dorothy.[5] It was a short walk from The Key, a substantial property on the south side of Cheapside where Packington was probably living, to the Mercers' Chapel.[6] However, Robert Packington never arrived at the chapel that morning. Some labourers working at the end of Soper Lane, near the chapel, heard a loud gunshot and a grisly discovery was soon made.[7] Robert Packington had been shot dead, just metres from his destination.

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[1] Peter Marshall, *Religious Identities in Henry VIII's England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 62.

[2] Foxe, *Actes and Monuments* (London, 1563), 581.

[3] TNA PROB 11/24/320 (Will of Richard Collyer, Mercer of Saint Pancras London).

[4] William P.W. Phillimore, ed., *The Visitation of the County of Worcester made in the Year 1569* (London: Harleian Society, 1888), 103; Their mother was Agnes Baldwin, one of the four children of Sir John Baldwin, a prominent judge, who by 1535 had been appointed Chief Justice of the Common Pleas: John H. Baker, "Baldwin, Sir John (before 1470, d. 1545)", *ODNB,* last modified 4 October 2008, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/1166.

[5] TNA PROB 11/27/ f. 32v (Will of Robert Packington).

[6] Christopher Whittick, "Collier [Collyer], Richard (1480x85?–1533)", *ODNB,* last modified 4 October 2008, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/95011.

[7] Foxe, *Actes and Monuments* (1576), 529.

The murder sent shockwaves through London, and the murderer was never arrested, despite the offer of a reward.[8] His death happened at a time when London was in a state of panic because of events hundreds of miles away, in Yorkshire. Throughout October 1536, the largest rebellion of the Tudor age, the Pilgrimage of Grace, led by lawyer Robert Aske, had swept through the north of England, in the name of halting the increasing tide of religious reform and defending traditional Catholicism. By November, the rebels had seized control of the country north of the rivers Don in Yorkshire and Ribble in Lancashire.[9] By the time of the murder, Henry VIII was negotiating with two rebel leaders who had travelled to London, Sir Ralph Ellerker and Sir Robert Bowes.[10] Robert Packington's murder was a result of the unstable atmosphere in the capital fostered by the rebellion, and the emboldening effect it had on those who agreed that the Reformation should be overturned.

This chapter will focus upon this and other examples of popular religious violence connected to the conservative rebellions of the early Reformation: the Lincolnshire Rising and the Pilgrimage of Grace of 1536-7, the Helston Rising of 1548 and the Western Rising and Seamer Rising of 1549. All these rebellions were undertaken by ordinary Catholics seeking to reverse the Reformation. In most cases the rebels committed such violence themselves, but rebellion could also legitimise violent acts by sympathisers. Most of the examples in this chapter have been noted in previous studies of the various rebellions, but they are usually used illustratively. When historians do mention them, there seems to be a tendency, conscious or unconscious, to minimise them. For example, Richard Hoyle called the murder of John Raynes during the Lincolnshire Rising in October 1536 "almost

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[8] Marshall, *Religious Identities,* 62.

[9] Richard W. Hoyle, *The Pilgrimage of Grace and the Politics of the 1530s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 9.

[10] Indeed, on the very day of the murder, George Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury, wrote to Lord Thomas Darcy, another leader of the rebellion, to expect the return of Ellerker and Bowes with the king's terms: SP 1/111 f. 83 (Shrewsbury to Darcy).

accidental".[11] Others have explicitly blamed the murders of William Body and William Hellyons, murdered in 1548 and 1549 respectively, on their own personalities. Frances Rose-Troup in her account of the murder of Body, which has survived as the primary one today, described him as "a blustering bully" and "an unscrupulous, low, bragging brute".[12] Another example is Julian Cornwall, who in his history of the Western Rising claimed William Hellyons was a man who "aped the manners of a true gentleman" while "exploiting every avenue of profit" and therefore being a "a man on the make".[13] By contrast, the Seamer Rising, which saw probably the worst example of popular violence in the English Reformation, and certainly in this thesis, rarely receives any acknowledgement at all.

This chapter will use instances of violence associated with all the aforementioned Catholic rebellions to show how violence committed by English Catholics had much in common with that committed by their confessional counterparts in France and Ireland. This is not to say that violence in early Reformation England was a mirror image of such violence in France and Ireland, but that Catholic perpetrators in all three countries followed the same "script" for popular religious violence, but in different ways, dependent on context. Through these examples, this chapter will show how medieval ideas about heresy and pollution continued to influence acts of Catholic religious violence in the early years of the English Reformation. Natalie Zemon Davis argued that French Catholic violence was intended to restore the traditional order threatened by Protestants.[14] This chapter will show how English Catholics attempted to use violence to wind back the Reformation, by killing those they believed were supporting its progress.

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[11] Hoyle, *The Pilgrimage of Grace*, 132.
[12] Frances Rose-Troup, *The Western Rebellion* (London: Smith, Elder, 1913), 54, 78.
[13] Julian Cornwall, *Revolt of the Peasantry, 1549* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), 67.
[14] Davis, "Rites of Violence", 60.

**In Defence of the Church: Violence in the Lincolnshire Rising, Horncastle, 1536**

The traditional procession marking the first Sunday after Michaelmas in the Lincolnshire town of Louth on 1 October 1536 had an unusually mournful atmosphere. A man named Thomas Foster called out after the silver crosses which were being carried through the town "Our Lord speed you, for I think ye shall be taken away shortly, so that we shall never follow you more".[15] Michaelmas was the feast day of the Archangel Michael, traditionally regarded as the defender of the Church, and in the autumn of 1536 his help could not have felt more needed, at least by the people of Louth. The Church of England had formally broken from the authority of the Catholic Church in 1533, but it had taken three years for any substantial material changes in worship to appear. The first document to outline the practice of the newly-independent Church was the Ten Articles, published in July 1536.[16] Although an ambiguous document in some ways, the articles contained many moderated acknowledgements of doctrines which challenged or undermined Catholic belief, such as the doctrine of Purgatory, the importance of devotional activities such as pilgrimages, and the supremacy of the Pope.[17] In March 1536, an act had been passed to dissolve England's smaller monasteries, and by the autumn the dissolution was underway.[18] All this upheaval probably heightened the sense in Louth that all their traditions would soon be wrenched from them. Lincolnshire, like most of the country, was awash with rumours that their own parish churches were at risk of destruction. This was particularly distressing for the townspeople of Louth, as the church spire had been splendidly renovated twenty years earlier at great expense.[19] At the time of construction, it had been the tallest parish church spire in England.[20]

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[15] SP 1/110 f. 132 (Captain Cobbler's Depositions).

[16] Marshall, *Heretics and Believers,* 238.

[17] Peter Marshall, *Reformation England, 1480-1642* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2012), 44-45

[18] George W. Bernard, "The Dissolution of the Monasteries", *History* 96, 4 (September 2011), 390-409, 399; Marshall, *Heretics and Believers,* 244.

[19] Fletcher and MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions*, 28.

[20] Marshall, *Heretics and Believers,* 14.

Some of those in Louth evidently decided that this rumoured parochial desecration was the last straw.

During evensong that day, a number of armed men went to the parish church and took the keys either to the church itself, according to the eventual leader, Nicholas Melton, or to the treasure house, according to fellow rebel, John Browne, with the intention of protecting the church and preventing its treasures from being taken.[21] When the Bishop of Lincoln's registrar, John Frankish, arrived the next day he was confronted by the rebels, the details of which will be examined later. The rebels quickly captured some gentry who just as quickly became leaders of the rebellion, although how much they helped or hindered the rising is uncertain. The nearby town of Horncastle, galvanised by events in Louth, also joined the rising, led by William Leach, who captured the sheriff, Sir Edward Dymock.[22] On 4 October, the same day the rebels' first manifesto was written, the Horncastle rebels murdered two men: the Bishop of Lincoln's chancellor, John Raynes, and George Wolsey. By 7 October, a force of 10,000 rebels had peacefully taken Lincoln, many local magnates having joined the rising, and those who had not having fled. It was here that a new set of articles was drafted, but when news reached the city on 10 October that the king had condemned the rebellion, the gentry involved began to falter, and the next day the rebels were persuaded to return home, with the promise of a pardon.[23] Although there were some words that the commons would rise again if the king's terms were not met, the rebellion was over. This section will focus on the popular religious violence committed in the first four days of the Lincolnshire Rising: the murders of John Raynes and George Wolsey, and the attack on John Frankish. These were not the only examples of violence committed during the rebellion, but they were the most

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[21] SP 1/109 f. 1 (The Lincolnshire Rebellion); SP 1/109 f. 75 (The Lincolnshire Rebellion).

[22] Hoyle, *The Pilgrimage of Grace,* 94.

[23] Fletcher and MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions,* 29-30.

extreme and well-documented.[24] These examples will be employed to show how the rebels used medieval Catholic traditions to shape and justify their violence.

There are challenges to studying the violence of the Lincolnshire Rising. For example, there is only one account of the murder of Raynes, although there are more about the circumstances leading to it. It comes from Bryan Stanes who gave his account of the murder whilst imprisoned in the Tower of London.[25] His account was shaped by his circumstances, given that he was facing execution as one of the murderers, making it likely he moulded his account to create a more sympathetic version of his actions, and exaggerate others' culpability to diminish his own.[26] This applies to most of the witnesses on whom a historian must depend for any first-person description of the rising's brief life. Another issue is that many of the former rebels gave their versions of events during interrogations, meaning they were answering questions, and details not included in the interrogatories are likely to be lost.[27] Often details about the lives of the former rebels are also not recorded, so it is difficult to contextualise their specific experiences. Another complication is that the ringleader of the rising in Horncastle, William Leach, appears to have escaped capture, and the testimony of other key witnesses has not survived.[28]

As Lincolnshire descended into rebellion, John Raynes, Chancellor to the Bishop of Lincoln, had been in Bolingbroke, Lincolnshire to assess the valuation of benefices, but he fell ill, so he remained in the town until the next week, and was unable to flee.[29] It was likely

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[24] There are other examples of violence suggested in accounts of the rebellion, such as threats of murder, accusations of attacks between rebels and a report that a servant of Lord Burrowe was attacked, but in these cases what actually took place and if they were related to religion is unclear: James Gairdner, *L&P, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 11, July-December 1536* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1888), 399; SP 1/110 f. 132 (Captain Cobbler's Depositions).

[25] James Gairdner ed., *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 12 Part 1, January-May 1537* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1890), 33.

[26] Stephen J. Gunn, "Peers, Commons and Gentry in the Lincolnshire Revolt of 1536", *Past & Present* 123 (May 1989), 52-79, 54.

[27] Falvey, "Relating Early Modern Depositions", 87.

[28] Hoyle, *The Pilgrimage of Grace,* 124.

[29] *L&P, Henry VIII, Vol. 11*, 401.

he was preparing to oversee the enforcement of religious reform of some sort, as he had been ordered to by the Bishop of Lincoln, John Longland, on 3 September 1536.[30] He was still in his sickbed when he was confronted by some of the Horncastle rebels: the ringleader, William Leach, and two others, Philip Trotter, a mercer, or cloth merchant, and William Longbottom. Raynes may have tried to bribe his way to safety; it was mentioned by some that he gave Trotter twenty shillings to help him escape, but whether Trotter intended to protect Raynes is unclear.[31] The next day, Raynes was taken from Bolingbroke to Horncastle, where he was murdered. Bryan Stanes' account described how Raynes had been brought from Bolingbroke, despite being ill, to Horncastle by two men: "one Gibson…and John Lincoln, of Hawmby, a very rich man".[32] According to Stanes, a furious crowd awaited Raynes, which included many priests, who greeted him with shouts of "Kill him! Kill him!" At this, two other men from Horncastle, William Hutchinson and William Balderstene, pulled Raynes from his horse and beat him to death. Stanes admitted that he had struck Raynes on the arm, but this may be an attempt to diminish his role in the murder. The murder of George Wolsey was mentioned in far less detail, the only aspect recorded was that he was hanged.[33]

John Raynes was murdered because it was believed that he was about to preside over the destruction of the Church according to the rumours that had triggered the rising. These rumours appear in almost every eyewitness account of the rising, and were drastic in the extreme. Priest William Morland mentioned that it was supposed that all Church chalices would be taken away and that only one church would be allowed to stand within every six or seven miles.[34] He was far from the only rebel to consider these rumours important at the

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[30] Margaret Bowker, "Lincolnshire 1536: heresy, schism or religious discontent", in *Schism, Heresy and Religious Protest: papers read at the tenth summer meeting and the eleventh winter meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society,* ed. Derek Baker (London: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 195-212, 197.

[31] *L&P, Henry VIII, Vol. 11*, 401.

[32] *L&P, Henry VIII, Vol. 12 part 1*, 37.

[33] For example, see the statement of Thomas Moigne, *L&P, Henry VIII, Vol. 11*, 395.

[34] *L&P*, *Henry VIII, Vol. 12 part 1*, 227.

beginning of the rising.[35] When imprisoned in the Tower of London, the vicar of Louth,

where the rebellion began, claimed that the rebellion would not have occurred had it not been

rumoured that the Church jewels would be taken away. Fellow rebel and prisoner, Robert

Sothbye, also claimed that he had heard rumours that the number of churches would be

reduced. Other imprisoned rebels, including the aforementioned Bryan Stanes and Philip

Trotter, as well as George Huddysfield, Roger New, Nicholas Leeche, Robert Ledes and

Barnard Fletcher, all imprisoned in the Tower for their roles in the rebellion, also mentioned

these rumours, and Huddysfield added that he had heard one that claimed the christening of

children would be abolished. Richard Burwell claimed that Simon Maltby, the parson of

Farforth, started a rumour that the chalices made of precious metals would be replaced.[36]

Not only were the Lincolnshire rebels convinced that an attack on the traditions of the

Church was imminent, but the same rumours also named Raynes specifically as the man who

would preside over such destruction. In his account of the rebellion, John Browne not only

stated that the rebels took the keys to the Louth treasure house, but also that this occurred

because the rebels thought the jewels of the church would be taken away by the "Bishop's

chancellor": Doctor Raynes.[37] The Bishop in question, John Longland, Bishop of Lincoln,

was at best a reluctant enforcer of Henry VIII's religious reforms, but this was irrelevant to

the rebels.[38] Edward Richardson claimed that William Leach was able to rally the town of

Horncastle, where the murder took place, to the cause of rebellion by claiming the bishop's

officers were taking the church jewels.[39] Thomas Kendall, the vicar of Louth, also mentioned

that the bishop's chancellor was coming to take away the beloved church ornaments.[40] These

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[35] Geoffrey R. Elton, *Policy and Police: The Enforcement of the Reformation in the age of Thomas Cromwell* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 40.

[36] *L&P, Henry VIII, Vol. 12 part 1*, 399; SP 1/110 f. 148 (Moigne's Deposition).

[37] SP 1/109 f. 75 (The Lincolnshire Rebellion).

[38] Margaret Bowker, *The Henrician Reformation: The Diocese of Lincolnshire Under John Longland 1521-1547* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 59.

[39] *L&P, Henry VIII, Vol. 12 part 1*, 33.

[40] SP 1/110 f. 141 (Kendall, Vicar of Louth).

rumours were given more credence by the fact that they were spread by priests. Kendall's sermon in Louth on 1 October may have triggered his parishioners to act.[41] Bryan Stanes mentioned a parson, Simon Maltby, spreading rumours about churches being pulled down and that all the crops and livestock in Lincolnshire would be taken away, along with the church jewels and riches. Thomas Retforde, parson of Snellone, reported that another parson had told him that the number of parishes would be reduced.[42] They also encouraged the rebellion itself; for example, John Browne claimed that the vicar of Louth, Thomas Kendall, "strake them upon their backs and bade them go in their journey", when the rising began.[43]

These rumours are significant for a couple of reasons: they are what David Riches called "tactical pre-emption", to describe how perpetrators of violence seek to justify their violence ahead of committing it.[44] It is clear from the propensity of references to these rumours that these were a vital way that those involved justified both the rebellion in general and the murder of John Raynes specifically. The rumours framed the murder not as the brutal slaying of a sick man, but as a pre-emptive strike in defence of the church. This is not to say that the rumours were a self-conscious construction of the rebels; many of those involved probably genuinely believed these rumours were true. John Raynes was murdered because he was held responsible for the impending destruction of the fabric of traditional Catholicism, which his murderers were seeking to defend.

The attempt by the perpetrators to depict the murder of John Raynes as a legitimate act in defence of the church can also be evidenced by how the murder was carried out. The murder resembles a public execution, most glaringly in its public setting. Bryan Stanes

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[41] Cliff S.L. Davies, "Popular Religion and the Pilgrimage of Grace", in *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England,* eds. Anthony J. Fletcher and John Stevenson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 58-88, 71.
[42] *L&P, Henry VIII, Vol. 12 part 1*, 33.
[43] SP 1/109 f. 75 (The Lincolnshire Rebellion).
[44] Riches, "The Phenomenon of Violence", 7.

claimed Raynes was brought before a crowd of rebels in a field outside Horncastle where the murder took place.[45] A key argument of Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* is that the performance of violence in public by the state was central to punishing criminals and ensuring the audience would learn from such gruesome scenes.[46] Historians of early modern England have similarly demonstrated how the spectacle of violence was a key part of the state's display of power.[47] By killing John Raynes in public, and before a large enthusiastic crowd, the rebels were claiming the same legitimacy for their act as that of state executions.

This was even clearer in the murder of Wolsey as he was hanged, probably the most common form of public execution in the sixteenth century. The rebels were also manipulating the ritual of public execution to portray Raynes, as well as Wolsey, as common criminals, which was further solidified after the murder of Raynes by the division of his clothes and money among the crowd.[48] Given that Raynes was believed to be about to preside over the despoiling of the Church, stealing his possessions after his death was a symbolic reversal, alongside the more pragmatic motivations that must also have been present. The systematic theft suggested Raynes' material gains were illegitimate, earned by furthering the Reformation, stealing from the Church and perhaps by extension, from the people themselves. Such looting was also a feature of other popular rebellions, such as the Revolt of Masaniello of 1647 in Naples, in which the homes of several rich citizens were plundered as a way to symbolically repossess the wealth that had been stolen from the people.[49] The rebels involved in the murders of John Raynes and George Wolsey manipulated the rituals of public

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[45] *L&P, Henry VIII, Vol. 12 part 1*, 37.
[46] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 58.
[47] Wood, "The Deep Roots of Albion's Fatal Tree, 416.
[48] *L&P, Henry VIII, Vol. 12 part 1*, 37.
[49] Peter Burke, "The Virgin of the Carmine and the Revolt of Masaniello", *Past & Present,* 99, 1, (May 1983), 3-21, 14.

executions to paint their victims as criminals and themselves as defenders of the Church, doing what they believed the state had failed to do.

Although the murder had little overt religious meaning in the way it was carried out, it was legitimised as an act in defence of the Church by the presence and encouragement of priests in the crowd.[50] Before his death, Raynes had been holding a session of the commissary's court, and his presence unnerved the priests of Lincolnshire, who feared he had come to examine their fitness for clerical office.[51] This fear, alongside that of the divestment of the church, motivated many clergy to endorse the murder.[52] There was even a claim that the parson Simon Maltby "and other priests had determined to strike down the said chancellor".[53] Bryan Stanes concluded his account of the murder with the claim that the priests present reassured those that participated that their cause was rightful.[54] It is probable that much of the testimony by former rebels was structured to misrepresent their culpability and suggest they had been led astray by the priests around them, such as John Overey, who claimed "The priests were the occasion of this business".[55] However, the sheer volume of references to priests does suggest there was considerable clerical involvement in the rising.[56] Due to their sacred vocation, priests, at least in theory, were held above ordinary people, subjected to especially demanding standards of behaviour, and granted the power to perform the sacraments.[57] Whether this reverence always translated into practice is ambiguous, but at

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[50] *L&P, Henry VIII, Vol. 12 part 1*, 33.

[51] *L&P, Henry VIII, Vol. 11*, 399.

[52] Hoyle, *The Pilgrimage of Grace,* 106.

[53] *L&P, Henry VIII, Vol. 11*, 399.

[54] *L&P, Henry VIII, Vol. 12 part 1*, 33.

[55] SP 1/110 f. 160 (The Lincolnshire Rebellion).

[56] Priests questioned after the rebellion collapsed include William Langley, Henry Jenkinson and Thomas Bradley: SP 1/110 f. 173 (The Lincolnshire Rebellion); SP 1/109 f. 1 (The Lincolnshire Rebellion); many priests were accused of being involved in the rebellion: *L&P, Henry VIII, Vol. 11*, 399; former rebels John Tayler, Harry Chylde and John Harreson all mentioned priests justifying involvement in the rebellion: SP 1/110 f. 160 (The Lincolnshire Rebellion); as did John Browne: SP 1/109 f. 75 (The Lincolnshire Rebellion).

[57] Peter Marshall, *The Catholic Priesthood and the English Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 109, 116-117.

least in Lincolnshire it seems clear the rebels held an entirely conventional view of the priests around them. So, when these men, closer to God than any layperson, claimed that the murder of those threatening the Church was justified, they believed them. This is not to say that the Lincolnshire rebels were mere puppets of the various priests around them, but that they played a key role in justifying both the rebellion in general and the violence in particular. The religious motivations behind the murders were even more explicit in another act of violence that had occurred earlier in the rising.

On 2 October 1536, another of the Bishop of Lincoln's servants, John Frankish, the Bishop's registrar, arrived in Louth and was set upon by the rebels. The most detailed account of what happened next comes from William Morland, a former monk and priest with a propensity for injecting himself into significant events. In Morland's account, Frankish was at the home of a man named William Golsmythe when the rebels discovered him. The common bell was rung, and many people ran armed to the house and confronted Frankish. They seized both him and the books he was carrying, as well as a "brand" of fire and took them to the foot of a landmark known as the "High Cross" in the market square. Morland claimed to have urged the rebels not to do any mischief, but this is perhaps to be doubted, given that as a suspect in causing the rising, Morland may have misrepresented his own involvement in this incident to appear more sympathetic. He also claimed that Frankish approached him with the words "For the Passion of Christ, priest, if canst, save my life; and as for the books that be already brent I pass not of them, so as a little book of his reckonings of such money as he had laid out might be saved and also the King's commission." At the High Cross, the rebels used the fire to burn the books in the market square. Morland described this aspect of the event in vivid detail describing how "every man below got a piece of them and hurled them [the books] into the fire." The unfortunate registrar was then given a ladder and forced to climb to the top of the cross, at the foot of which the books were being

burned. Morland claimed he managed to save Frankish's Book of Reckonings, and later

helped him escape the area, but not before the grateful Frankish paid for Morland's dinner.[58]

What happened to John Frankish, and his books, followed in the footsteps of the

medieval tradition of committing heretical books to fire. The rationale behind such brutality

was that heresy was an infection, contained within the bodies of heretics, and the only

solution was to burn them, lest they infect the rest of society.[59] However, in the aftermath of

Martin Luther's challenge to the Catholic Church, the works of Luther and other authors

deemed heretics such as Ulrich Zwingli and William Tyndale were also burned in public

rituals, often alongside punishments of their adherents to show how both had transgressed

against God.[60] By mimicking the actions of the state, the rebels in Louth were once again

claiming the same legitimacy for their own actions, but this exemplifies a religious dimension

less explicit in the murders in Horncastle. By burning Frankish's books and, symbolically,

Frankish himself, the rebels were stating that the Church destruction they believed imminent

was not just criminal, but heretical.[61] The symbolic burning of Frankish could also be a more

brutal imitation of how book-burning ceremonies sometimes also included public penances of

repentant heretics, which invoked the spectre of burning, such as in February 1525/6 when

Robert Barnes was forced to carry a bundle of wood around St Paul's Cathedral as part of his

public recantation.[62] The experiences of John Frankish show how the rebels were influenced

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[58] L&P, *Henry VIII, Vol. 12 part 1*, 173.
[59] Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society*, 15.
[60] Craig W. D'Alton, "The Suppression of Lutheran Heretics in England, 1526–1529", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 54, 2 (May 2003), 228-253, 230; Allan G. Chester, "Robert Barnes and the Burning of the Books", *Huntingdon Library Quarterley* 14, 3 (May 1951), 211-221, 214; John Longland, Bishop of Lincoln, had even encouraged such bonfires of profanities earlier in his career, Bowker, *The Henrician Reformation,* 58
[61] In a way, this event was the inverse of the execution of the monk John Forest two years later in 1538, who was burned with an image of the Welsh saint Dderfel Gadarn: Peter Marshall, "Papist As Heretic: The Burning of John Forest, 1538", *The Historical Journal* 41, 2 (June 1998), 351-374, 356.
[62] Chester, "Robert Barnes and the Burning of the Books", 213.

by their Catholic medieval inheritance to remove those they perceived as threats to the Church, that must be cleansed to save the county from heresy.

The Lincolnshire Rising is usually regarded as a minor rising, especially compared to the Pilgrimage of Grace which broke out in Yorkshire almost simultaneously, because of its brief and chaotic existence, but there is at least one aspect in which it is significant.[63] The violence associated with the rising shares many key features with Catholic violence in other contexts. Both the violence in Lincolnshire and in Ulster at the beginning of the Irish Rebellion of 1641 were triggered by rumours that repressive measures against traditional Catholicism were on the horizon.[64] Like French Catholics throughout the Wars of Religion, or Irish rebels in 1641, the Lincolnshire rebels deliberately mimicked state punishments like hanging to kill enemies of the Church.[65] The desecration of heretical books was also a feature in Lincolnshire in the 1530s, France in the 1560s and 1570s, and Ireland in the 1640s.[66] Priests played key roles in justifying violence in all three contexts, using their position as intermediaries of God to claim that such violence was spiritual cleansing.[67] The rebellion was also set in motion after a religious procession, in this case in celebration of Michaelmas, another common feature also noted in Europe by Natalie Zemon Davis and Benjamin Kaplan.[68]

However, this is not to equate Lincolnshire in 1536 with either France during the Wars of Religion or Ulster in 1641. These three contexts had just as many, if not more,

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[63] For example, see Arthur G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (London: Batsford, 1964), 221; Susan Brigden, *New Worlds, Lost Worlds: The Rule of the Tudors, 1485-1603* (London: Penguin, 2000), 128.

[64] Brian Mac Cuarta, "Religious violence against settlers in south Ulster, 1641-2", in *Age of Atrocity: Violence and political conflict in early modern Ireland,* eds. Clodaigh Tait, David Edwards and Pádraig Lenihan (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007), 154-175, 156.

[65] In Montpellier in 1569 a Catholic crowd captured a Protestant condemned to death by a harassed judge and hanged him before his own house: Davis, "Rites of Violence", 63; Walter, "Performative violence", 138.

[66] For example, in Angers a Catholic mob threw a French Bible into a river saying they had drowned the truth of the devil: Davis, "Rites of Violence", 56; Mac Cuarta, "Religious violence", 171.

[67] Davis, "Rites of Violence", 68; Mac Cuarta, "Religious violence", 170.

[68] Davis, "Rites of Violence", 70; Kaplan, *Divided by Faith,* 74.

differences as similarities. Instead, the parallels in how religious violence was legitimised and carried out show how Catholics across Western Europe shared a common script for religious violence. Catholics experienced a bolstering of their faith at public rituals, and their reverence for priests meant that when such divine emissaries claimed religious violence was sanctioned by God, they believed them. Catholics had been taught since the medieval period to see heresy as pollution of the Church and the solution was to cleanse the Church of heretics by killing them. The murder of heretics could take a variety of forms, but a common one was the invocation of state execution to give such violence the veneer of legitimacy. Ideas about cleansing also extended to objects believed to be spreading heresy, most importantly books, and these were also condemned to fire to cleanse the world of their contamination. The violence in the early days of the Lincolnshire Rising shared many of the same features as Catholic popular religious violence in other contexts because English Catholics in Lincolnshire had much the same understanding of heresy and cleansing as their counterparts in the rest of Europe. The rebels in Lincolnshire used violence to punish those they held most responsible for the destruction of Catholic tradition they believed imminent. To justify their actions they used the rituals of state executions and cleansing rites to lend their violence the same guise of legitimacy. The manner in which the Lincolnshire rebels attempted to purge Lincolnshire of heresy shows how much the medieval Catholic conception of heresy continued to hold sway in the early years of the English Reformation, and influenced how Catholics committed violence against those they saw as transgressing against God.

**Death by Association: The Murder of Robert Packington, London, 1536**

If the bloodshed of the Lincolnshire Rising was typical of Catholic violence, the murder of Robert Packington a month later was entirely atypical. As probably the first gun murder in the history of London, it was uniquely frightening to contemporaries. This perhaps explains the intense interest by many chroniclers in the murder; the most vivid and challenging

account was given by John Foxe, but it was also mentioned in the works of chroniclers and writers such as Edward Hall, Raphael Holinshed, John Stow and Charles Wriothesley.[69] The murderer was never discovered, which left room for some of these writers to claim they knew who had committed the murder.[70] The most notable was posed by John Foxe, who claimed that the Dean of St Paul's cathedral, John Incent, had ordered the murder.[71] As Peter Marshall has noted, there is no evidence to validate this theory and Incent was probably only mentioned because St Paul's was very close to Cheapside where Packington was murdered. This section will show that Robert Packington was murdered because of his evangelical religious beliefs and affiliations, and that the violence was legitimised by the political climate of November 1536, particularly the impact of the Pilgrimage of Grace.

To most observers, Robert Packington appeared to be an entirely conventional man. He was born around 1489 in Stanford-on-Teme, Worcestershire, to John Packington and Elizabeth Washborne.[72] He had five siblings: three brothers, John, Augustine and Humphrey, and a sister, Eleanor.[73] He followed in his older brother John's footsteps and studied at the Inner Temple, and became a mercer, or cloth merchant, and completed an apprenticeship to the Mercers' Guild in 1510.[74] As a mercer, he travelled across Europe, especially to the Netherlands, which may also have enabled him to participate in more illicit trade. In the 1520s he became a member of Parliament, joining the last two sessions of the Parliament of

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[69] For example, in his multiple accounts he neglects to mention that Packington was attending Mass at the time of his death: Foxe, *Actes and monuments* (London, 1563), 581: "vsed daily at iiii. of the clocke winter and sommer to go to praier at a church"; Edward Hall, *Hall's Chronicle* (London, 1809), 824; John Bale *The image of both Churches* (London, 1547), 228; Charles Wriothesley, *A Chronicle of England during the Reigns of the Tudors* (London, 1895), 59; John Stow, *A Survey of London* (London, 1598), 261

[70] Marshall, *Religious Identitie*s, 62.

[71] Foxe, *Actes and Monuments* (1570), 1131.

[72] Peter Marshall, "Pakington, Robert (b. in or before 1489, d. 1536'), *ODNB,* published 4 October 2008, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/96818.

[73] TNA PROB 11/27/ f. 32v.

[74] Marshall, "Pakington, Robert", *ODNB.*

1523, in the place of William Bowyer.[75] He was also probably an MP at the 1536 Parliament. As was common for most Tudor businesspeople, he was also involved in a number of lawsuits, but none of these appear remarkable.[76] A particularly close business partner was Richard Collier, who left him The Key, the Cheapside property where Packington was probably living at the time of his death, in trust for Collier's two children.[77] As aforementioned, by 1536, Packington had been married twice, the second time to Collier's widow Katherine, and was responsible for seven children. Whilst to an outside observer Robert Packington appeared to be an entirely normal mercer, there was one aspect of his life that was far from ordinary: he was an evangelical.

In the early Reformation, religious identities were much more fluid and diverse than they became later, so calling those who supported the cause of religious reform during Henry VIII's reign "Protestant" would be inaccurate.[78] Instead, historians have labelled such people "evangelicals".[79] Heretical groups prior to the first stirrings of Protestantism in 1517, such as the Lollards, had often held ranges of beliefs with little common ground.[80] However, evangelicals were different because, although there may well have been diversity of belief, they were usually convinced of a number of crucial convictions; the most important of which was justification by faith, the tenet that a person was only saved from damnation by faith in

[75] Helen Miller, "PAKINGTON, Robert (by 1489-1536) of London", in *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1509-1558,* ed. Stanley T. Bindoff (London: Published for the History of Parliament Trust by Secker & Warburg, 1982), 48-9, 48.

[76] SP 1/39 f. 199 (R. O. John ap Howell); TNA C 241/282/160 (Debtor: John Palmer of Lemington, esquire. Creditor: Robert Packington, citizen and mercer of London); TNA C 241/282/172 (Debtor: William Corbet, citizen and cloth-worker of London. Creditor: Robert Packington, citizen and mercer of London); TNA C 241/282/159 (Debtor: John Palmer of Lemington, esquire. Creditor: Robert Packington, citizen and mercer of London); TNA C 131/112/20 (Debtor: John Palmer, of Lemington, esquire. Creditor: Robert Packington, a citizen and mercer of London).

[77] Whittick, "Collier [Collyer], Richard", *ODNB*.

[78] Alec Ryrie and Peter Marshall, "Introduction: Protestantisms and their beginnings", in *The Beginnings of English Protestantism,* eds. Alec Ryrie and Peter Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1-13, 6-7.

[79] For example, see Peter Marshall, "Evangelical conversion in the reign of Henry VIII", in *The Beginnings of English Protestantism,* eds. Alec Ryrie and Peter Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)*,* 14-37.

[80] Richard Rex, *The Lollards* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), xxi.

God alone.[81] Other key principles included a lack of faith in the Church as a charitable intermediary, and a conviction in the importance of being able to read religious works, above all the Bible, in the vernacular.[82]

Robert Packington's evangelical status is well established among historians, based on his will, which contained careful acknowledgements of archetypal evangelical beliefs like justification by faith, the choice of preacher at his funeral, Robert Barnes, and his associations with other evangelicals, such as Thomas Cromwell and Rose Hickman.[83] The year before Packington's murder, Stephen Vaughan, another of Cromwell's operatives, wrote to Cromwell that "Pakyngton intends to report to you the truth of all that is passed in Flanders, and deserves your thanks. The King has no better subject."[84] As a mercer, Packington would have been obliged to travel often to Europe, especially centres for the cloth trade like Flanders and Antwerp, but Vaughan's letter suggests he also used his travels to gather information for Cromwell. Unfortunately, Vaughan gave no details as to the exact nature of what Packington had to report, but this letter does show a connection between Robert Packington, Stephen Vaughan and Thomas Cromwell.[85] Packington's travels to Antwerp, also the European centre for the printing industry, would have enabled him to smuggle back to England another precious commodity: English Bibles. Rose Hickman, born

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[81] Alister E. McGrath, *Reformation Thought: An Introduction* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 115.

[82] David Daniell, *The Bible in English: Its History and Influence* (London: Yale University Press, 2003), 125.

[83] TNA PROB 11/27/ f. 32v; *L&P*, *Henry VIII, Vol. 11*, 441; Barnes first clashed with English religious authorities in 1526, when he was arrested on the orders of Cardinal Wolsey for criticising the clergy. In 1531 he fled to Wittenburg, where he became a friend of Martin Luther, but he was able to return to England later that year, much to the chagrin of Sir Thomas More whom he apparently angered during an audience with the king. Barnes eventually became a victim of Henry VIII's "middle way": he was burned at the stake on 30 July 1540 as one of three evangelicals so punished alongside three conservatives who were hanged, drawn and quartered, in a grotesque display of Henry VIII's supposedly moderate religious policy, Brigden, *London and the Reformation,* 251; Shagan, *The Rule of Moderation*, 73; Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer: a life* (New Haven: University of Yale Press, 1996), 171.

[84] SP 1/90 f. 195 (S. Vaughan to Cromwell).

[85] M. K. Dale, "VAUGHAN, Stephen (by 1502-49), of St. Mary-le-Bow, London", in *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1509-1558,* ed. Stanley T. Bindoff (London: Secker & Warburg for the History of Parliament Trust, 1982), 519-20, 519; One of Stephen Vaughan's more important missions for Cromwell took place in 1530 where he met with the evangelical writer and Biblical translator, William Tyndale, to attempt to persuade him to return to England.

Rose Lok, a future Marian exile who came from a family of evangelical mercers, named Robert Packington as the man who "used to bring English bibles in from the sea".[86] By 1536, Robert Packington was a well-established member of the evangelical brethren, and his trade enabled him to carry out his faith, both working for the most powerful evangelical in the country, Thomas Cromwell, and smuggling the texts so crucial to evangelical practice.

This context of Packington's life prior to the autumn of 1536 is essential to understanding his murder because by November of that year, being an evangelical in London had become increasingly dangerous. As the Lincolnshire Rising died down, another rebellion was only just beginning: the Pilgrimage of Grace. Although it was more measured and controlled, the Pilgrimage was also an attempt to reverse the Reformation, in particular to defend the monasteries from dissolution.[87] Whilst economic causes played a role in the rebellion, it was primarily a rebellion against the new religious direction of the country. If there was one man blamed personally for the new religious policy, it was Thomas Cromwell. One letter dated 24 October 1536 claimed that the rebels wanted to avenge themselves on Cromwell, as well as Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury.[88] William Breyar, a criminal who managed to obtain the livery of the queen, was confronted by the rebels in the Cumbria village of Dent, mentioned how Cromwell was personally hated by the rebels. One man remarked "Thy master is a thief, for he pulleth down all our churches in the country." The other villagers apparently disagreed with this assessment of who was truly behind this destruction, as Breyar claimed that most of them said "It is not the King's deed but the deed of Crumwell." They went on to threaten that "if we had him here we would crum him [and

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[86] Rose Hickman, "Rose Hickman's Memoir of Protestant life under Mary", in *Religion and Society in Early Modern England,* eds. David Cressy and Lori A. Farrell (London: Routledge, 1996), 34-37, 34.
[87] Fletcher and MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions,* 38-49.
[88] *L&P, Henry VIII, Vol. 11*, 345.

crum] him that he was never so Crumwed".[89] This widespread resentment towards Thomas Cromwell would have made Packington's association with him dangerous.

The Pilgrimage of Grace plunged London into a state of panic. The rebels' demands were widely circulated in the city, and by November were being discussed around dinner tables.[90] Within weeks, all priests in the city aged between sixteen and sixty were ordered to surrender any bladed object not used for eating.[91] The anxiety surrounding the potential for priests to stir up support for the rebellion would not have been aided by William Gibson, a priest who proclaimed his support for the rebels to his colleagues at Whittingham College, London.[92] Sir George Throckmorton feared most of London sided with the rebels, whilst the London governors ordered a nightly watch of the city to guard against unrest.[93] These measures show that the government held genuine fears of a fifth column within the city who sided with the rebels.[94]

The rebellion also emboldened those within the city who sympathised with the rebels to express their contempt for evangelicalism. A woman named Margery Williamson was imprisoned that November for openly wishing for Cromwell's death.[95] Richard Hilles, another evangelical living in the London parish of St Magnus, wrote to the European reformer, Heinrich Bullinger, that his conservative fellow parishioners were encouraged by the rebellion to threaten to report him to the Bishop of London if he did not repent.[96] One former rebel, whilst travelling in London a year later, was given shoes at a discount by a

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[89] SP 1/109 f.36 (The Northern Rebellion).
[90] *L&P, Henry VIII, Vol. 11*, 556-9.
[91] Brigden, *London and the Reformation,* 251.
[92] James Gairdner, ed., *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 13 Part 1, January-July 1538* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1892), 506.
[93] Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, 251, 249.
[94] David M. Palliser, "Popular Reactions to the Reformation during the years of uncertainty 1530-70", in *The English Reformation Revised,* ed. Christopher Haigh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 94-113, 108.
[95] Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, 252.
[96] Hastings Robinson, ed., *Original letters relative to the English reformation*, 2 vols, vol 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1846), 231.

cobbler who wished the rebellion had been successful.[97] This is not to say that all of London was ready to join the rebellion, but it did embolden some of those who shared the rebels' beliefs to act in some way. Packington's murder also took place in mid-November 1536, when it appeared the government would negotiate with the rebels.[98] This would turn out to be wishful thinking, but nevertheless it does appear the rebels, and perhaps their sympathisers, were confident at least early on that the king would listen to their demands. On 27 October it had been agreed that two of the leaders, Sir Ralph Ellerker and Robert Bowes, would take the pilgrims' petitions to the king, and by 2 November they had arrived at Windsor Castle.[99] Although the truce was an uneasy one, it could have heightened the sense among those who supported the rebels that the circumstances were in their favour, and that now was the time to strike down their enemies, like Robert Packington.

The fact that Packington was murdered with a gun was the most shocking aspect of his death to contemporaries, and was the most common detail noted in contemporary accounts. This is because guns were extremely rare possessions in mid sixteenth-century England, having been repeatedly banned by Henry VIII in favour of archery.[100] The idea of a handheld gun probably also seemed fairly novel; pistols had only become possible two decades earlier in 1510 with the Italian invention of the wheellock mechanism, and soon after had become strictly regulated across Europe.[101] Certainly Henry VIII feared they could be used by would-be assassins; the year after Packington's death he banned the use of any gun under two feet in length.[102] The use of the gun demonstrates that murder was the goal of Packington's attacker. It is unlikely that many in Henrician London would carry a pistol

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[97] *L&P, Henry VIII, Vol. 12 part 1*, 95.
[98] For example, see SP 1/110 f. 91 (Earl of Shrewsbury to Lord Darcy).
[99] Fletcher and MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions,* 35-36, 37.
[100] For example, see Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, eds., *Tudor Royal Proclamations: Volume 1, The early Tudors, 1485-1553* (London, 1964), 151-153.
[101] Frederick Wilson, *Those Entrusted with Arms: A History of the Police, Post, Customs and Private Use of Weapons in Britain* (London: Greenhill in association with Royal Armouries, 2002), 31.
[102] Hughes and Larkin, *Tudor Royal Proclamations: Volume 1*, 250.

under normal circumstances, and suggests some premeditation on the part of the murderer, which does correlate with other details of the attack. Packington was assaulted when he was alone and along a route he took every day. In this way, the murder has more in common with religious and political assassinations, such as that of the Protestant leader William of Orange in 1584.[103] William of Orange was murdered because he was leading the Protestant Dutch rebellion against Catholic Spanish rule in the Netherlands, which does show how gun murders could be motivated by religious hatred. However, given their practical value, guns were also used in many other contexts. Considering Packington's evangelical belief and the Catholic rising in the North, it seems most likely that Packington was attacked by a conservative sympathiser, galvanised by the Pilgrimage of Grace and the sense that the Reformation may be about to recede.

Robert Packington's murder was starkly different from many other acts of Catholic religious violence, both in the English context and beyond. However, it is typical of much Catholic violence in that it was a murder. It is well-established in the historiography of medieval Catholic Europe that heresy was construed as a disease embodied by the heretic, most famously by Robert Moore in 1987.[104] The Catholic concept of sin was that it was a conscious choice by the individual, so logically heresy was the most grievous of crimes, a deliberate choice to reject God in the full knowledge of the truth.[105] In fact, the word "heresy" came from a Greek word for "choice".[106] There were some defences: a heretic could be found insane or to be demonically possessed, which could alleviate the severity of penalties, but the so-called "canonist" definition of heresy was the most widely accepted.[107] This definition had

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[103] Lisa Jardine, *The Awful End of Prince William the Silent* (London: HarperCollins, 2005), 50.

[104] Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society,* 8, 15, 94-5.

[105] Jonathan Willis, "Repurposing the Decalogue in Reformation England", in *The Influence of the Decalogue: Historical, Theological and Cultural Perspectives,* ed. Dominik Markl (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2013), 188-204, 191.

[106] Andrew P. Roach, *The Devil's World: Heresy and Society 1100-1300* (London: Routledge, 2005), 1.

[107] Andrew E. Larsen, *The School of Heretics: Academic Condemnation at the University of Oxford, 1277-1409* (Boston: Brill, 2011), 6.

four points: a belief deliberately chosen by a person, contrary to scripture, declared in public and held in the face of challenge.[108] However, the popular understanding of heresy was probably much broader than this, which this chapter supports, given that very few of those victimised in this chapter would conform to this academic definition.

This construction of heresy as a conscious choice meant heretics were treated with the utmost severity. Should a heretic repent, they had to perform their abjuration in public, usually a speech authored by the court and an act of penance, such as carrying bundles of wood to a shrine, a reminder of the punishment for failing to repent.[109] Those who repented were often not allowed to forget their transgressions, they could be forced to wear a badge of burning wood, both to warn others, and keep ever present the threat of what would happen should the former heretic lapse back into error.[110] Heresy in a more abstract sense was understood as an infection in society, which by extension would corrupt the whole of civilisation if left unchallenged. This was not the only way heresy was described: for example, the Lollards were sometimes described as wolves in sheep's clothing, lying in wait to lead those around them astray, but pollution rhetoric was the most powerful.[111] The proliferation of such inflammatory language meant that the executions of more tenacious heretics were understood as cleansing events, demonstrating how the stain of heresy was seen as embodied by those regarded as heretics.[112] As heresy was understood as a malignant cancer in society, the logical solution was to eradicate it. This understanding of heresy and how to combat it continued into the reign of Henry VIII. The official punishment for obstinate evangelicals such as Thomas Hitton, Thomas Benet, Thomas Bilney, Richard

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[108] Edward Peters, "The Way of Caritas: Preaching, Penitence and Pastoralism", in *Heresy and Authority in Medieval Europe,* ed. Edward Peters (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1980), 165-168, 167.
[109] Chester, "Robert Barnes and the Burning of the Books", 213.
[110] Marshall, *Heretics and Believers,* 104.
[111] Forrest, *The Detection of Heresy,* 145-146.
[112] Robert I. Moore, "Heresy as a Disease", in *The Concept of Heresy in the Middle Ages (11th-13th c.): proceedings of the international conference, Louvain, May 13-16, 1973,* eds. Willen Lourdaux and Daniel Verhelst (Leuven: University Press; The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976), 1-11, 5.

Bayfield, John Tewkesbury and James Bainham remained execution. Of course, those who were reported as heretics to the authorities were not condemned to death immediately. For example, Thomas Bilney had several encounters with the authorities prior to his eventual execution in 1531.[113] Therefore, death was established in early Tudor England as the punishment for persistent or malignant heretics, because of the understanding that heresy was an infection contained within the bodies of heretics, that had to be eradicated for society to be safe from contamination. Although Packington's murder was far from the ritualised acts seen in other contexts, it did share the key feature of much Catholic violence: eliminating the heretic from society and sending the message to their co-religionists that the same fate awaited them if they did not correct their path.

Rose Hickman recalled her mother's reaction to Packington's murder in vivid detail. She was clearly unnerved by it, she begged her children not to mention their evangelical dealings to anyone outside the family after the murder, and hid their English Bible.[114] Whilst the Lok family probably felt more threatened than most because they also lived in Cheapside, this highlights the secondary motivation behind Packington's murder: to frighten his co-religionists. The murder was intended to attack not just one powerful member of the evangelical community, but the entire community. That someone like Packington could be suddenly struck down with a little-understood weapon, must have driven home to many of those who shared his convictions how vulnerable they were, as Rose Hickman's mother clearly felt. This further validates how the rebellion, motivated by powerful conservative religious sentiment, emboldened Londoners who also were aghast at the rise of evangelicalism, to destroy those who had disseminated heretical ideas and had encouraged the first stage of the English Reformation.

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[113] Greg Walker, "Saint or Schemer? The 1527 Heresy Trial of Thomas Bilney Reconsidered", *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 40, 2 (April 1989), 219-238, 221, 224-225, 228
[114] Hickman, "Rose Hickman's Memoir of Protestant life", 34.

**Blind Reform: The Murder of William Body, Cornwall, 1548**

After the chaos of 1536–7, England would not face such religious upheaval again, until Henry VIII's death in 1547 brought his young son Edward VI to the throne. Edward's reign, dominated by powerful Protestants, heralded a new wave of religious change, more radical than anything attempted by his father. The first stirrings of what would become a nationwide reaction to the new religious and political order came from Cornwall. On 5 April 1548, William Body, Archdeacon of Cornwall, arrived in the coastal village of Helston, probably on business related to Edwardian religious reform.[115] His agenda was clearly unwelcome; soon after his arrival, people from Helston and the surrounding villages of St Kevern and Constantine and other more distant Cornish villages converged on Helston and attacked Body. He attempted to flee, taking refuge in a local house, but the mob tracked him down, dragged him into the street and stabbed and beat him to death. Frances Rose-Troup, who authored the most vivid reconstruction of the murder, named two men as the murderers: William Kylter, a local priest, and Pascho Trevian, a mariner. Later, the perpetrators gathered in the village cemetery and defended the murder, before moving on to the town marketplace. Something of a small rising that has been termed the Helston Rising by historians of Cornwall followed, but failed to muster much support and was quickly crushed. Soon after, the twenty-eight men most implicated in Body's murder were taken to London for trial, found guilty and executed for high treason.[116] Much like John Raynes in Lincolnshire, Body was murdered because he was perceived as a threat to the traditional Church practice his murderers were seeking to defend.

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[115] Ronald B. Manning, "Violence and Social Conflict in Mid-Tudor Rebellions", *Journal of British Studies* 16, 2 (Spring 1977), 18-40, 31.

[116] Rose-Troup, *The Western Rebellion,* 79, 88.

Contemporary accounts of William Body's death were created to portray the rebels as monstrous criminals, challenging the God-given rule of the sovereign. Therefore, most sought to glorify Body as a loyal servant and demonise his killers. For example, Richard Carey called Body "guiltless" when he mentioned the murder in his *Survey of Cornwall*.[117] John Strype's *Ecclesiastical Memorials* described the murder as an act committed by "popishly affected" Cornish people.[118] In his description of Cornwall, John Norden mentioned the murder in the sections for both Helston and St Kevern, and described Body as an innocent victim.[119] This tendency to dismiss the actions of failed rebels as wanton brutality, makes studying the murder problematic, which is only compounded by later historians. The most detailed modern account of the murder is found in the work of Frances Rose-Troup, but her depiction is complicated by her prejudicial attitude towards Body. As described in the introduction, she depicted Body as a "blustering bully" whose "autocratic manner" was responsible for his own violent death, alongside the conservative religious devotion in Cornwall.[120] This theme has spread to other histories of Cornwall; for example, Alfred Rowse called Body a "bold, unscrupulous man".[121] What further complicates studying Body's death is that key contemporary accounts either do not survive or are difficult to access, which means this study must follow in the footsteps of other historians which mention the murder and depend on Rose-Troup's account.[122]

William Body himself remains an elusive figure. His birthdate does not survive; the first mention of him is a letter he wrote to Thomas Cromwell dated 28 October 1532 in which

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[117] Richard Carey, *The survey of Cornvvall* (London, 1602), 98.
[118] John Strype, *Ecclesiastical Memorials* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1822), 143.
[119] John Norden, *Survey of Cornwall* (London, 1728), 46.
[120] Rose-Troup, *The Western Rebellion,* 54, 78-79.
[121] Alfred L. Rowse, *Tudor Cornwall: Portrait of a Society* (London: J. Cape, 1941), 149.
[122] Frances Rose-Troup claimed to have based her account on the two indictments of the murders after the event, but she did not directly reference the documents themselves, which no historians have referenced since. Meanwhile the trial documents of those involved in the murder and the rebellion which followed are found in King's Bench and so are largely in Latin: TNA KB 8/15.

he reported a journey to York to visit the Archbishop over a financial matter.[123] There is little indication of what his official work comprised of, but many of his early letters to Cromwell are about money.[124] In 1536, he was sent to Ireland on a mission to persuade those in power there to gain more revenue for the King.[125] Body sent Cromwell brief letters which detailed his journey in the summer of 1536, but he had little joy in his Irish excursion.[126] In a letter dated 9 August 1536 he complained of the conditions, "And so I, amongst others, lay in my harness without any bed, almost famished with hunger, wet, and cold". His exasperation at the state of the government in Ireland is also evident: in the same letter he wrote that the Master of the Rolls, "never speaketh as he thinketh, nor thinketh as he speaketh".[127] A letter from the Lord Deputy and Council in Ireland shows the resentment was mutual.[128] This suggests Body may have lacked diplomatic skills, although this seems not to have concerned his employer.[129] Body certainly seems to have been singularly unimpressed by the Lord Deputy, and perhaps regarded him as having more interest in leisure than governing, remarking in a report to Cromwell that the lord "playde upon the harpe".[130] Lord Grey was aware of Body's dislike for him, among others, and Rose-Troup uses this as more evidence for her negative assessment of Body's character.[131] The intense criticism levelled at William Body by historians seems unfair for such a minor historical character.

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[123] SP 1/71 f. 149 (William Body to Cromwell); the only indication of Body's age is in a letter he wrote to Cromwell in August 1535 where he wrote "since I was 27 years of age I never led so "pensifull" a summer", suggesting he was considerably older than this: SP 1/95 f. 109 (William Body to Cromwell); SP 1/89 f. 107 (William Body to Cromwell); SP 1/89 f. 108 (William Body to Cromwell).

[124] SP 2/o f. 34 (R. O. William Body); SP 1/83 f. 55 (William Body); In a damaged letter from the same year he was noted as receiving goods from the estate of a late earl: SP 1/96 f. 37 (William Body).

[125] SP 60/3 f. 75 (Instructions to William Body).

[126] SP 60/3 f. 105 (William Body to Cromwell).

[127] SP 60/3 f. 120 (William Body to Cromwell).

[128] SP 60/3 f. 175 (Deputy and Council of Ireland to Cromwell).

[129] SP 60/3 f. 73 (Cromwell to the Deputy and Council of Ireland); Body was trusted by Cromwell and the king to act as a courier, carrying letters between them and the Council of Ireland: SP 60/3 f. 165 (The Lord Deputy and Council of Ireland to King Henry VIII).

[130] SP 60/3 f. 114b (The Council of Ireland to Lord Crumwell).

[131] Rose-Troup, *The Western Rebellion,* 54.

Despite the hints of political intrigue, Body's main concern still seems to have been financial.[132] His long correspondence with Cromwell shows that he was in Cromwell's employment from at least 1532 until around 1537.[133] Body's apparent path after 1537 turned out to be prescient; the dramatic downfall and death of Cromwell followed just three years later. Meanwhile, Body effectively bought the Archdeaconry of Cornwall from Thomas Wynter, recorded as the protégée and possible illegitimate son of the late Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, who owed him money, but his appointment was not well received in all quarters.[134] He was involved in lawsuits concerning the Archdeaconry until his death.[135] The most dramatic went before the Court of Star Chamber, in which Body alleged he was performing his duties in St Stephen's church in Launceston, Cornwall in 1547, when a number of men burst in and challenged his right to authority. Body claimed he was thrown out of the church in fear of his life.[136] He also sued a number of other men, probably around the same time, for not allowing him to access a farm that was part of the Archdeacon's estate.[137] By 1548, Body had certainly gained enemies, and the unscrupulous way in which he gained his position in Cornwall raised some questions for the Cornish, for which he has been castigated by historians ever since.

Body's problems in Cornwall were compounded by the fact that the region maintained a fierce sense of regional identity throughout the early modern period, and as a probable foreigner, Body would have been unwelcome.[138] Mark Stoyle has shown that West Cornwall specifically, where Helston is located, was the most aggressively Cornish in

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[132] SP 60/3 f. 175 (The Lord Deputy and Council of Ireland to Crumwell).
[133] SP 1/124 f. 178 (Robert Lord to Cromwell).
[134] Rose-Troup, *The Western Rebellion,* 71.
[135] TNA C 1/950/37 (Body v. Pollard).
[136] TNA STAC 2/10 ff. 244-256 (Body v. Wynter).
[137] TNA STAC 2/5 ff. 60-66 (Body v. Harrys).
[138] Mark Stoyle, *West Britons: Cornish Identities and the Early Modern British State* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002), 18.

identity, and the cradle of five rebellions throughout the Tudor age.[139] Body's origins are

unclear; in 1547, when he wrote his will, he wrote that he wished to be buried in Bodmin,

Cornwall, although this may be because of his official position in the area.[140] Whether Body

himself was Cornish or not, the fierce nationalism of the Cornish influenced how they

responded to intrusions from London, especially on religious matters. The general consensus

among historians is that Cornwall retained its devotion to Catholic traditions, again especially

in West Cornwall.[141] However, there is one exception. Robert Whiting has argued that people

in south west England, such as Cornwall, were largely disinterested in religious matters, at

least enough that the Reformation was not of much concern to them.[142] Whiting, in part, uses

the itineraries of the Tudor wanderer John Leland, who in his notes on Cornwall, routinely

noticed a ruined monastery or other derelict building with a formerly religious purpose, and

uses this to illustrate what he sees as a lack of interest in religion in Cornwall.[143] However,

this lack of investment in religious institutions could also be evidence of poverty. Leland

even made this connection himself: he remarked on a "poor chapel" in a "poor towne".[144] By

contrast to the many ruined priories noticed by Leland, the church in Helston itself, as

recorded in the 1549 inventory, was in possession of some considerably expensive objects;

two silver chalices, vestments made from luxuriant fabrics like velvet and silk, an altar cloth,

streamers and some other objects for liturgical use.[145] Many of these objects would have been

some years old, but they could only have been bought through contributions from

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[139] Mark Stoyle, "The Dissidence of Despair: Rebellion and Identity in Early Modern Cornwall", *Journal of British Studies* 38, 4 (October 1999), 423-444, 423; Stoyle, *West Britons,* 9.
[140] TNA PROB 11/32/129 (Will of William Body, Gentleman, Farmer and Patron of the Archdeaconry of Cornwall, Oxfordshire).
[141] Richard Peter and Otho B. Peter, *The Histories of Launceston and Dunheved in the County of Cornwall* (Plymouth: W Brendon & Son, 1885), 143; John Chynoweth, *Tudor Cornwall* (Stroud: Tempus, 2002), 236.
[142] Robert Whiting, *The Blind Devotion of the People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 162.
[143] Lucy Toulmin-Smith, ed., *The Itinerary of John Leland in or about the years 1535-1543* (London: Centaur Press, 1964), 180; Whiting, *The Blind Devotion,* 162.
[144] Toulmin-Smith, *The Itinerary of John Leland,* 319.
[145] Lawrence S. Snell, *The Edwardian Inventories of Church Goods for Cornwall* (Exeter: Printed by James Townsend, 1955), 18.

parishioners. This shows that in Helston the population was certainly engaged in Catholic religious practice.[146] It was into this fiercely independent context, riven with Catholic devotion, that William Body attempted to force the first stage of the Edwardian Reformation.

There is some disagreement regarding what William Body was doing in Helston when he was murdered; Rose-Troup claimed he was presiding over the destruction of images in the church, whilst Barrett Beer was less sure.[147] John Speed came to the same conclusion more contemporaneously, writing in 1612 that Body was pulling down images in the Helston church.[148] John Hayward in 1630 wrote the same.[149] However, Carey wrote that Body was sat in commission for religious affairs.[150] However, in 1548 little official iconoclasm took place. Although the Henrician Reformation had seen the break of the English Church from Rome and the Dissolution of the Monasteries, in many ways the form of religion practised under Henry VIII was conservative. However, under Edward VI, whose regency was dominated by more zealous reformers, the Reformation quickly gained pace. In the first two years of Edward VI's reign, the new government both wished to push the Reformation much further than Henry VIII ever had, but also were cautious not to enforce religious change too strongly in the immediate aftermath of the old king's death.[151] In the 1547 injunctions, it was ordered that those charged with enforcing the Reformation should "vtterly extincte, and destroye, all shrines, couerynge of shrines, all tables, candelstickes, tryndilles or rolles of waxe, pictures, paintynges…"[152] However, the government left the decision of how these should be enforced up to local religious authorities.[153] The churchwardens' accounts of nearby Devon villages

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[146] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars,* 156.
[147] Rose-Troup, *The Western Rebellion,* 79.
[148] John Speed, *The theatre of the empire of Great Britaine* (London, 1612), 805.
[149] John Hayward, *The life, and raigne of King Edward the Sixt* (London, 1630), 53.
[150] Sarah Bendall, "Speed, John (1551/2–1629)", *ODNB,* last modified 3 January 2008, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/26093; Carey, *The survey of Cornvvall*, 98.
[151] Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Tudor Church Militant: Edward VI and the Protestant Reformation* (London: Allen Lane, 1999), 66.
[152] Church of England, *Iniunccions geue[n] by the moste excellent prince, Edward the sixte* (London, 1547), 11.
[153] MacCulloch, *Tudor Church Militant,* 70.

point to the archdeacons in Devon and Cornwall conducting visitations rather than presiding over any official destruction. In the accounts of the village of Stratton for February 1549, there are mentions of preparing for an archdeacon's visitation.[154] The accounts of nearby Ashburton also mention preparations for visitations by the Devon archdeacon.[155] As Body died before this time, this suggests that he was more likely to be performing visitations, which even so, would have been understood as just the pretext for organised destruction as can be seen in churchwardens' accounts a few months later.[156] Whilst it is possible that given his clear zeal for reform, Body was presiding over a visitation himself, it is also feasible that he was simply enforcing reform mentioned in the Injunctions without any dialogue with the local population.[157]

William Body did have a history of relentlessly driving the Reformation forward without any sense of caution, as shown by an incident the year before his death in the Cornish town of Penryn.[158] Body provoked a riot in the town in 1547, when he called a general meeting of the parishes and informed them that a confiscation was imminent according to the king's wishes, which the populace took to mean he was about to destroy their religious customs.[159] This riot is sometimes placed in 1548, which when describing his murder, makes it seem like he was causing disorder wherever he went in Cornwall in April 1548.[160] However, most modern research dates the Penryn riot to 1547, and the official response to the rebellion also suggests 1547 as a more likely date. The authorities responded to the dramatic events by reassuring the locals that their religion was not in danger, whilst Body was

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[154] Joanna Mattingly, ed., *Stratton Churchwardens' Accounts, 1512-1578* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, an imprint of Boydell & Brewer Ltd., 2018), 88-90.

[155] Alison Hanham, ed., *Churchwardens' Accounts of Ashburton, 1479-1580* (Exeter: Devon & Cornwall Record Society, 1970), 121.

[156] Philip Caraman, *The Western Rising, 1549: The Prayer Book Rebellion* (Tiverton: Westcountry Books, 1994), 7.

[157] Marshall, *Heretics and Believers,* 320-321.

[158] Aston, *Broken Idols of the English Reformation*, 195.

[159] Cornwall, *Revolt of the Peasantry 1549*, 52.

[160] For example, Fletcher and MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions*, 54.

imprisoned for ten days.[161] Some historians have taken this at face value, and used it as a way to criticise Body, implying his actions were beyond his governmental remit.[162] However, Body's imprisonment was more likely as a result of official caution; initially the Edwardian Church and state tended towards restraint in matters of religious reform. The appeasement of the perpetrators therefore was likely tactical.[163] This incident both shows the government's unease about enforcing further reform too quickly, and that William Body had a history of blindly driving religious change without heed for any potential opposition.

The way in which the perpetrators justified the murder shows they saw it as an act in defence of the church. In two indictments made against the perpetrators, the words said by John Resseigh, a yeoman from Helston, who addressed the crowd as they gathered in Helston at the market cross after the murder, were provided. Each indictment gives a slightly different account of his words, but they were to the effect of demanding that the religious laws of Henry VIII be revived until his son Edward VI reached the age of 24, and that if anyone defended Body or supported the religious changes associated with him, they would murder them as they had Body.[164] The caveat regarding Edward VI's age suggests the rebels were manipulating the ambiguous nature of kingship under Edward VI, who was only ten years old in April 1548. John Resseigh argued that Edward's youth invalidated any religious change made in his name.[165] By extension, the murder was in defence of the old Henrician order that the would-be rebels clearly supported.

John Resseigh's speech also shows that regardless of what Body was actually doing in Helston, his presence was interpreted by the Cornish as a sign that drastic Edwardian reform

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[161] Marshall, *Heretics and Believers,* 320-321.

[162] For example, Barrett L. Beer, *Rebellion and Riot: Popular Disorder in England during the Reign of Edward VI* (Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 1982)*,* 43.

[163] MacCulloch, *Tudor Church Militant,* 70, 72.

[164] Rose-Troup, *The Western Rebellion,* 79.

[165] Andy Wood, *The 1549 Rebellions and the Making of Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 28.

was imminent, and Body's murder underscores that these reforms were seen as heresy. As aforementioned, this is because Catholic violence was structured around killing heretics and cleansing society of the stain they embodied.[166] The public performance of the murder highlighted how it was justified as necessary defence of the church. Exposure was a key aspect of what gave public executions their legitimacy as rituals of state justice, so Body's murder in public could be a claim to that same authority.[167] This could be seen in the violence during the Lincolnshire Rising, and was a common aspect of such murders in other contexts, notably France. For example; in 1562 in Toulouse a Protestant merchant was slain in front of a church, before his remains were burned at the town hall. In Montpellier in 1569, a Catholic crowd hanged a Protestant in front of his house after a hasty show trial. Neapolitan rebels in 1647 also committed acts of popular violence that deliberately emulated state executions in grisly detail, such as the murder of Giovanni Vicenzo Starace, who was made the scapegoat for the failure of the government response to an ongoing famine, and was dragged to a traditional execution site by an angry mob where he was killed. His remains were later dragged through the streets of Naples in imitation of how a criminal's body would be brought to an official execution.[168] Many of these examples also involved ecclesiastics as agitators or participants.[169] This is also true in Helston: the priest Martin Geoffrey encouraged the murder of Body, and another priest, William Kylter, took part in committing it. Their presence, much as it had in Lincolnshire, only encouraged the murderers to believe that they were doing God's will. The speech by John Resseigh shows that the murder was justified by the perceived heretical nature of the Edwardian reforms, and the uncertain state of a government headed by a child.

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[166] Davis, "Rites of Violence", 58.
[167] Wood, "The Deep Roots of Albion's Fatal Tree", 416; Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 58.
[168] Burke, "The Virgin of the Carmine", 9, 15.
[169] Davis, "Rites of Violence", 63, 66.

Whilst the murder of William Body in 1548 has much in common with that of John Raynes in 1536 in that both men were murdered to defend the Church from desecration, there is one meaningful difference as well. John Raynes was murdered at the inception of the Lincolnshire Rising, whereas the murder of William Body predated the Helston Rising by two days. The Helston Rising was directly linked to the murder; it was probably partly motivated by the desire to stop any investigation of Body's fate. Indeed, one of the attackers remarked that they would not allow anyone to be punished for taking part.[170] Unfortunately, the royal pardon issued on 2 May after the rebellion had been quelled gives little detail as to what the rebels had actually done. Much of the text followed the standard structure of a royal pardon: condemning the "treason Rebellyons Insurrecons" of the rebels, and underlining the magnanimity of the monarch for forgiving such transgression.[171] However, it is possible to make some suggestions as to how the murder helped form the brief rebellion. As Body was a Church official, however unpopular he may have been, the potential consequences of killing such a person might have forced the perpetrators into solidarity. As the murder was justified in defence of the Church, it could have united the Catholic population to prolong their efforts to protect the traditions of Catholicism. It is also clear that the ambiguous nature of kingship under the boy-king Edward VI also fed the sense that the legitimacy of the government was more questionable and ambiguous than usual. This was partly how the perpetrators justified the murder, so the rebellion could also have been facilitated by the ambiguous position of the king. The murder may possibly have lent the rebels a sense of legitimacy; after all the power over life and death was normally claimed by the state and God. Both popular religious violence and rebellion in early Reformation England required the perpetrators to assert their own power and challenge the legitimacy of the state in some way. The death of William

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[170] Rose-Troup, *The Western Rebellion,* 79.
[171] Krista J. Kesselring, *Mercy and Authority in the Tudor State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 2.

Body shows that murder could not only be legitimised by rebellion, but that the reverse was possible: murder could justify rebellion.

**The Service Greater than the God?: The Murder of William Hellyons, Devon, 1549**

William Body's death has often been linked to the Western Rising, even though it would not erupt for another year.[172] However, another man was murdered at the onset of this Rising, in the village of Sampford Courtenay: William Hellyons. The murder happened in June 1549, within a day of the mandatory introduction of the new *Book of Common Prayer*. On 9 June 1549, Whitsunday, the aged priest of Sampford Courtenay, William Harper, gave the service in the new form as demanded by the government.[173] However, his parishioners confronted Harper the very next day at the parish church and bullied him into giving the service in the old way.[174] This seemed to cause an uproar across the county, and the success galvanised religious tensions in the village.[175] This concerned the local Justices of the Peace sufficiently that they quickly arrived in the village to stem the tide of what they must have feared, accurately, would become a full-blown rebellion.[176] The sixteenth-century antiquary John Hooker derisively described the justices as "white lyvered" as they were intimidated by the strength of conservative religious sentiment in the village. The sole exception was a local man named William Hellyons, who made a speech in the parish church.[177] Hellyons' exact words to the crowd in the parish church have not been recorded, but the sources agree that his words were something to the effect of dissuading his listeners from participating in an evil rebellion. Holinshed described Hellyons as having "some communication with them for the

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[172] For example, in Cornwall, *Revolt of the Peasantry,* 51.
[173] John Hooker, *The Description of the Cittie of Excester,* trans. and eds. Walter J. Harte, Jacob W. Schopp and Harry Tapley-Soper, 3 vols, volume 2 (Exeter: Devon and Cornwall Record Society, 1919), 56.
[174] Alexander Jenkins, *The History and Description of the City of Exeter* (Exeter: P. Hedgeland, 1806), 113.
[175] Hooker, *The Description of the Cittie,* 57.
[176] Raphael Holinshed, *The Third volume of Chronicles* (London, 1586)*,* 1026.
[177] S. Mendyk, "Hooker [Vowell], John (c. 1527–1601)", *ODNB,* last modified 26 May 2005, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/13695; Hooker, *The Description of the Cittie of Excester,* 56.

staie of their rebellion, and for the pacifieng of them in their due obedience."[178] However, this emphasis on loyalty to the king probably was inserted by Holinshed to portray Hellyons as a loyal subject wrongfully murdered by those bent on rebellion. As Hellyons left the church, he was attacked by a man from the crowd. By most accounts a man named Lithibridge or Githbridge, stabbed Hellyons in the neck as he walked out of the church, before the rest of the crowd attacked Hellyons and killed him.[179]

Unlike William Body, murdered just a year earlier, Hellyons' murder disappeared into the footnotes of the Western Rising. One of the few mentions of the murder can be found in the extended narrative account of Exeter through several centuries by the nineteenth-century historian, Alexander Jenkins. The Tudor chronicler, Raphael Holinshed, gave a more detailed account, in which the interaction between Hellyons and his killers prior to the murder was more prolonged, but was generally analogous to Jenkins'.[180] The murder was also mentioned alongside that of Body in a contemporary ballad, in celebration of the defeat of the Western rebels.[181] Both accounts emphasise the ferocity of the murder, mentioning that Hellyons' corpse was left in pieces by the attack, which shows that the murder was remembered as exceptionally violent.[182] Today, a plaque has been placed outside the church where Hellyons was killed, reading "On Whit Monday 1549 Sampford Courtenay people killed a local farmer William Hellyons and then joined the Cornish in the Western Rising which ended in defeat by the king's army outside this village".[183] William Hellyons himself remains a mysterious figure, the best-documented part of his life being his terrible death. Jenkins described him as originally from Flanders.[184] Holinshed did not mention Hellyons' background, although the

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[178] Holinshed, *The Third volume of Chronicles,* 1026.
[179] Jenkins, *History and Description*, 113.
[180] Holinshed, *The Third volume of Chronicles,* 1026.
[181] Anonymous, *Ballad on the defeat of the Devon and Cornwall rebels of 1548* (London, 1549).
[182] Holinshed, *The Third volume of Chronicles,* 1026.
[183] "History of Sampford Courtenay", *Sampford Courtenay,* accessed 3 September 2019, http://www.sampfordcourtenay-pc.gov.uk/history-sampford-courtenay.
[184] Jenkins, *History and Description*, 113.

name does suggest Cornish ancestry.[185] Frances Rose-Troup wrote that he could have been a member of the Hellions family, a reasonably well-established Devon family of gentlemen farmers.[186] He was described in all accounts as a yeoman or a franklin, meaning a reasonably well-off farmer, a rung below the gentry.[187] His character was described as amiable and well-liked, but how much this may be connected to sympathetic writers painting his life in a positive light, to underline the evil of his killers, is unclear.[188] The words he spoke which led to his death are vague, they were unrecorded verbatim; but the most important aspect is that they were interpreted as an endorsement of the new *Book of Common Prayer*.

Devon had remained largely devoted to traditional Catholicism throughout the early Reformation.[189] While parish records, such as churchwardens' accounts, do not survive for Sampford Courtenay, it is possible to evaluate devotion in Devon in general, through better recorded nearby parishes. Morebath, a village whose piety has been both well recorded and studied by Eamon Duffy, as well as being just thirty miles from Sampford Courtenay, can provide an indicator as to the strength of traditional piety in rural Devon. Eamon Duffy's detailed study of the churchwardens' accounts of Morebath show that aspects of traditional religion in the village retained significant devotion from the populace, in particular the cult of saints. For example, the cult of Saint Sidwell, the only major saint local to Devon, was extensively promoted in the village from the 1520s by the local priest. Duffy has shown that the parishioners quickly grew to share the devotion of their priest to the saint, and bequeathed items such as an altar cloth for her shrine and a banner with her image upon it for the church. One woman even donated her wedding ring in her will to make a silver shoe for the statue of

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[185] Holinshed, *The Third volume of Chronicles,* 1026.

[186] Jenkins, *History and Description*, 113; Daniel Lysons, *Magna Britannia: Being a Concise Topographical Account of the Several Counties of Great Britain*, 6 vols, vol 6 (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1822), 544.

[187] Christopher Dyer, *Everyday Life in Medieval England* (London: Hambledon and London, 2000), 111.

[188] Holinshed, *The Third volume of Chronicles,* 1026.

[189] Beer, *Rebellion and Riot*, 51.

Saint Sidwell in the parish church.[190] The giving of such intimate items shows how much individual saints and their cults could mean to ordinary parishioners.

Churchwardens' accounts in other Devon villages support this view of popular piety. In Stratton in 1548/9 the church still had a statue of St George which was only taken down under royal order, whilst at Ashburton, the church had so many images that it took two years to remove them all.[191] The survival of rood screen images was also common in Devon, suggesting the local people went to great lengths to protect them.[192] All this evidence strongly suggests that in Devon, the old Church and its traditions retained significant support. Sampford Courtenay itself was perhaps particularly attached to the old ways; as the name suggests, it had once been in the lands belonging to the Courtenay family, who held the title Earl of Devon, and were hardly the most enthusiastic supporters of Henry VIII's Reformation. This may have compounded the response of the village to the 1549 *Book of Common Prayer*. However, later, the village fell into royal hands and into the estate of the queen. William Harper was appointed rector of the village by Katherine Parr, the final queen in the eventful marital history of Henry VIII.[193] This means Harper may have been an evangelical, which renders his behaviour in the rebellion strange, although he may have been intimidated by his parishioners and only performed the traditional service under duress.[194]

Not only was Devon deeply committed to Catholicism, but the county also had a history of exulting in the death of heretics. The clearest example of this was the death of Thomas Benet, who was burned at the stake in the early 1530s. Benet was a secretive evangelical living in Devon until he made the fateful decision to leave a note on the doors of

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[190] Duffy, *Voices of Morebath,* 107, 273, 74-5.

[191] Mattingly, *Stratton Churchwardens' Accounts*, 90; Hanham, *Churchwardens' Accounts of Ashburton*, 124.

[192] Diane Wilks, *A Cloud of Witnesses: Medieval Panel Paintings in Devon Churches* (Broadclyst: Azure Publications, 2011), 3.

[193] Janel Mueller, "Introduction", in Katherine Parr, *Katherine Parr: Complete Works and Correspondence,* ed. Janel Mueller (London: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 1-33, 12.

[194] Katherine Parr, *The lamentacion of a synner* (London, 1547), 21.

Exeter Cathedral which claimed that the pope was the Antichrist and that praying to saints was idolatry. Unsurprisingly, this created an uproar in the conservative city and caused a great witch-hunt for the culprit. Foolishly, Benet gave himself away during a particularly fervent sermon in Exeter Cathedral by bursting into laughter. When he refused to recant before being burned at the stake, his stubbornness so enraged the "deuilishe rage of the blynd people" that many in the crowd directly participated by throwing kindling onto the fire themselves.[195] Of course, Foxe's account of Benet's execution cannot be accepted at face value, and his account was, as ever, shaped to portray Catholics as primitive and violent and Protestants as their innocent victims. Nevertheless, this account does highlight the depth of popular devotion to traditional Catholicism in Devon and the corresponding hatred for heresy.

It was into this context of fierce Catholic devotion that the 1549 *Book of Common Prayer* arrived, and at one of the most important points in the religious calendar. Whitsun traditionally was the occasion for much merrymaking after the traditional service.[196] However, the new service as prescribed in the 1549 *Book of Common Prayer* would have been different from the previous one, even if the 1549 edition was much more moderate than that which followed in 1552.[197] Modern scholarship on the 1549 prayer book tends to emphasise its relatively gentle push towards Protestantism, and allowance for conservative beliefs to remain.[198] However, the prayer book was never intended to be a final point in the development of the Reformation, and it was still recognised by Catholics as a product of Protestant religious policy.[199] For example, the new words spoken during Communion

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[195] Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (1570), 1219-1220.
[196] Caraman, *The Western Rising,* 38.
[197] Gordon Jeanes, "Cranmer and Common Prayer", in *The Oxford Guide to The Book of Common Prayer: A Worldwide Survey,* eds. Charles Hefling and Cynthia Shattuck (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 21-38, 26
[198] MacCulloch, *Cranmer*, 410.
[199] Eamon Duffy, "Cranmer and Popular Religion", in *Thomas Cranmer: Churchman and Scholar,* eds. Paul Ayris and David Selwyn (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1993), 199-215, 204.

emphasised that good works could not negate a person's sins, the only thing of any importance was the faith of the believer: in other words, justification by faith alone. The Collect was even more explicit, saying only that "through the merites of Christe Iesus our sauiour" one would be redeemed.[200] This was both an assertion of a central Protestant doctrine, and a rejection of the idea of saintly intercession.[201] This Whitsun service was the first one to be performed under the new prayer book, which had only been mandatory since that very day.[202] The new services were to be performed in English; they challenged any idea that the communion ceremony was anything other than spiritual in nature and undermined the cult of saints.[203] Even these changes, comparatively more moderate than what was to come, were still clear and definite breaks with the Catholic past.

William Hellyon's murder, motivated by his apparent endorsement of the new prayer book, shows that the new religious order was widely regarded as heresy. This conclusion is supported by the details of his burial. After his death, Hellyons was buried with his body aligned north and south. Holinshed noted that this was the manner in which a heretic would be buried; however, this seems unlikely, as convicted heretics were burned and their ashes disposed of beyond sacred ground.[204] Instead, Hellyons was buried in a way reserved for another group who were also believed to have sinned against nature and God: suicides.[205] Suicide, like heresy, was perceived in early modern England as a most heinous crime. Suicides could be posthumously convicted of self-murder, their goods forfeited to the crown and their remains forbidden a sacred burial.[206] However, the ways in which they could be

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[200] Thomas Cranmer, *The booke of the common prayer* (London, 1549), 73.

[201] MacCulloch, *Cranmer*, 420.

[202] Hooker, *The Description of the Cittie of Excester,* 56.

[203] MacCulloch, *Cranmer*, 414.

[204] Holinshed, *The Third volume of Chronicles,* 1026.

[205] Robert A. Houston, *Punishing the Dead? Suicide, Lordship, and Community in Britain, 1500-1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 189.

[206] Michael MacDonald and Terrence R. Murphy, *Sleepless Souls: Suicide in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 15, 34.

profanely buried depended on their location. There was no official ritual for burying a suicide; instead, different popular rituals developed across the country. The most quintessential tradition was burial at a crossroads with a stake through the heart; but there were others, such as burying the suicide facing down, or aligned facing north and south. Usually a person would be buried facing east and west so that on the Day of Judgement they could arise to face God. Orientating a grave to face north and south showed that the deceased would never ascend to heaven; instead, a suicide was believed to remain in a state of everlasting liminality. Hellyons' burial in a manner usually reserved for suicides is the final piece of evidence that his killers regarded him as a heretic. Suicides were buried in the belief they would never achieve salvation, which corresponded with beliefs about heretics. Heretics were also believed to be condemned to everlasting damnation after death and their remains were treated accordingly. Both suicides and heretics were seen as spiritual pollutants, who must be separated from the Christian community in death.[207] Burying Hellyons as a suicide could also have been a way to show that Hellyons had provoked his own death, a view that absolved his killers of any guilt. How rituals of burial for suicides could also be applied to heretics can be seen in Ulster in Ireland a century later in 1641; for example, some of the Protestant victims of the Catholic rebels were buried face down, as suicides sometimes were.[208] These beliefs overlapped because ultimately, although the nuances were different, both suicides and heretics were considered beyond hope in the next life and a danger to the spiritual health of the community. A grave was made in the hope of salvation, so the grave of a suicide, or heretic, was meant to show that they sacrificed their chance at redemption by sinning against God.

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[207] MacDonald and Murphy, *Sleepless Souls,* 20, 42-44.
[208] Mac Cuarta, "Religious violence against settlers in south Ulster', in *Age of Atrocity*, 168-9.

The murder of William Hellyons also has another meaning: a claim to legitimacy. Although the murder had much in common with those of John Raynes and William Body, there was one notable difference: Hellyons had no position in the Church of England. This makes it unlikely that the murder was in defence of religious practice specifically. Instead, given the context of the budding rebellion, which Hellyons also threatened, the murder was to defend it. The rebels claimed legitimacy through the minority of Edward VI, declaring, much as the Helston rebels had, that his youth meant no changes to religious practice could be made.[209] This again shows that the minority of Edward VI undermined the legitimacy of the government's religious prerogative. England was not the only country to experience violent attempts at religious, economic or social change by relatively ordinary people, at times when the head of state was absent, and the country was ruled by a regency. For example, in 1520 the Castilian city of Segovia was convulsed by a rebellion over excessive taxation, which erupted mere weeks after their ruler, Charles I of Spain, had departed for the Holy Roman Empire as Emperor Charles V. In that instance, the rebels also sought to declare their legitimacy by killing a hated minister in a manner which deliberately emulated a state execution.[210] However, the murder also suggests that the rebels felt a much stronger sense of legitimacy than the Helston rebels. 1549 saw a slew of rebellions across the country about a variety of issues, but the sheer scale of the tumult suggests a widespread sense of unease about the direction of the country.[211] This crisis of confidence, prompted by religious change, challenges to traditional rights and mistrust of those in authority, compounded by the inherent instability of a child-king, could all have contributed to the Western rebels believing they were doing what was right, and Hellyons was in their way.

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[209] Beer, *Rebellion and Riot,* 52.
[210] Wayne Te Brake, *Shaping history: ordinary people in European politics, 1500-1700* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1998) 26.
[211] Andy Wood, *The 1549 Rebellions and the Making of Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 5.

This greater sense of legitimacy is also reflected in the rebels' attempt to claim power through violence. Hellyons was in the church of Sampford Courtenay to remonstrate with the villagers who had so vociferously rejected the new prayer book. His words could have dissuaded some from involvement in the rebellion, as well as reminding them that even in their own locality, not everyone found the religious changes so objectionable. It is well-established that the power of life and death was key to the early modern government's conception of power.[212] Therefore, by murdering the lone dissenting voice, the future rebels of Sampford Courtenay were claiming the same authority to their burgeoning uprising. This conclusion is supported by the choice, once again, to perform the murder in public, in this case, on the steps of the parish church. The choice by the rebels to imitate the public nature of state executions shows how the murder was intended to serve the same purpose: giving the rebellion a claim to authority. It also gave the rebels a chance to assert that they were doing God's work by eliminating a heretic in their midst. William Hellyons was murdered both because his apparent support for the 1549 prayer book rendered him a heretic, and because his visible dissent made him a threat to the rebellion that would soon overtake the village, in the vain hope of turning back time.

**Punishment after Death: The Seamer Rising, Yorkshire, 1549**

The most severe instance of violence throughout the English Reformation was the massacre which occurred at the beginning of the Seamer Rising. To recap from the introduction, in late July or early August 1549 in the Yorkshire village of Seamer, a mob descended on the home of a local man named Matthew White and abducted the four men they found inside. In the most detailed account of the rebellion, which first appeared in the 1570 edition of John Foxe's *Actes and Monuments,* the men are identified as White himself, "Clopton his wiues

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[212] Wood, "The Deep Roots of Albion's Fatal Tree", 416.

brother, one Sauage a Marchaunt of Yorke, and one Bery seruaunt to Syr Walter Myldmay..."

The rebels took them "out of Seamer to a place around one mile from the village near the

Wold. There, the four men were killed by the mob, and after they had died the attackers

"strypped them of their clothes and purses..." The remains of the victims were initially left in

the field where they were killed, until the wives of two of the victims had the bodies buried

two weeks later.[213] This section will show how the murders were motivated by the recent

Dissolution of the Chantries, and how they were shaped by the Catholic understanding of

heresy.

This event proved the opening chapter of the short-lived Yorkshire Rising, intended to

unite with other rebellions taking place across the country at the same time. However, by 21

August 1549 the government had issued a pardon for the rebels, suggesting the rebellion had

largely collapsed.[214] The ringleaders were executed on 21 September 1549.[215] Edward

Seymour, the Lord Protector, seemed unconcerned about the rebellion when he was informed

of it, perhaps showing it did not mobilise a large amount of men.[216] However, Robert

Holgate, then the President of the Council of the North, later tried to use his swift defeat of

the rebellion to commend himself to the unsympathetic government of Mary I.[217] As has been

mentioned before, using the work of Foxe brings some challenges to analysis. These are more

pronounced with the Seamer Rising, as Foxe was one of the very few writers to provide an

account of the brief rebellion at all, so any historian must primarily rely on his version of

events.[218] When Foxe was developing his seminal work, one of the main criticisms levied at

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[213] Foxe, *Actes and Monuments* (1570), 1538.

[214] Jones, "*Commotion Time'*, 295.

[215] Page, *The certificates of the commissioners,* vol 1, xvi: this text misdates the rebellion to 1548.

[216] BL Harley MS 523 ff. 52r-53v: "Letter from Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset and Lord Protector, to Sir Philip Hoby".

[217] SP 11/6 f. 131 (Petition of Robert Holgate to Sir Robert Souhwell).

[218] Foxe, *Actes and Monuments* (1570), 1538.

Protestantism was that it was a disruptive force that upended the normal order.[219] However, the case of the Seamer Rising, a violent and chaotic rising motivated by conservative religion, offered Foxe the chance to turn these accusations upside down and show Catholicism to be as dangerous to society as it claimed Protestantism to be. This applied to other events, such as the murder of Robert Packington, but were especially relevant to how Foxe approached the Seamer Rising. Outside of Foxe, there are some other mentions of the Seamer Rising, but these are sparse at best. John Stow provided a succinct and less emotive account in his *Chronicles of England*.[220] There are some linguistic parallels between Stow's and Foxe's accounts, which has led Amanda Jones to speculate that Stow may have plagiarised Foxe's version. However, this seems improbable, as historians of Stow have never connected the two writers' work; in fact, they generally point out that Stow underused Foxe as a source.[221] Jones is attuned to this as well, and also proposes that Stow used the same sources.[222] The account given by Raphael Holinshed is effectively based on Foxe's. This means that Foxe's work has remained essentially the only account that was written by an early modern historian as every other near-contemporary historian either used his account or used the same sources. The brief rebellion has since disappeared into the footnotes of Reformation historiography.[223]

All four of the victims murdered in Seamer had in some way profited from or been connected to the Dissolution of the Chantries. Prior to the Reformation, chantries were often temporary institutions that were an integral part of the economy of salvation: the system by which a person could ascend to heaven and avoid hell after death.[224] The Catholic concept of

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[219] Margaret Aston and Elizabeth Ingram, "The Iconography of the *Acts and Monuments*", in *John Foxe and the English Reformation,* ed. David Loades (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1997), 66-142, 82.

[220] John Stow, *The chronicles of England* (London, 1580), 1042-1043.

[221] Barrett L. Beer, *Tudor England Observed: The World of John Stow* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1998), 95.

[222] Jones, "*Commotion Time",* 295.

[223] Some exceptions include Arthur G. Dickens, "Some Popular Reactions to the Edwardian Reformation in Yorkshire", in Dickens, *Reformation Studies*, 32-38; Carl S. Watkins, *The Undiscovered Country: Journeys Among the Dead* (London: Bodley Head, 2013), 55.

[224] Burbridge, *Late Medieval Chantry Foundations*, 6.

life after death was originally that a person's soul would go to one of two places. The first

was heaven, a paradise close to God in the company of the saints, reserved for those who

were truly good in life.[225] The second was hell, a tortuous place inhabited by demons and all

manner of undesirables, which was the destination for those who had proved themselves

irredeemably evil.[226] How one ended up in hell was clear enough, but a problem stemmed

from the belief that only saints could possibly die free from any sinful baggage and so ascend

to heaven untrammelled.[227]

In the twelfth century, a solution to this dilemma was created with the idea of

Purgatory, the so-called "third place".[228] Purgatory was believed to be as tortuous for its

inhabitants as hell with the sole exception that the souls of the deceased were eventually able

to leave, once they had been purged of all their earthly failings.[229] Purgatory has been called

both the defining belief of medieval Catholicism and the least defined in content.[230] There

were a number of ways those left on Earth could shorten the time their deceased relatives,

friends or acquaintances would spend in Purgatory: the so-called "four keys" to open the

gates of Purgatory.[231] Perhaps the most important was the saying of masses for the souls of

the dead, which was the job of chantries.[232] Chantries were usually set up by reasonably

wealthy individuals to say masses for their souls.[233] These masses and prayers began within

hours of the death of the patron and could continue for years afterwards; indeed, the

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[225] Meredith J. Gill, *Angels and the Order of Heaven in Medieval and Renaissance Italy* (New York City: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 61.

[226] Alixe Bovey, *Monsters and Grotesques in Medieval Manuscripts* (London: British Library, 2002), 38.

[227] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars,* 341.

[228] Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory* trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 2.

[229] Eileen Gardiner, "Introduction", in *Medieval Visions of Heaven and Hell: A Sourcebook,* ed. and trans. Eileen Gardiner (New York; London: Garland, 1993), xv-xxxv, xvi.

[230] Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 12.

[231] *Kalender of Shepherds,* ed. Heinrich O. Sommer (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner & co. ltd, 1892), 177.

[232] Clive Burgess, "For the Increase of Divine Service'': Chantries in the Parish in Late Medieval Bristol", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 36, 1 (January 1985), 46-65, 49.

[233] Kathleen L. Wood-Legh, *Perpetual Chantries in Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 35.

wealthiest testators could afford to establish chantries in perpetuity.[234] More ordinary people could also pay to have masses said at a chantry, but the transitory nature of their funding often meant chantries were temporary institutions that only stood for between five and ten years.[235] Chantries were institutions for the dead maintained by the living, which created a bond between these two groups.[236]

Although the primary purpose of chantries on the eve of their dissolution was to assist the dead in their eventual escape from Purgatory, they could also provide other services, both spiritual and worldly.[237] Chantry priests could work as teachers, or provide services which could have been previously performed by monks, and so were often considerably more valuable to their communities than simply facilitating salvation for the dead.[238] This seems to have been particularly true in Seamer; before the dissolution, Seamer had two or three chantries and one chapel. All seemed to be well-established in the village; none had recently sold any land and were remarked upon to be serving the community extensively.[239] The most valuable service they were likely to be providing was the saying of the Mass. One of the chantry priests mentioned that the village had many "howseling people", a term which denoted people eligible to receive the sacrament. This suggests that the chantry priests were key providers of the sacrament to the people of Seamer, possibly because the parish church was a mile out of the village and so the chantries were more accessible.[240] Therefore, both in

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[234] Robert Whiting, "'For the health of my soul': prayers for the dead in the Tudor South West", in *The Impact of the English Reformation,* ed. Peter Marshall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 121-142, 122.

[235] Clive Burgess, "Strategies for Eternity: Perpetual Chantry Foundation in Late Medieval Bristol", in *Religious Belief and Ecclesiastical Careers in Late Medieval England,* ed. Christopher Harper-Bill (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1991), 1-32, 3.

[236] David Parsons, *Lost Chantries and Chapels of Medieval Northamptonshire* (Brixworth: Friends of All Saints Church, 2003), 4.

[237] Marie-Helene Rousseau, *Saving the Souls of Medieval London: Perpetual Chantries at St Paul's Cathedral* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 5.

[238] Peter Cunich, "The Dissolutions and their Aftermath", in *A Companion to Tudor Britain,* eds. Robert Tittler and Norman Jones (Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 221-237, 232-3.

[239] Page, *The certificates of the commissioners*, vol 2, 515.

[240] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars,* 459.

England generally, and more importantly in Seamer specifically, the chantries performed a number of vital purposes.[241] They helped the deceased secure salvation, provided their communities with the Eucharist, and connected those suffering in Purgatory with their kindred souls on Earth.

In the accounts of the murders, how the victims were murdered is not depicted. Instead, the most shocking aspect of the attack for contemporary writers was the fact that the victims' remains were initially left unburied by the perpetrators.[242] This was rare, even amongst the victims in this chapter; Robert Packington received a conventional funeral, and John Raynes, George Wolsey and William Hellyons all received burial, if not always a Christian one. This makes the initial refusal to bury the Seamer victims all the more startling. As already mentioned, the only aspect that all the victims shared was a connection to the Dissolution of the Chantries. Matthew White had been a chantry commissioner and another victim was his brother-in-law. Savage was a merchant who was clearly an associate of White, given that he was at the house when the mob arrived. Edward Bury was a close business associate of White, and was in the service of another chantry commissioner. This is the only connection the victims share, and their gruesome end stems from their involvement in and profit from the chantries' destruction. Refusing to bury a body had a number of meanings, one was as a punishment for criminals. Executed convicts were often dissected as part of medical research after death, as a continuation of their punishment.[243] Those convicted of more serious crimes, such as heretics and traitors also suffered punishments which extended beyond their deaths. The ashes of those who had been burned were not buried.[244] The remains

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[241] Simon Roffey, *The Medieval Chantry Chapel: An Archaeology* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007), 7.

[242] Foxe, *Actes and Monuments* (1570), 1538.

[243] Kate Cregan, *The Theatre of the Body: Staging Death and Embodying Life in Early-Modern London* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 11.

[244] Anne Hudson and Anthony Kenny, "Wyclif [Wycliffe], John [called Doctor Evangelicus] (d. 1384)", *ODNB,* last modified 23 September 2010, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/30122.

of traitors were even exhibited throughout the country as warnings.[245] This shows how perpetrators saw the victims as criminals for their complicity in the destruction of the chantries. This may partly explain the theft of the victims' possessions, aside from more practical considerations.[246] This may have been a way of symbolically repossessing the wealth acquired from the plundering and destruction of sacred institutions. Therefore, the lack of proper burial shows that the perpetrators wanted to punish the victims for their perceived crimes in destroying a beloved and important religious institution.

The second important meaning behind the actions of the perpetrators in Seamer is that they were either attempting to ensure, or trying to show, that their victims would not achieve salvation after death. The refusal to bury the victims was so shocking in early modern England because the manner in which the remains of a deceased person was treated was central to whether they would achieve redemption in the next life.[247] This meant that leaving a corpse unburied was a great taboo.[248] The originally Jewish story of Tobit failing to bury the body of a murder victim and being punished with blindness was often used to show the importance of burial for salvation.[249] However, as aforesaid, heretics were denied any proper death rituals.[250] This idea had its roots in the fates of many sinners and villains in the Bible. The caricature of an evil woman, Jezebel, was devoured by dogs after being defenestrated as a sign that she had led an evil life and was surely damned.[251] In Jeremiah 14:15-17, those who listened to false prophets were also condemned to receive no burial.[252] This idea that

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[245] Ronald C. Finucane, "Sacred Corpse, Profane Carrion: Social Ideals and Death Rituals in the later Middle Ages", in *Mirrors of Mortality: Studies in the Social History of Death,* ed. Joachim Whaley (London: Routledge, 1981), 40-60, 58.
[246] Foxe, *Actes and Monuments* (1570), 1538.
[247] Julian Litten, *The English Way of Death: The Common Funeral Since 1450* (London: Hale, 1991), 119.
[248] Christopher Daniell, *Death and Burial in Medieval England 1066-1550* (London: Routledge, 1997), 92.
[249] Thomas Wimbledon, *A sermon no less frutefull* (London, 1550), 29.
[250] Mac Cuarta, "Religious violence against settlers in south Ulster, 1641-2", in *Age of Atrocity,* 168.
[251] 2 Kings 9: 32-37.
[252] Jeremiah 14:15-17.

heretics should not receive burial was carried into the real world. The remains of Huguenot victims of Catholic mobs during the French Wars of Religion were sometimes fed to dogs, thrown into the Seine and even dismembered and sold at markets.[253] In Ireland during the 1641 rebellion, the remains of Protestant victims of Catholic massacres were often left exposed as an act of revenge and a sign that they were damned in the next life.[254] There was also a clear shaming aspect to the murders, as the victims' clothes and possessions were taken after they were murdered.[255] This shows that not burying the body of a murder victim was a way of denying them salvation for Catholic perpetrators of violence against Protestant victims.

A related aspect is that the exposure of a corpse after death made it likely that they would become food for animals, which Foxe emphasised in his account, that the victims' remains were left for crows to feed on. This grim aspect was also a way to ensure a victim would not achieve salvation. Some believed that on the Day of Judgement, when all would be resurrected, if a person's body were not intact they would not be saved.[256] The destruction of human remains through animals was something that happened to the remains of Biblical villains such as Jezebel, whose corpse, as aforementioned, was devoured by dogs. This was yet another sign that these people, and therefore the victims, were bound for the same fate. The process of decomposition after death was a taboo to witness, so by leaving the bodies unburied, the perpetrators were allowing this process to be visible to everyone, another way to posthumously shame the victims.[257] The decay of human remains was portrayed as a sign

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[253] Davis, "The Rites of Violence", 83.

[254] Eamon Darcy, *The Irish Rebellion of 1641 and the Wars of the Three Kingdoms* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2013), 72.

[255] Foxe, *Actes and Monuments* (1570), 1538.

[256] Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336 (*New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 156.

[257] Nigel Llewellyn, *The Art of Death: Visual Culture in the English Death Ritual, c.1500-c.1800* (London: Reaktion Books in association with the Victoria & Albert Museum, 1991), 54.

of a corrupt nature, and so by making this natural process visible, the perpetrators were also making a statement about the evil nature of the victims and their inevitable damnation.[258] The perpetrators were attempting to ensure or prove that their victims would never be redeemed, as another way to punish them for their involvement in the Dissolution of the Chantries.

The act of leaving the remains of the victims unburied, reflected what they had done by destroying the chantries. The chantries were a cornerstone in a system that was designed to help those suffering in Purgatory, alleviate their anguish and shorten their time spent there. Although the dissolution was motivated by Protestant belief within the government, in conservative Yorkshire, it is most likely that people still clung to the Catholic belief in Purgatory, and the necessity of the chantries.[259] For those who genuinely believed in this economy of salvation, the dissolution had real consequences. They could feel sorrow at the thought of those suffering in Purgatory who now had no hope of aid from the saying of masses.[260] There was also the related fear of having no hope of aid oneself after death; as Eamon Duffy has shown, the fear of Purgatory, unlike that of hell, was universal.[261] This could have been heightened by the ways in which Purgatory was invoked; the early medieval theologian, Adam of Eynsham, portrayed hell as a nightmarish world in vivid terms in a work reprinted in 1483.[262] A French writer described Purgatory as a place where "thou shalte see moo tormentes than ony may endure."[263] These examples show that Purgatory as a doctrinal concept was described in immersive and emotional terms which could make it all the more

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[258] Kenneth Rooney, "Tradition and Innovation in the Middle English debates of mortality", in *Transmission and Transformation in the Middle Ages: Texts and Contexts,* eds., Kathy Cawsey and Jason Harris (Dublin: Four Courts, 2007), 157-174, 165.
[259] Carl M.N. Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory: The art and craft of dying in sixteenth-century Spain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 168.
[260] Ronald C. Finucane, *Appearances of the Dead: A Cultural History of Ghosts* (London: Junction Books, 1982), 64.
[261] Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars,* 341.
[262] Adam of Eynsham, *The prologe of this reuelation* (London, 1483), 18.
[263] Dominican Laurent, *A book for a kyng* (London 1485), 51.

terrifying. However, this may not be the whole picture; the great comfort the chantries could provide was also described in emotive and driven terms such as John Mirk's 1486 sermon on the topic.[264] This concurs with the findings of some historians, who have argued that the doctrine of Purgatory was reassuring rather than frightening for most people.[265] Whether it was frightening or comforting, the removal of this central doctrine was deeply troubling for those who persisted in believing in it. Therefore, leaving unburied the corpses of those who had helped destroy the security of support in the afterlife was symbolic of what they had done to those in Purgatory. They had uprooted a long-established tradition, and condemned both the living and the dead to an uncertain future. The violence of the Seamer Rising was driven by the desire to punish those who had attacked the church, and show that such people were not just unfit for the earthly realm but condemned in the next.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has examined examples of popular religious violence associated with five conservative religious rebellions in the early Reformation. It has shown that such violence committed by ordinary English Catholics was shaped by the medieval understanding of heresy and pollution through the many parallels with Catholic violence in France and Ireland. This is not to say that Catholic violence in these three countries was identical, but to show how Catholics across Western Europe followed the same script for violence, informed by a shared medieval understanding of sin, salvation and damnation. The main difference this chapter has highlighted between English Catholic violence and that of France and Ireland is in scale and intensity. This chapter examined the circumstances of nine deaths that took place in the first decades of the English Reformation. Although all these were brutal acts, the

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[264] John Mirk, *Liber festivalis* (London, 1486), 158.
[265] Clive Burgess, "'A fond thing vainly invented': an essay on Purgatory and pious motive in late medieval England", in *Parish, Church and People: Local studies in lay religion 1350-1750,* ed. Susan J. Wright (London: Hutchinson, 1988), 56-84, 64.

relative absence of violence in England is in stark contrast with the widespread horror seen in France and Ireland during comparable periods, as this chapter has shown. All the reasons behind this are too complex to be easily understood. However, it is possible to make some suggestions as to what forces restrained violence in the English context, and galvanised it in others.

One point is that in England, the victims were agents or representatives of national agendas for religious reform. In France, perpetrators and victims of violence were competing communities in the town, city or area in question. This could have aggravated violence in some contexts because Catholic culprits were using violence to purge the presence of Protestantism itself, which may partially account for the targeting of women and children alongside men. By contrast, English victims of Catholic violence were killed for enacting or supporting a state-run process of reform, which appears to have limited such extreme violence to those with power and influence, who were unambiguously challenging the Catholic Church. The impact of bouts of war in France played a significant role in intensifying both anti-Protestant sentiment and the sense of threat French Catholics felt from their Protestant neighbours. An example of how bouts of war could influence violence after the fact can be seen in the aftermath of the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre. After the initial massacre of thousands of Protestants in Paris on 24 August 1572, the violence spread across the country, and there were several copy-cat massacres in cities across France. The cities which saw the worst bloodshed, such as Bourges, Lyons, Meaux, Orleans and Rouen, shared, among other things, a significant Protestant minority which had either attempted or actually seized power during the latest outbreak of war the previous decade.[266] This suggests that the experience of conflict and brief Protestant domination caused many Catholics to believe that

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[266] Benedict, "The Saint Bartholomew's Massacres in the Provinces", 221.

the only way to achieve peace in the future was to eradicate Protestantism from their communities. The lack of an open war in England was vital in limiting outbreaks of violence.

The other major comparison for this chapter has been popular religious violence in Ireland during the 1641 rebellion. In Ireland, Catholic religious violence was greatly heightened by the fact that Protestantism by 1641 had become synonymous with the brutal English occupation, the exclusion of the native Irish from economic advantage and protection under the law, and foreign ethnicities. This meant that in Ireland, Catholic violence against Protestants was a result of the economic oppression and legal exclusion suffered by the native Irish in favour of English occupiers, alongside hatred for their Protestant religion. The ethnic, economic and religious divisions between the native Irish and immigrant English and Scottish, caused the Irish to believe that the only remedy to their predicament was to exterminate the Protestant occupiers from their country entirely. By contrast, England lacked major internal ethnic tensions, and there is little evidence that perpetrators of violence were from poorer backgrounds who targeted victims from the ranks of the economically advantaged. The absence of many of the factors particular to Ireland helps to account for lower levels of violence in England.

Another factor which was important in reducing or spurring violence is the state of confessional divides in all three contexts. In France and Ireland, the lines between Catholics and Protestants were clearly drawn. This evidently encouraged both sides to see their opponents as depersonalised enemies of God, which could only have exacerbated the severity of religious violence as a result. However, in England in the 1530s and 1540s, because the Reformation was still in its infancy, confessional divides were far less obvious. In 1536, a Protestant religious identity had yet to come to fruition, and religious conflict was primarily between different visions of Catholicism. This is less true of 1549, when the government was

effectively a Protestant one steadily implementing a Protestant religious agenda. Even so, the division between Catholics and Protestants was still far from being as clear as they would become as the Reformation wore on. This could have played a role in curbing Catholic religious violence in England because many ordinary Catholics may not have had a strong sense of what constituted Protestant religious opposition. Also, the royal supremacy, and with it the rejection of papal power, had been generally accepted by 1536. Instead, ordinary English Catholics targeted those explicitly attacking Roman Catholic traditions. This is not to say they did not have a well-defined idea of what a heretic was. However, heresy could cover a wide range of religious crimes and subversive beliefs. Given the vast majority of the English people effectively remained Catholic until the 1570s, especially in the areas which saw rebellion in the 1530s and 1540s, it is also very likely that anyone who could be considered an evangelical, or proto-Protestant living in such areas, would keep their beliefs clandestine. Both the lack of a specific conception of Protestantism and the need for many with evangelical beliefs to keep them quiet, were also important in limiting the scope of Catholic violence in England.

This chapter has shown how English Catholics shared the same understanding of heresy and script for violence as their co-religionists in France and Ireland. It has demonstrated how Catholics were influenced by their medieval heritage to purge those who took part in endorsing the early stages of the English Reformation. It has also suggested some of the reasons behind the relatively restrained nature of English Catholic violence in the 1530s and 1540s, compared to the arbitrary brutality perpetrated by Catholics in other circumstances. English Catholics used violence shaped by their medieval heritage in a futile attempt to defend the traditions and institutions of the Catholic Church from plunder and pillage by perceived heretics. This demonstrated the vitality of Catholicism in the first decades of the Reformation, but also the hopelessness for such ordinary people to

successfully challenge the agenda of the state. The resurgence of Catholicism in England would be made possible by the death of the young king, Edward VI, and the accession of his intensely Catholic sister, Queen Mary I. This, however, would only herald the beginning of even more bloodshed.

# "MUCH ADO ABOUT THE MAYPOLE": CONFLICT AND POPULAR FESTIVE CULTURE IN ELIZABETHAN AND STUART ENGLAND

## Introduction

The evening of 14 May 1572 probably seemed ordinary to the few inhabitants of the hamlet of Warbleton, a tiny village in rural East Sussex, dominated by arable farming. Sussex was a county fragmented by religious division due to a generally conservative population, a clergy dominated by the godly, and a mostly Catholic gentry; indeed, the nearby home of the Viscountess Montagu at Battle Abbey had acquired the nickname "little Rome".[1] It was two weeks after May Day, and the maypole, the centre of the celebrations, had been constructed outside the house of a local farmer named John Simms.[2] Around 11pm, when most of the villagers had probably retired to their beds, a group of men, likely from the surrounding villages and towns, entered the village and tried to cut down the maypole. They failed to do so unnoticed as an unidentified assailant saw them and shot at them with a bow and arrow, hitting one in the throat, killing him instantly. The inquest described the wound as being two and a half inches deep. We know about this shocking incident from the record of the inquest held on 22 May in the parish church. The document, held in the National Archives, has not survived intact, so some details have been lost. The victim was a man named Noah Spinner, a carpenter from Hailsham, a town around five miles from Warbleton. The inquest found that a man named John Hayward, a labourer from nearby Crowhurst, had committed the murder; at the Assizes he claimed he was innocent.[3] Evidently, Judge John Southcote and Serjeant

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[1] Matthew Dimmock, Andrew Hadfield and Paul Quinn, "Introduction: Contesting Early Modern Sussex", in *Art, Literature and Religion in Early Modern Sussex: Culture and Conflict,* eds. Matthew Dimmock, Andrew Hadfield and Paul Quinn (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 1-14, 2; Richard L. Williams, "Forbidden Sacred Spaces in Reformation England", in *Defining the Holy: Sacred Space in Medieval and Early Modern Europe,* eds. Sarah Hamilton and Andrew Spicer (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 95-114, 99.

[2] PRO ASSI 35/14/6, quoted in Cameron Louis, ed., *Records of Early English Drama: Sussex* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 170-171 (original Latin) and 249-50 (English translation).

[3] Louis, *REED: Sussex,* 249-50.

Thomas Gawdy, who presided over his case at the East Grinstead Assizes in early September, found his story more convincing as he was acquitted.[4] Whatever the truth, it is clear that Noah Spinner and the other men removed the maypole illegally; the Warbleton parish register which recorded the burial of Spinner on 16 May, noted that he died "a stellin" the maypole.[5]

Noah Spinner, an obscure carpenter, came to his death in such brutal circumstances because of one of the great cultural divides in Reformation England: the battle over popular festive culture. To paraphrase Ronald Hutton, this chapter will define popular festive culture as traditional annual festivals that included customary public celebrations or pastimes that were celebrated locally or nationally.[6] This included customs like Morris dancing, Church wakes, maypoles, processions, revelling, rush-bearing and beating the bounds, which from the Elizabethan era onwards became increasingly contested. There were various waves of legislation attempting to control or prohibit them, and in many communities those who disagreed over such customs came to blows. For example, in Hickling, Nottinghamshire in 1587, several men attacked their parson when he tried to stop them carrying out the custom of ringing bells on All-Souls Night. In Shrewsbury, Shropshire in 1588, the mayor had several members of the Shearmen's Guild imprisoned after they clashed with officials trying to remove a local landmark known as the Shearmen's Tree.[7] This was not the end of the dispute; some years later in 1594, a man named Thomas Lacon was killed when he and two other men came to blows over the same tradition.[8]

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[4] James S. Cockburn, ed., *Calendar of Assize Records: Sussex Indictments, Elizabeth I* (London, 1975), 85.

[5] St Mary the Virgins Parish Register ESRO: PAR 501/1/1 f. 6 (16 May) quoted in Louis, *REED: Sussex*, 170.

[6] Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year 1400–1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 1.

[7] Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England,* 106, 138.

[8] Patrick Collinson, "The Shearmen's Tree and the Preacher: the Strange Death of Merry England in Shrewsbury and Beyond", in *The Reformation in English Towns, 1500-1640,* eds. Patrick Collinson and John Craig (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), 205-220.

There were numerous other examples of such conflict across England throughout the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The Cheshire village of Little Budworth in 1596 was consumed by conflict between the local authorities and the population over traditional Church wakes.[9] Church wakes, or ales, were events that were usually held in church yards, although what form they took could range from sporting events to public celebrations with drinking and dancing.[10] In the medieval period they were often used to raise money for parish churches, and leftover food could be donated to the poor.[11] In Wells in 1607, the traditional Whitsun celebrations became an elaborate charivari, or public shaming ritual, when the constable of Wells, John Hole, and a local couple, John and Anne Yarde, were heard to denigrate the customs.[12] There were also countless smaller incidents of mockery or protest over popular celebratory traditions; in Knutsford, Cheshire, a bear-keeper brought his bear into the parish church and allowed the animal to lay a paw on the prayer desk. In other Cheshire villages, the inhabitants defiantly ignored orders not to attend bear-baiting and challenged any minister who dared confront them.[13] However, after the seismic changes of the first phases of the Reformation, these old customs became targets for termination by a swathe of interested parties; the most important for this chapter were the godly.

The godly, otherwise derogatively known as Puritans, have never been a clearly-delineated group, and defining who is and is not godly has always posed a challenge for both

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[9] Steven Hindle, "Custom, Festival and Protest in Early Modern England: The Little Budworth Wakes, St Peter's Day, 1596", *Rural History* 6, 2 (October 1995), 155-178.

[10] Felicity Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 358-359.

[11] Gabriel Byng, *Church Building and Society in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 67.

[12] David Underdown, "'But the Shows of their Street': Civic Pageantry and Charivari in a Somerset Town, 1607", *The Journal of British Studies* 50, 1 (January 2011), 4-23.

[13] Cust and Lake, *Gentry Culture*, 45.

contemporaries and historians.[14] As the term "Puritan" began life as an insult, how the term

was used pejoratively changed over time; going from originally being an insult for

Protestants generally in the 1560s, to an often arbitrary weapon to attack the enemies of

Laudianism in the 1630s.[15] The godly themselves also gave complex explanations of what a

godly person should be. For example, the godly Sir Robert Harley wrote to his friend Sir

Horace Vere on the "character" of a godly person, claiming that the godly were both obedient

to the Church and state, but also suggesting that they opposed religious practices within the

established church.[16] Therefore, this study will refer to such people with a term they used to

describe themselves: godly, which as a positive term also presents different challenges; after

all, any Christian could refer to themselves as godly. Nevertheless, the term "godly" better

encapsulates their perception of themselves, and by extension their belief in the ungodliness

of the world than terms of insult such as "Puritan".

Some historians have attempted to use belief in a particular doctrine to distinguish a

Puritan, such as predestination.[17] This was the Calvinist belief that God had divided humanity

into two groups long before a person's birth, and designated them either a member of the

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[14] As such, the troubled search for a definition has inspired comparison with a menagerie's worth of beasts, both worldly and mythical. For example, Patrick Collinson has compared the debate to one "conducted among a group of blindfolded scholars in a darkened room about the shape and other attributes of the elephant sharing the room with them", as well as an okapi: Patrick Collinson, *Godly People: Essays on English Protestantism and Puritanism* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1983), 1; Patrick Collinson, "A Comment: Concerning the Name Puritan", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 31, 4 (October 1980), 483-488, 484; Patrick Collinson, "Elizabethan and Jacobean Puritanism as Forms of Popular Religious Culture", in *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560-1700,* eds. Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), 32-57, 34. Christopher Hill and Bill Sheils have referred to the term "Puritan" as a "dragon" and "protean beast" respectively: Christopher Hill, *Economic problems of the church: from Archbishop Whitgift to the Long Parliament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), xii; William J. Sheils, *The Puritans in the Diocese of Peterborough, 1558-1610* (Northampton: Northamptonshire Record Society, 1979), 2.

[15] For example, Thomas Harding, *A detection of sundrie foule errours* (Louvain, 1568), 24.

[16] BL Additional MS 70001 29/202, f. 47V, "Harley to Sir Horace Vere, [17?] February 1620/1"; Jacqueline Eales, "Sir Robert Harley, K.B. (1579-1656) and the 'Character' of a Puritan", *The British Library Journal* 15, 2 (October 1989), 134-157, 136-8.

[17] For example, see Richard L. Greaves, *Society and Religion in Elizabethan England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), 7.

elect, destined for ascension to heaven, or a reprobate, one who would be damned.[18]

However, others, such as Nicholas Tyacke, have challenged this view, arguing that such Calvinist convictions became commonplace after the accession of Elizabeth I.[19] This has been qualified by later historians, but it seems clear that the godly were not marked out from other Protestants by any specific beliefs, but in the zeal with which they applied them.[20] In this study, the term "godly" will be used to describe those who practised this zealous form of Protestantism, as this is how they referred to themselves. It will define a godly believer as a Calvinist, who invested greater meaning in scripture than any other source of authority, and opposed the use of ceremony in the practice of religion and in wider culture. Of course, these traits were shared by many, if not most, English Protestants, but what distinguished the godly was the zeal with which they applied these beliefs, which meant they were often referred to as the "hotter sort of Protestant".[21]

That the godly were marked out by the intense and uncompromising nature of their religious beliefs, underlines how conflict between the godly and their enemies over festive culture was a different form of religious violence. Religious violence is usually considered as conflict between two different confessional positions, such as Catholic/Protestant, because this was the dominant form of religious conflict in Reformation Europe. However, England's state of religious "cold war" allowed a much wider range of religious disputes to develop. In the case of popular festive culture, the core of the disagreement was whether or not popular

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[18] Peter White, *Predestination, policy and polemic: Conflict and consensus in the English Church from the Reformation to the English Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 16-17: for Theodore Beza's view of pre-destination specifically.

[19] Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism, c. 1590-1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 3.

[20] Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales, "Introduction: the Puritan Ethos, 1560-1700", in *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560-1700,* eds. Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), 1-31, 8-9; Ryrie, *Being Protestant,* 7.

[21] For example, see Alexandra Walsham, "Holy Families: The Spiritualization of the Early Modern Household Revisited", *Studies in Church History: Religion and the Household* 50 (2014), 122-160, 131.

festivity was a religious issue at all. The godly argued that all earthly matters had religious significance, so they opposed popular festive culture for a variety of reasons established from this central tenet. The Protestant view of sin, held to an extreme by the godly, was that all humanity was inevitably prone to transgression. As such, the "script" for godly violence was defined by the desire to remove the objects and people considered responsible for encouraging immorality. However, those who maintained devotion to festive traditions believed that such customs were beyond the scope of religion, so their violence was directed against the godly who challenged them.

This chapter will demonstrate that there were two key beliefs that lay behind violence in defence of festive tradition: devotion to such traditional customs and an utter hatred for the godly. The perpetrators of anti-Puritan violence saw the godly as meddling busybodies attacking harmless and cherished customs, which had no religious meaning in their eyes.[22] Their violence was intended to brutally put the godly back in their proper place: out of their neighbours' business. Whether those who defended festive traditions had a particular religious leaning is ambiguous. There is a suggestion that resistance to the godly was sometimes rooted in conservative or even Catholic affiliation; for example, in Little Budworth, the Catholic Hugh Starkey was a ringleader in the conflict, perhaps as an attempt to maintain his family's social status, if not political power.[23] However, in most cases, it is impossible to ascertain the religious affiliations of those involved in such violence. Regardless of their religious leanings, this chapter will show that anti-Puritan violence rarely had any overt religious dimension, because those who committed such violence did not perceive it as serving a religious purpose. Instead, anti-Puritan violence was aimed at forcing the godly to stop their interference with traditional customs.

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[22] Cust and Lake, *Gentry Culture,* 45.
[23] Hindle, "Custom, Festival and Protest", 168-169.

In short, this chapter will show that the conflict over popular festive culture was a deeply visceral debate between two intensely committed sides, who saw the objects and practices of popular festive culture as emblematic of their opposed worldviews, and were willing to use violence either to attack or defend them. The godly used violence, often with religious meaning, to cleanse their communities of traditions they deemed idolatrous and sinful. Those who retained devotion to popular festive culture used violence to defend their beloved customs against hated godly interference. Given the widespread nature of both festive culture and opposition to it, this form of violence was probably the most common in England from the reign of Elizabeth I onwards. Consequently, it is likely that the examples in this chapter represent the tip of the largest iceberg in this thesis. Ultimately, this chapter will show how godly zeal, anti-Puritanism and popular devotion to festive culture, sometimes loosened by alcohol, could be a combustible mix.

To show these two arguments, this chapter will use a number of case studies that demonstrate different aspects of violence surrounding popular festive culture; the only recorded example of murder over a maypole in 1572 will be used to examine why they were both objects of contempt for the godly and cherished customs for their adherents. Another example of violence over a maypole which took place in Somerset in 1611 will demonstrate how violence against maypoles was a strand of iconoclasm. The last section will examine two incidents of violence between godly constables and their communities over festive traditions and show how anti-Puritan prejudice legitimised violence against them, albeit with little religious motivation. This chapter will ultimately explain how the violence over popular festive culture represented a very different form of popular religious violence than is usually considered, that was only possible in the unique context of Reformation England.

**A Green and Pleasant Land?: Defending Merry England, Sussex, 1572[24]**

The murder of Noah Spinner has been called the opening salvo of what Patrick Collinson dubbed "England's wars of religion", between the godly and their enemies.[25] Jeremy Goring regarded the case as an example of the godly attempting to remove an object they found repugnant.[26] Ronald Hutton noted the case, but pointed out the possibility that this could be an instance of maypole theft unrelated to religion, although the evidence he cited was ambiguous.[27] The murder cannot truly be termed the first instance of violence as a result of the Reformation, a dubious honour which instead rightfully belongs to the violence of the 1530s. Instead, this example could more accurately be called the opening salvo of a major conflict descended from the Reformation: the nationwide conflict over festive culture. This section will use the murder of Noah Spinner to examine both the reasons behind the godly opposition to one central object of festivity, the maypole, and why others remained devoted to its maintenance as a custom, and how these two sides clashed in rural Sussex, with tragic consequences.

By 1558, maypoles had been a central part of springtime celebrations for at least two centuries. Their origin is nebulous; there is little record of them prior to the fourteenth century, but whether this reflects their absence or simply the lack of written evidence is unclear.[28] The way in which maypoles were used also varied from region to region, and the way they are used today, in which ribbons are attached to the top of the maypole and plaited by dancers into a pattern, is a nineteenth century innovation.[29] However, some chroniclers did

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[24] The subsection title is inspired by a quotation from William Blake's poem "Jerusalem".

[25] Patrick Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1988), 139, 141-142.

[26] Jeremy Goring, *Godly Exercises Or the Devil's Dance?: Puritanism and Popular Culture in Pre-Civil War England* (London: Dr. Williams's Trust, 1983).

[27] Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England*, 142.

[28] Joseph Strutt, *The sports and pastimes of the people of England* (London, 1903), 276.

[29] Ronald Hutton, *The Stations of the Sun: A History of the Ritual Year in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996)*,* 296.

record the form such festivities could take in the early modern period. For example, John Stow's *Survey of London* mentioned a pole "set vp in the streete, in the Summer as May-Pole" in the mid-fourteenth century.[30] Henry Machyn described May celebrations during the reign of Mary I in more detail, portraying a lavish festival with processions and dancing, and the crowning of a lord and lady of the May in 1555 and 1557.[31] It is unclear whether the revival of these traditions during Mary I's reign, after some challenge during the reign of her brother Edward VI, added a reinvigorated Roman Catholic quality to such customs.[32] Ronald Hutton used churchwardens' accounts to show that maypoles were a commonplace part of springtime celebrations prior to the Reformation.[33] The widespread presence of maypoles in England in the Reformation period is also shown by their proliferation in almost all the volumes of *Records of Early English Drama*.[34] The role of maypoles differed according to place and time, but they do seem to have been prominent fixtures in the backdrop of spring and summer celebrations.

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[30] Stow, *A Survey of London*, 284.

[31] Henry Machyn, *The Diary of Henry Machyn, Citizen and Merchant-Taylor of London, 1550-1563,* ed. John G. Nichols (London: printed for the Camden Society, by J. B. Nichols and son, 1848), 89, 137, 201, 123-141.

[32] Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England,* 101.

[33] Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England,* 28.

[34] The extent of maypoles in English festive culture can be seen in the fact that they appear in almost every volume of *Records of Early English Drama,* such as Cameron Louis *Records of Early English Drama: Sussex*, xlix; John M. Wasson, ed., *Records of Early English Drama: Devon* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), xiv; Rosalind Conklin Hays, C. Edward McGee and Evelyn S. Newlyn, eds., *Records of Early English Drama: Dorset and Cornwall* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 13; James M. Gibson, ed., *Records of Early English Drama: Kent – Diocese of Canterbury* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), xix; James Stokes, ed., *Records of Early English Drama: Lincolnshire* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 271; Elizabeth Baldwin, Lawrence M. Clopper, and David Mills, eds., *Records of Early English Drama: Cheshire Volume 1* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), lxix-xix; Elizabeth Baldwin, Lawrence M. Clopper, and David Mills, eds., *Records of Early English Drama: Cheshire Volume 2* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 517; J. Alan B. Somerset, ed., *Records of Early English Drama: Shropshire* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 54; John R. Elliott Jr, Alan H. Nelson, Alexandra F. Johnston and Diana Wyatt, eds., *Records of Early English Drama: Oxford Volume 1* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 260; James Stokes and Robert J. Alexander, eds., *Records of Early English Drama: Somerset including Bath* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 64, David N. Klausner, ed., *Records of Early Modern English Drama: Worcestershire and Herefordshire* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 62; David George, ed., *Records of Early Modern English Drama: Lancashire* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 101.

The first aspect to examine in the murder of Noah Spinner is why he and his co-conspirators were in Warbleton in the first place and why they wanted to attack the maypole. The few direct references to maypoles in godly literature leave no doubt as to how such people perceived them. One common trope was that maypoles were idols; wooden gods either from the pagan past, or the Catholic medieval world, or both. Philip Stubbes denounced maypoles as "stinking ydols", and initiators of unbridled depravity, in his bestselling *Anatomie of Abuses*.[35] Henry Airay, a fierce Calvinist preacher, called maypoles remnants of paganism in a sermon published in 1610.[36] Other authors brought an explicit anti-Catholic dimension, such as William Whitaker, the godly canon of Norwich Cathedral from 1578, who invoked the maypole as a prophane comparison for communion in an inflammatory anti-Catholic tract in 1585, in which he claimed that Catholics saw Protestant communion as "a maipole, or token of a tauerne".[37] An anonymous writer also claimed that maypoles angered God by their very presence.[38] Henry Burton recorded several alleged instances of such divine outrage manifesting as providential punishment. The most extreme took place in Woolston, Worcestershire when the population defiantly celebrated a maypole, among other festive traditions, against the wishes of their minister, and suffered an avenging fire as a result.[39]

This also carried over into godly behaviour in the real world. In the aforementioned controversy in Wells in 1607, the godly constable of Wells, John Hole, as well as a local

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[35] Philip Stubbes, *The anatomie of abuses* (London, 1583), 93-4; Alexandra Walsham, "Stubbes [Stubbs], Philip (b. c. 1555, d. in or after 1610)", *ODNB*, published 23 September 2004, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb:26737.

[36] A.J. Hegarty, "Airay, Henry (1558x60–1616)", *ODNB*, published 23 September 2004, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/246; Henry Airay, *Lectures upon the vvhole Epistle of St. Paul to the Philippians* (London, 1618), 837.

[37] C.S. Knighton, "Whitaker, William (1547/8–1595)", *ODNB*, last modified 3 January 2008. https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/29228; William Whitaker, *An answere to a certeine booke, written by Maister William Rainolds student of diuinitie in the English colledge at Rhemes* (London, 1585), 200.

[38] Anonymous, *A sad warning to all prophane, malignant spirits* (London, 1642), 31.

[39] Henry Burton, *A divine tragedie lately acted* (London, 1636), 7.

godly couple, John and Anne Yarde, were publicly shamed by the community after Anne

Yarde was heard to criticise the maypole itself as a "painted calf", explicitly connecting the

maypole to the archetypal object of idolatry created by the Israelites in Exodus.[40] A Wiltshire

clergyman told his parishioners in the 1630s that those who danced around maypoles were to

be considered reprobates.[41] In 1633, Arthur Dorvell of Ditcheat in Somerset, claimed he could

prove through the words of the prophet Jeremiah in scripture that the maypole was indeed an

idol.[42]

Other authors opposed the maypole on moral grounds; for example, Thomas Adams,

whose godly belief can be seen in his vociferous opposition to the Spanish Match in 1623,

wrote that maypoles tarnished the decency of communities, listing a number of vile actions

he claimed occurred wherever maypoles were established.[43] The Calvinist clergyman, John

Boys, described maypoles as "base" in a much-reprinted theological work.[44] This strand of

godly thought was also parodied by less devout writers: Thomas Lodge equated maypoles

with codpieces, another sign that they had attained a rather crude subtext.[45] The last work of

the Elizabethan pamphleteer, Thomas Nash, described a maypole as a vehicle to display the

likeness of a woman, and rouse male desire.[46] Whilst Nash's comment should not be taken

seriously, it does show the connection in the late Elizabethan mind between maypoles and

illicit lust. "Maypole" could even be utilised as an insult for women, such as in William

Shakespeare's 1595/6 play *A Midsummer Night's Dream* when the diminutive Hermia insults

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[40] TNA STAC 8/145/2 (Bill of Complaint), printed in *REED: Somerset,* 261-306; see Exodus 32.

[41] David Cressy, *Charles I and the People of England* (New York, 2015), 273.

[42] Bishop's Court Deposition Book SRO: D/D/Cd 78 f. 3 quoted in Louis, *REED: Sussex*, 96-7.

[43] Thomas Adams, *A commentary or, exposition vpon the diuine second epistle generall* (London, 1633), 1229; J. Sears Mcgee, "Adams, Thomas (1583–1652)", *ODNB*, last modified 24 May 2012, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/131.

[44] John Boys, *An exposition of the dominical epistles and gospels* (London, 1610), 187; William Richardson, "Boys, John (ba1571, d. 1625)", *ODNB*, last modified 23 September 2004, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/3144.

[45] Thomas Lodge, *VVits miserie, and the vvorlds madnesse discouering the deuils incarnat of this age* (London, 1596), 27.

[46] Thomas Nash, *Nashe's Lenten Stuff* (London, 1600), 31.

her tall rival Helena by calling her a "painted maypole".[47] Simon Cotton, curate of Dundry in Somerset, after failing to stop his town from installing a maypole in 1635, was horrified at how the people of the village degraded themselves while maypole dancing.[48] Richard Baxter recalled similarly that he could only dance around the maypole after casting aside his religious objections, however temporarily.[49] Not only were maypoles considered propagators of moral degeneracy, they also angered the Almighty, brought about divine punishment and confirmed that those who celebrated them were sentenced to eternal damnation.

Maypoles were far from the only aspects of popular culture the godly disapproved of; the list of forbidden pastimes during the Interregnum was comically long:

> Fairs, Markets, Wakes, Revels, Wrestlings, Shootings, Leaping, Bowling, Ringing of Bells for pleasure, or upon any other occasion, (saving for calling people together for the publique Worship) Feasts, Church-Ale, MayPoles, Gaming, Bear-Baiting, Bull-Baiting, or any other Sports and Pastimes.[50]

This leaves the question of why maypoles were often singled out for such fierce criticism, being the only major festive custom condemned both as an emanator of moral corruption and an idol of a false religion. One explanation is that they were the most visible and constant emblems of popular festive culture. A maypole once established would stand steadfastly for the entirety of the time it was used, and sometimes maypoles could stand in a community on a permanent basis, such as that which was resident in the Strand in London for several decades until it was cut down in the 1640s.[51] Therefore, they held a unique ability to infuriate the godly. They were also frequently conflated with religious items, suggesting a wider

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[47] William Shakespeare, *A midsommer nights dreame* (London, 1600), 20.

[48] Bishop's Court Deposition Book SRO: D/D/Cd71 ff. 209-9vf, printed in Louis, *REED: Somerset,* 101-5.

[49] Richard Baxter, *Reliquue Baxteriana* (London, 1696), 2.

[50] Charles H. Firth and Robert S. Rait, eds., *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642-1660* (London, 1911), 162-70.

[51] Walter Thornbury, *Old and New London: Volume 3* (London, 1878), 84-88.

subtext in which they were perceived as the altar or idol of a religion of excess, paganism and Catholic devotion combined, despite some of these connections being mutually exclusive.

A good example of how all these prejudices could intersect is a poem entitled "Sir Maypole" which concluded Thomas Hall's 1660 *Funebria floræ,* effectively a culmination of all the aforementioned condemnations of maypoles. Hall used the poem to make all the usual accusations about the maypole, portraying it above all as an idol, the wooden god of all the things the godly saw wrong with the world.[52] The poem begins with the personified Sir Maypole demanding obeisance from the reader, claiming to possess divinity and threatening divine vengeance from supposed powerful vassals from the pope to Satan. Sir Maypole claims to have dated from Roman times, being both adored by "Romes Idol-gods" and Catholics. This description of the maypole as a demi-god, demonstrates how it was the most obvious and offensive aspect of popular festive culture to the godly, and as such was emblematic of that culture. Those who celebrated the maypole are even described in the poem as followers. Sir Maypole also describes himself as a bringer of disorder all the way up the social hierarchy, making both children despise their parents, and subjects their king. One of the other many things Sir Maypole boasts of is his ability to bring about ribald talk, relentless alcohol consumption and make "women eke their modesty".[53] This references the godly tradition of viewing the maypole as a symbol of moral degeneration. The godly tendency to conflate objects of their disapproval into one coalescent whole, despite internal contradictions, meant that the maypole was widely perceived as a symbol of everything the godly despised in their world. This provides a powerful explanation for why a minority of the godly felt a divine duty to remove this propagator of sin. Therefore, the godly of East Sussex could hardly have had more reasons to destroy the Warbleton maypole.

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[52] Thomas Hall, *Funebria floræ the downfall of May-games* (London, 1660), 42-48.
[53] Hall, *Funebria floræ*, 45-6, 42.

It is impossible to know for certain if Noah Spinner's killing was intentional, or a warning shot gone wrong, but his death poses the question of why would someone be willing to act so violently in defence of a maypole? Studying popular perceptions of maypoles is difficult to ascertain, due to the relatively lowly social status and the resulting lack of printed output of those who favoured them. The majority of printed sources for maypoles fell into one of two categories: the first was of course works by godly writers who fiercely opposed them, and who could hardly be trusted to truthfully explain the reasons behind their popularity. The second genre in which they appeared were in works of flattering but often patronising pastoral poetry. Poets such as Michael Drayton specialised in such work, but these also give little indication as to why they were celebrated.[54] This is because such aristocratic or gentry poets rarely had much knowledge of popular May Day revelries and experienced them as occasional rural amusements. Some scholars have suggested reasons for why maypoles remained so widespread; for example, Charles Phythian-Adams argued that the purpose of such festivities was to maintain the social hierarchy and harmony.[55] Given the intense interest in both these aspects in early modern England, this may well be partly true. Some sense of how the maypole was perceived by its contemporary supporters, however, can be observed by examining the work of godly writers such as Philip Stubbes in more depth. He called the maypole "the chiefest jewel" of May Day and described whole communities surrounding the maypole with "great devotion."[56] This suggests that maypoles were the centrepieces of spring celebrations and a point of communal pride. Maypole advocates echo this: Thomas Morton, an early colonist of America originally from Devon, described how in 1628 his colony was christened Merrymount, and the May celebrations of that year were used

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[54] For example, see Michael Drayton, *The Shepheards Garland* (London, 1593), 2, 17.
[55] Charles Phythian-Adams, "Ceremony and the citizen: The communal year at Coventry, 1450-1550", in *Crisis and order in English Towns, 1500-1700,* eds. Peter Clark and Paul Slack (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1972), 57-85, 62.
[56] Stubbes, *The anatomie of abuses,* 93-94.

to honour the new name.[57] Unlike their neighbours of Plymouth Colony and many other

settlers in New England, Morton was not a member of the godly; alongside his celebration of

traditional festive culture, he also advocated for and freely traded with Native Americans,

which also angered the godly settlers in the Massachusetts Bay.[58] The maypole was more

than a celebratory object; Morton mentioned that the maypole was decorated with plants to

act as a permanent signpost for the town. Most significantly, the people hung the town name

onto the maypole to proclaim it. Morton wrote that the people wanted a "memorial" to mark

their communal identity for all time, and the maypole became that memorial, and the town

emblem.[59] Indeed, a year later when the colony was attacked by Morton's godly opponents,

the maypole was brought down as a show of victory, both over the colony and the sinful

behaviour of the colonists, both of which were represented by the maypole.[60]

This affectionate regard for the maypole was hardly confined to the New World. The

songs of musician Thomas Weelkes celebrated the carefree abandon of maypole dancing.[61]

The balladeer Joseph Martyn dubbed maypoles the "people's joy".[62] Another songbook

described maypoles as the centrepiece of young people's courtship.[63] Similarly, Richard

Barnfield portrayed maypoles as symbols of young love.[64] Another poet described maypoles

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[57] Thomas Morton, *New English Canaan* (London, 1637), 132.

[58] Edith Murphy, "Morton, Thomas (1580x95–1646/7)", *ODNB,* last modified 3 January 2008, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/19372. For more on Morton and his struggles with his godly rivals, see Michael J. Colacurcio, *Godly Letters: The Literature of American Puritans,* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006); John McWilliams, *New England's Crises and Cultural Memory: Literature, Politics, History and Religion, 1620-1860,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

[59] Morton, *New English Canaan,* 132.

[60] William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation,* ed. William T. Davis (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1908), 238: He described the Merrymount celebrations in this way: "They allso set up a May-pole, drinking and dancing aboute it many days togeather, inviting the Indean women, for their consorts, dancing and frisking togither, (like so many fairies, or furies rather) and worse practices. As if they had anew revived and celebrated the feasts of the Roman goddess Flora, or the beasely practieses of the madd Bachinalians. Morton likewise (to shew his poetrie) composed sundry rimes and verses, some tending to lasciviousness, and others to the detraction and scandall of some persons, which he affixed to this idle or idol May-polle."

[61] Thomas Weelkes, *Ayeres or phantasticke spirites for three voices* (London, 1608), 11.

[62] Joseph Martyn, *Nevv epigrams, and a satyre* (London, 1621), 16.

[63] Thomas Morley, *Of Thomas Morley the first booke of balletts to fiue voyces* (London, 1595), 10.

[64] Richard Barnfield, *The affectionate shepheard* (London, 1594), 23.

similarly as symbols of innocent enjoyment.[65] That ordinary people shared these sentiments

can be seen in the presence of the maypole in towns and villages across the country and their

varied uses. A London shopkeeper, Edward Fuller, gave the address of his shop to

prospective customers thus "at Strand-Bridge near the May-pole".[66] A maypole was a

boundary marker and signpost in the Cheshire town of Handbridge.[67] In 1560 the city of

Dover had a flag mounted on their maypole and a maypole in South Kyme, Lincolnshire in

1601 was used as a town notice board.[68] This shows that maypoles were not just celebratory

objects, but symbols of tradition, local pride and even the community itself. By attacking

them, the godly were metaphorically attacking all of these aspects of a community's identity,

even symbolically the community itself. In the defence of this and the wider festivities which

surrounded maypoles, many were willing to act violently.

The argument of this chapter is that those who committed violence against the godly

did so out of attachment to festive tradition and hatred for the godly. However, the Warbleton

case is an outlier in many respects; its brutality exceeds that of all the other examples in this

chapter, and it predates all of them by several decades. Its date, May 1572, means it predates

much of the virulent anti-Puritanism that erupted later in the century. However, that very

year, *An admonition to the Parliament* was published.[69] It famously referred to the *Book of*

*Common Prayer* as mined from "that popishe dunghil, the… Masse boke". This text does

show that godly consciousness had begun to emerge. It also included a condemnation of

popular festive culture, admonishing ministers who took part in festive games and

"heathnishe dauncing", demonstrating that the negative godly view of festive culture, that

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[65] Anthony Munday, *The paine of pleasure* (London, 1583), 10.
[66] Edward Fuller, *A catalogue of seeds, plants* (London, 16?), 1.
[67] Baldwin, Clopper and Mills, *REED: Cheshire Volume 1,* 389-90.
[68] Gibson, *REED: Kent – Diocese of Canterbury*, xci; Stokes, *REED: Lincolnshire,* 269-301.
[69] Marshall, *Heretics and Believers,* 505-506.

would become a mainstay of godly belief, had begun to emerge.[70] The context of Sussex in the 1570s strongly suggests that prejudice against the godly was present in the county and so could have motivated violence against them.[71] By 1572, the county had been facing something of a godly onslaught. The accession of Richard Curteys to the Bishopric of Chichester in 1567 heralded an intense campaign of godly evangelisation in the county which could have ignited more zealous Protestant feeling in the general populace.[72] There is also some evidence that such godly people in authority were trying to suppress popular festive culture in the late 1560s and early 1570s; for example, Thomas Lucy, of Westbourne in West Sussex, was presented in 1573 for hosting a musician at his home and allowing him to perform during service time, and when confronted by a warden said "thos that ther were wold rule the warden."[73] In 1578, the traditional practice of rush-bearing, the gathering of greenery for decorating the parish church, was banned in the East Sussex town of Rye.[74] Ronald Hutton has also found that traditions such as Church wakes and May games began to wane significantly around this time in Sussex.[75]

This was even more pronounced in the Weald area where Warbleton and Hailsham were located.[76] Warbleton's most famous son was, and still is, Richard Woodman, one of the nine Protestants burned for heresy on 22 June 1557 in the town of Lewes during the reign of Mary I.[77] This indicates there was a robust foundation of Protestantism in the area at the time

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[70] Anonymous, *An admonition to the Parliament* (London, 1572)*,* 14, 24.

[71] Rivkah Zim, "Religion and the Politic Counsellor: Thomas Sackville, 1536-1608", *The English Historical Review* 122, 498 (September 2007), 892-917, 895, 897.

[72] Roger B. Manning, "Curteys, Richard (1532?–1582)", *ODNB,* last modified 3 January 2008, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/6957.

[73] Louis, *REED: Sussex*, 171.

[74] Louis, *REED: Sussex*, 126.

[75] Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England,* 119.

[76] Paul Quinn, "Richard Woodman, Sussex Protestantism and the Construction of Martyrdom", in *Art, Literature and Religion in Early Modern Sussex: Culture and Conflict,* eds. Matthew Dimmock, Andrew Hadfield and Paul Quinn (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014)*,* 195-220, 195, 209.

[77] Thomas S. Freeman, "Woodman, Richard (c. 1525–1557)", *ODNB,* published 23 September 2004, last modified https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/29930.

of the murder in 1572. The clergy of Sussex and in Warbleton in particular also appear to

have been of a godly disposition. In October 1571, just eight months before the murder,

Richard Curteys appointed William Hopkinson as rector of the parish, alongside Salehurst the

next year.[78] He may have been the author of a fiercely Protestant survey of the county in

1584/5, and his curate in Warbleton, Thomas Hely, was a brash godly minister with a

predilection for baptising children with quintessential godly names such as "Much-mercy"

and "Return".[79] In the 1580s the Warbleton churchwardens were commanded to provide a

decent surplice, suggesting they had not done so previously.[80] The nuances of godly attitudes

towards the surplice will be examined in Chapter Four, but suffice to say here that opposition

to vestments was another attitude associated with godly convictions.[81] In his book on

seventeenth-century Sussex, Anthony Fletcher argued that Puritanism had laid strong roots in

the Weald area in particular.[82] Graham Mayhew, in an article based on evidence from probate

documents, located the heart of Sussex Puritanism in the coastal towns, but agreed that the

Weald region also had strong godly connections.[83] This evidences the presence of a godly, or

at least zealously Protestant, clique within Warbleton and the Weald region of East Sussex,

bolstered by the local clergy. This supports the argument that the maypole was removed by

some of the local godly out of zeal. The maypole was an abomination to Protestants on the

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[78] David J. Crankshaw, "Hopkinson, William (d. 1604)", *ODNB,* last modified 3 January 2008, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/13759.

[79] Jeremy Goring, "The Reformation of the Ministry in Elizabethan Sussex", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 34, 3 (July 1983), 345-366, 348; Nicholas R.N. Tyacke, "Popular puritan mentality in late Elizabethan England", in *The English Commonwealth,* eds. Peter Clark, Alan G.R. Smith and Nicholas R.N. Tyacke (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1979), 77-233, 78; Anthony J. Fletcher, "Puritanism in Seventeenth-Century Sussex", in *Studies in Sussex Church History,* ed. M.J. Kitch (London, 1981), 145-8, 155.

[80] Walter C. Rensham, "Notes from the Act Books of the Archdeaconry Court of Lewes", in *Sussex Archaeological Collections,* vol 49 (Lewes: Sussex Archaeological Society, 1906), 47-65, 50.

[81] Collinson, *Godly People,* 327.

[82] Anthony J. Fletcher, *County Community in Peace and War: Sussex 1600-1660* (London: Longman, 1975), 61.

[83] Graham J. Mayhew, "The Progress of the Reformation in East Sussex 1530-1539: The Evidence from Wills", in *Southern History: A Review of the History of Southern England, Volume 5,* ed. John Lowerson (Folkestone, Kent: Dawson, 1983), 38-67, 58.

fervent end of the Protestant spectrum, posing a clear and present danger to the moral and spiritual health of the community, as long as it was allowed to remain.

As much as godly sentiment can be evidenced in Elizabethan Sussex, it also appears that it was not without struggle in the county. Sussex was particularly divided when it came to religion. Roger Manning has argued that Sussex was more resistant to the Reformation than other southern regions.[84] In 1564, conservative Justices of the Peace in the county outnumbered those in favour of Protestantism by fifteen to ten, despite an attempt at a purge in the early years of Elizabeth I's reign.[85] William Overton, chaplain to Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, and pain in Richard Curteys' side, addressed the Sussex Justices of the Peace in 1579, and called the godly the "chiefe Authours of Discord and dissention", warning of the growing ranks of their sect in the county.[86] The editor of *Records of Early English Drama* for the county noted the continuation of festive traditions in various villages, another indication that those with godly inclinations had failed to convert much of the county.[87] The churchwardens' accounts of West Tarring show payments in the 1570s for the performance of plays and minstrels and provisions of beer, as well as the receiving of money raised at a church ale in the late 1560s.[88] A maypole accident in 1582 caused the death of a man named John Rowe in Horsham, another village in the Weald.[89] A maypole was also recorded in Rudgwick, another parish in the Weald in 1612.[90] In 1620 a maypole was installed in Chichester, and in 1623 a maypole was mysteriously cut down at Eastergate after it was

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[84] Roger B. Manning, *Religion and Society in Elizabethan Essex: a study of the enforcement of the religious settlement, 1558-1603* (Leicester, 1969), 1, 36.

[85] Allison Hall, "Religion and the Composition of the Commissions of the Peace, 1547–1640", *History* 103, 355 (April 2018), 223-242, 229; A. Hassell Smith, "The Personnel of the Commissions of the Peace, 1554-1564: A Reconsideration", *Huntington Library Quarterly* 22, 4 (August 1959), 301-312, 311.

[86] William Overton, *A godlye, and pithie exhortation* (London, 1579), 46.

[87] Louis, *REED: Sussex*, pxviii-xx.

[88] Louis, *REED: Sussex*, 172-177.

[89] Louis, *REED: Sussex*, 28-9.

[90] Louis, *REED: Sussex*, 42-3.

decided that the wood should be used for a ladder.[91] These scant records suggest that at least some of the general population of Sussex, and in the Weald region, remained religiously and culturally conservative throughout the Reformation.

Elizabethan Warbleton and the surrounding area was divided between the godly bolstered by the local clergy and those who favoured popular culture, which lends support to the concept that some in the area would have celebrated the maypole, and others would have loathed it. In the context of increased godly presence, those who valued popular festive culture may well have felt their beloved traditions were under threat, and were willing to defend them with violence against the growing ranks of the godly. The attempt by the godly to remove the Warbleton maypole on the night of 14 May 1572, and by extension attack a fundamental symbol of communal pride, triggered this contempt for the godly to spiral into violence. The godly of the Weald saw the Warbleton maypole as a threat to the spiritual and moral health of their community and like many who came after, attempted to remove it in a bid to end its corrupting influence. However, their attempt ended in murder, both because their views were deeply unpopular, and the fact that the maypole had much greater significance than they imagined.

**A Graven Idol: Pollution and Purification, Somerset, 1611**

An example which gives a deeper insight into the specific nature of godly violence against maypoles, took place in Wraxall, Somerset in 1611. The only surviving account of what took place came from the victim, Robert Wilmott, which was given in Consistory Court testimony. He testified that on the night of Trinity Sunday 1611, he was awoken by a commotion outside his house. To find out what was going on, he went outside and walked past the village churchyard, where he discovered Lewis and John Whiting, among others, cutting down the

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[91] Louis, *REED: Sussex*, 20-1, 23.

village maypole, in the courtyard of Owen Wales' home. When his demands that they stop were ignored, Wilmott threw stones at them. A struggle quickly followed: Lewis Whiting held Wilmott around the neck and Wilmott's hand was slashed.[92] Wilmott called his assailants "villains" and challenged them to kill him in the sacred ground of the churchyard. The scene quickly drew a crowd, including Wilmott's wife, son and brother-in-law. Wilmott testified that his attack lasted until the maypole had been removed, and that during the struggle he was "chided" by the Whitings, but admitted he could not recall their exact words.[93] Most of those involved in this incident remain anonymous, and Wilmott did not give any reason as to why anyone would have wanted to remove the maypole, or any explanation of his own actions, particularly his choice to throw stones at his attackers. Stoning could have a religious meaning, in imitation of Biblical examples, such as the unfortunate man from the Book of Numbers who was stoned to death for gathering wood on the Sabbath.[94] However, given that Wilmott was taken by surprise during the night, it is far more likely that his actions were improvised. This section will examine this example of violence once again over a maypole, to show how attacks on maypoles can be considered a form of iconoclasm, and how Protestant violence could manifest in the English Reformation.

In Somerset, it is clear that festive traditions did survive, but were also subject to constant challenge. There were maypoles recorded in Wells and elsewhere in the county, suggesting they remained a widespread celebratory tradition.[95] In Pawlett in 1587, a man named John Cornish was presented in a session in the parish church both for defending Catholicism, and for being involved in protecting a maypole from theft, suggesting a connection between defence of popular festive culture and conservative religion.[96] As

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[92] Consistory Court Book SRO: D/D/Ca 170 ff. 9-9v quoted in Louis, *REED: Sussex*, 397-8.
[93] Consistory Court Book SRO: D/D/Ca 170 ff. 9-9v quoted in Louis, *REED: Sussex*, 397-8.
[94] Numbers 15:35-6.
[95] Louis, *REED: Sussex*, 63-64, 136, 149, 203, 381, 384, 404.
[96] Louis, *REED: Sussex*, 202.

aforementioned, in 1635 there was controversy over a maypole in Dundry, Somerset, when

the curate, Simon Cotton, vociferously objected to a maypole being set up too near the parish

church.[97] As the maypole in Wraxall was in the church-yard, the Whitings could have

objected to this aspect as well. These examples show that the custom of maypoles survived in

Somerset into the Jacobean era, though not always without conflict.

The day these events took place suggests that the removal of the maypole was done

due to godly scruple; Robert Wilmott deposed that this incident took place on Trinity

Sunday.[98] Other instances of maypoles being illegally removed also took place on Sundays.

For example, two men named James Miller and John Boone were arraigned in 1635 for

chopping down a maypole in Buckinghamshire.[99] Sabbatarianism, or the view that the

Sabbath Day should be kept holy, was not entirely unique to the godly, but they did maintain

it with considerably more fervour than was common.[100] Stephen Denison, the godly curate of

St Katharine Cree, preached that denigrating the Sabbath would be the first step toward the

entire moral and spiritual collapse of the country.[101] This was after the publication of the

*Book of Sports* in 1618, which decreed that entertainments and festivities were permitted on

the Sabbath provided they did not intersect with divine service. Such godly sentiment must

have been heightened by official support for the degradation of the Sabbath. For example, the

committed Sabbatarian, Theophilus Brabourne, wrote a provocative text in 1622 on the

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[97] Louis, *REED: Sussex*, 101-105.
[98] Louis, *REED: Sussex*, 397-8.
[99] SP 16/296 f. 11 (Presentments made at an Ecclesiastical Visitation held at Brickhill).
[100] Kenneth L. Parker, *The English Sabbath: A study of doctrine and discipline from the Reformation to the Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988)*,* 7-8; John Fielding, "Arminianism in the Localities: Peterborough Diocese, 1603-1642", in *The Early Stuart Church, 1603-1642,* ed. Kenneth Fincham (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1993), 93-114, 100; John Spurr, *English Puritanism, 1603-1689* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998), 73-5.
[101] Anna Bayman, "Denison, Stephen (d. 1649)", *ODNB*, published 3 January 2008, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/65829; Stephen Denison, *An exposition vpon the first chapter of the second Epistle of Peter* (London, 1622), 26.

sanctity of the Sabbath to fight the idolatry he thought was being permitted by the

government to pollute the Sabbath.[102]

So called "Sabbath breaking" was believed to anger God sufficiently to bring about

providential punishment. For example, when an accident occurred at London's Paris Bear

Garden, on Sunday 12 January 1583, in which several spectators died, many godly writers

argued it was a divine punishment for their sin of going to a bear-baiting on the Sabbath.[103]

Nehemiah Wallington and Henry Burton noted the providential misfortune suffered by those

who allowed festivity on the Sabbath in minute detail.[104] The choice by those involved in the

incident in Wraxall to eliminate the maypole on Trinity Sunday is another indication that they

had a religious motivation. It could have been a way to express that they were doing God's

work by protecting the sanctity of the Sabbath Day in destroying an idol.

This instance of violence demonstrates how attacks on maypoles were a form of

iconoclasm. Both official and popular iconoclasm, the destruction of objects deemed

idolatrous, was a constant feature in the English Reformation, but is usually considered in the

context of explicitly religious objects, such as relics and religious art.[105] Margaret Aston did

include maypoles as targets for iconoclasts in her chapter on the subject in *The Culture of*

*English Puritanism,* but did not study the phenomenon of iconoclasm against them in much

depth.[106] Idolatry was consistently considered a most detestable offence in Protestant eyes;

numerous royal injunctions across the sixteenth century condemned idolatry which "god

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[102] Bryan W. Ball, "Brabourne, Theophilus (1590–1662)", *ODNB*, last modified 5 January 2006, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/3155; Theophilus Brabourne, *A defence of that most ancient and sacred ordinance of Gods* (London, 1632), 1.

[103] For example, see John Fielde, *A godly exhortation, by occasion of the late iudgement of God, shewed at Parris-garden* (London, 1583), 3; Patrick Collinson, "Field [Feilde], John (1544/5?–1588)", *ODNB*, last modified 3 January 2008, https://doi.org /10.1093/ref:odnb/9248.

[104] Nehemiah Wallington, *The Notebooks of Nehemiah Wallington, 1618-1654,* ed. David Booy (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 100.

[105] For example, see Margaret Aston, "Iconoclasm in England: official and clandestine", in *The impact of the English Reformation, 1500-1640,* ed. Peter Marshall (London: Arnold, 1997), 167-192, 169.

[106] Margaret Aston, "Puritans and Iconoclasm, 1560-1660", in *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560-1700,* eds. Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), 92-121.

almighty doth most detest and abhorre", and commanded churchwardens to "take awaye, vtterly extincte, and destroye" any object given excessive veneration.[107] As demonstrated earlier in this chapter, maypoles were also seen as idolatrous, often for much the same reasons as other targets of iconoclasm. They were perceived as idols, encouraging ordinary people to worship them, and given their pagan and Catholic histories, were also seen as vestiges of Catholicism, encouraging the retention of Catholic beliefs.

A useful comparison to show how violence against maypoles and more traditional iconoclasm overlapped can be seen with public crosses. This is not to suggest that maypoles and crosses are interchangeable, but both occupied a dual space, seen as both religious and cultural objects. As the ultimate symbol of the Christian faith, the cross was used in religious images and Church art, during religious ceremonies such as baptism, and most importantly for this context, public monuments, as well as in countless other ways.[108] This meant that from the early Reformation onwards, the cross in all its forms had been a prime target for iconoclasts.[109] It was specifically the veneration of the cross which Protestants opposed so fiercely, so they believed it was safer to have no cross at all than risk having it and it being venerated. Crosses were attacked during the reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI such as the famous rood screen at St Margaret Pattens, which was destroyed by around thirty radical iconoclasts in 1538.[110] However, many more traditionally-minded Protestants, such as Queen Elizabeth I herself, defended the cross, which may have complicated popular attitudes

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[107] Church of England, *Articles to be enquired of, in the Kynges Maiesties visitacion* (London, 1547), 4; Church of England, *Iniunccions geue[n] by the moste excellent prince*, 3; Anonymous, *Iniunctions geven by the Quenes Maiestie* (London, 1559), 2, 12.

[108] Margaret Aston, *Broken Idols of the English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 707-8, 774, for more details see "The Cross", 707-882.

[109] Aston, *Broken Idols,* 707; Reginald C. Dudding ed., *First Churchwardens' Book of Louth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941), one of the earliest examples of iconoclasm in England involved a silver cross, xvii–xviii, 220.

[110] Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, 290.

towards it.[111] However, the godly opposed crosses as much as any other object with a Catholic and pre-Reformation heritage, but such attitudes were amplified by the centrality of the cross as a Christian symbol. There were numerous treatises solely devoted to the issue of the cross, listing all the reasons why it should be rejected: it was idolatrous, a relic of Catholicism, and a symbol of moral hypocrisy, just to name a few.[112] Much like maypoles, the cross was therefore a controversial symbol, beloved by some and hated by others. As a result, public crosses provide a useful comparison for violence towards maypoles because both occupied a dual space. Public crosses obviously had a much more powerful religious significance than maypoles, but as public monuments they also had an important social context in which people understood them.

Like maypoles, stone crosses, often decorated with carved images, were common in churches, towns and cities across the country, but during the Reformation they were increasingly targeted by iconoclasts. The most famous example was the Cheapside Cross which was finally destroyed in 1643 after several failed attempts and an extended print battle. Similar examples of cross-breaking were recorded in Springthorpe, Lincolnshire in 1563, Durham in 1589, Banbury, Oxfordshire in 1600, and Wharton, Cumbria in 1603.[113] Crosses were, like maypoles, regarded as idols and Catholic ciphers by the godly, exemplified by a pamphlet written about the Cheapside Cross, unambiguously titled *The Downe-fall of Dagon*.[114] This was despite crosses, like maypoles, often having meaning beyond religion: the aforementioned cross in Durham had been constructed in 1346 to celebrate an English victory over the Scots.[115] Since its construction in the thirteenth century to mark the funeral

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[111] Aston, *Broken Idols,* 747; for how this encouraged defences of the cross see John Martiall, *A replie to M. Calfhills blasphemous answer made against the Treatise of the crosse* (London, 1566).
[112] William Bradshaw, *Short Treatise of the Crosse in Baptisme* (London, 1604); *A treatise of divine worship* (London, 1604); *A treatise of the nature and vse of things indifferent* (London, 1605); *English Puritanisme* (London, 1641).
[113] Aston, "Puritans and Iconoclasm, 1560-1660", 103-4.
[114] Anonymous, *The Downe-fall of Dagon* (London, 1643), 4.
[115] Aston, "Puritans and Iconoclasm, 1560-1660", 103.

procession of Eleanor of Castile, the wife of King Edward I, the Cheapside Cross in London had been utilised during public events, such as coronations and royal and civic processions more generally.[116] As public monuments, crosses were part of the local landscape.[117] This explains why crosses were often protected or defended by local populations more fiercely than strictly religious images in churches. The destruction of one of the crosses in Banbury eventually led to a Star Chamber case after supporters of the cross interrupted its destruction and a riot ensued. The Cheapside Cross probably only survived for so long due to its public support.[118] During the print war that raged in the popular press prior to the destruction of the cross, there were attempts to defend it or mock the godly opposition to it. One ballad claimed that the cross blessed the city, and its absence could promote a Catholic resurgence, concluding with the lines, "I am a foe to Rome, for you shall finde/ When I am gone, ther's the more room behinde".[119] This popular support also meant there were protests in its defence. When the cross was partially destroyed in 1642, there were mentions of a riot by "those that called themselves Defenders of the Cross" in a list of charges made against the Lord Mayor of London in July that year.[120] Nevertheless, the godly regarded the cross as another idol that had to be removed.[121] The phenomenon of cross-breaking shows how beloved public landmarks with multiple meanings could become targets for godly iconoclasm. This reinforces the fact that the destruction of maypoles was another form of iconoclasm: they were seen as idols. The overlap between justifications for attacking crosses

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[116] Joel Budd, "Rethinking Iconoclasm in Early Modern England: the Case of Cheapside Cross", *Journal of Early Modern History* 4, 3-4 (January 2000), 379-404, 384.

[117] For example, Stow, *Survey of London,* 26, 55, 81, 83, 100, 108.

[118] Aston, "Puritans and Iconoclasm, 1560-1660", 103-104.

[119] Anonymous, *A Vindication of Cheapside Cross against the Roundheads* (London, 1643).

[120] *Journal of the House of Lords: Volume 5, 1642-1643* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1767-1830), 230.

[121] David Cressy, *Travesties and Transgressions in Tudor and Stuart England: Tales of Discord and Dissension* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 235.

and maypoles shows how the latter can also be seen as iconoclasm, despite them not having any explicit religious meaning.

Maypoles and crosses were not synonymous. Maypoles were also symbols of popular festive culture, which meant they were also condemned by the godly on moral grounds. The godly wished to purge their society of all forms of sin; religious objects represented one form of sin and popular festive culture another. This explains why the Whitings and others were so determined to remove maypoles: they were both idols leading communities astray, and symbols of a festive culture they viewed as a moral disgrace. Maypoles stood at the intersection between religion and popular culture and were despised by the godly in both contexts. They were the ultimate idols of popular festive culture, and so, in the eyes of many godly people, had to be destroyed to fulfil their vision of a reformed England.

So far, this chapter has shown how many godly people saw maypoles as the painted idol of a wider festive culture and this motivated a minority of them, including the Whitings, to destroy them. This leaves the violence itself; Robert Wilmott was assaulted and suffered an injury at the hands of the Whitings and their accomplices, so what was the purpose behind this? The attack seems to have one main purpose: stopping Wilmott in his tracks. Wilmott admitted he threw stones at those trying to remove the maypole, so it seems clear he was obstructing their goal. The details of the attack support this view. Lewis Whiting held Wilmott around the neck, and the wound on Wilmott's hand could easily have been inflicted during a struggle, as it seems unlikely Wilmott meekly tolerated being grabbed by Whiting as he claimed.[122] This strongly suggests that their primary purpose was to remove the maypole and the violence towards Wilmott was just a means to that end. This speaks to the determination of the godly involved to eliminate the maypole. Those who went to the

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[122] Louis, *REED: Sussex*, 397-398.

churchyard on Trinity Sunday 1611 to remove the maypole, likely did so out of the strong conviction that its presence posed a danger to the community and must be removed. The violence they committed against Robert Wilmott was meant to ensure they could carry out their purpose unmolested. By implication, defending such a malign object could have tainted him in their eyes as a blind accomplice at best, or a degenerate himself at worst. They could also have viewed their act as compassionate, as they believed removing the maypole was for the benefit of the community. In many other instances of more typical iconoclasm, godly individuals often felt obligated or justified to remove idolatrous trappings when the Church or authorities had failed to do so. For example, John Bruen, a born-again godly gentleman from Bruen Stapleford in Cheshire, personally destroyed a number of religious images and windows in his parish church.[123] Whatever the nuances of their views, Robert Wilmott was attacked because he got in the way of removing an object his attackers saw as an idolatrous deity, which had to be purged from their community before it brought about the spiritual ruin of the town.

Historians often characterise Protestant popular religious violence as predominantly against objects.[124] Instances such as this one do show there is some truth in this view, but it also shows that this difference was not because Protestantism, and godly Protestantism in particular, was any more rational or reasonable, or less violent, than Roman Catholicism. This distinction was due to a fundamental divergence in how Catholics and Protestants perceived sin. Catholics since the medieval period regarded sin as a conscious choice, which meant they focused retribution and violence against those who they believed had chosen to commit heresy. However, during the Reformation, Protestants developed a very different concept of sin, believing it was an inevitable part of human behaviour.[125] This explains why

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[123] Aston, "Puritans and Iconoclasm", 100-101.
[124] For example, Kaplan, *Divided by Faith,* 77.
[125] Willis, "Repurposing the Decalogue", 196.

Protestants used violence against objects and images they considered facilitating idolatry or any other sinful behaviour. Sin was inevitable in Protestant minds, so they used violence to remove what they saw as encouraging or instigating sin: in other words, making a bad situation worse. The godly of Wraxall sought to cleanse their town of the destructive power of festive culture and stop it from degrading the moral and spiritual integrity of the village. In doing so, they were continuing a venerable Protestant tradition, much as their grandparents had burned relics, and their sons and grandsons would destroy the trappings of the Laudian church. This also explains why their violence against Wilmott was entirely functional: ultimately they did not see him as the problem, instead the cause of such contention was the maypole. The maypole was a symbol of a world they saw as desperately needing further reform, and by destroying it, they were trying to remedy the idolatry and degradation that had survived the initial purges of the English Reformation. To achieve this, they were more than willing to use violence, not just against the objects of their indignation, but also their fellow citizens who would defend them.

**"Face the Music": The Perils of Revelling in Jacobean England, Gloucestershire, 1612 and Warwickshire, 1621**

John Parker was furious. It was the end of May 1612. He had been appointed constable in the south Gloucestershire parish of Thornbury, about twelve miles from Bristol, at Michaelmas the previous year and had been trying to impose his will on the area ever since.[126] Constables in such communities were given the role of maintaining law and order on the ground, and were chosen from within the area they were policing, although they were often not particularly well-educated or qualified for the task.[127] As such, they were often caught

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[126] TNA STAC 8/239/3 (Answer).
[127] Keith Wrightson, "Two concepts of order: justices, constables and jurymen in seventeenth-century England", in *An Ungovernable people: the English and their law in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,* eds. John Brewer and John Styles (London: Hutchinson, 1983), 21-46.

between different concepts of justice, but Parker does seem to have had a specific agenda. In the spring of 1612, he had spoken frequently against the popular folk traditions endemic to the region, but it must have become apparent to him that day that for all his words, the local populace had blatantly ignored him, and the traditional May revels would take place as normal. In response, he and his follower, Morris Hoop, an ironic name if there ever was one, descended on the village of Rangeworthy, which customarily hosted the revels. They found at least one hundred people taking part in the celebrations, engaging in games, drinking and dancing.[128] Parker himself later sought to paint the revels as an unruly bibulous riot that he had a duty to disperse according to his office.[129] The degree to which his account can be trusted will be examined later. Parker and Hoop tried to disrupt the celebrations by arresting four musicians and taking them to the stocks.[130] This enraged the crowd who set upon the two men and, according to Parker, armed themselves with "longe staues sword & daggers Rapiers and other weapons".[131] The two men were assaulted by some of the crowd and forced to flee.

This incident is strikingly similar to another confrontation which took place in the Warwickshire village of Brinklow some years later on May Day 1621. The complainant was another constable, named Thomas Robinson, who, much like Parker, attempted to arrest a man he claimed was a wandering vagrant during a May Day celebration. Instead, he was assaulted by the defendants, William Hall, Thomas Newcombe and George Pace, who allegedly had armed themselves with an array of weapons. They rescued the alleged vagabond and Robinson claimed he had to flee into the surrounding fields in fear of his life, but he was pursued and attacked again. He managed to escape and return to his home in the village, but he claimed to have been pursued by the defendants and others who he named as

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[128] TNA STAC 8/239/3 (Answer).
[129] TNA STAC 8/239/3 (Bill of Complaint).
[130] TNA STAC 8/239/3 (Answer).
[131] TNA STAC 8/239/3 (Bill of Complaint).

Elizabeth Newcombe, Eleanor Barrows and Robert Cole, who tried to break into his home

and kill him. He was only saved by some of his more peaceable neighbours.[132] This section

will use these two examples to further examine Protestant violence, and how anti-Puritan

prejudice, devotion to folk culture and official legitimacy could facilitate violence against the

godly.

The multiple accounts involved in Star Chamber cases means there are often different

versions of events to disentangle. In his Bill of Complaint, John Parker portrayed himself as a

dutiful public servant who only ever acted out of concern for law and order. This is to be

expected, as this would be a sympathetic face to show to the court and maximise the chance

they would find in his favour. He called his attackers "disorderly", the revellers "wicked and

detestable" and the musicians "gatherers of the unruly company".[133] When compared to the

account given by the defendants, much of his account is revealed as misdirection. The

Answer was the work of two of the defendants, Robert Hobbes and William Hooper.[134] Of

course, they also had motivations that have a bearing on how they constructed their account.

It was written to portray themselves in the most positive light, deny all serious allegations and

blacken the name of John Parker. Nevertheless, it does expose some major omissions in

Parker's account. First, they showed that what Parker portrayed as an intoxicated rampage

was actually the customary Whitsunday revel.[135] Parker perhaps omitted to mention the

traditional celebration in his account because it gave what he wished to portray as a riot too

much legitimacy.

Parker completely excluded any mention of religious motivation in his actions, but the

Answer suggests a very different picture. It is rare to read a legal document that so clearly

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[132] TNA STAC 8/245/27 (Bill of Complaint).
[133] TNA STAC 8/239/3 (Bill of Complaint).
[134] TNA STAC 8/239/3 (Answer).
[135] TNA STAC 8/239/3 (Bill of Complaint), (Answer).

expresses the emotions of its creators, but on the topic of Parker, the Answer dripped with disdain. Hobbes and Hooper called Parker a "pres[i]cian", another derogatory term synonymous with Puritan, and, more memorably, "a singularity of sanctitie".[136] This strongly suggests that Parker acted at least as much out of godly zeal than out of the care of law and order. Another omission of Parker's that the Answer highlighted is the level of support for him and his godly agenda in the community. In his Bill of Complaint, Parker chose to portray himself as a beleaguered official, the last bastion of law and order in the wilds of South Gloucestershire.[137] This was probably an attempt to cast his actions as motivated by concern for public order, which was often used to justify attacking festive culture by those concerned with reducing public unrest. While this may reflect his perceptions, the Answer suggested that many in the local area were sympathetic to his cause; it mentioned that many had been seduced by his "pretended sanctimonie" and were willing to assist him in arresting the musicians.[138] Parker may have felt besieged in his office as constable because of another piece of information he failed to mention in his Bill.[139] Hobbes and Hooper mentioned in their Answer that thirty indictments had been brought against him at the last Sessions of the Peace, possibly to do with his actions at the revels. The defendants confessed to stopping Parker and Hoop from arresting the musicians, but denied using violence to do so. This was likely another manipulation of events to appear more sympathetic in the eyes of the court. They countered that Parker himself was violent in attempting to arrest the musicians, which probably contained more than a grain of truth. The final revelation from the Answer is that Parker had tried prosecuting them through the local Justices of the Peace, who dismissed the case.[140] This also suggests that the JPs opposed Parker.

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[136] TNA STAC 8/239/3 (Answer).
[137] TNA STAC 8/239/3 (Bill of Complaint).
[138] TNA STAC 8/239/3 (Answer).
[139] TNA STAC 8/239/3 (Bill of Complaint).
[140] TNA STAC 8/239/3 (Answer).

This leaves the question of what occurred on the night of Whit Monday 1612. The most likely is as follows: John Parker, under pressure in his office, and sensing that the local populace and powerful players were against him, decided to break up the annual revel with Morris Hoop. The two men travelled to Rangeworthy and interrupted the revel to arrest the men they believed most culpable: the four musicians.[141] The Answer wrote that Parker grabbed the throat of one of the musicians, John Tomkins, and "did violently dragge and drawe the Musitians aforesaid or some of them towards the stocke".[142] The defendants responded with something of the violence alleged, although the inventory of weapons listed by Parker probably owed more to Star Chamber conventions than reality. Parker and Hoop were then most likely attacked with something of the ferocity Parker claimed and he and Hoop were forced to escape, having failed in their purpose.

The accounts of events in Brinklow present much the same problem of interpretation. Thomas Robinson also used his complaint to portray himself as a bastion of law and order only seeking to do his duty. His Bill of Complaint however was far more explicit in its moral condemnation of the defendants; he called them "disordered persons common quarrellous affray mackers and disturbers of yor maiesties peace" as well as "common frequenters & haunters of Tauernes and alehouses and especially vpon the Saboth day festiuall days in the tyme of divine service".[143] This also shows him trying to cast the celebration as in violation of the *Book of Sports,* which allowed festivities to take place provided they did not interfere with Church attendance.[144] The full implications of this key piece of legislation will be examined later. Like Parker before him he also downplayed the celebrations as an annual

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[141] TNA STAC 8/239/3 (Bill of Complaint).
[142] TNA STAC 8/239/3 (Answer).
[143] TNA STAC 8/245/27 (Bill of Complaint).
[144] King James I and VI Stuart, *The Kings Maiesties declaration to his subiects, concerning lawfull sports to be vsed* (London, 1618), 3.

custom, in favour of portraying it as a riot. He also claimed that the defendants held "causeless malice and displeasure" towards him.[145]

The Answer provided by William Hall, Thomas Newcombe and George Pace differs from Robinson's in almost every respect. They claimed to have attended church on May Day morning and then fetched a suitable tree and brought it into the village as the maypole. It was traditional in many communities for music to be played whilst a maypole was being decorated and mounted, and the defendants found two musicians to perform for them, one a professional and the other his young apprentice. They claimed that all of them then attended the evening church service, and afterwards returned to their celebrations, when Thomas Robinson arrived. He took what they called "causeless offence", tried to put one of them in the stocks and when this failed, tried to arrest the younger of the two musicians. They categorically denied assaulting Robinson, and instead claimed that a mysterious young woman who had also helped dress the maypole rescued the musician instead.[146] This account shows that the vagrant Robinson claimed he tried to put in the stocks was actually a musician. However, this account contains several incongruous details: their claim that a young woman alone rescued the apprentice seems unlikely, and the encounter they describe seems improbably minor for Parker to have thought it worthwhile to sue. The account also lacks detail of the key events, although as an Answer, its main intention was to address the key allegations made in the Bill of Complaint.

The most likely series of events that took place on the evening of May Day 1622 is as follows: Thomas Robinson tried to put a stop to the May Day celebrations, and made an abortive attempt to arrest one of the partygoers.[147] When this failed he settled on perhaps the easier target of the young apprentice and was attacked by the defendants and others,

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[145] TNA STAC 8/245/27 (Bill of Complaint).
[146] TNA STAC 8/245/27 (Answer).
[147] TNA STAC 8/245/27 (Bill of Complaint).

frustrated by his attempts to block their festivities.[148] Whether or not the other two attacks Robinson claimed actually took place is difficult to quantify. He did provide some detail about what happened, and mentioned that there were witnesses to the attack at his home.[149] The whole matter of the physical violence was omitted entirely from the Answer made by the defendants.[150]

Whilst both complaints were partly intended to gain the sympathy of the court, they also indicated that both Parker and Robinson could with reasonable certainty be placed on the godly end of the Protestant religious spectrum. Parker repeatedly called the revel he interrupted disorderly, and claimed it led all the attendees into every imaginable sin.[151] As previously established, John Parker's account of the revel as an explosion of bacchanalian excess cannot be trusted as a factual account of the celebration, at least beyond his assertion that alcohol was served at the event. Hobbes and Hooper described the revel as involving music, dancing, particularly by the younger members of the community, and playing games.[152] Many godly writers argued such jovial diversions were just as dangerous, both morally and spiritually, as the maypole. Philip Stubbes devoted several pages in the first part of his *Anatomie of Abuses* to making a scriptural rebuttal of "deuilish dauncings", claiming it was one of the errors of the Church fathers to have allowed it.[153] Henry Burton included numerous examples of people across England suffering fires, being killed in divinely-instigated knife fights, drowning and numerous other misfortunes at the hands of God for partaking in revelling.[154]

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[148] TNA STAC 8/245/27 (Answer).
[149] TNA STAC 8/245/27 (Bill of Complaint).
[150] TNA STAC 8/245/27 (Answer).
[151] TNA STAC 8/239/3 (Bill of Complaint).
[152] TNA STAC 8/239/3 (Answer).
[153] Stubbes, *The anatomie of abuses*, "The horrible Vice of pestiferous dauncing, vsed in Ailgna", 174-193.
[154] Burton, *A divine tragedie lately acted*, 4-5, 7-8, 10.

John Parker could also be seen to reasonably conform to these prejudices, which his absurdly scornful Bill can be used to show. It has already been established that one of the Bill's primary objectives was to persuade the Court of Star Chamber as to the virtues of his case. Nonetheless, it does also reflect his own views in some ways. His repeated references to the "barbarous & beastly manner" of the revels and the "most beastly and disorderly drinking" of the revellers and the general tone of the Bill suggested his views of revelling had much in common with the godly one, especially with the knowledge that the revel was entirely legal.[155] This is also true of Thomas Robinson's account; his clear anger at the "greate prophanacon of the Sabboth" suggested he shared the Sabbatarian views already elaborated upon earlier in this chapter. This, alongside his clear opposition to the May Day traditions and his claim that he "endauoured diligently the reformacon & Suppression of vices & abuses", paint a clear picture of typical godly devotion.[156] More evidence of both Parker and Robinson's godly inclination can be found in the answer made by their respective opponents. Hobbes and Hooper claimed that Parker opposed the wearing of surplices and the churching of women after childbirth, both of which were typical godly attitudes, although these were probably also included to paint Parker as a religious non-conformist and influence the court against him.[157] Although pithier and less disdainful, the Answer made by William Hall, Thomas Newcombe and George Pace also speaks to the godly inclination of Thomas Robinson; they claim he took "causeless offence" at the May Day events and the musicians in particular.[158] How this shows their own view of his convictions will be considered later. Both constables certainly appear to have held godly religious convictions to some degree.

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[155] TNA STAC 8/239/3 (Bill of Complaint).
[156] TNA STAC 8/245/27 (Bill of Complaint).
[157] TNA STAC 8/239/3 (Answer).
[158] TNA STAC 8/245/27 (Answer).

By challenging and attempting to arrest those they found most offensive so publicly, these godly constables were carrying out a demand from their faith: confronting the ungodly with their sin with a view to converting them. This idea had long been a concern for godly preachers, who had argued such open confrontation of immorality was necessary for salvation.[159] The godly minister of Great Yarmouth, John Brinsley, called threatening a congregation with their sin "holy violence".[160] Preachers such as John Donne, John Downame, Richard Greenham and Henry Airay, all argued that a key purpose of their sermons was to purge the listeners of sin through fierce confrontation.[161] This act of challenging others' sins was also viewed as spiritually beneficial for the godly person who did so. John Downame wrote that experiencing such challenges to their faith, such as provoking those partaking of festive culture, could actually enhance someone's godly faith.[162] This idea trickled down from these preachers to their congregations and could even be construed as a divine duty.[163] By confronting the musicians, proclaiming their supposed sins before the entire community, these godly constables were not only trying to purge the community of the seed of disorder represented by the musicians, but were also enacting a key principle of their convictions.

So far, it has been established that both John Parker and Thomas Robinson were both godly constables who vehemently opposed the festive activities of those within their jurisdiction. Both of them also committed acts of violence in differing degrees of severity

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[159] Eric J. Carlson, "Good Pastors or Careless Shepherds? Parish Ministers and the English Reformation", *History* 88, 291 (July 2003), 423-436, 430.

[160] Richard Cust, "Brinsley, John (1600–1665)", *ODNB,* last modified 3 January 2008, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/3441; John Brinsley the Younger, *The preachers charge, and peoples duty* (London, 1631), 16.

[161] Carlson, "Good Pastors or Careless Shepherds?", 430.

[162] John Downame, *Consolations for the afflicted* (London, 1613), 543.

[163] Jonathan Willis, *The Reformation of the Decalogue: Religious Identity and the Ten Commandments in England, c.1485-1625* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 265-273; Peter Lake, "A Charitable Christian Hatred': The Godly and their Enemies in the 1630s", in *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560-1700,* eds. Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), 145-183, 166.

against musicians, which triggered the violence against themselves. So why did these godly

constables attack these musicians? The most apparent reason is that they blamed the

musicians involved for the sin in question taking place, be it dancing, revelling or whatever

else. John Parker called his victims the "Abbetors of the unruly persons".[164] Similarly,

Thomas Robinson called the musicians he attempted to arrest "vagabonds Rogues & vagrant

persons".[165] Accordingly, both men were attempting to punish musicians by trying to take the

unfortunate performer in question to the stocks. This particular contempt for musicians was

also common amongst the godly.[166] Musicians were often seen as symbols of disorder, as

itinerant and rootless vagrants, they were often believed to make a special goal of denigrating

the Sabbath, whilst everyone else could not work.[167] Philip Stubbes believed musicians were

"drunken sockets, and bawdye parasits".[168] Thomas Lowell portrayed the wandering minstrel

as a provocateur of vice.[169] The godly Andrew Willet, indignantly reproached those

musicians he believed lured his congregation away from his sermons.[170] There are also a few

similar examples of violence against musicians. For example, in the 1630s the godly

clergyman, Richard Northen, was punished for attacking a piper named William Keale in the

Lincolnshire village of Haydor for providing music to some young people for dancing.[171] The

violence against musicians in both these cases gives the lie to the argument that Catholics

attacked people and Protestants objects, first put forward by Natalie Zemon Davis in 1973.[172]

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[164] TNA STAC 8/239/3 (Bill of Complaint).
[165] TNA STAC 8/245/27 (Bill of Complaint).
[166] Elizabeth Baldwin, *Paying the Piper: Music in pre-1642 Cheshire* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2002), 27.
[167] Christopher Marsh, *Music and Society in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 73-78.
[168] Stubbes, *The anatomie of abuses,* 111.
[169] Marsh, *Music and Society,* 79.
[170] Anthony Milton, "Willet, Andrew (1561/2–1621)", *ODNB,* last modified 3 January 2008, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/29445; Andrew Willet, *A fruitfull and godly sermon preached at Paules crosse* (London, 1592), 19.
[171] SP 16/410 f. 28 (Sentence in the Court of High Commission against Richard Northen, curate of Haither alias Haydor co. Lincoln).
[172] Davis, "Rites of Violence", 77.

Instead, what it shows about Protestant violence, especially in a godly context, is that it was focused against those, be it objects or people, that were deemed most culpable in leading others astray. Protestants viewed sin as inevitable, but this did not mean that the godly would not remove those who were making a bad situation worse by facilitating moral and spiritual deterioration.

The actions of John Parker and Thomas Robinson clarify the features of the godly "script" for violence. It shows that the primary purpose of godly religious violence was to remove dangerous influences: objects or people they believed were obstacles in the path to salvation. This was rooted in a view of sin as an inescapable part of fallen human nature, something a person could be guided into by their environment. This belief that popular festivities encouraged sin was at the core of godly objections to festive culture. This was not a small issue: for the godly, every opportunity created for sin was part of a cosmic battle between the forces of God and Satan. The godly believed that their duty as Christians was to confront those objects, practices or people that were leading their fellow Christians astray. This was done with the purpose of removing them, and challenging those who engaged with them to change their ways, for the sake of their soul.

This difference in views of sin and the purpose of religious violence offers an explanation behind the vast disparity between Catholic and Protestant violence and why the former was often so much more extreme. Catholics were educated to see heresy as a deliberate choice by a heretic to reject God. This is why their violence was intended to purge the unrepentant heretic from society with death. By contrast, Protestants, and especially the godly, saw sin as part of human nature, so their violence was instead aimed at those they saw as encouraging sin in one form or another. This was the reasoning behind the Protestant penchant for iconoclastic attacks on objects. However, these examples of conflict over revels also show how easily Protestant violence could translate to people. John Parker saw the

musicians in Rangeworthy as responsible for the immoral revel, and sought to remove and punish them, as well as confronting the attendees with what he saw as their transgression. An object has an existence independent of its creator, but a performance has no existence without the performer. Thomas Robinson did much the same in Brinklow. In short, Protestants were not less interpersonally violent than Catholics because they were less zealous or fervent in their faith. Their understanding of sin was one which prioritised eradicating the causes of immoral behaviour, be they object or human, rather than the individual sinner.

Whilst Parker and Robinson arguably instigated the violence against themselves by so vociferously challenging popular festive culture, this does nothing to explain why their attackers were so willing to commit violence in defence of that culture. Robert Hobbes and William Hooper gave two justifications of their actions against Parker and Hoop. One was that the revel was a much-beloved tradition. They described it as a custom that dated beyond memory in the area, and was commonly viewed as an opportunity for the hard-working rural labourers and farmers of the area to relax and enjoy entertainment. Their description of the revel as a "meeting of friends" and their claim that it played a key role in resolving tensions and maintaining community harmony also strongly suggests that it held great significance within the local area.[173]

The lack of religious descriptions also illustrates that the revel was devoid of religious meaning for Hobbes and Hooper, and suggests they would have been unconvinced by the godly argument that such revels were immoral. The thirty-five people John Parker named as his attackers also suggests that it was not just Hobbes and Hooper who viewed the revel in this positive light. The Answer also demonstrates that those who took part in it were not

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[173] TNA STAC 8/239/3 (Answer); This also concurs with the findings of historians, for example, Janet Chrzan, *Alcohol: Social Drinking in Cultural Context* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 47; Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England,* 359; Michael D. Bristol, *Carnival and Theatre: Plebeian Culture and the Structure of Authority in Renaissance England* (London: Methuen, 1985), 28.

lacking in appropriate religious devotion. They asserted that all those who attended the revel always attended divine service and heard the weekly Sunday sermon. The event itself was even moved from Sunday to Monday at the request of the parson of Rangeworthy and Iron Acton, Robert Hoop.[174] The Answer also goes to great lengths to portray the revel as an organised and respectfully mirthful event, perhaps to counter the claim of John Parker as much as to illustrate truth.[175] However, this may have been an attempt to downplay the revel. Given that alcohol was often consumed at revels, how orderly it could have remained as the evening continued is doubtful. Regardless, the answer presents a compelling case as to how beloved and well-established the revel was for much of the community.

William Hall, Thomas Newcombe and George Pace in their Answer to the Complaint of Thomas Robinson did not give clear reasons behind why they were willing to violently defend their musicians. However, some inferences can be made from the few defences of musicians in the wider popular culture. The most common were that musicians were bringers of merriment, healers of discord and revered for their musical talent.[176] Christopher Windle, a Gloucestershire minister, wrote a positive response to the *Book of Sports* in 1618, while he was imprisoned for debt, which defended music and musicians, among other aspects of festive culture.[177] Music was one of the arts, he wrote, and formed part of a "liberal education"; musicians themselves were honest and respectful members of society, and their music was a source of joy and cheer.[178] He also found some scriptural basis for this defence of the musical profession, such as the story of the prophet Elisha calling upon a singer to perform, and whose music allowed him to prophesy. He also pointed out how Moses used

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[174] If he was a relation of Morris Hoop is unknown.
[175] TNA STAC 8/239/3 (Answer).
[176] Marsh, *Music and Society*, 88, 98.
[177] Marsh, *Music and Society*, 99.
[178] Audrey Douglas and Peter Greenfield, eds., *REED: Cumberland, Westmorland and Gloucestershire* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 402-419, 414, 418.

music to praise God in the Book of Exodus, and the musical output of King David, the writer of the Book of Psalms.[179]

Defending musicians from arrest by godly officials was hardly an unusual occurrence in early modern England.[180] During the notorious aforementioned war against festive culture waged in Wells in 1607, the godly John Hole tried to arrest three musicians, who were rescued by a determined crowd.[181] Later, the musicians provided the music for dancing in the city, and one man even gave one musician one of his own garters to fix an instrument, a gesture that shows the considerable affection in which such performers were often held by their audiences.[182] The godly constable of Keynsham, Somerset was stopped from arresting some minstrels performing in a local alehouse by a crowd in August 1630.[183] In December 1641, the Shrewsbury constable, Richard Powell, was berated and attacked while trying to apprehend some musicians and claimed that he was beaten so hard that "the fire burst out of his Eye".[184] The Rangeworthy defendants also described the musicians as playing for the revels for around an hour, suggesting they were an essential part of the celebrations.[185] Similarly in Brinklow, the defendants described them as playing a key role in the celebrations by making a "melody" while the maypole was being carried in a procession into the village.[186] This shows that outside of the godly enclave, musicians were regarded with great affection and respect and that many ordinary people were willing to commit violence in their defence.

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[179] Douglas and Greenfield, *REED: Gloucestershire,* 406-7, 419.
[180] Marsh, *Music and Society*, 101.
[181] Stokes, *REED: Somerset,* 275, 278.
[182] Stokes, *REED: Somerset,* 245.
[183] Stokes, *REED: Somerset,* 154-5, Marsh, *Music and Society*, 102.
[184] Somerset, *REED: Shropshire,* 320-322.
[185] TNA STAC 8/239/3 (Answer).
[186] TNA STAC 8/245/27 (Answer).

What compounded the violence was the derision with which the godly were often regarded. The Answer of Hobbes and Hooper is littered with scathing references to John Parker and his godly disposition such as the aforementioned noteworthy insult "singularity of sanctitie".[187] They also accused Parker of bringing about disorder and quarrelling within the community, as well as abject hypocrisy. Although they were less overtly contemptuous, William Hall, Thomas Newcombe and George Pace also showed the same dismissive attitude towards godly zeal. They portrayed Thomas Robinson as a fanatical official overreacting to a harmless custom. As already mentioned, this diminishing of what took place was probably partly intended to influence the court against Robinson, but it does also reflect something of the view of the man himself: in their own words, that his acts were "causeless".[188] Much of this reflects typical Jacobean anti-Puritan sentiment. The prevailing view of the godly outside their community was one of mockery and scorn. The aforementioned Christopher Windle wrote that the godly obsession with purity in word and deed made them the most hypocritical and impure members of English society.[189] A popular rhyme described a godly man so angered at his cat committing the crime of killing a mouse on the Sabbath that he killed it: an obvious parody of Sabbatarianism.[190] Ben Jonson's 1614 play *Bartholomew Fair* featured the wonderfully named Zeal-of-the-Land Busy, perhaps the quintessential caricature of the godly busybody.[191] He condemned popular folk culture in all its forms, but was converted to their goodness in the end by a puppet no less.[192] This exemplified the view that the godly were disproportionately angered by trivial matters and hypocritical, espousing such beliefs to mask

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[187] TNA STAC 8/239/3 (Answer).
[188] TNA STAC 8/245/27 (Answer).
[189] Douglas and Greenfield, *REED: Gloucestershire*, 409.
[190] Richard Braithwaite, *Barnabees journall* (London, 1638), B4.
[191] Ben Jonson, *Bartholmew fayre* (London, 1631), 6.
[192] Patrick Collinson, "The Theatre Constructs Puritanism", in *The Theatrical City: Culture, Theatre and Politics in London, 1575-1649,* eds. David L. Smith, Richard Strier and David Bevington (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 157-170, 160; Jonson, *Bartholmew fayre*, 85.

their own sins.[193] The overall impression is that godly concerns were considered trivial or

irrelevant by their opponents. Therefore, whilst the godly were convinced of their own

righteousness, others saw their beliefs as immaterial and hypocritical. Both John Parker and

Thomas Robinson and their views were held in deep disdain in their respective communities,

whilst the rituals they attacked were long-treasured customs.

Those in Brinklow had another powerful reason for believing they had every right to

hold their May Day celebrations. In 1618, King James I had issued the *Book of Sports,* which

had allowed the celebration of festive traditions under specific conditions.[194] For the godly, it

must have come as a blow. James' sympathies appeared to be very much in favour of

traditional festive customs, or at least against the godly, as the declaration allowed all

"lawfull Recreation" to take place, provided such practices did not interfere with Church

attendance.[195] The May festivities in Brinklow conformed to this rule. This means that

Thomas Robinson's attempt to halt the festivities had no legal basis. This could only have

further legitimised violence against him, given that his Sabbatarian attitudes were directly in

conflict with both the letter and the spirit of the *Book of Sports.* Windle also raised this point

that the king's support of folk culture legitimised its practice.[196] Those who supported festive

traditions were surely emboldened by this book which lent official support to their customs

and rebuked "Puritanes & precise people." It also had enjoined those in official positions to

adhere to these rules and not to block the celebration of festive traditions.[197] For those in

Brinklow, the law was on their side and their customs had been legitimised by the king, the

highest earthly authority in their world. So not only was Thomas Robinson deemed a godly

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[193] Peter Lake, "Anti-puritanism: The Structure of a Prejudice", in *Religious Politics in Post-Reformation England: essays in honour of Nicholas Tyacke,* eds. Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2006), 80-97, 81.

[194] George, *REED: Lancashire*, 229-231.

[195] King James I and VI, *The Kings Maiesties declaration to his subiects, concerning lawfull sports to be vsed* (London, 1618), 7-9.

[196] Douglas and Greenfield, *REED: Gloucestershire,* 408.

[197] *The Kings Maiesties declaration*, 2, 6.

busybody attacking treasured festive customs, he was also defying the king's will, and his attackers felt entitled to use violence to correct him. Both groups of defendants subscribed to these two beliefs: support for festive customs and contempt for the godly. They knew they were on one side of a struggle over their beloved traditions, whilst the detested godly constables were on the other.

The attacks on John Parker and Thomas Robinson had their roots in these two motivators: both had attempted to block the much-treasured traditional revels, and as they did so, at least in part out of godly zeal, their views were disregarded and mocked. These were the most potent causes of the violence, but do the details of the act itself reveal any more about anti-Puritan violence? The most immediate aim is the most obvious: to defend the customs in question and enable them to continue unmolested. However, the deeper meaning is difficult to grasp; neither of the Star Chamber cases give direct answers. Given the context of rapidly-escalating tensions between John Parker and much of his community, the most likely answer is that it was meant to put him in his place. It is clear that Parker had come to be viewed as a malignant presence in the community by May 1612.[198] In the eyes of the population of Rangeworthy, he was seen as a bringer of discord, an arrogant and overbearing busybody, bent on bending the area to his will, with or without their approval. Attacking him in public, before much of the local populace, showed both Parker himself and the onlookers how little power he had over the affairs of the village.

This use of violence, to protect a beloved custom and punish the godly for interference, also characterises the violence seen in the Cheshire village of Little Budworth in 1596, which erupted over an attempt by a local official to suppress the annual church ales.[199] Both examples erupted after the victim/s intervened in the performance of a specific

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[198] TNA STAC 8/239/3 (Answer).
[199] For a detailed analysis of these events see Hindle, "Custom, Festival and Protest in Early Modern England" 155-178.

entertainment, a procession and a bear-baiting respectively, and in both cases the victims were beaten by sympathetic spectators.[200] This supports the argument that this form of violence was an often impulsive act to defend traditional customs, justified by the victims' unreasonable behaviour. The fact that the eventual result of the violence against Parker and Hoop appears to have been forcing them to make a hasty exit, supports this view. This could have been meant to assert, both to Parker and those who supported him, that he was powerless to stop those who wished to partake of popular festive culture from doing as they wished. This is not to suggest that much of this violence was planned; in fact, it seems more likely that most, if not all, of these examples were impulsive reactions. It is also clear that none of these instances of violence against the godly had much, if any, religious elements. This further shows that the issue of festive culture was not a religious one to those who supported it, therefore anti-Puritan violence was not shaped by religious ideology. The crux of the disagreement was over whether festive culture had any religious significance. It is clear the godly believed they did, while those who supported festive customs saw them as harmless entertainment, and were willing to fight to defend them from harassment.

The violence against Thomas Robinson shares this intention; he was not only driven from the festivities, but he was also repeatedly attacked until he was able to escape to his home. This shows an even greater determination to literally force Robinson out of the festivities. The severity of the violence committed against Robinson is the only significant difference between events in Brinklow and Rangeworthy. Thomas Robinson claimed he was attacked several times by at least twenty people and was forced to cry for help and barricade himself in his home.[201] Of course, as already mentioned, some of these claims were probably intended to influence the court, particularly his claim that his attackers were armed. Given all

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[200] Baldwin, Clopper and Mills, *REED: Cheshire Volume 2,* 696-712.
[201] TNA STAC 8/245/27 (Bill of Complaint).

the similarities between these two cases, why the violence in Brinklow was so much more extreme seems peculiar. The key difference is the level of official support the perpetrators in Brinklow believed they had. This case shows how the *Book of Sports* with its clear statement of royal affirmation of both festive culture and anti-Puritanism, endorsed violence against the godly, in defence of traditional customs, and such violence increased in intensity as a result.

These instances of godly constables and their conformist parishioners further shows how godly violence was focused on removing what or who they saw as dangerous influences, with the view that such influences would only encourage further sinful behaviour. The violent response shows how many persisted in their affection for these popular rituals, and were deeply hostile to the godly. The lack of religious meaning in the violence against these godly constables also shows that, as far as their attackers were concerned, such violence had no religious significance, and was instead primarily concerned with protecting festive traditions. The instance of Brinklow also demonstrates the enormity of the impact that official support could have on legitimising popular violence. Robert Hobbes and William Hooper claimed they saw nothing wrong in refusing to help arrest the musicians. Perhaps they also saw no wrong in punishing a presumptuous constable who had overstepped his power.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has shown how the nationwide conflict over popular festive culture that lingered in England throughout the later decades of the English Reformation, triggered two forms of violence. One was committed by the godly, who used violence to cleanse their communities of such festivity, which they saw as idolatrous and morally degrading. They primarily directed their violence against dangerous influences because their conception of sin emphasised the inevitability of immoral behaviour. Therefore, it made little sense to commit violence against individual sinners. Instead, godly violence was intended to remove those

objects, customs and people they held most culpable in encouraging sinful behaviour, such as alcohol consumption or sexual immorality. The second was committed by those who supported such celebratory traditions, who were willing to defend them with violence. This was only compounded by the commonly-held prejudice against the godly, which dismissed their concerns as frivolous and deceptive. The lack of religious meaning in anti-Puritan violence is rooted in this understanding that for their enemies, the issue of festive culture was not a religious one. The rites of popular festive culture were so contested because they were emblematic of two radically different worldviews: one which valued tradition and harmony, and another bent on radical religious reform at all costs. In the decades to come, the conflict between these two sides would only intensify beyond any hope of resolution.

The other reason behind the de-ritualised violence committed against the godly was that, in most cases, it was unplanned. Instead, it seems probable that most of the anti-Puritan violence in this chapter was spontaneous. Whilst the impulsiveness of such violence shows the strength both of devotion to festive customs and contempt for the godly, it also suggests that anti-Puritan violence was enabled by more ephemeral considerations. Aspects such as alcohol consumption, memories of prior confrontations, as well as context, could all make an act of violence possible. The impulsive nature of anti-Puritan violence does suggest such violence was not intrinsic to the conflict over festive culture, but a possible side-effect of emotions running high. Ronald Hutton portrayed the battle for "Merry England" as one fought primarily through legislation, by local officials and churchmen attempting to prohibit such customs, or such attempts being overturned.[202] This is how most experienced the fight for festive traditions, with only a minority experiencing popular religious violence over the matter, despite this form of violence probably being the most widespread of any in this thesis.

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[202] Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England,* for example, 121, 126, 127, 132, 138-9, 158, 171, 189.

When historians write about religious violence, they usually refer to inter-confessional violence, and in early modern studies, between Catholics and Protestants. This chapter has shown how the conflict over festive culture, between those who opposed it and those who supported it, was deeply religious in nature: both sides motivated by zeal or hatred. The core of the conflict was a fundamental disagreement over what was considered religious. This intra-confessional violence in England was facilitated by the fact that England saw no major civil conflict until the 1640s. In France for example, Protestants were forced into solidarity by the long war with their Catholic enemies. The lack of any major military conflict in England until the mid-seventeenth century allowed a much wider range of religious conflicts to emerge outside of the traditional Catholic/Protestant binary. This meant that the divides between different forms of Protestantism were allowed to fester, without the unifying effect of war. Such intra-confessional tensions were allowed to simmer in the background, and occasionally vent steam when circumstances allowed. It was this ever-present but complex and nuanced nature of popular religious violence in the English context, that justifies its description as a "cold war" of religion, as opposed to the clear, open and binary religious wars seen in other contexts. The Protestant victory in England after the accession of Elizabeth I in 1558 also proved to be its greatest burden.

# HONEY AND WORMWOOD: TOLERATION, VIOLENCE AND ANTI-CATHOLICISM IN POST-REFORMATION ENGLAND[1]

## Introduction

On 1 July 1609, John Brudenell arrived for a dinner party at the home of a local landowner, Sir Robert Payne, in the parish of Midloe in Huntingdonshire.[2] As a local member of the gentry, and possibly a member of the Brudenell family of Deene in Northamptonshire, Brudenell was no stranger to such social events.[3] The Payne family were prominent members of the local gentry community; Sir Robert himself served as a member of Parliament some years later in 1614, 1621, 1626 and 1628. His second son John became the vicar of nearby Southoe in 1600.[4] The other attendees included most of the important members of the community of Midloe. However, there was one aspect which set Brudenell apart from the other attendees, he was a Catholic.[5] Whether this made him hesitant to attend Payne's dinner party is unknown, but it is likely that the shared social status of those present could be expected to override religious concerns. Such occasions were opportunities for social display, reinforcing local hierarchies and solidifying social cohesion, in which religion was secondary, so Brudenell had no reason to suspect this event would turn out any differently.[6] The dinner appeared to have passed without controversy, and after most of the guests had departed, leaving the host, Robert Payne, his son John, Brudenell himself, and two other men

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[1] The title is inspired by Proverbs 5:3-5: "For the lips of a forbidden woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil, but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword."

[2] TNA STAC 8/11/23 (Bill of Complaint); today the parish is in Cambridgeshire.

[3] For more information about the family see Joan Wake, *The Brudenells of Deene* (London: Cassell, 1953).

[4] Simon Healy, "PAYNE, Sir Robert (1573-1631), of Midloe, Hunts.", in *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1604-1629,* eds. Andrew Thrush and John P. Ferris*,* 6 vols, vol 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 622-624.

[5] Brudenell's recusancy was referenced in the Bill of Complaint which initiated the Star Chamber case, and Brudenell himself did not deny being a Catholic in his Answer.

[6] Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson, *A Day at Home in early modern England: material culture and domestic life, 1500-1700* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 131-3.

named Thomas Bellay and John Bedell, the conversation turned to a recent book published

by the Bishop of Lincoln, William Barlow.[7] The book in question was most likely *An answer

to a Catholike English-man*, a response Barlow had written on the orders of King James I to

the book *A Catholike English-man* by the Jesuit Robert Persons.[8] This was also entirely

commonplace; discussing political texts was a way for gentlemen to perform their education

and learnedness. However, the conversation became hostile. Bedell launched into a tirade,

railed against Persons for criticising the late Queen Elizabeth, and suggested that no Catholic

could be a truly loyal subject to the English crown. Feeling personally insulted by this

comment, John Brudenell attacked Bedell with a dagger, and slashed his face.[9] Bedell later

brought a lawsuit against Bellay and Brudenell in the Court of Star Chamber.

This case demonstrates how even at the most apparently congenial of social

occasions, anti-Catholic prejudice remained ever-present in the background. As such, this

case exemplifies the paradox that defines this chapter. The historian of Catholicism in post-

Reformation England is confronted with two contradictory strands of scholarship. One is the

historiography of anti-Catholicism: the prejudice and discrimination against Roman

Catholics, the extent of which can hardly be overstated. Anti-Catholicism was not just a

deeply-held prejudice which cast Catholicism as a false religion, led by the Antichrist,

designed to subvert true religion and the political freedom of England, but a building block of

a new national identity.[10] Protestant England was constructed as one half of a binary: an

ordained Protestant nation, built on the pure and rational understanding of scripture.

Catholicism was the polar opposite: an anti-religion created to fulfil human desires over

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[7] TNA STAC 8/11/23 (Bill of Complaint).

[8] C.S. Knighton, "Barlow, William (d. 1613)", *ODNB,* last modified 3 January 2008,
https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/1443.

[9] TNA STAC 8/11/23 (Bill of Complaint).

[10] Peter Lake, "Anti-popery: the Structure of a prejudice", in *Conflict in early Stuart England: studies in religion and politics, 1603-1642,* eds. Richard Cust and Anne Hughes (London: Longman, 1989), 72-106, 73.

spiritual duties, worship false gods, and a foreign creation used by other powers to invade England.[11] This was only heightened by events such as the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, which confirmed many of these negative stereotypes about Catholics.[12] This meant that Catholics were often regarded with trepidation and sometimes sheer terror.[13] Therefore, in theory, the idea of tolerating Catholicism was tantamount to devil worship; allowing its followers to continue in such severe error was in direct conflict with Christian charity.[14] Anti-Catholicism was absolutely central to English Protestant identity, and its presence in political and religious life can hardly be overstated.

However, despite the centrality of anti-Catholicism in Elizabethan and Jacobean England, another branch of scholarship has demonstrated the extent to which Protestants and Catholics were often able to tolerate each other in everyday life. In day-to-day life, Catholics and Protestants appeared to value harmony over conflict.[15] Catholics, although they were unable to hold official positions of power, were able to accrue influence in their local communities.[16] Anti-Catholicism was also not a constant, and could ebb and flow according

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[11] Lake, "Anti-popery: the Structure of a prejudice", 74, 79; Jennifer L. Anderson, "Anti-Puritanism, Anti-Popery, and Gallows Rhetoric in Thomas Nashe's 'The Unfortunate Traveller'", *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 35, 1 (April 2004), 43-63, 57; for the battle to portray Catholics as patriotic English subjects see Gillian E. Brennan, "Papists and Patriotism in Elizabethan England", *British Catholic History* 19, 1 (May 1988), 1-15.

[12] Anne James, *Poets, Players, and Preachers: Remembering the Gunpowder Plot in Seventeenth-Century England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 193; Carol Z. Wiener, "The Beleaguered Isle: A Study of Elizabethan and Early Jacobean Anti-Catholicism", *Past & Present* 51, 1 (May 1971), 27-62, 27.

[13] Robin Clifton, "Fear of popery", in *The Origins of the English Civil War,* ed. Conrad Russell (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1973), 144-167, 158-162.

[14] Arthur F. Marotti, "The Intolerability of English Catholicism", in *Writing and Religion in England, 1558-1689,* eds. Roger D. Sell and Anthony W. Johnson (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 47-69, 49; Alexandra Walsham, *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500-1700* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 1.

[15] Sheils, "'Getting on' and 'getting along' in parish and town", 68; Alexandra Walsham, "Supping with Satan's Disciples: Spiritual and Secular Sociability in Post-Reformation England", in *Getting Along? Religious Identities and Confessional Relations in Early Modern England – Essays in Honour of Professor W.J. Sheils,* eds. Adam Morton and Nadine Lewycky (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 29-55.

[16] Michael C. Questier, *Catholicism and community in early modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 60-61.

to political circumstances.[17] This meant that Catholics could also move between conformity and recusancy, refusing to participate in Protestant services, depending on the intensity of hostilities.[18] The experiences of Catholics in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were far more nuanced and complex than the simple binary understanding of their religion in English national mythology. This evidence of relative toleration and peaceful inter-confessional relations appears to be in direct conflict with the historiography of anti-Catholic prejudice.

This chapter will examine examples of popular religious violence between Catholics and Protestants in the reigns of Queen Elizabeth I, King James I and King Charles I, to reconcile how early modern England was both deeply anti-Catholic, and also a place where most Catholics could live in relative peace. Anti-Catholic violence was certainly uncommon after the accession of Elizabeth I in 1558, so the violence that did take place demonstrates both how anti-Catholicism could rationalise violence in some contexts and restrain it in others. It will show how popular anti-Catholic violence was often a product of heightened circumstances, when religious divisions were especially stark or when a crisis had threatened Protestant stability. The disparate examples that make up this chapter also show how anti-Catholicism was distributed throughout society, so violence against them could erupt anywhere, dependent on context. Examples of violence after executions of Catholic priests, and after providential events, demonstrate how anti-Catholic violence was often directed against those most vilified in the wider culture, and in circumstances where some form of approval had been given. Sir Robert Payne's dinner party shows how attempts to maintain

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[17] Anthony Milton, "A Qualified Intolerance: the Limits and Ambiguities of Early Stuart Anti-Catholicism", in *Catholicism and Anti-Catholicism in Early Modern English Texts,* ed. Arthur F. Marotti (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), 85-115, 93, 110.
[18] Katy Gibbons, "When he was in France he was a Papist and when he was in England … he was a Protestant", in *Getting Along? Religious Identities and Confessional Relations in Early Modern England – Essays in Honour of Professor W.J. Sheils,* eds. Adam Morton and Nadine Lewycky (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 169-184.

inter-confessional harmony often contained the potential to provoke violence as much as accord. This chapter will conclude with the murder of Compton Evers, a lieutenant in the royal army during the Bishops' Wars, to show how anti-Catholic tropes could justify the most severe violence during wartime. Ultimately, this chapter will show how anti-Catholicism and desires for harmony in early modern England did not exist independently, but were two interconnected aspects of life after the Reformation.

**Defacing Catholicism: Public Execution and Violence, Oxford, 1589 and Dorchester, 1642**

Public executions of condemned criminals were commonplace in England until 1868, when they were moved inside prisons and out of the public gaze.[19] This was done primarily out of the belief that the spectacle of death was incompatible with the values of a civilised society, and that witnessing crowds either had the wrong perspective or were corrupted by the sight of execution.[20] However, this logic was entirely counter to that of the early modern period. Instead, the crowd was believed to play an essential role: witnessing the punishment and being warned by the example of the executed prisoner. However, the witnesses to an execution often seized a more direct role in executions, which sometimes spilled over into violence.[21] This section will focus upon three examples of popular religious violence that occurred during or after public executions. The victims were George Nichols and Richard Yaxley, who were executed together on 19 October 1589 with two Catholic laypeople, Thomas Belson and Humphrey Pritchard, and Hugh Green, who was executed in Dorchester on 19 August 1642.[22] After their deaths, the faces of George Nichols and Richard Yaxley

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[19] Simpson, "Introduction: Public Executions, the 'Bloody Code', and English Society", 7.

[20] Randall McGowan, "Civilizing Punishment: The End of the Public Execution in England", *Journal of British Studies* 33, 3 (August 1994), 257-282, 259-260.

[21] Lake and Questier, "Agency, Appropriation and Rhetoric", 65.

[22] Richard Challoner, *Memoirs of Missionary Priests and other Catholics of Both Sexes that have suffered death in England of Religious Accounts from the Year 1577 to 1684,* 2 vols, vol 1 (Philadelphia: M. Kelly, 1840), 151.

were mutilated with daggers.[23] The remains of Hugh Green suffered even greater indignities: the priest's head was taken by the crowd and used as a football and finally buried with sticks placed in the facial orifices.[24] This section will examine these examples, to show how these three men were used as vessels for anti-Catholic prejudice, and how the violence against them grew out of the Protestant tradition of iconoclasm.

How these events have been recorded presents issues to the historian. All these examples of violence were recorded by Catholic writers whose accounts were shaped to memorialise the sufferings of Catholic martyrs. The only contemporary account that survives of the executions of George Nichols, Richard Yaxley, Thomas Belson and Humphrey Pritchard is a text called *Breve Relatione del Martirio di doi Reverendi Sacerdoti et doi laici,* printed in Rome in 1590.[25] The main account of the execution of Hugh Green comes from a Catholic gentlewoman, Elizabeth Willoughby. Many of the Catholic authors who constructed such accounts, whether they were intended for public consumption or not, such as Richard Rowlands alias Verstegan, intended them both as inspirations for Catholic readers, and to be an answer to John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs.* One of the defining Protestant texts of the English Reformation, the *Book of Martyrs* was written to glorify those who died for the Protestant faith and demonise Catholic persecutors.[26] This means that in response, such Catholic accounts are likely to have emphasised the innocence and endurance of the martyr in question, and underline or exaggerate the evil nature of the Protestant crowd. They also sought to emphasise the physical suffering of the Catholic martyrs, so such accounts must be treated with caution.[27] Another layer of complication is added to this by the fact that many of

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[23] Challoner, *Memoirs of Missionary Priests,* vol 1, 151.

[24] Challoner, *Memoirs of Missionary Priests,* vol 2, 225.

[25] Printed in Christine Kelly, *Blessed Thomas Belson: His Life and Times 1563-1589* (Gerrard's Cross: Smythe, 1987), 92-100.

[26] David Loewenstein, *Treacherous Faith: The Specter of Heresy in Early Modern English Literature and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 109.

[27] Anne Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom in the English Catholic Community, 1535-1603* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 245.

these accounts do not survive verbatim, but through the writings of later Catholic hagiographers. One of the most important of these is Richard Challoner, an eighteenth-century Catholic priest and writer, who published the two-volume *Memoirs of Missionary Priests and other Catholics,* essentially a set of saintly biographies of those who died for the Catholic faith between 1557 and 1684, which also noted the post-execution mutilation this section will examine.[28] The accounts were based on those made by others, both contemporaneously to the martyrs and after, and has been a key source for those wishing to study Catholic martyrs since publication in 1741-2. Fortunately for the historian, Challoner appears to have kept editorialising to a minimum, preferring to let his sources speak for themselves.[29] The same is true of the Victorian antiquarian Joseph Gillow, whose five-volume *A literary and biographical history or bibliographical dictionary of the English Catholics* is another valuable source for this section. Although Gillow's work was essentially a compilation of edited sources rather than original writing, his understanding of the past was coloured by his fierce Catholicism, and given he did not verify the veracity of his sources, his work must also be handled with care.[30]

The first feature all the victims share is that they were Catholic priests, and more specifically, seminary priests educated in Douai and Rheims in France. As such, they were typical of Catholics executed during the early modern period. For example, between 1577 and 1603 alone, around 200 Catholics, 124 of which were priests, were executed for essentially religious crimes.[31] George Nichols was an Oxford native who joined the English

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[28] Sheridan Gilley, "Challoner, Richard (1691–1781)", *ODNB,* last modified 10 October 2019, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/5025.

[29] Edwin H. Burton, *The Life and Times of Bishop Challoner, 1691-1781*, 2 vols, vol 1 (London; New York: Longmans, Green, 1909), 169.

[30] J.F.X. Bevan, "Gillow, Joseph (1850–1921)", *ODNB,* published 23 September 2004, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/41282.

[31] Claire Cross, "Orthodoxy, Heresy and Treason in Elizabethan England", *Revue Française de Civilisation Britannique* 18, 1 (March 2013), 5.

College at Rheims on 20 November 1581.[32] Nichols was mentioned as being of advanced years when he joined the English college, but other than the details from his arrest and interrogation his life remains a mystery.[33] His comrade Richard Yaxley was probably born in Boston, Lincolnshire and was sent to England from Douai in 1586.[34] Nichols and Yaxley, along with Belson and Pritchard, were arrested around midnight on 18 May 1589 at the Catherine Wheel inn, a refuge for Catholics in Oxford, and after much interrogation, and possibly a brief but uncomfortable sojourn in London, were found guilty of treason at the summer assizes and executed on 19 October 1589. Hugh Green was born around 1584, meaning he was in his mid-fifties when he was executed in 1642. From a Protestant background, he joined the English College at Douai in 1609, and returned to England in 1613. He was arrested whilst apparently trying to flee the country and executed at Dorchester on 18 August 1642.[35]

The fact that all three men were educated in the Catholic seminaries abroad, and returned to England to bolster the Catholic faith, made them all members of the most feared Catholic faction in Elizabethan and Stuart England: ordained priests. The English mission to reclaim what Catholics saw as the lapsed nation of England began in earnest in 1580, when seminary priests and Jesuits began landing in England from abroad, to join forces with many seminary priests already in the country, but their task proved troubled from the beginning.[36] Despite such difficulties, the subversive methods of such men meant that they quickly

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[32] Joseph Gillow, *A literary and biographical history or bibliographical dictionary of the English Catholics*, 5 vols, vol 5 (London: Burns and Oates, 1902), 177.

[33] Gillow, *A literary and biographical history,* vol 5, 177.

[34] Challoner, *Memoirs of Missionary Priests,* vol 1, 148.

[35] Challoner, *Memoirs of Missionary Priests,* vol 2, 119.

[36] Michael L. Carrafiello, "English Catholicism and the Jesuit Mission of 1580-1581", *The Historical Journal* 37, 4 (December 1994), 761-774, 761; Michael J. Yellowlees, "*So Strange a Monster as a Jesuite': The Society of Jesus in Sixteenth-Century Scotland* (Isle of Colonsay: House of Lochar, 2003), 77.

became a source of fear for the Protestant government.[37] However, how important missionary priests were in the survival of English Catholicism after 1558 is difficult to quantify. John Bossy afforded such Catholic missionaries tremendous importance in his 1975 work *The English Catholic Community,* in which he argued that pre-Reformation Catholicism was effectively starved to death in Elizabethan England, and Catholic missionaries led Catholicism to a rebirth through their mission.[38] He even pointed to the foundation of the seminary at Douai in 1568 as the "Year Zero" for the rebirth of post-Reformation English Catholicism.[39] This focus on seminary priests and Jesuits and their role in revitalising English Catholicism, as well as their suffering for the cause, was maintained in the work of historians such as Joy Rowe and Patrick McGrath.[40] However, post-revisionist scholarship has re-emphasised the continuity of Catholicism throughout the Reformation, and shown how Catholics manoeuvred through waves of persecution and toleration.[41] Either way, whilst seminary priests may not have played a major role in the survival of Catholicism after the accession of Elizabeth I, this does not change how they were portrayed at the time by the English state and wider popular culture.

Throughout the reign of Elizabeth I, most Catholics were not subject to extreme penalties; instead, the head of each household in the country was required to attend the Protestant Sunday service in the parish church every week, and those who did not were fined

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[37] Michael C. Questier, "'Like Locusts over all the world': Conversion, Indoctrination and the Society of Jesus in late Elizabethan and Jacobean England", in *The Reckoned Expense: Edmund Campion and the Early English Jesuits,* ed. Thomas M. McCoog (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1996), 265-284, 265.

[38] John Bossy, *The English Catholic Community, 1570-1850* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1975), 12.

[39] Christopher Haigh, "Review: Catholicism in Early Modern England: Bossy and beyond", *The Historical Journal* 45, 2 (June 2002), 481-494, 482.

[40] For example, see Patrick McGrath and Jill Rowe, "Anstruther Analysed: the Elizabethan Seminary Priests", *British Catholic History* 18, 1 (May 1986), 1-13; McGrath and Rowe, "The Elizabethan priests: their harbourers and helpers", *British Catholic History* 19, 3 (May 1989), 209-33; McGrath and Rowe, "The bloody questions reconsidered", *British Catholic History* 20, 3 (May 1991), 305-19; McGrath and Rowe, "The imprisonment of Catholics for religion under Elizabeth I", *British Catholic History* 20, 4 (October 1991), 415-435.

[41] Lucy E.C. Wooding, *Rethinking Catholicism in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

for recusancy, the legal term for refusing to do so.[42] The teeth of anti-Catholic persecution was directed at Jesuits, seminary priests, indeed any priest believed to be coming from abroad, and those who sheltered them. The escalation of inter-confessional hostilities in England was set in motion in 1570, after the failed revolt of the Northern Earls, and Elizabeth I's excommunication by Pope Pius V.[43] The early 1570s saw a wave of proclamations condemning so-called seditious texts from abroad penned by "obstinate and irrepentant traitors", in other words, Catholic exiles.[44] In the early 1580s, the government demanded all English Jesuits and seminary priests to return home on the grounds that they were being trained to bring about the collapse of the Protestant government.[45] How those who remained abroad were regarded by the government was made clear on 1 April 1582, when a proclamation was issued which declared all Jesuits and seminary priests who did not return to England as commanded were traitors.[46] The proclamation argued that this judgement was necessitated by the fact that such priests had been trained by foreign Catholic powers, such as the king of Spain, Philip II, or the pope, to facilitate foreign invasion and kill the Protestant queen.[47] This set the tone for much anti-Catholic legislation to come. For example, a proclamation justifying the execution of two seminary priests, William Marsden and Robert Anderton, in 1586 claimed such men were "created at Rome and Rheims" and sent by the pope and others "favouring his pretended tyrannous authority over the crown of England" to assist native Catholics to rise against the government.[48]

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[42] Marshall, *Heretics and Believers*, 467.

[43] Krista J. Kesselring, *The Northern Rebellion of 1569: Faith, Politics and Protest in Elizabethan England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 185-6.

[44] Paul L. Hughes and James A. Larkin, eds., *Tudor Royal Proclamations: Volume 2, The Later Tudors: 1553-1587* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1969), 376-379, 347.

[45] Hughes and Larkin, *Tudor Royal Proclamations: Volume 2*, 481-484.

[46] Hughes and Larkin, *Tudor Royal Proclamations: Volume 2*, 488-492.

[47] Hughes and Larkin, *Tudor Royal Proclamations: Volume 2*, 489.

[48] Hughes and Larkin, *Tudor Royal Proclamations: Volume 2*, 518.

In *The Execution of Justice in England* William Cecil portrayed Catholic missionaries as sent to England to undermine the Protestant government of the country.[49] He claimed that seminary priests, along with Jesuits, were entering the country "bringing with them certeine *Romish* trash, as of their hallowed Waxe…" in order to "perswade the people to allowe of the Popes foresaid Bulles and warrantes, and of his absolute authoritie ouer all Princes and Countries."[50] He claimed that without providential deliverance there would have been "imminent danger of horrible vprores in the realmes, and a manifest blooddy destruction of great multitudes of Christians."[51] This was the official view, that Catholic missionaries were bent on overturning England's religious and political self-determination. This explains the combination of hatred of Catholicism and the fear of a secret fifth column within the country that defined much of the anti-seminary rhetoric.[52]

This only intensified as war with Spain loomed on the horizon. A proclamation issued in 1588 mentioned Jesuits and seminary priests being sent into the country by the pope to raise Catholics against the crown.[53] Even after the threat of impending Spanish invasion had passed with the defeat of the Spanish Armada in August 1588, later proclamations explicitly blamed seminary priests, among others, for the ongoing war with Spain, and called them "ravening strangers, willful destroyers of their native country and monstrous traitors.".[54] It was in this context, that George Nichols and Richard Yaxley were arrested and executed in 1589. In October 1591, another proclamation listed the questions that were to be put to any arrested seminary priest, which focused primarily on their potential foreign connections, such

[49] William Cecil, *The execution of iustice in England* (London, 1583), 4.
[50] Cecil, *The execution of iustice,* 4.
[51] Cecil, *The execution of iustice,* 5.
[52] John C.H. Aveling, *The Jesuits* (London: Blond & Briggs, 1981), 145.
[53] Hughes and Larkin, *Tudor Royal Proclamations: Volume 2,* 14.
[54] Hughes and Larkin, *Tudor Royal Proclamations: Volume 3, The Later Tudors 1588-1603* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1969), 86-93.

as if they had attended a seminary in or even visited Rome, Rheims or Spain and why they had come into England.[55]

The reign of King James I was in some ways a relief for English Catholics; only nineteen priests were executed between 1603 and 1625. However, by February 1604 his government was issuing orders for all Jesuits and seminary priests to leave the country within weeks, and any who remained would be punished under the laws of the previous regime.[56] Once again, this was justified by the argument that such priests were foreign agents: the 1604 proclamation explicitly stated that "their absolute submission to Foreine Jurisdiction at their first taking of orders…" made them enemies of the state.[57] The discovery of the Gunpowder Plot the following year only exacerbated official attitudes towards Catholic priests, and repeated proclamations would follow at regular intervals which ordered Jesuits and seminary priests to leave the country, on the grounds that they were responsible for fostering rebellion against the government, the foiled plot being the prime example.[58] Such orders appeared throughout the reign of Charles I, and it was in the obedience of one such order that Hugh Green was arrested in 1642.[59]

This view of such priests was well absorbed into the wider popular culture. Many Protestant writers presented missionaries as inciters of murder, foolish conmen and agents of the pope, sent to lure the unwary into spiritual error.[60] Thomas Sampson, a Marian exile and later a godly preacher, called Jesuits and seminary priests "vermine" whose mission was to

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[55] Hughes and Larkin, *Tudor Royal Proclamations: Volume 3,* 94.

[56] Marshall, *Reformation England,* 206; Paul L. Hughes and James A. Larkin, eds., *Stuart Royal Proclamations: Volume 1, Royal Proclamations of King James I, 1603-1625* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 70-73

[57] Hughes and Larkin, *Stuart Royal Proclamations: Volume 1,* 72-73.

[58] Hughes and Larkin, *Stuart Royal Proclamations: Volume 1,* 131-133, 142-145, 245-250, 329-336, 591-593.

[59] Privy Council of Scotland, *Commissions, proclamations, and acts of Privie Councell, concerning Jesuits, Priests, and Papists* (Edinburgh, 1642), 1, 7-8; David Underdown, *Fire From Heaven: The Life of an English Town in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Harper Collins, 1992), 197.

[60] For how this myth was not confined to England or the early modern period see Geoffrey Cubitt, *The Jesuit Myth: Conspiracy Theory and Politics in Nineteenth-Century France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

guide the unlearned from the true Protestant faith.[61] In an introduction to a sermon preached to Jesuits and seminary priests imprisoned in the Tower of London, later dedicated to Sir Francis Walsingham, John Keltridge, a particularly belligerent and dogmatic preacher in the Church of England, wrote such missionaries were "sente in of late dayes by the Pope, to disturbe vs, and rayse Tumults".[62] Anthony Munday, in one of a series of viciously anti-Catholic texts, described those studying at seminaries in Rome and Rheims as vessels nurtured by the pope to assist his cause in England.[63] This was a common theme; the Protestant convert, John Reynolds, described both Jesuits and seminary priests as locusts, bent on consuming England's Protestant vine and fruit.[64] The 1600 text *A toile for tvvo-legged foxes*, a book laden with anti-Catholic propaganda, described such men as "fox-priests". Such "fox-priests" were described as weapons of the Antichrist, as well as "stragling extrauagants, roguish pedlars of whorish merchandice" seeking to "reconcile simple people to the obedience of the Pope, to powre into their harts pestilent opinions against her Maiestie".[65] These examples show how effective the government was at promoting their narrative, which justified their intense persecution of missionary priests.

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[61] Thomas Sampson, *A warning to take heede of Fovvlers psalter* (London, 1578), 25; Alec Ryrie, "Sampson, Thomas (c. 1517–1589)", *ODNB,* published 23 September 2004, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/24595.

[62] John Keltridge, *Two godlie and learned sermons appointed, and preached, before the Jesuites, seminaries, and other aduersaries to the gospell of Christ in the Tower of London* (London, 1581), 6; Stephen Wright, "Keltridge, John (ba1553, d. 1582x1604)", *ODNB,* last modified 3 January 2008, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/15308.

[63] Anthony Munday, *A discouerie of Edmund Campion* (London, 1582), 13; David M. Bergeron, "Munday, Anthony (ba1560, d. 1633)", *ODNB*, last modified 24 May 2007, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/19531: As a traveller in Europe, Munday met several seminary priests, and on his return testified against some, including Edmund Campion, despite never having met him.

[64] John Reynolds, *A sermon vpon part of the prophesie of Obadiah* (London, 1584), 35; other examples include, James Aske, *Elizabetha triumphans* (London, 1588), 11, 18: "He sends abroad his Seminarie Priests/ To driue his Bulls vnto the English soyle."; Mordechai Feingold, "Rainolds [Reynolds], John (1549–1607)", *ODNB,* last modified 24 May 2012, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/23029: Reynolds proved adept at debating his former co-religionists, the most famous example being his series of debates with the imprisoned Jesuit John Hart who did concede on the issue of papal supremacy over rulers and agreed to the publication of their debates, published in 1584 as *The summe of the conference betweene John Rainoldes and John Hart*. Hart was eventually banished instead of executed, which may also explain his more amenable behaviour, as Reynolds believed.

[65] J. Baxter, *A toile for tvvo-legged foxes* (London, 1600), 16.

The power of this narrative to demonise any and all seminary priests was exacerbated by the fact that in 1589 and 1642 respectively, the country had faced or was facing some form of political crisis, which aggravated anti-Catholic fears. The defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, the year before the execution of Nichols and Yaxley, was understood as a providential escape from Spanish Catholic invasion: a sign of England's status as God's favoured country.[66] The godly pamphleteer, William Averell, in a ferociously anti-Catholic text published during the Armada crisis, described foreign-educated priests as malignant hypocrites who disguised themselves as meek holy men but were in fact bent on poisoning their disciples and enticing them away from true loyalty to queen and country.[67] These sentiments would have seemed all too real and frightening to English Protestants in 1588. A sermon preached to soldiers preparing to fight the Spanish in 1588 named the Jesuits specifically as the order ordained by the pope to travel through Europe to raise armies and kings to fight the rise of Protestantism, the true faith.[68] It is unlikely that Protestant preachers cared to note the differences between various groups of Catholic missionaries, and the activities condemned as acts of Jesuits were also being carried out by seminary priests. The preacher, Edward Harris, explicitly called the approaching Spanish Armada the work of such men declaring "The Princes which threaten vs are gathered by these Jesuits."[69]

1642, when Hugh Green was executed, was also a time of tension and fear, this time of a Catholic fifth column rising up from within the country, or from Ireland which had seen the beginning of a violent Catholic rebellion the previous year.[70] A pamphlet entitled *Nevvs from hell,* written by John Milton, the future author of Paradise Lost, by then a budding

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[66] Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 385.
[67] William Averell, *A Mervalious Combat of Contrarieties* (London, 1588), 21; William E. Burns, "Averell, William (ba1556, d. 1605)", *ODNB,* published 23 September 2004, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/40543.
[68] Edward Harris, *A sermon preached at Brocket Hall, before the right vvorshipfull, Sir Iohn Brocket, and other gentlemen there assembled for the trayning of souldiers* (London, 1588), 13.
[69] Harris, *A sermon preached at Brocket Hall,* 14.
[70] Robin Clifton, "The Popular Fear of Catholics during the English Revolution", in *Rebellion, Popular Protest and the Social Order in Early Modern England,* ed. Paul Slack (Cambridge, 1984), 129-161, 131.

Independent, supposedly a series of letters from Lucifer to the pope, mentioned "Jesuites, Priests, and Seminaries" as beloved servants.[71] A text by John Udall, an Elizabethan godly writer, published in 1642, some 50 years after the author's death, claimed that the English seminaries of Rome "kept out discipline, nourished ignorance, and fostered superstition and popery".[72] A speech given by John Pym, a ferocious anti-Catholic, published in 1642, named seminary priests "enemies of the Church".[73] Yet another anonymous text claimed seminary priests were the authors of "diverse pernicious designes" and were enemies to their country.[74] An anonymous history, published in 1642, of Catholic attempts to overthrow the English monarchy, blamed seminary priests and their "false and bewitching counsels" for encouraging rebellion.[75] Alongside this stood the case of the seminary priest Arthur Brown, whose recantation and condemnation of the Jesuits before his death in 1642 proved a gift to Protestant polemicists to hammer home this same point.[76] It is clear from all this evidence that the degree to which seminary priests were condemned both by the government and the wider popular culture is difficult to exaggerate. Therefore, by the time all three men were brought to execution, the crowd present saw them as the most malignant and dangerous of Catholics, hell-bent on subverting the Protestant order and national security of England.

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[71] John Milton, *Nevvs from hell* (London, 1642), 3; Anonymous, *I marry sir, Heere is newes indeed* (London, 1642), 2; Gordan Campbell, "Milton, John (1608–1674)", *ODNB,* last modified 8 January 2009, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/18800; Other examples include I.B., *To the most honourable and high court of Parliament* (London, 1642), 1.

[72] John Udall, *The true form of church government first instituted by Christ* (London, 1642), 50; Anonymous, *Exceeding good newes from the Jsle of VVight* (London, 1642), 4; Claire Cross, "Udall, John (c. 1560–1592/3)", *ODNB,* last modified 24 May 2008, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/27973.

[73] John Pym, *Two speeches delivered in Parliament* (London, 1642), 7; Conrad Russell, "Pym, John (1584–1643)", *ODNB*, last modified 21 May 2009, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/22926: Pym was among the five Members of Parliament Charles I made a disastrous attempt to arrest on 4 January 1642.

[74] Anonymous, *Reasons and arguments alledged to satisfie the kingdome* (London, 1642), 2-3.

[75] G.B.C., *Plots, conspiracies and attempts of domestick and forraigne enemies, of the Romish religion against the princes and kingdomes of England, Scotland and Ireland* (London, 1642), 20.

[76] Arthur Brown, *Arthur Browne, a seminary priest, his confession after he was condemned to be hanged at the assizes holden at Dorchester* (London, 1642).

The violence against these three seminary priests was also a result of the more immediate context: public executions. In theory, public executions were intended to be performances of moral lessons, in which observers had a passive role. However, to begin with, executions often had something of a carnivalesque atmosphere, with some in attendance treating the execution more as entertainment than solemn moral spectacle.[77] In such an atmosphere, even those who did see the execution of a traitor as a serious affair, could and did play a more complex role than that of simple witness.[78] They could engage with the condemned, encourage them to repent, or challenge their beliefs or resolve. This was a feature at the quadruple execution of Nichols, Yaxley, Belson and Pritchard. For example, before he was hanged, Pritchard was challenged by a man in the crowd on what being a Catholic truly meant, to which he responded with an affirmation of faith.[79] This could also escalate into more direct physical involvement: at the execution of Mark Barkworth in 1601, the crowd supported his weight when he was hanged so that he would live long enough to be dismembered.[80] Therefore, although post-execution mutilation was clearly unusual, it was simply at the most extreme end of a spectrum of interactions between the condemned and the crowd.

In another sense the violence against the three priests in question was also a continuation of the brutality of the public execution. Nichols, Yaxley and Green were all hanged, drawn and quartered: the most gruesome judicial display the English justice system had to offer. The victims of such execution were sentenced to "hang til they were halfe deade, then to haue their secrets cut off, and with their intrailes throwne into the fire before their

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[77] Laqueur, "Crowds, carnival and the state in English executions", 309.
[78] For example, see Ronald Huebert and David McNeil, "Dying in Earnest: Public Executions and Their Audiences", in *Early Modern Spectatorship: Interpreting English Culture 1500-1780,* eds. Ronald Huebert and David McNeil (Montreal; Kingston; London; Chicago: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019), 131-169.
[79] Kelly, *Blessed Thomas Belson,* 100.
[80] Challoner, *Memoirs of Missionary Priests,* 232.

faces, their heads to be seuerd from their bodies, which seuerally should be deuided into foure quarters, and afterward disposed at his Maiesties pleasure…"[81] The logic behind such brutality was made clear by Sir Edward Coke at the trial of the Gunpowder plotters in 1606: to show the unnatural nature of the crime of treason, for which all three seminary priests were executed. The convicted traitor was dragged to execution to show they were unfit to walk on God's earth, the hanging was symbolic of the fact that a traitor was unfit for both heaven and earth, and the most gruesome aspects of all, the disembowelling and dismemberment, were both punishments of and representative of how a traitor had transgressed against both the state and God, and no longer deserved to be treated as a person either before or after death.[82] In this context, the facial mutilation was a continuation of the violence performed by the state. In other contexts, perpetrators of popular violence intentionally mimicked state violence to lend the same legitimacy to their own. In these instances however, such imitation was not necessary, the perpetrators instead continued state violence on the body of an executed traitor, and by doing so asserted that their violence was equally legitimate.

The post-execution mutilation of these three seminary priests was also a part of the polemical battle that surrounded religious executions. Although the end result of an execution was obviously a foregone conclusion, the meaning of that death was a continuous battle between Protestants and Catholics. Protestants hoped to use the execution to show that the victim was merely a common criminal.[83] Catholics sought to show that the victim behaved in a way that only a martyr could do, to show that the victim was truly executed for religious reasons, and that theirs was the true faith.[84] There were certain behaviours that a prospective

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[81] Anonymous, *A true report of the araignment, tryall, conuiction, and condemnation, of a popish priest, named Robert Drewrie* (London, 1607), 23-24.
[82] Francis Hargrave, ed., *Complete Collection of State Trials,* 11 vols, vol 1 (Dublin: Printed by Graisberry and Campbell, 1793), 271.
[83] Lake and Questier, "Agency, Appropriation and Rhetoric", 97.
[84] Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom*, 75.

martyr had to demonstrate in order to be considered one after death, which Nichols, Yaxley and Green all conformed to.[85] All three apparently celebrated their sentences as opportunities to die for their faith, behaved with kindness and equanimity on the scaffold and managed to hold their own with the Protestant ministers and the crowd.[86] George Nichols managed to make a short speech before being hanged; he asserted that he was being executed solely due to his status as a priest, a challenge to the official narrative that he was a traitor, and repeatedly kissed the scaffold to show he was content to die as a martyr for the Catholic Church.[87] Yaxley did the same. He embraced the corpse of Nichols, and was hanged midway through a profession of his faith.[88]

Similarly, Hugh Green allegedly managed to convert two of the criminals he was imprisoned with, in imitation of Christ on the cross.[89] He also stressed in his speech on the gallows that he was being put to death for religious reasons, and in a speech laden with scriptural references contended the truth of the Catholic Church, and refused to debate with Protestant clergymen present.[90] This clearly angered some in the crowd, who shouted "stop that mouth of the blasphemer, cast him off the ladder", to which Green responded by praying for religious unity, and King James I, another attempt to subvert the official narrative, and gave benediction to some Catholics in the crowd. Elizabeth Willoughby, a Catholic noblewoman whose narrative of Green's execution is the key one to survive, claimed that no one was willing to execute the priest for at least half an hour, until a "country clown" volunteered, although this part of the narrative seems more likely an attempt to claim that not even Protestants were willing to execute someone so holy.[91] Whatever the truth, Green's

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[85] Lake and Questier, "Agency, Appropriation and Rhetoric", 97.
[86] Challoner, *Memoirs of Missionary Priests,* vol 1, 151, vol 2, 225.
[87] Kelly, *Blessed Thomas Belson,* 99.
[88] Kelly, *Blessed Thomas Belson,* 99.
[89] Gillow, *A literary and biographical history,* vol 4, 20.
[90] Challoner, *Memoirs of Missionary Priests,* vol 2, 122.
[91] Challoner, *Memoirs of Missionary Priests,* vol 2, 123.

death must have been much more of a horrible scene than those of Nichols and Yaxley.

Green's execution was botched and he took at least half an hour to expire whether due to the "timorous" nature of the executioner or otherwise.[92] The Catholic writers who recorded his death wrote that he accepted what must have been agony with remarkable even-handedness, although such a portrayal is to be expected.[93] By dying in such a manner, all these men were aiding the Catholic cause in England, and their mutilation after death was an attempt to challenge this.

There is also an element of iconoclasm to these attacks. In one sense, heads had been central to some saints' cults before the Reformation, so such mutilation could be a reaction or challenge to this.[94] However, it is more likely that such violence was a continuation of iconoclastic acts committed during the earlier stages of the English Reformation. Whilst some acts of iconoclasm focused on removing supposed miraculous objects and images from their original places and burning them, some iconoclasts chose to simply remove the head or face of the statue of a saint. [95] For example, in 1528, some French iconoclasts awakened the ire of King Henry VIII by beheading a statue of the Virgin Mary.[96] One of the most systematic examples of this can be found in the Lady Chapel at Ely Cathedral, where almost all of the dozens of statues have had their heads or faces removed in some way.[97] This was

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[92] Challoner, *Memoirs of Missionary Priests,* vol 2, 124; Gillow, *A literary and biographical history,* vol 4, 20.

[93] Gillow, *A literary and biographical history,* vol 4, 21-2.

[94] Some medieval saints were cephalophores, such as St Denis of Paris and St Paul the Apostle, meaning they were depicted carrying their own severed heads, or were believed to have done so in their legends: Scott B. Montgomery, "Securing the Sacred Head: Cephalophory and relic claims", in *Disembodied Heads in Medieval and Early Modern Culture,* eds. Catrien Santing, Barbara Baert and Anita Traninger (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 77-115, 87.

[95] Peter Marshall, "The Rood of Boxley, the Blood of Hailes and the Defence of the Henrician Church", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 46, 4 (October 1995), 689-696, 696; Aston, "Iconoclasm in England: official and clandestine" in *The Impact of the English Reformation*, 168, 173.

[96] Margaret Aston, *England's Iconoclasts, Volume 1: Laws Against Images* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 210.

[97] This was probably carried out under the evangelical Thomas Goodrich, Bishop of Ely, from 1534 to 1554: Felicity Heal, "Goodrich [Goodryck], Thomas (1494–1554)", *ODNB,* last modified 22 September 2005, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/10980.

probably done because of its shock value: it was one of the most powerful ways to visually illustrate the helplessness of a given saint in a much more confrontational and lasting way. A statue attacked in such a way would stay in its original place for posterity, its feebleness forever marked by its missing face. Likewise, the intention behind the mutilation of the faces of executed seminary priests was to remove any delusion that the victim possessed any divinity or any spiritual status by damaging the most expressive and individual part of their body, a direct challenge to any claim that such a person was a martyr.[98]

The mutilation of the face of a martyr could also have more specific implications beyond the general attack on the victim's religious status: sometimes the heads of martyrs were believed to bring about providential events. The father of Edward Waterson, executed in 1594, claimed that his son's severed head called out to him, whilst the head of John Cornelius, also executed in 1594, was credited by some Catholics with causing an outbreak of plague in Dorchester.[99] Although it concerns a different body part, the *Breve Relatione* claimed that the dismembered arm of George Nichols miraculously moved to point at Oxford while affixed to the city gates.[100] This means that attacking such remains was a challenge to claims that the victim could enact miracles. In earlier times, supposed miraculous relics were burned to show they had no such powers. The mutilation of the remains of Catholic martyrs performed the same gruesome function. Mutilation of martyrs' remains was intended to participate in the polemical battle of an execution, and promote the Protestant agenda behind the executions of Catholics. It was also intended to express the enormous hatred that the

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[98] Aston, *England's Iconoclasts*, 213; for how this was applied to some Catholic buildings see Alexandra Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity, and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), "Remembrancers of the Reformation: Desecrated Places" 147-152.

[99] Challoner, *Memoirs of Missionary Priests,* 176, 186.

[100] Kelly, *Blessed Thomas Belson,* 100.

perpetrators clearly felt towards such missionaries, who they believed were not holy men but were subversive saboteurs of their country and Protestant faith.

Another important accompanying element was that Catholic laypeople treated the remains of executed Catholics with tremendous reverence. Margaret Clitherow made what she called pilgrimages to the sites where those she deemed martyrs had been executed.[101] Catholics would also try and gain whatever remains or bodily fluids from an executed Jesuit they could, believing them as powerful as any pre-Reformation relic.[102] One of Edmund Campion's fingers, removed after his execution on 1 December 1581, was treasured as a relic by a member of the Catholic Vaux family.[103] Richard Challoner wrote that blood, bone fragments and pieces of clothing were taken from the body of William Hart after his execution in 15 March 1583.[104] Although thefts of heads were uncommon at the scene of executions themselves, they did happen afterwards, when the remains were displayed in a conspicuous place as a warning, such as the head of Richard Simpson, a seminary priest executed on 24 July 1588, which was stolen and reverently buried after his execution, according to Challoner.[105] Therefore, seminary priests in death as well as life could prove a balm to the Catholic cause and a thorn in the side of the Protestant one. In this context, attacking the face, the part of the body most expressive and symbolic of an individual person, was an attack on that person's identity, most importantly their identity as a martyr.[106]

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[101] Peter Lake and Michael C. Questier, "Margaret Clitherow, Catholic Nonconformity, Martyrology and the Politics of Religious Change in Elizabethan England", *Past & Present* 185, 1 (November 2004), 43-90, 60

[102] Robyn Malo, "Intimate Devotion: Recusant Martyrs and the Making of Relics in Post-Reformation England", *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 44, 3 (Fall 2014), 531-548, 534; Alexandra Walsham, "Miracles and the Counter-Reformation Mission to England", *The Historical Journal* 46, 4 (December 2003), 779–815

[103] Jessie Childs, *God's Traitors: Terror and Faith in Elizabethan England* (London: Bodley Head, 2014), 71.

[104] Challoner, *Memoirs of Missionary Priests,* 84.

[105] Challoner, *Memoirs of Missionary Priests,* 130.

[106] For more on the power of the face in early modern England, see James A. Knapp, ed., *Shakespeare and the Power of the Face* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015).

The harrowing death of Hugh Green, which could have proved a great symbolic victory for the Catholics, given his apparently graceful acceptance of it, combined with the efforts of two Catholic women to recover the body, seems to have triggered a much more caustic response. Using Green's head as a football, whilst hugely impractical and not to mention macabre in the extreme, conveyed that Green's death was just a game, not a solemn martyrdom.[107] This trivialised Green's death, undermining any polemical point that he was a martyr, and demonstrated that his body was not worthy of any respect, but was only worth using to play a sport. This recalls the comment made in 1549 by the Western rebels that the 1549 *Book of Common Prayer* was "but lyke a Christmas game", which also shows how the rebels saw the new book as a trifling joke rather than a holy book.[108]

There were likely also individual triggers for these attacks, as they were far from normal at an execution. In the instance of George Nichols and Richard Yaxley, the latter may have been the more important of the two in terms of triggering the attacks on himself and Nichols. He was noted as being young and attractive, with good manners, which meant he may have inadvertently played into another stereotype about seminary priests and Jesuits: that they were seducers.[109] In a work explicitly intended to attack the Jesuits, the French theologian Pierre Boquin, one of the major thinkers in the Reformation of the Electoral Palatinate, suggested that Catholic missionaries made converts by blinding them to the truth through carnal extravagance.[110] This was a trope particularly involved with reasoning behind the conversion of women, as shown by the Independent minister and godly writer Henry Burton, in a dialogue where it is suggested that the female character of Curia was seduced

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[107] Gillow, *A literary and biographical history,* vol 4, 22-23.

[108] Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath,* 133.

[109] Challoner, *Memoirs of Missionary Priests,* vol 1, 151.

[110] Pierre Boquin, *A defence of the olde, and true profession of Christianitie against the new, and counterfaite secte of Iesuites* (London, 1581), 6; Charles D. Gunnoe Jr, "The Reformation of the Palatinate and the Origins of the Heidelberg Catechism", in *An Introduction to the Heidelberg Catechism: Sources, History, and Theology,* ed., Lyle D. Bierma (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 14-48, 41-5.

into her sympathy for Catholicism.[111] The ferociously anti-Catholic clergyman, Thomas Beard, took this even further in a 1616 work in which he described the entire Catholic religion as a tool to seduce Protestants from the true faith.[112] Yaxley's apparent youth, good looks and gentle manners perhaps induced the crowd to destroy what they believed was the reason behind his ability to convert people.[113]

Whilst these mutilations do demonstrate how anti-Catholic violence could erupt, they also suggest some of the reasons why violence against Catholics was not more commonplace. Catholicism was exaggerated in early modern England to a cartoonish degree, which could have made it difficult for people to associate the mundane Catholics around them with this hyperbolic image. However, Nichols, Yaxley and Green were seminary priests, the type of Catholics ordinary English people had been taught to fear and despise. They were also unknown to those who perpetrated violence against them, both of which could have made it easier for all the anti-Catholic tropes to be projected onto them, regardless of the specific details of their lives and careers. In a sense, the victims of post-execution mutilation were faceless, they were simply the latest symbols of the cosmic idea of Catholicism held in the minds of spectators.

Much of popular violence in other contexts was justified by a lack of state action. However, when it came to anti-Catholic oppression against seminary priests, the state could not be accused of restraint. Whilst most forms of state persecution against Catholics were non-violent, executions were the most extreme expression of the state carrying out its duty to subjugate and persecute Catholics. Indeed, the violence in this context was a continuation of the ritual of execution. The recognition that the state was carrying out its duty could also have

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[111] Henry Burton, *A tryall of priuate deuotions* (London, 1628), 8; Kenneth Gibson, "Burton, Henry (ba1578, d. 1647/8)", *ODNB*, last modified 28 May 2015, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/4129.

[112] Thomas Beard, *A retractiue from the Romish religion* (London, 1616), 1; Alexandra Walsham, "Beard, Thomas (c. 1568–1632)", *ODNB,* last modified 3 January 2008, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/1818.

[113] Challoner, *Memoirs of Missionary Priests,* vol 1, 151.

made it easier in day-to-day life for Protestants to tolerate Catholics. Violence at executions could also have acted as an outlet for people to express vicious anti-Catholic prejudice outside of ordinary life. Executions were also times where the rule of law was more ambiguous, so it is also possible that executions provided an opportunity for violence to occur without consequence.

The examples of post-execution mutilation in 1589 and 1642 show how anti-Catholicism was part of the background of religious life in post-Reformation England. However, this did not translate into popular violence unless some form of tacit permission had been given, in these instances, by the government. They show how ordinary Protestants were aware of the polemical battles that surrounded the executions of Catholics, and that in some circumstances they were willing to participate in favour of the government's narrative. It is also clear that the tradition of iconoclasm also continued to shape Protestant violence towards Catholics. However, the rarity of such examples of violence also suggests that they played a role in stemming the flow of violence outside of the specific context of an execution. Therefore, the mutilations of Nichols, Yaxley and Green not only show the strength of anti-Catholicism in England, and against missionary priests specifically, but also that such prejudice was not sufficient to motivate violence in ordinary circumstances.

**Come Dine (and Fight) with Me: Sociability and Violence, Huntingdonshire, 1609**

The case of Sir Robert Payne's dinner party, which opened this chapter, shows not only how the need to maintain social harmony was sufficient to bypass religious divisions, and facilitate inter-confessional socialising, but also how conflict could erupt on such occasions just as easily. This section will use this case to show how at times of increased tension, conflict between Catholics and Protestants could erupt in the right circumstances, and that a nuanced approach to religion and social obligation does not preclude the possibility of violent

conflict. The papers relating to the Star Chamber case that followed this incident comprise five documents, the original Bill of Complaint, two Answers and two Rejoinders. The Bill was presented by Sir Henry Hobart, the incumbent attorney general, on behalf of John Bedell, the victim of the assault, and the Answers were made by the two defendants: Thomas Bellay and John Brudenell.[114] However, whilst the wealth of documents make this case valuable to the historian, it also means that it is difficult to know what exactly transpired in Robert Payne's dining room.

The three accounts of the fight both affirm and contradict each other. All three describe meeting at Midloe Grange although Bedell and Bellay mention being invited to dine there, and Brudenell claims to have met the others "by chaunce", which is far from the only part of his narrative that seems incongruous with those of the others.[115] In their respective accounts, it is possible to make a judgement about their religious affiliations; Brudenell admitted to being Catholic, although unsurprisingly he also stated his loyalty to the English crown.[116] Bedell, through the petition submitted by Hobart, condemns Catholicism in the strongest terms, which combined with his actions during the dinner party, seems to confirm his fierce Protestantism.[117] The religious views of Thomas Bellay are the hardest to determine. In his Answer he also condemns Catholicism, but his actions in the case seem inconsistent alongside his claims of Protestant faith, so any conclusions about his faith must be left open.[118] That Brudenell was invited at all to this event shows that Payne at least believed him to be of enough importance locally that he warranted inclusion, and that their shared social status surpassed the importance of their religious differences. This is made especially clear by Brudenell's religious history; in his reply to the Court of Star Chamber he

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[114] TNA STAC 8/11/23 (Bill of Complaint), (Answer of Thomas Bellay), (Answer of John Brudenell).
[115] TNA STAC 8/11/23 (Bill of Complaint), (Answer of Thomas Bellay), (Answer of John Brudenell).
[116] TNA STAC 8/11/23 (Answer of John Brudenell).
[117] TNA STAC 8/11/23 (Bill of Complaint).
[118] TNA STAC 8/11/23 (Answer of Thomas Bellay).

admitted to being Catholic, but he also had a history of recusancy, which makes it likely that his neighbours were all aware of his Catholicism.[119] It is possible that he was connected to the Brudenells of Deene in neighbouring Northamptonshire, also a committed Catholic family.[120] This inclusion shows the desire of Payne to prioritise the accord of Midloe, rather than follow religious politics blindly, and exclude Brudenell from local gentry society on the grounds of his open Catholicism.

Despite Payne's best intentions, the dinner went badly wrong after the meal had been served, and the guests fell into conference with one another. This by itself was commonplace; conversation at civic dinners often concerned matters of state, politics and religion.[121] Indeed, all three accounts mention that they had enjoyed conversation of such topics amongst each other previously. More controversial topics were sometimes brought up but perhaps guests with contrary opinions would keep them to themselves. However, the conversation became heated when Sir Robert asked Thomas Bellay what he had thought of a recent book by the Bishop of Lincoln, William Barlow.[122] Most likely he was referring to *An answer to a Catholike English-man*, a response Barlow had written on the orders of James I to *A Catholike English-man* by the Jesuit Robert Persons.[123] The reason this conversation touched such strong emotions so quickly is probably linked to the context and content of Barlow's book. The book was published as a response to and during the controversy concerning the Oath of Allegiance.[124]

The Oath of Allegiance was passed through Parliament in 1606, and has traditionally been interpreted by historians as a moderate oath intended to end any violent conflict

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[119] TNA STAC 8/11/23 (Answer of John Brudenell).
[120] Wake, *The Brudenells,* 102.
[121] Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 390.
[122] TNA STAC 8/11/23 (Answer of Thomas Bellay).
[123] Knighton, "Barlow, William", *ODNB.*
[124] Victor Houliston, *Catholic Resistance in Elizabethan England: Robert Person's Jesuit Polemic, 1580-1610* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 144-145.

resulting from the failed Gunpowder Plot the previous year.[125] However, many Catholics interpreted the Oath as being exceedingly divisive; in fact, the division of the Catholic community may have been the ultimate agenda behind its passing.[126] The king himself published a book, initially anonymously, entitled *An apologie for the oath of allegiance,* in defence of the Oath. The book was a response to two breves against the Oath that Pope Paul V had issued in 1607 and 1608.[127] In the introduction, apparently aimed at other European rulers, James argued that the Oath was only intended to concern matters of civil and political obedience to himself as the monarch and not matters of the conscience.[128] This was the central point of the book; he was arguing that the Oath was not motivated by religion, but only to avoid civil conflict and not to trap Catholics in questions of conscience. However, not everyone was convinced by the king's attempts to calm the debate, most prolifically the Jesuit Robert Persons.[129]

Robert Persons was one of the most controversial figures in Stuart England and so defending him in Protestant company would have been unwise. Persons was controversial partly because he was a Jesuit, which as seen in the previous section, was a Catholic faction who were regarded with extreme hatred and fear; for example, Thomas Bell, a former missionary who turned first against the Jesuits and then against the Catholic mission itself, called Persons a "traitorous Iesuit".[130] In 1608 Bell wrote an entire book aimed at discrediting Persons, who had understandably responded to his previous work, repeated his insult and

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[125] For example, Kenneth L. Campbell, *The Intellectual Struggle of the English Papists in the Seventeenth Century* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1986), 45.

[126] Michael C. Questier, "Loyalty, Religion and State Power in Early Modern England: English Romanism and the Jacobean Oath of Allegiance", *The Historical Journal* 40, 2 (June 1997), 311-329, 313.

[127] Johann Sommerville, "Papalist political thought and the controversy over the Jacobean oath of allegiance", in *Catholics and the 'Protestant Nation',* ed. Ethan H. Shagan (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 162-184.

[128] King James I and VI Stuart, *An apologie for the oath of allegiance* (London, 1609), 9.

[129] Victor Houliston, "Persons [Parsons], Robert (1546–1610)", *ODNB,* published 23 September 2004, https://doi .org/10.1093/ref:odnb/21474.

[130] Thomas Bell, *The dovvnefall of poperie* (London, 1604), 5; Alexandra Walsham, "Bell [alias Burton], Thomas (b. c. 1551, d. in or after 1610)", ODNB, last modified 3 January 2008, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/2026.

added many others, such as "wolfe" and "Saucy Rebell".[131] William Cecil had also named Persons specifically as a traitor decades earlier in 1583.[132] Brudenell's lack of action where Persons was concerned shows that he and perhaps other Catholics were sometimes able to tolerate generalised animosity towards Catholics *en masse*, or against a particularly controversial figure, which Persons certainly was.

Robert Persons published a direct response to the king's work in 1608 called *The iudgment of a Catholicke English-man*, in which he argued that contrary to James I's claims, the Oath was greatly offensive to a Catholic conscience, and so could not be sworn by them.[133] Also significant for what would unfold in Midloe, Persons' book was critical of the late Queen Elizabeth I, claiming she was illegitimate and a ruthless persecutor of Catholics.[134] It was into this context that Barlow published his response to Persons in 1609. He was blisteringly critical of Persons and his work, as well as extremely defensive of the late queen.[135] He called the attack on the queen's memory an "infallible demonstration of his [Persons] degenerous and vnregenerate minde", and suggested the Oath was a means to "discouer a loyally-affected Subiect, from a hollow-hearted Recusant."[136] This controversy both around the Oath, and the print exchange between Persons and Barlow was certainly a live one in July 1609, and the key issue underpinning it, loyalty, could hardly have been more sensitive.

It is at this point, when the book was being disputed, that the disagreements between the three accounts begin. In their respective accounts, Bellay himself and Brudenell claimed

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[131] Thomas Bell, *The Iesuits antepast* (London, 1608), 24, 88, 199.
[132] Cecil, *The execution of iustice,* 9.
[133] Robert Persons, *The iudgment of a Catholicke English-man* (London, 1608), 1.
[134] Persons, *The iudgment*, 91, 35: It repeated claims that she had been involved with Admiral Thomas Seymour as a teenager, that she had died an unchristian death, and called her the "strangest woman that euer was borne": Persons, *The iudgment*, 32, 36.
[135] William Barlow, *An answer to a Catholike English-man* (London, 1609), for example, 5.
[136] Barlow, *An answer,* 2, 205.

that Bellay had replied that Barlow's book was well written, whilst Bedell claimed that Bellay had been extremely critical of it.[137] All agreed that Bedell responded by condemning Persons and his fellow Catholics in the strongest terms.[138] Bellay made the mistake of defending Persons, conceding his wrongfulness, but also that if he did not regard Elizabeth I as his lawful queen, it was not so great a sin.[139] The accounts differ on Bellay's motivations for making this argument. Bedell thought he acted out of malice whilst Bellay himself and Brudenell claimed that Bedell was being argumentative.[140] All agree that Bedell made some remark regarding the loyalty of all Catholics. Bedell claimed he only remarked that no Jesuit could be loyal. Bellay claimed Bedell liked the sound of his own voice. Meanwhile, Brudenell claimed that Bedell made this comment while giving him a sideward glance.[141]

It was after this exchange that the fight broke out; Bellay completely ignored all allegations of violence in his account, but both Bedell and Brudenell gave accounts in theirs, in which, unsurprisingly, they blame each other entirely.[142] Bedell described in vivid detail that Brudenell attacked him with a dagger and cut his cheek before Sir Robert Payne came to his aid.[143] By contrast, Brudenell gave a vague account in which he claimed that Bedell attacked him with a dagger, intending to cut his throat, but by some accident, managed to injure himself instead.[144] It is clear that there are some significant points of disagreement in all three accounts of the events of that fateful dinner. They cannot all be true and there are some aspects in each account that call their claims into question, meaning that each account cannot fully be trusted, but this does not mean that they are entirely false. Bedell laced his account throughout with the claim that he only spoke and acted in defence of the king's good

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[137] TNA STAC 8/11/23 (Bill of Complaint), (Answer of Thomas Bellay), (Answer of John Brudenell).
[138] TNA STAC 8/11/23 (Bill of Complaint), (Answer of Thomas Bellay), (Answer of John Brudenell).
[139] TNA STAC 8/11/23 (Answer of John Brudenell).
[140] TNA STAC 8/11/23 (Bill of Complaint), (Answer of Thomas Bellay), (Answer of John Brudenell).
[141] TNA STAC 8/11/23 (Bill of Complaint), (Answer of Thomas Bellay), (Answer of John Brudenell).
[142] TNA STAC 8/11/23 (Bill of Complaint), (Answer of Thomas Bellay), (Answer of John Brudenell).
[143] TNA STAC 8/11/23 (Bill of Complaint).
[144] TNA STAC 8/11/23 (Answer of John Brudenell).

name and that of the late queen, but this is to be expected as he wished the court to side with him in the case and emphasising loyalty would likely garner favour, and defend him against any serious charges.[145] Similarly, both Brudenell's and Bellay's accounts were shaped to defend themselves and so it is unsurprising that both were entirely exculpatory.[146] However, Brudenell made several claims in his account that seemed inconsistent, such as his claim that Bedell wounded himself. The fact that Bedell was the one injured, which no-one denies, perhaps shows that in this regard, Bedell's account is closest to the truth.[147] This also seems more likely as a case in which a Protestant was attacked and injured by a recusant Catholic, would have easily caught the attention of the attorney general, Henry Hobart, who brought the case to court.[148] If Bedell's excessive and persistent claims of loyalty throughout his text are to be understood, at least in part, as an attempt to gain the sympathy of the court, it remains that he also acted with more personal intentions alongside loyalty to the crown. This adds weight to the account of the argument given by Brudenell, in which he claimed that Bedell also meant to impugn Brudenell's own loyalty to the king.[149]

There is one final point that must be addressed in Bedell's version of events: he claimed that Bellay and Brudenell had, anticipating legal action after the events of the dinner party, conspired with each other and several other unnamed confederates to agree a story that they would each present to court. He even claimed that they had tried to intimidate him into not taking the case to court in the first place.[150] However, neither Bellay nor Brudenell make any reference to any conspiracy in their accounts except to deny it. The lack of detail provided by Bedell makes it more likely that this section of his narrative was aimed at

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[145] TNA STAC 8/11/23 (Bill of Complaint).
[146] TNA STAC 8/11/23 (Answer of Thomas Bellay), (Answer of John Brudenell).
[147] TNA STAC 8/11/23 (Bill of Complaint), (Answer of John Brudenell).
[148] TNA STAC 8/11/23 (Bill of Complaint).
[149] TNA STAC 8/11/23 (Answer of John Brudenell).
[150] TNA STAC 8/11/23 (Bill of Complaint).

ensuring that his case was heard by the Court of Star Chamber, which dealt with incidents involving conspiracy.[151] The following reconstruction of events, using all three accounts, seems the most likely course of the evening's proceedings. All three men agree on attending the dinner at the home of Sir Robert Payne, and the conversation turning to the print dispute between Robert Persons and the Bishop of Lincoln.[152] Bellay likely answered Payne's questions about the book and made some criticism of it, major or minor.[153] Bedell then responded with a vitriolic defence of the Bishop of Lincoln and an equally vitriolic attack on Robert Persons and did indeed comment that none of Persons' "religion" were truly loyal to the monarchy.[154] Whether Bedell intended to or not, he offended Brudenell, who took the comment to refer to himself, and the two men got into a fight in which Bedell was injured.[155] Speculating on the exact nature of events beyond this sketch is largely unhelpful as it is impossible to know ultimately the exact chain of causality and the web of intentions.

So, why was Brudenell so enraged at Bedell's suggestion of Catholic disloyalty? The essence of Bedell's comment was that a Catholic could not be a truly loyal subject to the monarchy. This was so inflammatory because loyalty to the monarch had been placed at the centre of tensions between Catholics, Protestants and the English crown since the reign of Elizabeth I.[156] Missionary priests had been executed as traitors, rather than burned as heretics, on the grounds that they could not be both Catholic priests and loyal subjects to the queen, as famously argued by William Cecil in *The Execution of Justice*.[157] A royal proclamation issued in 1586 suggested that being a Catholic was synonymous with rebellion against the

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[151] Anne Hughes, "Religion and Society in Stratford Upon Avon 1619-1638", *Midland Society* 19, 1 (1994), 58-84, 61; Steve Hindle, *The State and Social Change in Early Modern England, c. 1550-1640 (*Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 78.

[152] TNA STAC 8/11/23 (Bill of Complaint), (Answer of Thomas Bellay), (Answer of John Brudenell).

[153] TNA STAC 8/11/23 (Answer of Thomas Bellay).

[154] TNA STAC 8/11/23 (Answer of John Brudenell).

[155] TNA STAC 8/11/23 (Bill of Complaint).

[156] Wallace MacCaffrey, *Elizabeth I* (London: Edward Arnold, 1993), 331.

[157] Cecil, *The execution of iustice,* 4.

monarchy, whilst also stating that Queen Elizabeth would not execute her subjects for religious differences alone.[158] Another in 1591 ordered that arrested recusants were not to be questioned about their religion, but on issues of loyalty: were they loyal to the queen or the Pope, did they maintain Jesuits or seminary priests, and would they support the queen in the event of Spanish invasion.[159] As pointed out earlier, during the Reformation, Protestantism became associated with patriotism, and the faith of any true English subject. Therefore, Catholicism became synonymous with foreignness, especially England's enemies, particularly Spain.[160] The memories of the fever pitch of anti-Catholic fear in the 1580s and 1590s may have been particularly sensitive for the attendants of the party because it is likely that they came to maturity during this period. Robert Payne was born in 1573, and the others were probably also middle aged. Brudenell, having been a recusant, may well have had strong memories of such suspicion. Therefore Bedell's comment that no Catholic could be a loyal English subject was the most incendiary anti-Catholic comment to make.

Although John Brudenell was the person who caused harm, he was not the only one responsible for the events which ruined what would have been an otherwise peaceful evening. John Bedell made the comment which apparently broke the fragile peace.[161] Such a confrontational comment which suggested that Catholics, not just in general but personally, could not be truly loyal, was a comment that was undoubtedly provocative and meant to inspire some reaction from Brudenell, if not the violent act which unfolded. As aforesaid, loyalty had been placed at the centre of the justification for Catholic persecution under the Elizabethan government and had recently been brought to the surface again by the conflict

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[158] Hughes and Larkin, *Tudor Royal Proclamations: Volume 2,* 519.
[159] Hughes and Larkin, *Tudor Royal Proclamations: Volume 3,* 95.
[160] Lake, "Anti-popery", 79.
[161] TNA STAC 8/11/23 (Answer of John Brudenell).

surrounding the Oath of Allegiance. This poses the question of what Bedell meant by making

such a comment.

Some historians who have studied inter-confessional occasions, including ones that

went wrong, have suggested that conversion may have been a possible motivation behind

such social events.[162] While this may have been a theoretical justification for contact with a

supposed heretic, it seems unlikely that this describes the dinner party at Midloe. This dinner

party in effect shows the diversity of Protestant approaches to Catholics in ordinary society,

in microcosm. Sir Robert Payne, as shown by his invitation to Brudenell, prioritised

communal harmony above religious dogma. Bellay also appears not to have been

dogmatically anti-Catholic; he engaged in the religious debate apparently in good faith and in

an intellectual rather than ideological way. Bedell on the other hand, perhaps on the godlier

end of the Protestant spectrum, clearly did not welcome Brudenell and went out of his way to

make Brudenell feel unwanted, even if he did not anticipate violence. His comment touched

upon one of the oldest anti-Catholic tropes, and his behaviour towards Brudenell suggests he

believed that Brudenell should be excluded from society on account of his religion.

Although John Brudenell reacted so violently partly because Bedell's comment

recalled one of the most dangerous anti-Catholic tropes, suggesting he was not a loyal subject

to the king also offended Brudenell's honour. Loyalty to the monarch was constructed into

the core of the chivalric ideal of honour from the medieval period onwards. This is because

the ultimate expression of honour was bearing arms in combat, as the Italian fencing master

Vincentio Saviolo mentioned in his training manuals, published in 1595, "Kings and Princes

haue nobilitated some with the name of Knights for their excellencie therein".[163] This meant

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[162] For example, see Walsham, "Supping with Satan's Disciples", 29; Peter Marshall, "Choosing sides and talking religion in Shakespeare's England" in *Shakespeare and Early Modern Religion,* eds. David Loewenstein and Michael Witmore (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 40-56, 45.
[163] Richard W. Kaeuper, *Medieval Chivalry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 156; Vincentio Saviolo, *Vincentio Sauiolo his practise* (London, 1595), 137.

that loyalty to the monarch was a key tenet of a man's personal honour into the early modern period, even as the opportunities for military disport diminished. One of the most influential guides to courtly behaviour, Thomas Hoby's translation of Baldassare Castiglione's 1528 work *Il libro del cortegiano,* rarely out of print from its publication in 1561 until 1612, condemned those who relied on their land and castles for their status and bore claims of disloyalty "without shame or care".[164] Questioning someone's loyalty to the monarch at a social occasion would therefore be a clear aspersion on their honour and as such constitute grounds for a duel.

Duelling had been imported into England as part of the Italian Renaissance in the early Tudor period, and its central purpose was to restore the honour of a gentleman whose said honour had been challenged or insulted by another.[165] However, it is clear that the struggle which ensued at the dinner was far from a gentrified duel, which would usually follow the structure of a challenge being issued: often this was made in a letter which clearly stated the grievance in question, which sometimes was published to avoid the receiver claiming ignorance.[166] The defendant, the offender who received the challenge, had the choice of weapon.[167] A time and place would be agreed for the duel to ensue, usually "twixt the rising and setting of the Sunne" on a given day and should either fail to arrive, the duel would be abandoned. The fact that Bedell's comment could be considered an affront to Brudenell's honour, does show that it could have been considered justification for violence, if in a more civilised form. Therefore, Brudenell's violent response was both a reaction to the appearance of a common anti-Catholic trope, and an affront to his honour as a gentleman.

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[164] Baldassarre Castiglione, *The courtyer of Count Baldessar Castilio* trans. Thomas Hoby (London, 1561), 266.

[165] Markku Peltonen, *The duel in early modern England: civility, politeness and honour* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 18, 44.

[166] Richard Cust and Andrew Hopper, "Duelling and the Court of Chivalry in Early Stuart England", in *Cultures of Violence: Interpersonal Violence in Historical Perspective,* ed. Stuart Carroll (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007)*,* 47-69, 48; Saviolo, *Vincentio Sauiolo his practise*, 188.

[167] Peltonen, *The duel in early modern England,* 61.

How anti-Catholic tropes and concepts of honour could overlap with more tragic consequences was demonstrated in the death of Thomas Morris. On 1 January 1607, Morris, a yeoman guard, had gone to a tavern in Aldersgate, London called the Half Moon, with some friends, including a man named Humphrey Lloyd. Lloyd was likely a church papist, a Catholic who attended church services to avoid recusancy fines, but still retained Catholic beliefs.[168] While the group were drinking in the tavern, the men began to discuss matters of religion, although the anonymous pamphlet from which the most detailed account of events comes, did not specifically state what issues were considered. However, the debate quickly became personal. Morris accused Lloyd of being a "dissembler", "neither hot nor cold" and if anything "best affected to Popery".[169] During the argument that followed, Morris threw wine in Lloyd's face, and Lloyd responded by hurling a bread roll at Morris. Initially the others present were able to calm this most acrimonious of food fights, but the two men quickly argued again, and left the tavern with threatening words to each other, Morris called Lloyd a "bald pate", and Lloyd retorted with the insult of "Cods-heade".[170] On Wednesday 7 January, the two men met again at Lincoln's Inn gate. Lloyd was accompanied by a mysterious gentleman; the only aspect noted about him was that he wore a white cloak. Morris was also with a friend, who witnessed a confrontation between the three men. Trying to mediate the situation, he clearly also knew Lloyd personally for he reminded both Lloyd and Morris that public confrontation would damage both their reputations. Lloyd claimed that he remained a good friend to Morris, to which Morris responded "wilt thou neuer lead thy dissembling? Dost thou pretend to loue me so deerely, and hast euen now sent mee challenge by this man?"[171] Lloyd answered that he would meet such a challenge anywhere, and the two men

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[168] Peter Lake and M. Questier, *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists and Players in Post-Reformation England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 97, 301.
[169] Anonymous, *A true report*: the text is mainly concerned with the trial of the seminary priest Robert Drury but includes a middle segment about Lloyd.
[170] Anonymous, *A true report,* 7.
[171] Anonymous, *A true report,* 8.

fought there and then. During the fight, Morris was mortally wounded, and died in the street. Lloyd was convicted of murder and executed soon after. At his trial, Lloyd abandoned his pretence of conformity and admitted his Catholic faith, and even received absolution from the condemned seminary priest, Robert Drury, in the courtroom.[172]

The fight which led to Morris' death, with the mention of a challenge, suggests it was a duel, if a less refined one. As it was Humphrey Lloyd who issued the challenge and initiated the duel, it is clear that Morris' insults clearly struck a nerve. The only insults included in the text were about religion; the metaphor of temperature was common amongst godly writers, which could suggest Morris was also on the godlier end of the Protestant spectrum. Being "lukewarm" or "neither hot nor cold", denoted a person devoid of true religious devotion, indifferent to God and doomed to eternal damnation.[173] Morris' use of the phrase "neither hot nor cold", a reference to the Book of Revelation, as well as calling Lloyd a papist, however truthfully, clearly proved at least partly sufficient to justify a duel, with terrible consequences.[174] The wider significance of this tragic series of events, is that it shows how anti-Catholic slurs could also be a matter of honour for Catholics, beyond a purely religious context, and could justify a violent response in some circumstances.

This is not the only example of conflict between a Protestant and a Catholic that involved issues of both honour and religion. In the town of Beverly in the East Riding of Yorkshire in 1635, a dispute over a game of bowls between a Catholic gentleman named Ralph Pudsey, and a Protestant aspiring gentleman named William Johnson, turned nasty when Johnson accused Pudsey of cheating and called him "a base cheating rascall, a base rascall, a base papisticall rascall". In some accounts, Johnson added that Pudsey "was not the

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[172] Anonymous, *A true report,* 9.
[173] Otto Cassman, *Vade mecum* (London, 1606), 134; Arthur Dent, *The opening of heauen gates* (London, 1610), 82; Richard Bernard, *Contemplative pictures with wholesome precepts* (London, 1610), 3.
[174] Revelation 3:15-17.

king's friend".[175] According to Johnson, Pudsey, and his friend Edward Nelthorpe, beat him

with a cudgel and a cane respectively. This case was eventually resolved by the Court of

Chivalry, and appears to have been primarily about social position: Pudsey was from an

established gentry family, whilst Johnson was not. Johnson was eventually required to

apologise for the insult, among other offences, perhaps most importantly pretending to be a

gentleman. This instance shows how easily anti-Catholic prejudice could appear the moment

a social relationship became strained, and could co-exist with other social tensions.

As much as Sir Robert Payne's dinner party shows how conflict could erupt amongst

the most genial of social occasions, such instances were the exception rather than the rule. A

more typical experience of dining with someone with whom a person had radically different

beliefs was recorded by Robert Woodford, a lawyer based in Northamptonshire, in December

1637.[176] Woodford, a convinced member of the godly, also had some business in the late

1630s with Sir Christopher Hatton, a future royalist, who supported the increasing

ceremonialism of the Church of England under Charles I and his Archbishop of Canterbury,

William Laud.[177] Woodford, well aware that he disagreed with his host, did not air his

grievances, until at least after the meal had been served, when he did discuss the issue of

bowing to altars, one of many Laudian changes to worship, with Hatton's chaplain, James

Longman. Even this exchange appeared, at least in Woodford's account, to have been

relatively civil.[178] Woodford justified his politeness through the fact that he was not

personally questioned on his beliefs.[179] This account is likely a much more common

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[175] Richard Cust and Andrew Hopper, "546 Pudsey v. Johnson", in *The Court of Chivalry 1634-1640,* eds. Richard Cust and Andrew Hopper (London: Harleian Society, 2006), 231-233, 232.

[176] John Fielding, "Opposition to the Personal Rule of Charles I: The Diary of Robert Woodford, 1637-1641", *The Historical Journal* 31, 4 (December 1988), 769-788, 776.

[177] Victor Slater, "Hatton, Christopher, first Baron Hatton (ba1605, d. 1670)", *ODNB,* published 23 September 2004, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/12606.

[178] Robert Woodford, *The diary of Robert Woodford, 1637-1641*, ed. John Fielding (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press for the Royal Historical Society, 2012), 136-7.

[179] *The diary of Robert Woodford*, 137.

experience of dining with those of different religious convictions, and Woodford's approach also shows how most avoided conflict: simply by not bringing up controversial topics. This shows that religious tensions were still present at more polite events, but by unspoken mutual agreement, most people perhaps chose to ignore points of religious difference in favour of maintaining harmony. This was probably partly because violent conflict could have severe consequences, from legal repercussions to social punishments such as loss of patronage. Therefore, what happened at Sir Robert Payne's dinner party made explicit the religious divisions implicit at most inter-confessional social occasions, and showed that all that stood between Robert Payne's dinner party and Christopher Hatton's was tact.

This intriguing case shows that the desire within small rural communities to maintain the bonds of polite society was in many ways more important than religious dogma. Sir Robert Payne showed a clear desire to keep the peace as he invited all the key members of the community to his home, regardless of their religious views. This desire for social cohesion is also illustrated on the Catholic side in the case as Brudenell, at least initially, seemed willing to allow insults to his religion to pass without comment. It also shows that there was a limit to tolerance; once the personal loyalty of John Brudenell was questioned, he reacted violently.[180] Of course, this particularly disastrous dinner party has only survived for posterity because of its violent outcome. This case illustrates the clear desire for peace and harmony in communities, but also that when religious differences were involved, such peace was fragile at best. The fact that the violence was generated by ill-judged and prejudiced comments illustrates that perhaps in most cases violence was avoided not through tolerance, but tact. Both tolerant and violent interactions grew out of the same social practices and rules of conduct that solidified the bonds of society, and could also break them.

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[180] TNA STAC 8/11/23 (Answer of John Brudenell).

**Divine Sanction: Providence and Violence, London, 1623**

This chapter has shown how the perception of state approval could justify popular violence against Catholics in some contexts. However, other examples suggest how violence could be legitimised by an even higher authority. At the French Ambassador's house in Blackfriars on Sunday 26 October 1623 a large group of Catholics had gathered to hear Mass, when the floor collapsed and many of the attendees, including the two Jesuit priests, were killed.[181] The coroner ruled that the accident was due to the collective weight of the gathered group being greater than the building's structure could withstand.[182] Unofficially however, many Protestants believed the disaster was the result of providence, a direct action of God, and the victims' deaths were divine punishment for their Catholic faith.[183] The key study of the impact of the accident, and the battle to dominate the narrative surrounding what became known as the "dolefull even-song" or more memorably the "Fatall Vesper", is Alexandra Walsham's 1994 article on the subject. This section will focus on an aspect of the immediate aftermath of the accident, which Walsham noted, but did not examine: violence against survivors. Despite efforts by some in the local area to rescue survivors and recover the remains of the dead, not all were inspired by the same sense of compassion.[184] As the survivors escaped from the wreckage, many who came to the scene of the accident threw stones and mud at them, whilst at least two may have been physically attacked. The Venetian ambassador reported that one young girl was almost killed after being rescued from the building's wreckage, and another woman was forced to flee to the home of a friend when a group of men tried to set her carriage on fire.[185] This section will assess these instances of

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[181] SP 14/153 f. 135 (Sec. Calvert to Sec. Conway); SP 14/153 f. 137 (Hen. Banister to Lord Zouch).

[182] Alexandra Walsham, "'The Fatall Vesper': Providentialism and Anti-Popery in Late Jacobean London", *Past & Present* 144, 1 (August 1994), 36-87, 39.

[183] For example, Matthew Rhodes, *Dismall Day, at the Black-Fryers. Or, A deplorable Elegie* (London, 1623), 1.

[184] W.C., *The Fatall Vesper* (London, 1623), 25-7.

[185] John Floyd, *A vvord of comfort* (London, 1623), 42-3; Allen B. Hinds, ed. *Calendar of State Papers Relating To English Affairs in the Archives of Venice, Volume 18, 1623-1625* (London: Originally published by His Majesty's

violence, and show how they were justified, both by the immediate political context, and the perception that the terrible accident was an act of God.

The first point of significance in understanding the shocking violence perpetrated against survivors of the accident at Blackfriars is that it happened at a time when anti-Catholicism, always in the background in Stuart England, had been amplified considerably by events in Spain. In October 1623, London was in a state of exultant celebration over the return of Prince Charles from his bungled attempt to negotiate a marriage with the Spanish Infanta.[186] The possibility of a match between Prince Charles, the eldest surviving son of King James I, and Infanta Maria, the sister of King Phillip IV of Spain, had been considered by both governments for at least ten years before the young prince's misguided effort to arrange the marriage himself by travelling to Spain in early 1623.[187] However, the match was deeply controversial and to say the general London population were pleased at its failure would be an understatement.[188] The festivities launched on the Prince's return were euphoric in nature, resembling an improvised carnival more than a traditional royal welcome.[189] One author described the celebrations as bordering on mass hysteria, describing the "vnlimitable & violent inundations of ioy" throughout London.[190] This was reiterated by John Taylor in his book on the topic, in which he described the extreme levels of elation and the jubilant celebrations in the capital such as bonfires, ringing of bells and revelry.[191]

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Stationery Office, 1912), 147; Albert J. Loomie, *Spain and the Jacobean Catholics, Volume II: 1613-1624* (London: Catholic Record Society, 1978), 160.

[186] John Southcote, "The Notebook of John Southcote, D.D., 1628-36", in *Miscellanea,* ed. John H. Pollen, 16 vols, vol 1 (London: Catholic Record Society, 1905), 99.

[187] Glyn Redworth, *The Prince and the Infanta: The Cultural Politics of the Spanish Match* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 1.

[188] P.G. Lake, "Constitutional Consensus and Puritan Opposition in the 1620s: Thomas Scott and the Spanish Match", *The Historical Journal* 25, 4 (December 1982), 805-825, 806.

[189] David Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1989), 101.

[190] Andres Almansa y Mendoza, *The ioyfull returne, of the most illustrious prince, Charles, Prince of great Brittaine* (London, 1623), 37-8.

[191] John Taylor, *Prince Charles his vvelcome from Spaine* (London, 1623), 4-6.

The joyful celebration of the return of the prodigal prince shows that the fear of Spanish Catholicism gaining influence in England was both widespread and a source of great anxiety, so the apparent defeat of Spanish influence unleashed a tremendous valve of jubilant carousing.[192] As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Catholicism was often portrayed as a foreign force, particularly associated with Spain, that was constantly scheming to conquer God's Protestant England.[193] This was exactly how the proposed match was portrayed by Protestant writers. In *Nevves from heaven* by John Reynolds, published a year after Charles' return in 1624, Reynolds portrayed the match as the culmination of a plot by monolithic Catholic Spain to conquer England.[194] The book consists of an imagined dialogue between Henry VIII and his three children in the afterlife. Three out of the four characters, Henry VIII, Edward VI and Elizabeth I, condemn the imperialistic Catholicism of Spain, which is defended by the apparition of Mary I, who had married a Spaniard, King Philip II.[195] At the end of the text, the late Queen Mary managed to send two letters from beyond the grave: one to Count Gondomar, the Spanish Ambassador, and one to the Catholics of England.[196] In both she urged the marriage as a way to circumvent the Protestant Church in England.[197] Another anonymous text published in 1624, which supposedly printed a petition presented to the king during Charles' stay in Spain, wrote that the Spaniards were leveraging their possession of Prince Charles' person to force James I to mandate his subjects to convert to Catholicism, as well as claiming that the match had enabled the Catholics of England to increase "both in multitude and boldnesse".[198] The match stoked up the old anxieties about Catholicism, and when it became clear that the marriage would not happen, such anxieties

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[192] Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells,* 104.
[193] Lake, "Anti-popery", 79.
[194] John Reynolds, *Nevves from heaven* (London, 1624), 1, 3.
[195] Reynolds, *Nevves from heaven*, for example, 5.
[196] Reynolds, *Nevves from heaven*, 56, 59.
[197] Reynolds, *Nevves from heaven*, 56-60.
[198] For example, see Anonymous, *A Second part of Spanish practises* (London, 1623), 1-2.

were released in a frenzy of joy in London.[199] These heightened emotions among many

Londoners, could have played a role in violence against survivors of the Blackfriars accident,

which, much like the failed marriage, provided evidence both of the continued presence of

Catholicism, and the sense that it had been defeated.

The other reason violence against survivors of the "Fatall Vesper" may have taken

place can be seen in how Protestants interpreted the terrible accident. A prime example is the

godly clergyman William Gouge's sermon on the terrible event.[200] As a clergyman in

Blackfriars, he claimed to have visited the scene of the accident not long after it took place,

although this does not seem to have imbued him with much empathy, as his sermon was

focused on arguing that the disaster was a direct intervention of God, punishing the attendants

at the Mass for their Catholic faith.[201] This was the dominant narrative of the accident

amongst Protestants.[202] This placed it in a long tradition of interpreting supposedly

providential events, in which God was believed to have directly intervened, as lessons or

examples of both ideal and reprehensible Christian behaviour and their consequences, for

Christians to learn from.[203] With this in mind, the accident appeared to be a direct act of God

to punish the Catholic victims, and by extension, to teach all other Catholics to change their

ways or suffer the consequences.

This was accompanied by a popular framing of the crisis as the latest in a series of

providential deliverances from Catholic attack.[204] Perhaps the most visceral example can be

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[199] Thomas Cogswell, "England and the Spanish Match", in *Conflict in Early Stuart England,* eds. Richard Cust and Anne Hughes (London: Longman, 1989), 107-133, 112-3.

[200] William Gouge, *The Extent of Gods Providence*, bound with *Gods Three Arrowes: Plague, Famine, Sword, in Three Treatises* (London, 1631), 393-401; Brett Usher, "Gouge, William (1575–1653)", *ODNB,* last modified 3 January 2008, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/11133.

[201] Gouge, *The Extent of Gods Providence,* 400.

[202] Walsham, "The Fatall Vesper", 39-42.

[203] Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 118-122.

[204] Walsham, "The Fatall Vesper", 39-42.

seen in a series of engraved images, which Alexandra Walsham examined in her article.[205] The image of the accident was entitled *No Plot, No Powder,* and was a grotesque image of the accident, portraying it both as an act of God and accompanying it with two complimentary engravings of the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, and the Spanish Armada of 1588.[206] This shows how the accident was also seen as a providential deliverance, and a sign of God's disfavour toward Catholics. The triptych of the Vesper, the Gunpowder Plot and the Spanish Armada became an extremely popular series of prints.[207] The accident at Blackfriars was also interpreted as the latest in a series of divine interventions to save Protestant England from destruction.[208] As Protestants interpreted the accident as a direct act of God intended to punish Catholics, the appalling brutality of the accident was the work of God as well. This could have been interpreted as a divine sanction to commit further violence against the victims.

There is a possibility that the violence was in some way an extension of the intense celebrations that accompanied Prince Charles' return. As aforementioned, the celebrations in London that Charles had returned without a Spanish bride were intense and feverish. The carnage of the accident created a similar atmosphere of frenzy with a much more horrific tone, and whilst some witnesses were moved by compassion, clearly not everyone was. London streets could be a volatile and dangerous environment even in more peaceful times, and violence was a constant threat. Just how dangerous London streets could be for controversial figures was exemplified by the murder of John Lambe, physician to the hated George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, by an angry crowd in Old Jewry on 13 June 1628.[209]

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[205] Walsham, "The Fatall Vesper", 65.
[206] Walsham, "The Fatall Vesper", 37.
[207] Walsham, "The Fatall Vesper", 68.
[208] Wiener, "The Beleaguered Isle", 90.
[209] Alastair Bellany, "The Murder of John Lambe: Crowd Violence, Court Scandal and Popular Politics in Early Seventeenth-Century England", *Past & Present* 200, 1 (August 2008), 37-76.

The throwing of mud and refuse was something common at executions, another occasion which often generated a bizarre and brutal atmosphere. The attempt to set a carriage on fire, which this section will return to, also contains echoes of the bonfires lit in celebration of Charles' return just a few weeks earlier. David Cressy has suggested that that the unusually excessive lighting of bonfires in the public celebrations was intended to cleanse or release the city of the fear and anxiety caused by the crisis.[210] The return of the prodigal prince functioned like a rebirth for the city; there was an elemental sense of relief.[211] Whilst this evidence is not enough to give a definitive answer, the similarities do suggest both that the emotional atmosphere in the capital compounded how some people reacted to the disaster, and that some regarded such Catholic misfortune as something to be celebrated.

As any violence that could have been perpetrated at the scene of the accident would have been entirely spontaneous, there is little symbolic value in analysing the form such violence took, as those involved probably used whatever was immediately available. The throwing of stones was mentioned in some accounts, which probably owes at least as much to convenience as the symbolism of stoning. Perhaps of more value is the allegation that mud and refuse were thrown at some survivors. Whilst this was also an attack made possible by such materials being readily available, this form of violence was known in other contexts, most notably public executions. For example, the Jesuit Stephen Rowsam was bombarded with excrement on his way to execution in 1587.[212] These attacks were meant to show the victim was as filthy or polluted themselves as the materials thrown at them, which would be in keeping with how Catholicism was often considered: as a contaminated, corrupting anti-religion.[213] Writer Thomas Clarke devoted fifteen pages in his 1621 work *The Popes deadly*

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[210] Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells,* 104-5.
[211] Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells,* 104.
[212] John H. Pollen, ed., *Acts of the English Martyrs hitherto unpublished* (London: Burns and Oates, 1891), 332.
[213] Davis, "Rites of Violence", 83; Lake, "Anti-Popery", 75.

*wound* to describe Catholic Rome and its Church in this very way, calling it, among other things, "the corporall habitation of foule diuells", "the Mother of whoredomes" and a producer of "abomination and filthinesse".[214]

Alongside more generalised violence, in some accounts there were mentions of specific acts against two female survivors. One was a young girl, whose attack was reported by the Venetian ambassador, who was described as having been pulled from the wreckage of the building, only to be attacked by a gang who left her almost dead.[215] The other attack reported involved an older woman of probable gentry background, who also survived the collapse of the building, but had to flee when a group of men tried to set her carriage alight while it was having a wheel fixed.[216] Again, both instances of violence were spontaneous, so any symbolic associations must be made with care. The most obvious association has been highlighted in Chapter One: death by burning was the traditional execution for heretics under both Catholic and Protestant governments. Whilst in one sense Catholicism was regarded as heresy in Protestant England, Catholics, when they were executed, were usually subjected to execution methods associated with either common criminals or traitors. Therefore, this instance would not have been directly imitating state violence. Fire also has a subtext of cleansing; it is possible that this attempt was a way to cleanse the city of Catholicism, but this is unclear. Instead, it seems most likely that this attempt at burning a carriage was an impulsive act aimed to hurt or frighten a Catholic gentlewoman, implicitly justified by the much greater violence of the accident.

Whilst both these instances could have been invented, exaggerated or emphasised to highlight the inhuman cruelty of the Protestant crowd, they also suggest how anti-Catholic prejudice could overlap with other prejudices to justify violence, in this case, misogyny. It is

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[214] Thomas Clarke, *The Popes deadly wound tending to resolue all men* (London, 1621), 40-55.
[215] Hinds, *CSPV, Volume 18* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office 1912), 147.
[216] Loomie, *Spain and the Jacobean Catholics,* 160.

already established that Protestant writers cast Catholicism as half of a moral binary, with Protestant England as the true religion, and Catholicism as an evil anti-religion. This also meant a gendered angle could appear. If English Protestantism was the good, rational, male religion, then Catholicism was a superstitious, irrational, and therefore female, belief system.[217] The aforementioned intensely anti-Catholic text *The Popes deadly wound* explicitly associated the Roman Church with female corruption.[218] The passionately anti-Catholic clergyman Alexander Cooke tried to discredit the Catholic Church by claiming there had once been a female pope, and dedicated a book to this topic, published in 1610.[219] The crisis surrounding the Spanish Match had also seen in the Infanta, as prospective bride for the next king, a Catholic agent, a woman who would usher Catholicism back into power in England. For example, in the fictional letter to the Spanish Ambassador aforementioned in *Nevves from heaven*, Queen Mary argued that the Infanta would make it possible for Catholicism to return to England after her marriage to Prince Charles.[220] Most authors were not so explicitly disrespectful about the Infanta herself, perhaps out of respect for her position, but the fear that she would be a Catholic Trojan horse was pervasive.

The terrible accident that occurred at the French Ambassador's house in Blackfriars on Sunday 26 October 1623, appeared to Protestants to be a providential act of God, intended to punish those Catholics present. This perception legitimised some witnesses to continue the

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[217] Frances E. Dolan, *Whores of Babylon: Catholicism, Gender and Seventeenth-Century Print Culture* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), 54; Helen Parish, "'Beastly is Their Living and their Doctrine': Celibacy and Theological Corruption in English Reformation Polemic", in *Protestant History and Identity in Sixteenth-Century Europe*, ed. Bruce Gordon (Aldershot: Scolar, 1996), 138–152, 145.

[218] Clarke, *The Popes deadly wound*, 42.

[219] Alexander Cooke, *Pope Ioane A dialogue betvveene a protestant and a papist. Manifestly prouing, that a woman called Ioane was Pope of Rome* (London, 1610); Thomas S. Freeman, "Joan of Contention: The Myth of the Female Pope in Early Modern England", in *Religious Politics in Post-Reformation England,* eds. Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2006), 60-79; William J. Sheils, "Cooke, Alexander (ba1564, d. 1632)", *ODNB,* published 23 September 2004, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/6154: Cooke's anti-Catholicism was so well-known and respected in clerical circles that he was encouraged to publish texts condemning Catholicism by Tobie Matthew, Archbishop of York.

[220] Reynolds, *Nevves from heaven*, 56-60.

violence and attack survivors themselves. It occurred at a time when England in general, and Londoners in particular, were in a state of euphoric relief at the failure of the Spanish Match, which had greatly intensified popular anti-Catholic prejudice. The accident, which followed hard on the heels of Prince Charles' return from Spain, and the intense public celebrations which accompanied it, appeared to be another sign of England's deliverance from Catholicism, a sign of Protestantism's triumph. That some more extreme violence also may have been directed against women, also suggests that anti-Catholicism could overlap with other prejudices, such as misogyny, and this could also exacerbate popular violence. Overall, this case suggests the wider possibility that perceived acts of providence could legitimise acts of popular violence. If God had performed such violence to punish Catholics for their wrongful faith, some believed divine permission had been given to participate in it themselves.

**An Unjust War: The Murder of Compton Evers, Somerset, 1640**

On 12 July 1640, a company of 160 soldiers from Devon, under the command of Edward, Viscount Conway, Colonel Thomas Culpepper and Lieutenant Colonel Richard Gibson, were resting from their march in the Somerset town of Wellington.[221] They had been newly recruited via impressment to fight in the Second Bishops' War, which had erupted in June 1640 when the Scottish Parliament decreed that it would not have bishops in the Scottish Kirk. However, King Charles I, having acceded to the throne in 1625, was convinced of the necessity of episcopacy in all of his kingdoms and declared war.[222] The war followed hard on the heels of the First Bishops' War, which had erupted over episcopacy and Charles'

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[221] SP 16/460 f. 129 (The Deputy-Lieutenants of Devon to the Lord Lieutenants Francis Earl of Bedford and William Lord Russell).

[222] Stanley D.M. Carpenter, *Military Leadership in the British Civil Wars, 1642-1651* (London: Frank Cass, 2005), 33.

disastrous attempts to introduce a new prayer book in Scotland.[223] That Sunday many of the soldiers attended a service, probably in the Wellington church of St John the Baptist.[224] Some of them noted the absence of one of their Lieutenants, Compton Evers.[225] His absence seems to have confirmed their suspicions that he was not a god-fearing Protestant as they were, but a Catholic.[226] In the evening, a number of the soldiers went to the inn where the Lieutenant was staying and confronted him in his chamber.[227] None of the men reported the nature of the conversation, but whatever was said, the answers Evers gave did not satisfy their suspicions, as the unfortunate Lieutenant was dragged from his lodgings and savagely beaten to death in the street by a mob of his own soldiers.[228] He tried to call for aid, but the town's officials were unable to help him, although they did later identify the perpetrators.[229] Following the murder all 160 of the soldiers mutinied and left the town to return to Devon, from where the majority originated.[230] The murder has been noted by historians for over 200 years, and this section will examine the murder in detail to understand how it was legitimised by a wider suspicion that Catholics were subverting the course of the Bishops' Wars for their own gain, and by the disordered state of the army in 1640.[231]

The ringleaders of the murder were Hannibal Founceford, Robert Carpenter, Henry Vaughn and John Knowle, all of whom, alongside some other soldiers, gave depositions after

[223] Mark Stoyle, *Soldiers and Strangers: An Ethnic History of the English Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 3.
[224] John Rushworth, *Historical Collections Of Private Passages of State* (London: Printed for D. Browne, J. Walthoe, J. Knapton, R. Knaplock, S. Buckley…etc, 1721), 1247.
[225] SP 16/460 f. 10 (Lieutenant Colonel Gibson to Edward Viscount Conway).
[226] SP 16/460 f. 10 (Lieutenant Colonel Gibson to Edward Viscount Conway).
[227] SP 16/460 f. 129 (The Deputy-Lieutenants of Devon to the Lords Lieutenants Francis Earl of Bedford and William Lord Russell).
[228] SP 16/460 f. 137 (Edmund Rossingham to Edward Viscount Conway).
[229] SP 16/460 f. 10 (Lieutenant Colonel Gibson to Edward Viscount Conway).
[230] SP 16/464 f. 123 (The Deputy-Lieutenants of Devon to the Council).
[231] Thomas Carte, *A general history of England*, 4 vols, vol 4 (London: Printed for the author, 1785), 285; Peter Bayne, *The Chief Actors in the Puritan Revolution* (London: James Clarke, 1878), 187.

they were arrested.[232] At least twenty-four soldiers appear to have been involved in some capacity, as when the Deputy Lieutenants attempted to arrest four of the culprits, they reported to Lieutenant Colonel Gibson that twenty other men came forward claiming to be equally guilty.[233] In their depositions the soldiers told much the same narrative; they related being formally impressed at Tiverton in Devon and the march of around twenty miles to Wellington. However, their accounts of the murder itself are more imprecise. Founceford confessed he had been in the Lieutenant's chamber but, rather unconvincingly, denied any role in the murder or that the gold found on his person when he was arrested was stolen from the Lieutenant. Carpenter was more candid about his theft from the Lieutenant, but like Founceford he claimed to only be a witness to the murder itself.[234]

Soldiers Edward Clarke and William Tonte claimed not to know the details of the murder and only saw Evers afterwards when his body was taken to a local inn, although Tonte said that he believed the soldiers had beaten Evers to death. His probable relative, John Tonte, deposed that he witnessed the Lieutenant being dragged from his lodgings into the street, and mentioned Founceford being present, alongside another soldier named Richard Sinclair. Another potential member of the family, Toby Tonte, also denied any involvement, and claimed to have been locked in his lodgings on the fateful Sunday. Soldier John Moore told a rather implausible tale that he had climbed onto the roof of the building where Evers was lodging and witnessed the conversation between him and three other soldiers, two of whom he named as Hannibal Founceford and Richard Sinclair. He was also one of the few soldiers to describe the murder whilst denying any culpability. William Shaprott claimed he only saw a mob of soldiers gathered around the Lieutenant. Thomas Clarke gave a more

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[232] SP 16/463 f. 277 (Examinations of soldiers and others taken before Sir Lewis Pollard, Bart., relative to the mutiny of the impressed soldiers at Wellington, in co. Somerset, and the murder of Lieutenant Compton …)
[233] John Burough, *Notes of the Treaty Carried on at Ripon Between King Charles I and the Covenanters of Scotland* (London: Printed for the Camden Society, 1869), 20.
[234] SP 16/463 f. 277 (Examinations).

detailed account of the murder, claiming that he saw Evers being beaten with the soldiers'

swords. Another more detailed deposition was that of Henry Vaughn who admitted to having

struck the Lieutenant, and also offered an explanation as to Moore's strange story, as he

named Moore as one of the murderers. The account of John Knowle corroborates Vaughn's

deposition; he mentioned John Moore as one of Evers' killers, but claimed that he himself

had only stolen from the corpse.[235]

Compton Evers, like many victims in this thesis, remains a shadowy figure to this

day; the best documented aspect of his life is his terrible death. No details of his military

career have been found by historians of the Second Bishops' War. However, Mark Stoyle

described him as a young man and as Lieutenant was the most junior rank for an officer in the

English army, he could have been relatively new to military service.[236] What can also be

deduced from his military rank is that it is likely he came from a reasonably wealthy family,

as men from a gentry background dominated those given commissions, rather than those with

much military experience.[237] Whilst the majority of his life remains elusive, there seems little

doubt over the principal motive for his murder, as the letters written by Evers' superiors

show.[238] The Deputy Lieutenants of Devon wrote to Gibson that the murderers "suspected

him [Evers] to be a Papist".[239] Gibson himself wrote to Viscount Conway that the soldiers

"murdered him for his religion".[240] None of the writers, who were Evers' superiors in the

army, questioned the conclusion of the soldiers about Evers' religion, suggesting that he was

indeed a Catholic, or at least they believed him to be so. Also, when he was murdered, he was

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[235] SP 16/463 f. 277 (Examinations).
[236] SP 16/463 f. 277 (Examinations).
[237] Martyn Bennett, "The Officer Corps and Army Command in the British Isles, 1620-1660", in *The chivalric ethos and the development of military professionalism,* ed. David B.J. Trim (Boston: Brill, 2003), 219-317, 297.
[238] Adrian Tinniswood, *The Verneys: Love, War and Madness in Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2007), 130.
[239] SP 16/460 f. 129 (The Deputy-Lieutenants of Devon to the Lords Lieutenants Francis Earl of Bedford and William Lord Russell).
[240] SP 16/460 f. 10 (Lieutenant Colonel Gibson to Edward Viscount Conway).

revealed to be wearing a crucifix, another suggestion of Catholic belief.[241] While his non-attendance at church does not constitute direct evidence of Catholicism, it was evidently damning to at least some of his contemporaries.

An insight into how the soldiers perceived Evers' Catholicism, and specifically why they saw it as something worth killing him over, can be seen in how other mutinous soldiers interacted with their officers. This was not the only example of ordinary soldiers accusing their officers of being Catholics, even if most of the time this did not result in violence. Lieutenant Colonel Gibson reported that a company recruited from Berkshire and Oxfordshire refused to continue to march under their current commanders, as they were afraid that they were to be led by "Papists" and that they did not want to "fight against the Gospel".[242] On 14 July 1640, Sir Nicholas Byron reported that between 500 and 600 soldiers from the regiment of Sir Jacob Astley mutinied for the very same reasons.[243] On 19 July Francis Windebank wrote to his father, the Secretary of State, how he had to win the confidence of his new recruits with the regular reading of Psalms and prayers after "divers of them swore desperately they would soon despatch us if they found we were Papists".[244] The very next day Sir Nicholas Byron wrote to Edward, Viscount Conway, that some new recruits had refused to travel to battle by sea because they feared half their commanders were Catholics.[245] Perhaps the most instructive example took place a few weeks after the murder on 24 July 1640, described in a letter from Captain William Lower to Secretary Windebank after his company had disbanded due to mutinous troops. He described how his company encountered the troops of two of his officers who had already mutinied, and reported the

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[241] SP 16/463 f. 277 (Examinations).
[242] SP 16/460 f. 11 (Relation of Sir Nicholas Byron).
[243] William D. Hamilton, ed., *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Charles I, 1640* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1880), 476.
[244] Hamilton, *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: 1640,* 492.
[245] Hamilton, *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: 1640,* 493.

following about what they said to the soldiers in Lower's company: "They told my men that they were to be shipped and sold for slaves, that the officers had false commissions, that the King gave them no authority, that they would be used like dogs, that all was peace in Scotland, and it was only a pretence to carry them elsewhere, that we all, and my Lord General himself, were Papists."[246]

The specifics of the rumour mentioned by Lower are indicative as to the nature of the fears surrounding Catholic officers. Firstly, the rumour that triggered the mutiny Lower reported, was that the leading officers were all Catholics. Such officers were not regarded as legitimate: the king would not have given such men commissions in the army, which meant their men had no obligation to obey them. The final aspect concerns the war with Scotland, or perhaps the lack thereof. This rumour portrayed the war with Scotland as a hoax, intended to remove men of military age out of the country. In short, the men who repeated these rumours believed their officers were not impressing them to fight a war to protect the country, but were luring them into forced labour abroad and leaving their country vulnerable to invasion, so they had no choice but to mutiny. Of course, in one sense the soldiers involved were using these claims to justify their mutiny, but they also offer an insight into why Compton Evers' men were so disconcerted by his Catholic faith. They saw a Catholic officer as only pretending to be an officer, who could not be trusted to lead them into a righteous war. Instead he was guiding them away from their country, as part of a vast Catholic conspiracy to render England defenceless. Indeed, not only were they trying to weaken England's defences, but they would also betray their own soldiers, and sell them into slavery abroad. The soldiers finally threatened to beat Lower to death if he tried to persuade them to continue their service. The threat made against Lower mirrors the details of the death of Compton Evers, which suggests that the soldiers had heard about the murder and were perhaps trying to use it

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[246] Hamilton, *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: 1640,* 509.

to threaten their officers into submission. It also highlights that a Catholic man, pretending to be an officer, in order to mislead his men and to undermine England's national security, was a traitor, the punishment for which was death. Compton Evers' men saw him as a traitor and killed him. Lower's men used the murder to suggest that they would do the same to him, if he did not allow them to leave military service.

The reason behind all this paranoia and violence was the conviction that the war with Scotland was illegitimate. Only King Charles I, and some of his advisors, had ever been convinced that the war should be fought at all, meaning most ordinary soldiers were doubtful that the Scottish covenanters were the enemy.[247] The majority of English Protestants probably felt the same as George Stevenson, a servant who lived in Berwick-upon-Tweed, who believed the Presbyterian Scots were the allies of English Protestants in religion, and the Catholics at home were the true enemy.[248] A political satire which came to the attention of the government in September 1640 cast the war as just the latest in a long list of attempts by the Pope, the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud, and the Queen, Henrietta Maria, to force Catholic belief into England. The pamphlet listed several of King Charles' other political missteps, such as the ship money debacle, and claimed the war with Scotland was essentially because they refused to accept the Catholic Mass. It also claimed that in the royal army, "the captains and lieutenants must be all Papists" because only they would want to fight such a war.[249] This encapsulates all the anxieties seen in the soldiers, albeit in a more measured form: the war was not legitimate, in fact it was part of a Catholic conspiracy, spearheaded by powerful Catholics at court and abroad, and the officers were all Catholics. This was a common theme in literature which opposed the war; a Scottish broadside lamented

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[247] Mark C. Fissel, *English Warfare, 1511-1642* (London: Routledge, 2001), 274.
[248] SP 16/463 f. 277 (Examinations).
[249] William D. Hamilton ed., *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Charles I, 1640-1,* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1882), 126-127.

that the "wicked counsels of Papists, Prelats and other fire-brands" held more influence than the loyal Presbyterian Scots.[250] A particularly vociferous example of this was Robert Baillie's 1640 book *Ladensium autokatakrisis.* Effectively an extended hit-piece against William Laud, Baillie claimed the crypto-Catholic Laud wanted to return Scotland to the rule of Rome, and the war was unjust for this reason.[251] During the war itself, a preacher asked to give a sermon to some soldiers, as reported by Francis Read, actually praised the Scots instead of supporting the war, and may even have suggested that many leading officers were in fact Catholics as Read remarked that "It would be an excellent example to stop some such mouths, for the people being persuaded or of opinion that their leaders and service were Popish has done his Majesty more disservice than any one thing, and thence have proceeded those barbarous murders, that rebellious denial of service, and that felonious running away from their officers, whereby this expedition has been so much retarded".[252]

These texts encapsulate the tensions at the heart of opposition to the English war with Scotland; on the one hand many Protestants saw the changes to worship under Laud to be perilously close to Catholicism.[253] These same Protestants felt greater affinity for the Presbyterian Scots and were reluctant to fight for a religious policy for which they had little sympathy, against one they saw as having much greater scriptural merit. With this in mind, the war appeared to some to be a Catholic conspiracy, intended both to weaken England and undermine Scotland's Protestant government. Whilst little blame for the war, or the religious direction of the country, was aimed at King Charles openly, it was a widely-held belief that he was surrounded by manipulative Catholics: overtly, in the form of his queen, Henrietta Maria, and covertly, in the form of Archbishop William Laud, regardless of the fact that Laud

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[250] Anonymous, *Information from the Scottish nation, to all the true English, concerning the present expedition* (Edinburgh, 1640).
[251] Robert Baillie, *Ladensium autokatakrisis, the Canterburians self-conviction* (Amsterdam, 1640), 5.
[252] Hamilton ed., *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: 1640,* 492-493.
[253] The nuances of this will be examined in Chapter Four.

was not a Catholic in actuality.[254] The myth of the evil counsellor had long been a tool to criticise a regime's direction and decisions, so both Laud and the queen were essentially figureheads at which Protestants could direct all their hatred of Catholics, and their suspicion of the regime's resolve or ability to maintain the Protestant religion either in England or Scotland. Therefore, the apparently small matter of a Catholic officer like Compton Evers leading a regiment represented only the tip of a much bigger iceberg of fear about the Bishops' War. His presence could have added weight to suspicions among his new recruits about the legitimacy either of his position, or the war itself. After all, according to the popular press and the rumours spread amongst soldiers, a Catholic officer was either pretending to be an officer leading them to slavery abroad, or leading them to fight for a crypto-Catholic Church against a righteous Protestant one. Either of these cast Evers as a traitor, leading them into either betraying their country, their religion or both. By violently obliterating him from their ranks, the soldiers who murdered Compton Evers were showing he had no right to their loyalty, that he was a traitor to his country, and they had no desire to follow him into an unjust war.

Another important aspect of the context which allowed the murder to happen, aside from the polarised religious environment, was the state of the army in 1640, which could be viewed as one predisposed to mutiny. The method by which the men involved in the murder were recruited, impressment, would neither have engendered goodwill between the officers and the new soldiers, nor ensured the quality of the new recruits.[255] Impressment was a system in which men were effectively forced into military service, although it had a number of loopholes by which it could be avoided, which often resulted in the poor and unfortunate

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[254] Michelle A. White, *Henrietta Maria and the English Civil Wars* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 97; Wallington, *The Notebooks of Nehemiah Wallington*, 115.

[255] Ian Gentles, *The New Model Army in England, Ireland and Scotland, 1645-1653* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 32.

forming much of the new companies.[256] Another practice was that of giving convicts a choice between military service or their lawful sentence, meaning that many criminals were recruited into the new companies in the king's army.[257] Impressment was hardly the best way to recruit suitable troops; in fact, early in Charles' reign, his impressed troops were remarked upon for their disorder.[258] The forces Conway raised throughout the Second Bishops' War were considered, both by contemporaries and historians, to have been particularly unmotivated to fight and untrained to do so.[259] However, impressment was the only way to ensure an army of reasonable size within a relatively short space of time.[260] Therefore, the men involved in the murder were likely to have been both ill-disciplined and ill-disposed towards their superiors.[261]

The extreme disorder and ill-discipline of the royal army can also be seen in the fact that Compton Evers was not the only officer to fall foul of his men during the Bishops' Wars, as is shown by the murder in June 1640 of Lieutenant William Mohun. Lieutenant Mohun was stationed in Faringdon, Berkshire in June 1640, and was said to be of harsh character. His men had evidently tired of him, as when a rumour circulated that he had killed a young drummer, they viciously pursued him and two other officers through the town and killed him. However, the reports of Mohun's death, unlike those of Compton Evers, are written in less emotive terms, suggesting the writers did not find Mohun's death as disturbing.[262] This may be because, at least in theory, officers were supposed to maintain a standard of behaviour

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[256] Mark C. Fissel, *The Bishops' Wars: Charles I's campaigns against Scotland, 1638-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 215.

[257] Geoffrey Parker, *The Military Revolution: Military innovation and the rise of the West, 1500-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 49.

[258] Stephen J. Stearns, "Military Disorder and Martial Law", in *Law and Authority in Early Modern England: Essays presented to Thomas Garden Barnes,* eds. Buchanan Sharpe and Mark C. Fissel (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2007), 106-135, 107.

[259] Charles Carlton, *Going to the Wars: The Experience of the British Civil Wars, 1638-1651* (London: Routledge, 1992), 26.

[260] Stearns, "Military Disorder", 107.

[261] Fissel, *The Bishops' Wars,* 222-225.

[262] SP 16/457 f. 244 (Edmund Rossingham to Edward Viscount Conway).

towards their men, being neither overly familiar nor severe. Mohun clearly transgressed these codes of honourable behaviour, even if he had not committed the crime which incited his murder.[263] This does not mean that the higher ranks of the army did not take the murder of Mohun seriously, as they did hang two of the perpetrators.[264] Whilst religion seems to have had less to do with the murder of Mohun, it does show the high levels of disorder within the army in 1640, the lack of proper discipline and the mistrust that some soldiers evidently had towards the officer class in the king's army, justified as it was in some cases.

Another letter highlights an additional motive behind the murder aside from religion: money. Edmund Rossingham wrote to Viscount Conway after the murder, that the men had intended to steal the king's gold.[265] In their depositions, a number of the culprits admitted to stealing from the Lieutenant's corpse; Robert Carpenter admitted stealing a piece of silver and some bullets from the Lieutenant, whilst John Knowle admitted he had taken one of the Lieutenant's pockets after his death.[266] The soldiers had not been paid at the time of the murder and it is likely that this also contributed to their discontent, especially given their enforced recruitment.[267] This forced labour for little money may also be behind the accusations of enslavement mentioned earlier. Pay, or rather the lack thereof, was an issue acknowledged by the military elite to be extremely dangerous to morale and discipline.[268] Therefore, the religious prejudice of the new recruits and their doubts about the righteousness of the war was clearly aggravated by their enforced recruitment, and the lack of sufficient wages.

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[263] Barbara Donagan, *War in England, 1642-1649* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 225.
[264] SP 16/460 f. 137 (Edmund Rossingham to Edward Viscount Conway).
[265] SP 16/460 f. 137 (Edmund Rossingham to Edward Viscount Conway).
[266] SP 16/463 f. 277 (Examinations).
[267] SP 16/460 f. 106 (Sir Jacob Astley to Edward Viscount Conway).
[268] Roger B. Manning, *Swordsmen: The Martial Ethos in the Three Kingdoms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 37.

The murder of Compton Evers was justified through his Catholic faith, and enabled by the chaotic state of the army in 1640. However, the details of his murder do reveal something else about the motivations of the killers and the justifications behind it. Evers was beaten and stabbed to death, with his own sword being used in the fatal assault.[269] While this must have been a brutal attack, the circumstances also suggest that the attackers used weapons available rather than planned the attack with much deliberate symbolism. However, the public nature of the murder does suggest the perpetrators did see their act as one of justice. As has been established, the performance of justice in early modern England was inherently public, so this choice is significant. The rumours which overran the royal army about Catholic officers, that they were facilitating an invasion, overlapped with the justifications given for the intense persecution of seminary priests and Jesuits. The doubts about the war, which portrayed it as a subversive attempt to undermine Protestantism in England and Scotland, could also legitimise killing in its defence. That these people were also executed for their alleged crimes could also have legitimised killing suspected Catholic traitors in other contexts. Whatever the reality, the direct circumstances of the murder continue the finding that Compton Evers was murdered because of his Catholic faith, which rendered him a traitor in the eyes of his men, predisposed as they were to mutiny.

The murder of Compton Evers, and the many other acts of violence committed by soldiers in the royal army in 1640 against their own men, were the result of a confluence of factors produced by the war with Scotland in 1640. The war fuelled religious tensions; many felt that the fellow Protestant country of Scotland was not the true enemy of England. Some saw it as an insidious Catholic plot to weaken England's military might, and undermine the Presbyterian Kirk in Scotland. For many soldiers, the presence of a Catholic officer confirmed all these fears and the murder was seen as an act of justice by the perpetrators: the

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[269] SP 16/457 f. 244 (Edmund Rossingham to Edward Viscount Conway).

rightful death of a man who had betrayed his country. Catholicism had long been portrayed as a foreign religion, and in the context of a polarising religious war, this made Evers a traitor, either leading his men into enslavement or the wrong war. This suspicion of the officer class was compounded by the disordered state of the royal army; many soldiers were recruited by force and may have had criminal backgrounds, making them less than ideal soldiers. To make matters worse, they were not paid sufficient wages. The murder of Evers, a junior Catholic officer, barely known to his men, was facilitated by these factors. The circumstances of his murder show that it was seen as an act of justice, in defence of their country and religion.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has examined examples of conflict between Catholics and Protestants in post-Reformation England to show how anti-Catholic violence existed alongside popular toleration in a symbiotic relationship. It has shown how instances of violence often highlighted some of the ways in which Catholics and Protestants were able to co-exist, as well as causes of conflict. Many of the examples took place during times of heightened religious tension, often due to political context, which suggests in more tranquil circumstances, Catholics and Protestants felt more comfortable with ignoring religious differences in favour of maintaining social harmony. It is also notable that many of the victims and perpetrators in this chapter were strangers to one another. This suggests that many in early modern England found it much easier to project their anti-Catholicism onto strangers, especially those most demonised in the wider culture, such as seminary priests or Catholic women. The range of interactions and the forms of violence that characterised this chapter also show how anti-Catholicism became a part of ordinary life in early modern England and could erupt in all manner of ways, dependent on circumstances. It was this ever-simmering religious tension in the background, which only required the right spark to explode into violence, that defined England's "cold" experience of religious conflict.

A major finding of this chapter is the centrality of the government's narrative about Catholics. This chapter has shown that the Elizabethan and Jacobean governments justified their extreme persecution of particular Catholic factions by claiming they were not true subjects of the English monarchy, but were traitors, seeking to undermine the monarchy by bolstering Catholic resistance, and encouraging foreign invasion. The success of this narrative, at least among Protestants, is evidenced by the fact that many of the acts of violence in this chapter were shaped by such perceptions. It was used to justify the violence directed at seminary priests such as George Nichols and Richard Yaxley. The aspersion of Catholic disloyalty was the cause of violence at Sir Robert Payne's dinner party. Fears about a Catholic invasion by stealth may well have played a role in the violence against the survivors of the "Fatall Vesper". The fear that Catholic officers were misleading their soldiers as part of a wider conspiracy partly justified the murder of Compton Evers. This shows that the government was immensely successful at convincing their Protestant subjects that Catholicism was a foreign religion, which transformed its followers into subversive rebels, bent on destroying the Protestant government, even if this did not always translate into violence.

The ultimate discovery of this chapter is that toleration and persecution of Catholics were not diametrically opposed aspects of life in early modern England, but were two intertwined aspects of inter-confessional interaction. Both the examples of post-execution mutilation and the "Fatall Vesper" demonstrate that some form of tacit permission had to be given for many ordinary Protestants to commit violence against Catholics. Much popular religious violence in this thesis was sanctioned by the sense that the state was not performing its duty, but this chapter shows the opposite was also true. The intense persecution of Catholics under Elizabethan and Jacobean governments meant that most ordinary Protestants were content to tolerate the presence of Catholics in ordinary life and only directed popular

religious violence towards them at times of heightened tensions, and even then only in particular contexts where some form of permission had been granted, and their victims were faceless personifications of Catholic conspiracy. This suggests that persecution in some contexts could also produce toleration in others. The reverse was also possible; Sir Robert Payne's dinner party shows how violence could also be produced at events intended to promote social unity. Finally, the violence within the royal army in 1640, shows how toleration of Catholic officers like Compton Evers could lead to violence from those who viewed such men with suspicion. Toleration and violence were inextricably linked in early modern England, existing in a symbiotic relationship, each defined by the other.

# "BETWEEN SCYLLA AND CHARYBDIS": POPULAR VIOLENCE ON THE EVE OF CIVIL WAR[1]

## Introduction

When Richard Drake, the vicar of Radwinter, a village in rural Essex, entered his church to perform the Sunday service on 15 January 1642, he would have been apprehensive at the very least. Over the last six months Drake and his curate, Thomas Garnham, had been subjected to a tremendous number of escalating acts of humiliation and violence by their own congregation. These ranged from the minor, such as churchwarden Richard Durden's penchant for locking Drake out of the church, to the frightening, such as in March 1641 when Garnham was assaulted by some of the village women armed with knives.[2] The vast majority of the violence and protest had centred on the parish church, and usually took place during services; for instance, one newly-married couple and their friends left the church in the middle of the wedding service, with one of them shouting "enough, enough".[3] Drake later wrote an account of his experiences, memorably titled *Affronts and Insolencies committed in the Parish of Radwinter against the Divine Service and the Ministers therof*. In his account he rarely gave any hint of his emotional state, but it seems likely that the sustained hostility would have taken a toll, however determined he was to endure. On this day, however, the pressure would prove to be too great for even Drake to withstand, as a certificate he included in his account related in vivid detail. William Voyle, whom Drake claimed was "pretending authoritie to be ye Lecturer" entered the church armed with a cudgel and attempted to pull

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[1] Many writers used the Greek mythological creatures of Scylla, an anthropomorphic female monster, and Charybdis, another monster who created whirlpools, to talk about England being trapped between the monster of Catholicism and its opposing monster of Anabaptism or otherwise radical religion: David Cressy, *England on Edge: Crisis and Revolution 1640-1642* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 130.

[2] Bod.L Rawlinson D 158, ff. 43-55, f. 48 (Affronts and Insolencies committed in the Parish of Radwinter against the Divine Service and the Ministers therof).

[3] Bod.L Rawlinson D 158, f. 43

Drake outside. There was a brief struggle in which Drake managed to escape into the pulpit, but Voyle, aided by several other men, John Smith, Richard Smith, Matthew Spicer and Stephen Sillon, pulled Drake from the pulpit and beat him. Finally, they pulled him by his gown and threw him out of the church. The certificate also mentioned that a man named Augustine Hawkins joined in the assault and said "Let us have him out of the church & knock out his brains", whilst another, John Smith, "kick'd, stamp'd & trod on him".[4] Soon after, Drake left Radwinter in fear of his life, never to return.

The details of the violence which dominated Radwinter will be examined later in this chapter, but suffice to say it was exceptional in scale and intensity. However, it was part of a broader wave of violent acts that swept across the country in the late 1630s and early 1640s. The chaos that engulfed Radwinter was set in motion some eight years earlier, with the ascendancy of William Laud, who was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury by King Charles I in 1633.[5] Both men favoured a form of worship based on tradition and ceremony, backed up by a strict demand for conformity on the part of clergy and laity alike.[6] Laud saw his vision of the Church of England as a return to a pure Church of old; he and his allies venerated the Elizabethan Church and considered the Catholic Church a "Reverend Mother" rather than the mortal enemy headed by the Antichrist, as more zealous Protestants had regarded it for generations.[7] This meant the Church hierarchy was dominated by ceremonialists who insisted

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[4] Bod.L Rawlinson D 158 f. 48.

[5] Anthony Milton, "Laud, William (1573–1645)", *ODNB,* last modified 21 May 2009, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/16112.

[6] Peter Lake, "The Laudian Style: Order, Uniformity and the Pursuit of the Beauty of Holiness in the 1630s", in *The Early Stuart Church, 1603-1642* ed. Kenneth Fincham (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1993), 161-186, 163, 182; Iain M. MacKenzie, *God's Order and Natural Law: the works of the Laudian Divines* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 101.

[7] Calvin Lane, *The Laudians and the Elizabethan Church: History, Conformity and Religious Identity in post-Reformation England* (London, England; Brookfield, Vermont: Pickering & Chatto Publishers, 2013), 2; Alexandra Walsham, "Impolitic Images: Providence, History and the Iconography of Protestant Nationhood in Early Stuart England", *Studies in Church History: The Church Retrospective* 33 (1997), 307-328, 321; for the nuances of the belief that the pope was the Antichrist see Peter Lake, "The Significance of the Elizabethan Identification of the Pope as Antichrist", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 31, 2 (April 1980), 161-178.

upon traditions the godly regarded as heralds of Satanic devil worship, but which they could not change. Anti-Puritanism was also a common feature among Laudians, and with their dominance within the Church, came a new legitimisation of such prejudice among congregations.

In the two years before the outbreak of civil war in the autumn of 1642, the political and religious stability of the country unravelled. After eleven years of personal rule in which Charles, Laud and their allies had presided unchallenged over religious affairs, the king was forced to call Parliament in April 1640.[8] However, its dissolution after just three weeks, only increased dissatisfaction with the Crown. By August, Charles' army had suffered disastrous defeat in war against Scotland and by November he was once again forced by circumstance to call Parliament, only this time it was less pliable. Within weeks of formation, Parliament had removed both Laud and another of Charles' key allies, the Earl of Strafford, from power, the latter being executed in May the following year. This was one of many disastrous concessions Charles made in 1641, alongside allowing Parliament to sit on a regular basis and the dissolution of both the Court of Star Chamber and High Commission, both of which had been key to maintaining order and stability in the country. By the end of 1641, almost all of those Charles had relied on to maintain his rule had been side-lined, removed or disgraced.[9] It was this deterioration of the government and crown which precipitated the tremendous wave of violence that is the focus of this chapter.

The destabilisation of the political order was accompanied by a new sense of power amongst more ordinary people; many developed a sense that they had the right to an opinion in the new political and religious climate.[10] Matters of Church and state were openly debated

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[8] Kevin Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 275; Cressy, *England on Edge,* 4.

[9] Cressy, *England on Edge,* 4-5.

[10] David Cressy, "The Protestation Protested, 1641 and 1642", *The Historical Journal* 45, 2 (June 2002), 251-279, 251.

in alehouses, shops and on street corners. The collapse of censorship saw an explosion of inflammatory tracts and the normalisation of ideas considered radical in previous years.[11] Panic was greatly exacerbated by the news in October 1641 of rebellion in Ireland, which soon filled newsbooks with terrifying accounts of the Catholic Irish and their cruelty towards their Protestant neighbours, inflaming anti-Catholic fears.[12] Any hope to avert crisis died with this news. Christmas 1641 was an unsettled and violent one in London, and as 1642 began, the situation became ever more dire. In January, Charles' catastrophic attempt to arrest five members of Parliament forced him and his family to leave London. Over the months that followed, both the king and Parliament sought support for their respective causes and struggled for resources as each side grew into an army.[13] The two finally met on the battlefield at Edgehill, Warwickshire on Sunday 23 October 1642.

The historic collapse of the state and Church forms the backdrop of this final chapter, as it allowed England's "cold war of religion" to drastically escalate. It freed ordinary parishioners and clergymen to clash over pre-existing disagreements about the practice of religion in the country, and encouraged many to use violence to achieve their goals. This chapter will examine examples of popular religious violence between Protestants from the five years preceding the outbreak of war that fall into two distinct categories. The first is anti-Puritan violence, perpetrated against the godly. Following on from Chapter Two, this chapter will demonstrate that anti-Puritan violence in the mid-seventeenth century continued to have little explicitly religious meaning. This is because disputes between the godly and other Protestants were over what counted as a religious matter, or what constituted their business.

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[11] Cressy, *England on Edge,* 322-331, 290-294.

[12] Joseph Cope, *England and the 1641 Irish Rebellion* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2009), 77, 89; David A. O'Hara, *English Newsbooks and Irish Rebellion, 1641-1649* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2006), 30.

[13] Cressy, *England on Edge,* 5.

Such violence was also casual in form, an expression of prejudice, influenced by popular forms of mockery.

The other, more prolific, category of violence targeted trappings and supporters of Laudian religious policy. This chapter will show how perpetrators of this form of violence saw the breakdown of political stability as an opportunity to cleanse their parishes of what they saw as the stain of Laudianism, in the belief that such idolatry posed an existential threat to the spiritual health of the country. Although such violence was facilitated by the political and religious instability of the times, this chapter will also show how most of the violence which took place had much deeper roots and was rarely original in motivation or form. The English Civil War was the result of a myriad of factors, old and new, political, economic and religious, but the violence that preceded it had its roots in earlier conflicts which the collapse of Charles' government allowed to detonate into the open.

**The First "Crimson Stains": Violence against the godly, 1636-1642[14]**

Defining the godly has always posed a challenge for historians, but defining their opponents is comparatively straightforward. Anti-Puritanism is best regarded not as a set of proscribed beliefs, but as scepticism of the integrity of the godly and contempt for the way the godly expected others to behave and worship. This thesis has previously documented anti-Puritanism in the context of conflict over popular festive culture. However, violence against the godly underwent an upsurge in the five years before the beginning of the English Civil War, which will be the focus of the first half of this chapter. Anti-Puritanism was hardly a new phenomenon in the mid-seventeenth century, nor did the violence carried out against the godly show any significant evolution. The only major difference was intensity and scale. Anti-Puritan violence rarely had explicit religious meaning; this is because such violence was

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[14] The title is inspired by a quotation from Edward Reynolds, *Evgenia's Teares or Great Brittaynes distractions* (London, 1642), 29.

motivated by disputes over where the boundaries of religion should be drawn, or what role the godly should have in religious matters. Unlike the anti-Laudian violence this chapter will examine later, anti-Puritan violence was not usually part of a sustained campaign to protest against or change religious policy. Instead, anti-Puritan violence was often spontaneous: a result of a context which gave permission, implicitly or explicitly, for the godly to be victimised. This section will show how anti-Puritan violence was enabled by context: first the Laudian monopoly on power in the late 1630s and then by political instability in the early 1640s. The primary case study will be the violence committed against the godly corporation in Norwich in the late 1630s, with insights from other examples which are less well-documented. All these examples will show how violence against the godly was characterised by mockery, derision and ridicule. It will also show how anti-Puritan violence was also shaped by context, often being an impulsive act enabled by sympathetic local politics, or a local reaction to godly incursion.

The city of Norwich occupied a complex religious position in the early modern period: in the early stages of the Reformation, the city's council was dominated by Catholics, a situation that only changed with the outbreak of plague in 1558. Under Elizabeth I, the city became a hotbed of zealous Protestantism.[15] Since the late 1560s, the city had encouraged mass immigration of persecuted Protestants of mainly Dutch, French Huguenot and Walloon origin, who both bolstered the city's textile industry and its commitment to godly religion.[16] Muriel McClendon's examination of the Reformation in Norwich argued that the city experienced a contradictory situation, being both divided by religion but largely avoiding

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[15] Muriel C. McClendon, *The Quiet Reformation: Magistrates and the Emergence of Protestantism in Tudor Norwich* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 1.
[16] Bernard Cottret, *The Huguenots in England: immigration and settlement c. 1550-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 55-62; David Trim, "Immigrants, the Indigenous Community and International Calvinism", in *Immigrants in Tudor and Stuart England,* eds. Nigel Goose and Lien Luu (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2005), 211-222, 211.

violence, which McClendon attributed to the moderating influence of the city's magistrates.[17] Whatever the reason for this tenuous harmony, the arrival of Matthew Wren as Bishop in 1635 triggered the most tumultuous period in the religious history of the city and, perhaps inevitably, violence followed.[18] This section will show how the conflict which erupted between Wren, his Laudian acolytes and the godly members of the city corporation promoted an environment hostile to the godly.[19] Conflicts between cathedrals and corporations were hardly uncommon, but the ferocity in Norwich was unusual.[20] The dominance of Laudianism in the late 1630s disempowered the godly and allowed the ordinary anti-Puritans of Norwich to attack the power, social status and repute of the godly aldermen above them.

As was common for seventeenth century disputes, that between the corporation and cathedral in Norwich generated a significant amount of legal documentation. The key petition which described the violence the godly aldermen were subjected to is a four-page document addressed to the Houses of Parliament.[21] It was probably written between 1640-1, but the events it recounted occurred in the spring and summer of 1636.[22] It began with the King's 1636 commandment that the mayor, civic officials and members of the city courts had to attend Sunday services at the cathedral.[23] The first complaint in the petition was that being forced to attend services in the cathedral was of great inconvenience to many of the city's notables for a variety of reasons: for example, they grumbled that cathedral sermons were

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[17] McClendon, *The Quiet Reformation,* 1.

[18] Ian Atherton and Victor Morgan, "Revolution and Retrenchment: The Cathedral, 1630-1720", in *Norwich cathedral church, city and diocese, 1096–1996,* eds. Ian Atherton, Eric Fernie, Christopher Harper-Bill and Hassall Smith (London: Hambledon, 1996), 540-575.

[19] Carl B. Estabrook, "In the midst of ceremony: cathedral and community in seventeenth-century Wells", in *Political culture and cultural politics in early modern England,* eds. Susan D. Amussen and Mark A. Kishlansky (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 133-161, 154.

[20] Catherine F. Patterson, *Urban Patronage in Early Modern England: Corporate Boroughs, the Landed Elite and the Crown, 1580-1640* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 133.

[21] Bod.L Tanner MS 220 ff. 147-50 "To the Right Hon(oura)ble the Lords Knights Cittizens…"

[22] Bod.L Tanner MS 220 f. 149.

[23] Bod.L Tanner MS 220 f. 147.

often at least three and a half hours long.[24] They also claimed that the seats they were given in the cathedral were uncomfortable and exposed to cold winds outside, and despite their best efforts, the cathedral's dean and prebends had refused to help.[25] However, as the petition continued it became clear that overlong sermons were the least of their problems. The seats they were allocated were beneath a balcony which was effectively used as a vantage point to drop things onto the unfortunate people seated below. First, the incumbent mayor in 1636, Christopher Barrett, had a Bible dropped onto his head which fortunately missed but broke his glasses. A hat was dropped onto the sword held before the mayor to "make sport".[26] Prior to Barrett becoming mayor, someone urinated onto the seats in the cathedral allocated to the wives of the great men of Norwich. Around the same time two well-respected men named Mr Drake and Mr Cupas had their cloaks and gowns cut as they sat in the cathedral. The most quoted accusation from the petition involved the alderman Thomas Shipdham, who suffered someone to "conspurcate & shitt upon his gowne from the galleryes aboue".[27] The next Sunday a shoe was dropped which almost hit the head of the mayor, again most likely Barrett. The last incident related also involved Barrett, and the petition claimed someone spat on his head.[28] The petition concludes with the petitioners asking to be allowed to return to attending services at their own churches so that they need no longer "goe constantly w[i]th the sword to the sermon".[29]

This petition and the wider dispute it was part of is reasonably well-known amongst historians, especially those who study the religious and political history of the city. Few historians have questioned the relative truth of the allegations in the petition. One exception

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[24] Bod.L Tanner MS 220 ff. 147-8.
[25] Bod.L Tanner MS 220 f. 148.
[26] Bod.L Tanner MS 220 f. 149.
[27] Bod.L Tanner MS 220 f. 149.
[28] Bod.L Tanner MS 220 f. 149.
[29] Bod.L Tanner MS 220 f. 150.

was Matthew Reynolds who in his book on the godly of the city questioned its authenticity.[30]

Reynolds' scepticism was because the petition was signed by at least two council members

who cannot be counted as godly, and he suggested that they only signed under some form of

coercion from their colleagues, although he put forward no evidence to support this

assertion.[31] Whilst this is impossible to exclude entirely, it seems more likely that the

signatures of more conservative aldermen can be explained by the violence being considered

inexcusable, as maintained by John Evans and Andrew Hopper.[32]

The particular men targeted for violence in the cathedral were principally the

members of the godly faction in Norwich civic society. This is not to say that all the godly

were targeted, but that the majority of the victims were the most prominent anti-Wren and

anti-Laudian activists. Christopher Barrett, who served as mayor of Norwich in the late

1630s, has been noted by historians as a prominent godly advocate.[33] The religious position

of Thomas Shipdham is more ambiguous, but he was an active opponent of Wren. His wife,

Elizabeth Shipdham, vociferously refused to be appropriately veiled when giving thanks for

the birth of her son in 1621.[34] This is significant because the refusal to wear a veil during a

churching ceremony was a common attitude amongst godly women, who often saw it as a

remnant of Roman Catholicism.[35] When she was excommunicated as a result, the couple took

their case to the criminal court.[36] This suggests that Shipdham did at least have some godly

sentiments, but his ambition meant he was reluctant to express them openly, especially as he

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[30] Matthew Reynolds, *Godly Reformers and their Opponents in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005), 239.

[31] Reynolds, *Godly Reformers,* 239.

[32] John T. Evans, *Seventeenth-century Norwich: Politics, Religion, and Government, 1619-1690* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 113; Andrew Hopper, "The Civil Wars", in *Norwich since 1500,* eds. Carol Rawcliffe, Richard Wilson, Christine Clark (London: Hambledon, 2004), 89-116, 92.

[33] Reynolds, *Godly Reformers,* 188: "Christopher Barret – a godly parishioner at St Andrew's, previously presented for not standing at the Gloria or Gospel – who failed to turn out to greet his honoured guest."

[34] Reynolds, *Godly Reformers*, 116.

[35] David Cressy, "Purification, Thanksgiving and the Churching of Women in Post-Reformation England", *Past & Present*, 141 (November 1993), 106-146, 133, for more details on the case of Elizabeth Shipdham see 136-7.

[36] Reynolds, *Godly Reformers*, 116.

once remarked that excommunication was "but a Scare Crow".[37] It seems clear that the majority of the victims were the godly members of the city corporation, which underlines how the violence against them was rooted in both contempt for their faith and their power.

What lay behind this series of violent and subversive attacks was an intense power dispute between the godly corporation, led by many of the victims mentioned above, and the Laudian clergy of Norwich, led by Matthew Wren, Bishop of Norwich. Wren was a close associate of Charles I and William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, who was appointed to the Bishopric of Norwich from 1635 to 1638.[38] He was especially close to Laud, who probably ensured his accession to the Bishopric and was godfather to Wren's fourth son who was named William in his honour.[39] He was likely given the position due to his strident adherence to William Laud's religious policy, which Laud probably hoped he would impart to the fervently Protestant diocese of Norwich.[40] As a result of his dogged loyalty, after Laud's fall in the 1640s, Wren was imprisoned in the Tower of London on 30 December 1640, where he remained until 1660.[41]

Wren's arrival in 1635 signalled the beginning of a backlash against the godly in Norwich. His injunctions for the Norwich clergy of 1635 and 1636 clearly encouraged the reporting of any who challenged the supremacy of the *Book of Common Prayer*, or the practices of the Laudian Church. The injunctions rebuked any preacher who strayed too far beyond the constraints of the *Book of Common Prayer* in their sermons, or who performed their duties without vestments.[42] The 1636 injunctions were particularly condemnatory

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[37] Bod.L Tanner MS 68, f. 162.
[38] Nicholas W. S. Cranfield, "Wren, Matthew (1585–1667)", *ODNB,* last modified 4 October 2008, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/30021.
[39] Kenneth Fincham, "William Laud and the Exercise of Caroline Ecclesiastical Patronage", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 51, 1 (January 2000), 69-93, 83.
[40] Diarmaid MacCulloch, "Worcester: a Cathedral City in the Reformation", in *The Reformation in English Towns, 1500-1640,* eds. Patrick Collinson and John Craig (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), 94-112, 109.
[41] Cranfield, "Wren, Matthew", *ODNB.*
[42] Bod.L Tanner MS 68 f. 66.

toward both ministers and laypeople who "under pretence of holinesse and edification" met to discuss matters of religion outside of the Church.[43] An even more explicitly anti-Puritan injunction ordered any minister who showed favour toward "Schimasticks or Seperatists (that are at home, or are gone abroad)", or prayed for them should be reported.[44] This was a reference to the exodus of the godly to the New World which followed Wren's arrival and his promotion of an anti-Puritan environment in the city.[45] In 1636, Wren ordered the appointment of several new standing commissioners to oppose what he called those who "under a mask and pretense of zeale and godliness" had lured many "into a hatred of the true worship, and into a contempt of all things divine and holy."[46] This obvious anti-Puritanism was a common trait among Laudians; Wren himself had expressed such sentiments in a sermon he preached before King Charles I in 1627.[47]

Laudian religious practice did take root to some degree in Norwich. The Norwich cathedral clergy, who appear to have taken no action to assist the besieged aldermen, included the Dean, John Hassall, and several prebendaries, including Fulke Roberts. Hassall appears to have been among the more flexible clergymen of his generation, adapting with the times throughout his career, being an ally to the godly of Norwich in the 1620s and changing his allegiance to Wren in the 1630s.[48] Roberts was a fierce Laudian; he published a book in 1639 which used scripture to defend Laudian changes to worship and argued they were not innovations.[49] The examples of these two men who supported Wren's changes strengthen the

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[43] Bod.L Tanner MS 68 f. 68.

[44] Bod.L Tanner MS 68 f. 69.

[45] Reynolds, *Godly Reformers*, 213

[46] Bod.L Tanner MS 68 fs. 219-20; Kenneth Fincham ed., *Visitation Articles and Injunctions of the Early Stuart Church: Volume II, 1625–1642* (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 1998), 161.

[47] Anthony Milton, *Laudian and royalist polemic in seventeenth-century England,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 93; Matthew Wren, *A sermon preached before the Kings Maiestie* (Cambridge, 1628), 31.

[48] Ian Atherton, "Hassall, John (ba1571, d. 1654)", *ODNB*, last modified 3 January 2008, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/65637.

[49] Fulke Roberts, *Gods holy house and service according to the primitive and most Christian forme thereof* (London, 1639).

argument that the cathedral staff effectively turned a blind eye to the anti-Puritan violence taking place under their noses because the principal victims were their loudest opponents, and neither were prepared to support the godly against Wren and the anti-Puritans emboldened by his policies.

Among the Norwich aldermen, the most prominent Laudian convert was Henry Lane. He held the position of mayor in 1640 and has long been recognised by historians as one of Wren's advocates and a staunch opponent of the godly in Norwich.[50] Lane supported Wren's religious changes within the corporation and opposed movements by the godly to block them, and was also the prime mover behind an anti-Puritan petition.[51] He was also the churchwarden who ensured the altar at his parish church, St Gregory's, met the Laudian standard. This was also the parish given to William Alanson, a clergyman who acted as an informant to Matthew Wren on the activities of the city council.[52] In 1642, Lane left the city to join the king's cause, which unsurprisingly resulted in his ejection in absentia from the Parliamentarian city council.[53] His eldest son later became a captain in the royalist army. Lane was not the only alderman who appears to have supported Wren. Edmund Anguish supported the introduction of altars and images in the church where he was a parishioner, alongside his brother Alexander, suggesting both had some investment in a more conservative form of worship. His third son, Richard, demonstrated an even clearer allegiance to Wren and later had his land sequestered for opposing godly reformation. This all suggests, as Reynolds concluded, that the Anguish family subscribed with some enthusiasm to Wren's Laudian direction of the church.[54] Four of these suspected Laudians

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[50] Reynolds, *Godly Reformers,* 212.

[51] Bod.L Tanner MSS 68 f. 149 (Alderman Lane to Wren 14 Oct. 1636), referenced in Evans, *Seventeenth-century Norwich,* 93, 109.

[52] Reynolds, *Godly Reformers,* 191, 211-12.

[53] Evans, *Seventeenth-century Norwich,* 126.

[54] Reynolds, *Godly Reformers,* 205-6.

worshipped at St Gregory's, a parish church later accused of having been supported by a Catholic, and as having idolatrous images of Christ and the apostles, alongside others, on display. Alderman John Freeman was responsible for the installation of religious images in St Gregory's, whilst his colleague John Loveland would become a key royalist activist in the early stages of the civil war.[55] William Gostlyn and Freeman, the only two aldermen to oppose the comprehensive anti-Wren petitions of 1640, subsequently revealed themselves as royalists and suffered accordingly. Other aldermen who would prove to be royalists included John Daniel, John Croshold and John Osborne.[56] This makes it clear that there were some in the city council, clergy, and likely among the population of the city, who supported Wren, or at least opposed the godly.

Many of the complaints later levelled at Laudians by the godly also reveal how they were being pushed out of power by individual Laudian ministers and their approach to their ministry.[57] In one godly petition, the minister of St Johns of Bearstreet was accused of, alongside being a habitual drunk and negligent preacher, excommunicating his parishioners and claiming they could only gain absolution in London.[58] Another minister named Lawrence Townley tried to leverage absolutions of excommunicated people to force them to swear oaths to obey the ordinary clergy as they would the church. Minister Henry Spendlow called parishioners who refused to receive communion at the altar rails "as ill as Rebels".[59] One minister, Isaac Dobson, was even quoted as saying "if the Church said the Crow is whyte we must believe it".[60] These accusations show how a major aspect of godly grievances was the fact that many of these Laudian ministers relentlessly asserted their own power and that of

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[55] Reynolds, *Godly Reformers,* 206-208.

[56] Evans, *Seventeenth-century Norwich,* 112, 117, 126.

[57] John Newman, "Laudian literature and the interpretation of Caroline churches in London", in *Art and Patronage in the Caroline Courts: Essays in honour of Sir Oliver Miller* ed. David Howarth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 168-188, 171.

[58] Bod.L Tanner MS 220 f. 118.

[59] Bod.L Tanner MS 220 f. 119.

[60] Bod.L Tanner MS 220 f. 122.

the Church over all other considerations. It also showed how the godly were effectively pushed out of power in Norwich by Wren and his Laudian followers. The godly saw matters of how their churches were run as their concern, but Laudians did not.

In the late 1630s the Laudians effectively dominated the Church of England and were largely able to suppress godly opposition.[61] Not only did Wren and his Laudian allies effectively control the practice of religion in the city, but they also had direct royal support; King Charles I himself had responded to godly protests by endorsing the Laudian changes. In a letter to the city, Charles wrote that he "cannot but very highly approue" of Wren's innovations, and reinforced the requirement that the corporation attend services in the cathedral.[62] Therefore, those who approved of the Laudian changes, or at least opposed the godly, would have been justified in believing that the king himself supported them. Given that the crown had previously provided the only way for the citizens of Norwich to resolve internal disputes, the king's approval of the Laudian agenda effectively paralysed the godly until 1640, when Charles' political fortunes collapsed.[63] Wren's dogged anti-Puritan policies, the degree to which his policy was accepted, and the inability of the godly to effectively resist, created an environment where violence against the godly could take place.

It is a key argument in this thesis that anti-Puritan violence rarely had religious overtones because the perpetrators of violence against them used such violence to mock, humiliate and shame the godly. The violence in Norwich certainly conforms to this pattern. The most potent acts committed in Norwich were aimed at undermining and challenging civic power, and the primary target of these was the mayor, one of the most important people

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[61] Cressy, *England on Edge,* 129-149.
[62] Bod.L Tanner MS 220 f. 151.
[63] Evans, *Seventeenth-century Norwich,* 1.

in an early modern city.[64] One of the more innocuous acts saw a hat dropped onto a sword

being carried in front of Christopher Barrett.[65] The right for the mayors of Norwich to bear a

sword had been given to the city by Henry IV in 1404.[66] The right to bear a sword in the

presence of civic dignitaries and even the monarch was a considerable privilege, so the sword

was a key symbol of mayoral power. The significance of the hat lies in the social expectation

that men of lesser status were supposed to remove their hats in the presence of those above

them in the social hierarchy.[67] Putting a hat over the mayor's sword therefore, was a way to

mock and challenge his position, suggesting he was undeserving of the mayoral office. Even

the victim recognised this as the petition claimed that this was done "to make sport".[68] By

creating a mockery of the mayor in the cathedral, the perpetrators were attempting to

humiliate the most powerful godly man in the city. Another assault which demonstrated this

was when a footstool was dropped from the cathedral balcony and almost hit the mayor

sitting below.[69] The performance of civility in early modern England involved giving correct

deference to those above one's status in the social hierarchy.[70] Therefore, such calculated

disrespect carried a distinct meaning: that the victims, who were all amongst the most

distinguished men in the city, were undeserving of respect because of their godly

convictions.[71]

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[64] Mark Stoyle, *From Deliverance to Destruction: Rebellion and Civil War in an English City (*Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1996), 22; Phil Withington, "Public Discourse, Corporate Citizenship, and State Formation in Early Modern England", *The American Historical Review* 122, 4 (October 2007), 1016-1038, 1030.
[65] Bod.L Tanner MS 220 f. 149.
[66] "Civic Regalia", *Norwich City Council,* accessed 19 January 2020,
https://www.norwich.gov.uk/info/20251/lord_mayor_and_sheriff/1702/civic_regalia.
[67] Susan Vincent, *Dressing the Elite: Clothes in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Berg, 2003), 90.
[68] Bod.L Tanner MS 220 f. 149.
[69] Bod.L Tanner MS 220 f. 149.
[70] Keith Thomas, *In Pursuit of Civility: Manners and Civilisation in Early Modern England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 68.
[71] Conal Condren, *Argument and Authority in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 52.

Another attack aimed at denigrating the victims' social status as much as civic rank, was perpetrated against two men named Mr Drake and Mr Cupas, who had their gowns and cloaks cut during a service in the cathedral.[72] How the culprits apparently managed to mutilate the garments of these men without them noticing is unclear, but, by doing so, the perpetrators were attacking a key symbol of their victims' social position and public identity.[73] It is well-recognised that clothing played a central role in how early modern people established their identities and status, so publicly mutilating the clothing of important citizens was a public affront and humiliation.[74] Clothing carried an even more important role for aldermen or those in other civic positions. Such powerful men were expected to wear particular garments in public which symbolised their elevated status, and it is likely that the two men in question were members of the Norwich corporation, given that all the victims were referred to as such.[75] A book printed in 1629 by the London Corporation specifically listed all the occasions the mayor and other dignitaries had to attend and the attire they were expected to wear, including "Violet Gownes" and "Cloakes of Scarlet", which were considered appropriate attire for Church services, amongst other public duties.[76] Norwich was England's second city, and so it is likely that the elite of Norwich were also greatly invested in their appearance. For civic elites their clothes were a badge of their standing, both to themselves and to the wider community.[77] By attacking the garments that symbolised the civic position and social prestige of the two victims, the perpetrators were challenging the

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[72] Bod.L Tanner MS 220 f. 149.

[73] Bod.L Tanner MS 220 f. 149.

[74] Ann R. Jones and Peter Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 32; Margaret Spufford and Susan Mee, *The Clothing of the Common Sort 1570-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), xvii; Paul D. Halliday, *Dismembering the Body Politic: Partisan Politics in England's Towns, 1650-1730* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 51.

[75] Bod.L Tanner MS 220 f. 149.

[76] City of London Corporation, *The order of my Lord Mayor, the aldermen, and the sheriffes for their meetings* (London, 1629), 1, 20.

[77] Ulinka Rublack, *Dressing Up: Cultural Identity in Renaissance Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 211.

victims' public identity and authority, which in an age when the clothes made the man, was a powerful statement of disrespect.

Other instances were more explicitly religious in meaning: for example, in another incident Barrett had a Bible dropped onto his head, which fortunately missed but fell close enough to break his glasses.[78] The godly were renowned and maligned, both in their own time and in the centuries that followed, for rooting their religion in the obsessive study, discussion and analysis of scripture.[79] This was as true of those in Norwich as anywhere else; one of the many godly complaints made against the Laudian clergymen of the city in the 1640s was that they prioritised obedience to their word over scripture.[80] Dropping a Bible onto the head of the godly mayor was not only an act of calculated disrespect, but also one which mocked the fervent godly reverence for this book. It effectively weaponised the object of greatest religious significance for the godly against them.[81]

This theme of inversion continued in the most visceral group of attacks, the first of which was acted against the alderman Shipdham, who suffered someone defecating on his clothing.[82] This example could hardly be more primitive in its execution, but it shares the intentions of the former example: to mock, trivialise and shame the godly victim. The invoking of human waste to insult those in power was one of the strongest slurs an early modern person could use; in fact, using such an insult against the monarch could result in the execution of the offender.[83] This act was not the only one to use bodily fluids to mock and humiliate the godly: someone urinated onto the seats that would be occupied by the wives of

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[78] Bod.L Tanner MS 220 f. 149.

[79] Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 262-3.

[80] Bod.L Tanner MS 220 ff. 122-3.

[81] Christopher Hill, *The English Bible in the Seventeenth Century Revolution* (London: Allen Lane, 1993), 4.

[82] Bod.L Tanner MS 220 f. 149.

[83] Andy Wood, "'Poore Men Woll Speke One Daye': Plebeian Languages of Deference and Defiance in England, c.1520–1640", in *The Politics of the Excluded in England, c.1500–1850* ed. Tim Harris (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 67-98, 81.

some of the victims. The beleaguered Barrett also suffered someone spitting on his head.[84]

All these examples could hardly be more explicit in their intent to ridicule the godly, but they were rooted in one of the oldest anti-Puritan stereotypes: hypocrisy.

The belief that the godly drive for purity in worship and life was in reality a mask for their corrupt nature was a key aspect of popular anti-Puritan bigotry throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[85] These acts are the ultimate example of this form of anti-Puritan violence as they literally turned the godly victims into impurities in the cathedral; the definitive way to expose that all their calls for spiritual cleanliness were a disguise for their own hypocrisy. Inversion was the defining feature of anti-Puritan violence, and anti-Puritan shows of opposition more generally. Inversion was not only the preserve of anti-Puritans, but was the most potent way to mock the godly, because they were caricatured as holier-than-thou busybodies. This meant that for anti-Puritans, confronting the godly in ways which contrasted their excessive holiness with signifiers of irreverence or pollution, was the ultimate expression that the godly were hypocrites. This idea of reversal was present in many of the attacks against the Norwich aldermen, but especially those which involved human waste. This was also invoked in other contexts. For example, godly parishioners of the ferociously godly minister Richard Culmer in his Kent parish of Harbledown in the 1640s suffered similar affronts when faecal matter was smeared onto pews and a gate, which blocked them from entering and sitting in the parish church.[86] This was also sometimes invoked to mock the godly in wider culture, such as in the archetypal Jacobean comedy *A*

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[84] Bod.L Tanner MS 220 f. 149.

[85] Patrick Collinson, *Richard Bancroft and Elizabethan Anti-Puritanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 12; Lake, "Anti-puritanism: The Structure of a Prejudice", 81.

[86] Bernard Capp, *England's Culture Wars: Puritan Reformation and its Enemies in the Interregnum, 1649-1660* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 1; Richard Culmer, *A parish looking-glasse for persecutors of ministers* (London, 1657), 29.

*Chaste Maid in Cheapside,* in which two godly gossips overindulge in wine and "had need of other Vessels" to evacuate their bladders.[87]

The wider background behind the theme of inversion was that it was a common feature of medieval and early modern festivity. Processions at Maytime or Whitsun often featured cross-dressing, usually men dressing as women.[88] Christmas celebrations could include upended hierarchies, such as in the tradition of Boy Bishops or the Lord of Misrule.[89] This shows how the script for anti-Puritan violence was drawn from a largely non-religious source: popular festive culture. This evidences how anti-Puritanism was not a religious prejudice in the traditional sense. Instead, anti-Puritanism was contempt for the godly and the duplicitous nature of their beliefs, and their divisive actions. Therefore, the violence committed against the godly also borrowed from rituals of festive culture to express the disdain and contempt anti-Puritans felt towards them. This is not to say that every example of popular anti-Puritan violence had this element. For instance, in Chapter Two the violence against John Parker and Thomas Robinson appears to have been reactive, a response to godly intrusion. Instead, the use of inversion in anti-Puritan violence shows how it was a different kind of religious prejudice than is traditionally considered. The godly and their opponents disagreed over what constituted a religious matter, and the power the godly should have in the Church. The anti-Puritans of Norwich utilised the theme of inversion in their violence against the godly aldermen because it was the most potent way to mock their religious pretensions and undermine their authority.

The view of the godly as hypocrites was behind much of the most extreme anti-Puritan violence, which was aimed at emphasising their supposed hypocrisy in the most

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[87] Thomas Middleton, *A chast mayd in Cheape-Side* (London, 1630), 37.
[88] Cust and Lake, *Gentry Culture and Religious Politics,* 46.
[89] Underdown, "But the Shows of their Street", 8.

powerful and offensive way. The violence against the godly in Norwich was the result of a polarised religious context in which the godly were at a profound disadvantage. The ascension of the anti-Puritan Matthew Wren and his aggressive enforcement of the Laudian agenda, which came with royal approval, legitimised violence against the godly, especially the powerful godly among the aldermen. The violence against them was intended to mock them and challenge their claims to sanctity; in other words, to take them down a notch.

Violence against the godly after the political fall of Charles I and his Archbishop of Canterbury also adhered to the same patterns of violence, albeit in a less extreme form, and was also enabled by the political and religious context of the early 1640s. In the letters of the Harley family, two incidents are mentioned which document anti-Puritan violence in Herefordshire. On 4 June 1642, Lady Brilliana Harley wrote to her son Edward that in Ludlow, a maypole had been set up with "a thing like a head" placed on the top, and the people threw or shot things at it "in diristion of roundheads". She also hinted at a similar event in the hamlet of Croft.[90] On 20 June 1642, Brilliana again wrote to Edward mentioning another incident in Hereford itself involving a preacher named Davis, who gave a sermon in a city church perceived by at least two listeners as opposing the king. The two men rang the church bells and summoned a considerable crowd who called Davis a roundhead, and cried "let us cast stones at him!".[91] Fortunately the threats came to nothing.

The first two incidents clearly mock the well-known godly contempt for such popular traditions as maypoles, but the act of mounting a head-like object also recalls how the remains of traitors were displayed after execution.[92] Stoning had a strong tradition of being a violent form of social protest against unpopular figures, so both these instances represent

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[90] Brilliana Harley, *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley, wife of Sir Robert Harley, of Brampton Bryan, Knight of the Bath,* ed. Thomas T. Lewis (London: printed for the Camden Society, 1854), 167.
[91] Harley, *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley,* 170-171.
[92] Challoner, *Memoirs of Missionary Priests,* vol 1, contains numerous examples of severed heads of Jesuit priests being mounted on poles or other objects for display, for example, 176, 196.

relatively standard anti-Puritan violence, primarily intended to mock their convictions. Both these examples also demonstrate how anti-Puritan violence in the 1640s was enabled by context. Brilliana Harley noted the victims in each case were referred to as "roundheads" and if this was accurate, it shows that, at least in Herefordshire, the godly had become conflated with the supporters of Parliament. Although King Charles left London in disgrace on 10 January 1642, his country did not immediately divide into two warring sides.[93] Herefordshire was one of many counties convulsed by debate over whether to side with the king or Parliament. Sometimes such debates turned violent, such as in February 1642, when a debate over who to support in the civil war to come came to blows in Hereford.[94] The county itself seems to have been dominated by royalist sentiment, save a few pockets of Parliamentarians, such as the godly Harley family of Brampton Bryan, which Brilliana was a member of by her marriage to Sir Robert Harley.[95] This sympathy for royalism is probably partly behind these acts of violence, but there is a strong element of anti-Puritanism in much of this violence, which suggests that the anti-Puritans of Herefordshire took advantage of the growing divide in the country to attack the godly, and justify it through their perceived support for Parliament. The political context of the summer of 1642, with the king and parliament preparing for war and gathering support, legitimised such violence in Herefordshire against perceived enemies of the king.

However galvanised anti-Puritanism was by the religious context of the years preceding the English Civil War, the anti-Puritan script for violence was not a creation of that context, but predated it. Examples of such extreme anti-Puritanism were rare, but one from Stratford-upon-Avon in 1619 demonstrates many of the key aspects of anti-Puritan violence

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[93] Cressy, *England on Edge,* 396, 405.
[94] Cressy, *England on Edge,* 405.
[95] Jacqueline Eales, *Puritans and Roundheads: The Harleys of Brampton Bryan and the Outbreak of the English Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 59.

which appeared later. On Sunday 30 May 1619, the godly clergyman Thomas Wilson

attended a service in the parish church, ahead of being confirmed as the new vicar, when a

group of locals gathered at the church to protest his impending formal admission to the

parish, which was to take place the following day.[96] The status and professions of those who

opposed Wilson, who ranged from gentlemen to weavers and wives, shows the universality

of anti-Puritan prejudice in seventeenth-century English society. Prior to being made vicar of

Stratford, Wilson had held a position in nearby Evesham so his godly beliefs were well-

known in the locality and were clearly opposed by some in his new congregation.[97] The

incident came to the attention of the Court of Star Chamber in a petition written by the

attorney general Sir Henry Yelverton, who shared Wilson's godly religious views. Yelverton

took great pains in the petition to paint those involved as rioters, claiming that they were

armed, and they had conspired together to rob Wilson of his "good name, Creditt and

reputacon, but also of his libertie and life".[98] Much of Yelverton's attempts to portray this

event as a riot seems questionable so it is more plausible that what actually took place was an

anti-Puritan protest. Yelverton claimed that the supposed rioters opposed Wilson because he

would oppose their "great vices".[99] Whilst the godly opposed many aspects of ordinary

English life and worship, this could have partly referred to opposition to festive culture,

which by 1619 had been legitimised by the *Book of Sports.* This incident therefore may, like

the 1621 incident in Brinklow, also in Warwickshire, be a result of the confidence given to

supporters of popular festive culture by the official endorsement of the king. Although this

case did not devolve into actual physical violence, the threats and insults made against

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[96] TNA STAC 8/26/10 (Complaint).
[97] Hughes, "Religion and society in Stratford Upon Avon", 61.
[98] TNA STAC 8/26/10 (Complaint).
[99] TNA STAC 8/26/10 (Complaint).

Wilson by the crowd are indicative as to the key aspects of anti-Puritanism that justified violence against them.

The first threat in the long list provided by Yelverton in his Bill of Complaint was that the people said if they could catch Wilson "they would flay him and despatch him of his life".[100] The threat to kill Wilson, while disturbing, is not particularly useful as to ascertaining why his godly views were so offensive to his future parishioners, however much it illustrates their resentment towards him.[101] As aforesaid, popular anti-Puritanism was usually rooted in disagreements over what should be considered religious. This is not to say there were no theological objections to the godly, but these were a minor aspect of popular anti-Puritanism. As a result, it seems unlikely that this threat was made with a religious meaning but one rooted in more ordinary life. Flaying has a gruesome history as an execution method, but in seventeenth century England, the context in which most ordinary people of Stratford would have been familiar with this particular activity would have been in an agricultural context. This is because it is an essential part of rendering an animal carcass into various products.[102] This shows how the protestors saw Wilson as a corrupted, debased creature, deserving only of the most ignoble treatment.

The protesters also called Wilson "an ill liver, an incontinent person, that he had the french poxe; and was burnt by meanes of his incontinency with lewd weomen".[103] These insults suggest in the strongest terms that Wilson was a hypocrite: his stringent godly beliefs were but a screen for his true licentious nature. As a libel circulated in Warwickshire that Yelverton also included in his complaint claimed, "These men seem of puer faction/…but

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[100] TNA STAC 8/26/10 (Complaint).
[101] TNA STAC 8/26/10 (Complaint).
[102] For examples see William Bradshaw, *A plaine and pithy exposition of the second Epistle to the Thessalonians* (London, 1620), 187; William Attersoll, *A commentarie vpon the fourth booke of Moses* (London, 1618), 144; Robert Allen, *A treatise of christian beneficence* (London, 1600), 103: although these books are theological, flaying is only ever mentioned as part of preparing a carcass for consumption.
[103] TNA STAC 8/26/10 (Complaint).

within they are full of dissension and discords."[104] The belief that the godly were hypocrites

has been examined in Chapter Two, but these threats highlight how sexual hypocrisy in

particular was used to discredit godly zeal.[105] The reference to the "french poxe" or syphilis,

one of the most powerful insults of the seventeenth century, also illustrates how godly

hypocrisy was sometimes viewed by anti-Puritans as a physical effect on the bodies of the

godly.[106] This sense of Puritanism as a corrupting force on the bodies of the godly prefigures

the more extreme acts seen in the 1630s and 1640s, which also sought to make the perceived

corruption of the godly literal.

The next list of threats drew a comparison with forms of capital punishment as the

protesters were reported to have cried out that they should pull Wilson from the parish

church, hang him and "cutt of his pockie and burnt members".[107] The first mention of

hanging suggests that the protesters believed Wilson's hypocrisy rendered him deserving of

capital punishment. This recalls Yelverton's claim that the protesters believed Wilson would

not carry out the King's laws regarding religious practice.[108] Opposition to the crown had

been one of the central crimes punishable by execution for centuries, and so this accusation

may represent an attempt by the perpetrators to justify their threats. The desire to remove

Wilson from the church also shows their devotion to the outgoing incumbent as well as belief

perhaps that Wilson's leadership was illegitimate. The final aspect about attacking Wilson

physically recalls the concept of godly hypocrisy and also purification as if by removing

Wilson's supposed "pockie and burnt members" the protesters could castrate his godly

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[104] TNA STAC 8/26/10 (Libels).

[105] For contemporary examples see Thomas Randolph, *Aristippus, or, The Ioviall philosopher presented in a priuate shew* (London, 1630), 35.

[106] Bernard Capp, *When Gossips Meet: Women, Family, and Neighbourhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 192; Claude Quétel, *History of Syphilis*, trans. Judith Braddock and Brian Pike (London: Polity Press in association with Basil Blackwell, 1990), 73-75; Griffiths, *Lost Londons,* 269.

[107] TNA STAC 8/26/10 (Complaint).

[108] TNA STAC 8/26/10 (Complaint).

influence.[109] This incident and the surrounding context of anti-Puritanism shows the central objections to godly religion that motivated violent opposition, such as a belief in their hypocrisy and their perceived opposition to the king, were as powerful in 1619 as they would prove to be some twenty years later.

In Norwich, the arrival of Matthew Wren and his Laudian program clearly opened a strong vein of anti-Puritanism in the city. Unsurprisingly, the godly and the Laudians remained embroiled in conflict throughout the late 1630s, but the unconditional royal support given to the Laudians and anti-Puritans left the godly vulnerable. In the early 1640s when the country approached civil war, violence against the godly broke out again, with the same intention of mockery and disempowerment, this time justified by their perceived opposition to the king. However, although the context of the late 1630s and early 1640s clearly allowed more violence to occur, the issues at the core of such violence were not unique to the mid-seventeenth century. Anti-Puritanism was not an invention of the seventeenth-century, but what added a new edge to anti-Puritanism was the introduction of Laudianism which with its devotion to ceremony, anti-Puritan sentiments and royal approval, both provoked the godly as rarely before, and added new legitimacy to those who opposed them, with violent consequences.

**The Brewing Storm: The Road to Civil War, 1640-1642**

The second half of this chapter will focus on the other major form of popular religious violence between different groups of Protestants which erupted in the years leading up to the outbreak of war: violence against Laudian ministers. This chapter will show how in the context of the early 1640s, many ordinary godly parishioners felt enabled to act on their hostility towards Laudian religious policy as never before. They used violence to cleanse and

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[109] TNA STAC 8/26/10 (Complaint).

purge their parishes of objects and practices, and later people, that they saw as idolatrous and sinful stains on the Church of England. Unlike the anti-Puritanism of the first section of this chapter, much anti-Laudian violence was clearly premeditated, constituting violent campaigns for reform in some instances. This chapter will show how godly perpetrators of violence, encouraged by a surrounding context of political chaos, targeted any aspect of worship, or indeed any person, that they believed was a dangerous influence, bent on leading the Church of England back into the fold of Roman Catholicism.

## Oaths and riots: London, 1641

Given the parliamentarian influence and fierce Protestantism that thrived in the capital, it is unsurprising that London became a hotbed of religious action between 1640 and 1642.[110] For example, on 11 May 1640, an angry crowd descended on Lambeth Palace, the official residence of William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, and he was forced to flee in fear of his life.[111] In September 1641 the French ambassador complained that his home in London had been attacked.[112] Four months later, a group of prisoners took over their prison to ensure that a number of Jesuit priests imprisoned there would be executed.[113] A member of the Separatist group known as the Brownists, a religious faction often conflated with radical Puritanism, was severely assaulted after attempting to give a sermon.[114] Two examples that are sufficiently documented and spilled over into physical violence occurred over two days in two churches in June 1641, both of which initiated petitions to Parliament. The first generated two petitions: one by the victim, Oliver Whitby, and the second by two of the perpetrators,

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[110] Keith Lindley, *Popular Politics and Religion and Civil War London* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1997), 36.
[111] Cressy, *England on Edge,* 116-119.
[112] BL Additional MS 6521 f. 612.
[113] SP 16/486 f. 125 (Captain Robert Slingesby to Sir John Penington).
[114] Walter, *Understanding Popular Violence,* 23; SP 16/486 f. 125, Anonymous, *An order from the High Conrt* (London, 1641), 4, Anonymous, *The discovery of a swarme of seperatists* (London, 1641), 3.

Robert Waineman and George Bonnest, both of whom were imprisoned for taking part.[115]

However, only one of these gives any significant description of the events that unfolded on

Sunday 6 June 1641. This account came from Oliver Whitby, a resident clergyman at St

Olave's, Southwark. In his petition, Whitby described how he had administered communion

at the rails and claimed that 500 people had received communion in this fashion, although if

he meant that day alone or over time is unclear. Administering communion at the rails was a

specific way of dispensing the sacrament that had been introduced by William Laud. It

involved moving the communion table to the east end of the church in an "altar-wise"

orientation and installing rails around it, at which those receiving communion were supposed

to kneel.[116] Only the celebrant was allowed to approach the altar.[117] However, on the day in

question some of the parishioners tried to bully Whitby into giving them communion sitting

at the communion table. Whitby resisted, which seems to have triggered something of a riot

in the church. Whitby described how many of his parishioners "thronged about him", called

him "Baal's priest", and attempted to stop those who were willing to kneel at the rails. There

were calls to throw Whitby out of the church or "pull him by his ears".[118] He also mentioned

that some of the parishioners "layd hands" upon him. Whitby's petition concluded with

requests to Parliament that he be allowed to perform communion as the protesters wished, for

his own security, as they had threatened to "dragg him by his heeles about the Church" if he

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[115] HL/PO/JO/10/1/61 15 June 1640 Petition (Petition of Oliver Whitbie); HL/PO/JO/10/1/67: 22 July 1641 Petition (The humble petition of Robert Waineman and George Bonnest of the parish of St Olave's in Southwark).

[116] Kenneth Fincham, "'According to Ancient Custom': The Return of Altars in the Restoration Church of England", *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 13 (January 2003), 29-54, 31.

[117] Newman, "Laudian literature and the interpretation of Caroline churches", in *Art and Patronage in the Caroline Courts*, 171.

[118] HL/PO/JO/10/1/61: 15 June 1640 Petition (Petition of Oliver Whitbie).

refused to do so.[119] Only two of those involved, the watermen Robert Waineman and George Bonnest, seem to have been punished for taking part.[120]

Given the controversy that had arisen surrounding such changes to the fabric of the Church and the receiving of communion, Whitby should have perhaps anticipated such a strong reaction eventually. It is not an exaggeration to say that the conversion of communion tables into altars, the installation of rails and the changes to the receiving of communion, constituted some of the most sweeping changes to English religious practice since the Elizabethan Settlement, at least in the minds of many Protestants.[121] These changes were central to the wider religious program of William Laud, aimed at emphasising the sanctity of sacred spaces and the ceremony of religious observance, as well as enforcing strict obedience.[122] However, they were deeply divisive. The Laudian argument was that the moving and railing of altars and kneeling for communion heightened the sanctity of the sacrament, and that participating as required was of paramount importance for communicants.[123] Laudian apologists contended that such changes were not inherently ground-breaking, but such platitudes carried little weight to the godly.[124] In the days after the uproar of 6 June, the churchwardens, Cornelius Cooke, John Rose and Robert Houghton, bowed under the pressure and had the rails removed.[125]

Protestants on the more zealous end of the spectrum in the Church of England found altars, rails and kneeling for communion repugnant. This was hardly the first time such issues

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[119] HL/PO/JO/10/1/61: 15 June 1640 Petition (Petition of Oliver Whitbie).

[120] HL/PO/JO/10/1/67: 22 July 1641 Petition (Robert Waineman and George Bonnest); BL Harley MS 6424 ff. 72-73.

[121] Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists,* 199.

[122] Kenneth Fincham and Nicholas Tyacke, *Altars Restored: The Changing Face of Worship, 1547-c.1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 211; Lake, "The Laudian Style", 164.

[123] Peter Lake, "The Laudians and the Argument from Authority", in *Court, Country and Culture: essays on early modern British history in honor of Perez Zagorin,* eds. Bonnelyn Y. Kunze and Dwight D. Brautigam (Rochester, N.Y.; Woodbridge: University of Rochester Press, 1992), 149-176, 153.

[124] Lane, *The Laudians and the Elizabethan Church,* 2.

[125] HL/PO/JO/10/1/61: 15 June 1641 (Petition of Cornelius Cooke, John Rose and Robert Houghton Churchwardens of St Olave's in Southwark).

had been controversial, but as the Laudian Church made participating in such ceremonies legally necessary, opposition to them was heightened.[126] Charles Chauncy, a Puritan minister twice presented for refusing to perform his office in a Laudian manner, wrote a 1641 work which argued that these changes were intended to encourage idolatry and false worship.[127] Robert Baillie, a Scottish opponent of Laudianism, was even more direct. In *A parallel or briefe comparison of the liturgie with the masse-book,* also published in 1641, he argued, much as the title suggests, that the Laudian liturgy was the Catholic Mass in all but name.[128] The book's seventh chapter focused wholly on the various aspects of communion, which, replete with anti-Catholic slurs, made the case that every individual element of Laudian communion was lifted from the Mass.[129] That the parishioners involved in the tumult held at least the rudiments of this view of Laudian communion can be seen in their choice of insults: most importantly, the invocation of Baal when they called Oliver Whitby "baal's priest".[130] The servants of Baal, one of many pagan gods mentioned in the Bible, famously opposed the prophet Elijah in the Book of Kings and died for their presumption.[131] In godly literature, Baal was used to represent paganism, idolatry and Catholicism.[132] This association between Laudianism and Biblical paganism indicates that those who chose to use violence saw the

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[126] Lori A. Ferrell, "Kneeling and the Body Politic", in *Religion, Literature and Politics in Post-Reformation England, 1540-1688,* eds. Donna B. Hamilton and Richard Strier (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 70-92, 75; Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I,* 228.

[127] Charles Chauncy, *The retraction of Mr. Charles Chancy formerly minister of Ware in Harfordshire* (London, 1641), 6, 8, 9-11, 15, 18, 22, 33: The malice of this particular work was heightened by its background; Chauncy had twice complied with the High Commission, but his conscience was so troubled by his decision that he decided to emigrate to America, which he did in 1638, and wrote a thorough recantation, which had been in wide circulation until finally being published in 1641. For more on Chauncy see Francis J. Bremer, "Chauncy, Charles (ba1592, d. 1672)", *ODNB,* published 23 September 2004, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/5196.

[128] Robert Baillie, *A parallel or briefe comparison of the liturgie with the masse-book* (London, 1641), ii; David Stevenson, "Baillie, Robert (1602–1662)", *ODNB,* last modified 24 May 2008, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/1067.

[129] Baillie, *A parallel or briefe comparison,* 74-84.

[130] HL/PO/JO/10/1/61 15 June 1640 Petition (Petition of Oliver Whitbie).

[131] 1 Kings 18:41.

[132] For example, see William Sclater, *Sermons experimentall* (London, 1638), 23; Anthony Cade, *A sermon necessarie for these times shewing the nature of conscience* (London, 1639), 19; Anonymous, *Englands ioy, for the kings gratious proclamation for the banishing papists* (London, 1640), 1.

Laudian service as a contamination of the true Protestant church, misdirecting its followers to worship a false god.

More evidence that the perpetrators in St Olave's viewed the Laudian liturgy as sinful distractions from true religion can be seen throughout the petition. Whitby mentions that some of the men in the church put their hats on during the incident: a clear communication of disrespect. One of the most indicative is the comment regarding pottage. As aforementioned, one of the insults hurled at Whitby was the command that he should "cary home your consecrated bread and pop your pottage".[133] Pottage is a thick soup or stew, and a dietary staple in England for centuries.[134] This comment may be a simple insult about the consecrated bread: that it was of no spiritual significance and could be eaten with the most commonplace foodstuff. There could also be a social element, a way of putting a pretentious clergyman in his place. However, it also had a theological connotation: in Genesis, Esau, the older twin of Jacob, sells his birth right as the eldest son to Jacob in exchange for a bowl of red pottage. It was commonly invoked by religious writers throughout the early modern period to talk about the value of true religion.[135] It was also sometimes used to criticise the *Book of Common Prayer*.[136] Whilst obviously mocking the veneration of the Eucharist and the *Book of Common Prayer*, this insult suggests that those who attacked Whitby saw the book as a betrayal. Such opposition to the *Book of Common Prayer* was hardly new. The version used in the 1640s was essentially the same one that had been used since the reign of Elizabeth I, and the godly had long viewed the *Book of Common Prayer* as fundamentally a Catholic cipher. The biblical story of Esau, Jacob and the pottage is about Esau making an

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[133] HL/PO/JO/10/1/61 15 June 1640 Petition (Petition of Oliver Whitbie).

[134] For example, Thomas Vicary, *The English-mans treasure with the true anatomie of mans body* (London, 1641), mentions pottage on pages 152, 162, 178, 188, 212, 218, 215.

[135] For example, see Léonard Constant, *A Christian and wholesom admonition directed to the Frenchmen* (London, 1587), "TO THE RIGHT worshipfull, godly, vertuous, and my singular good friends, M. Henry Neuill Esquier, and Maistresse Anne Neuill his wife, grace and peace with increase of godlie zeale."

[136] Thomas Cheshire, *A sermon preached in Saint Pavles chvrch* (London, 1641), 13; Giles Calfine, *A messe of pottage* (London, 1642), 1-2, 6.

impulsive decision to trade something of tremendous value for something of negligible worth which will gratify him immediately. Equating the *Book of Common Prayer* with pottage was a symbolic way of showing it was such an unequal exchange. In St Olave's the mention of pottage was used to indicate that Whitby's communion ritual was also something of little value that had been traded for something with indescribable value: uncorrupted religious practice, which was by extension, the birth right of the English people.

This leaves the question of what the perpetrators intended by threatening and assaulting their minister in such a manner, and putting forward such fierce opposition to the Laudian practice of communion. Given the evidence, the violence was primarily intended to rid the church of its idolatrous trappings. There were calls to throw Whitby out of the church, and physical attempts to stop those who wished to kneel for communion.[137] These actions all illustrate a determination to remove Laudian ceremonies from the church. Such aspects of worship in general, especially with regard to communion, were portrayed in oppositional works as pollutants in the Church of England. Charles Chauncey wrote that the veneration of the altar "stinkes of the breaden and dunghill God".[138] This was a common phrase that Protestant polemicists used to refer to the consecrated host, which they saw as idolatrous.[139] It was also a common aspect of texts which argued that Laudian communion and the Catholic Mass were the same.[140] This also reflects another point of continuity with earlier Protestant resistance, as denial of or scepticism towards the Catholic host had been a mainstay of evangelical and Protestant thought since the early sixteenth century.[141] Meanwhile, the examples of such rhetoric in the work of William Prynne, one of Charles I's most vocal

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[137] HL/PO/JO/10/1/61 15 June 1640 Petition (Petition of Oliver Whitbie).
[138] Chauncy, *The retraction of Mr. Charles Chancy,* 29.
[139] Christopher Haigh, "'A Matter of Much Contention in the Realm': Parish Controversies over Communion Bread in Post-Reformation England", *History* 88, 291 (July 2003), 393-404, 394.
[140] Chauncy, *The retraction of Mr. Charles Chancy,* 15.
[141] Garthine Walker, *Persuasive Fictions: Faction, Faith and Political Culture in the Reign of Henry VIII* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1996), 128.

detractors who lost his ears for his trouble, are too numerous to list in entirety.[142] A good example can be found in his 1637 work *A quench-coale*, in which he drew a connection between Laudianism and Jezebel, the most maligned woman in scripture, and called for the purging of the Church of England of all "popish abominations". In his list of "abominations" he included altars, bread baskets, and with the greatest emphasis, "ungodly ignorant curates".[143] The behaviour of those involved in the turmoil in St Olave's shows that they agreed both with the argument that Laudian ceremonies were idolatrous contaminations, and that the sole solution was to purge them from the church, along with those who supported them.

What occurred on Sunday 6 June 1641 was one of many instances of disorder in the capital that year that were opposed to William Laud's religious agenda. It was intended to end the rituals of such religious performance, and frighten and punish those ministers who dispensed it into allowing its discontinuation. The plaintive ending of Whitby's petition suggests that this particular campaign may have been successful.[144] Such an event would have been unthinkable just a few years previously, and must have been deeply shocking to those present, as communion was considered an act of enormous significance.[145] The willingness of the perpetrators to break this taboo demonstrates both their strong views on the matter and their confidence that in the chaotic times they were living through, such an action was possible. Perhaps, given that just two demonstrators were punished, and the objects of their grievances seem to have been swiftly removed, they were right.

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[142] William Lamont, "Prynne, William (1600–1669)", *ODNB,* last modified 19 May 2011, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/22854.
[143] William Prynne, *A quench-coale* (London, 1637), 29, 98.
[144] HL/PO/JO/10/1/61 15 June 1640 Petition (Petition of Oliver Whitbie).
[145] Christopher Marsh, "'Common Prayer' in England 1560-1640: The View from the Pew", *Past & Present* 171, 1 (May 2001), 66-94, 75.

In St Thomas the Apostle, a fourteenth century church in the City of London, the violence was more direct.[146] Reconstructing what took place in the church on 7 June 1641, the day after the events at St Olave's, is both supported and complicated by the multiple accounts that were submitted to the House of Lords. The first petition, submitted on 30 June 1641, was written by the victims, namely the parson, William Cooper, the churchwardens, including William Bathurst, and sundry other parishioners who supported them.[147] They reported that on 7 June 1641, the parish gathered in the church to take the Protestation Oath. The Oath had been ordered by parliament and was portrayed as a way to defend the country and secure loyalty to the king and parliament.[148] Many people explicitly saw it as a barricade against Catholicism, choosing to take it on days which had religious significance, such as on 5 November, the anniversary of the failed Gunpowder Plot some thirty-six years earlier.[149] The text of the Oath claimed a Catholic conspiracy was in place, and effectively functioned as a loyalty test for parliament and further religious reform.[150] After the Oath had been taken, a parishioner named John Blackwell stood up and made an impassioned speech against the altar rails in the church.[151] Blackwell was the godly son of a grocer, who later became a captain in the army of Oliver Cromwell.[152] He called them "popish in[n]ovat[i]ons" and stated that the Oath commanded their immediate removal. He also urged the move of the communion table from the east end of the chancel to its original position in the centre of the

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[146] Wilberforce Jenkinson, *London Churches Before the Great Fire* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1917), 171.

[147] HL/PO/JO/10/1/64: 30 June 1641 (The humble petition of the Parson, Churchwardens, and other Inhabitants of the parish of St Thomas the Apostle, in the City of London).

[148] "The House of Commons Protestation of 3 May 1641", in Samuel R. Gardiner ed., *Constitutional Documents of the Puritan Revolution, 1625-60* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), 155.

[149] John Walter, *Covenanting Citizens: The Protestation Oath and Popular Political Culture in the English Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 160.

[150] Edward Vallance, *Revolutionary England and the National Covenant: State Oaths, Protestantism and the Political Nation, 1553-1682* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005), 51-2.

[151] HL/PO/JO/10/1/64: 30 June 1641 Petition (The humble petition of the Parson, Churchwardens and others).

[152] Tai Liu, *Puritan London: A Study of Religion and Society in the City Parishes* (Newark; London: University of Delaware Press, 1986), 134; Robert Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution: Commercial Change, Political Conflict, and London's Overseas Traders, 1550-1653* (London; New York: Verso, 1993), 527.

church. It seems a considerable number of Blackwell's fellow parishioners agreed with his sentiments, as the rails were swiftly broken into pieces with bitter words of reproach to the more conformable. The petition names some of the perpetrators, such as Thomas Calley, Michael Robinson, George Tye and John Robert. The churchwarden may also have been assaulted as the petition mentions he was "stricken".[153] The only churchwarden named is William Bathurst who called himself as such in his signature on the petition, perhaps implying he was the one assaulted. The remnants of the rails were then carried outside and burned. The men whilst doing so were claimed to have said that "Dagon" was down, and that they would burn him. They also remarked that the rails were sinful, but they would make an offering of them. One of them also threatened the aforementioned parson, saying that if he dared to read the next service in a surplice they would burn him as well.[154]

However, Blackwell and his associates put forward two versions of events to counter their opponents' petition. The first was submitted on the same day as the previous one, suggesting they were prescient enough to prepare an account at the same time as their adversaries. The version of events given by the perpetrators in their counter-petition differed from the first in a few significant ways. They denied the assault on the churchwarden although they cryptically admitted they "defied" him. They blamed the taking down and burning of the rails on some unnamed "youths" and played down the violence used to do so. They used the Protestation Oath to justify their actions, claiming that by swearing it they had protested "before God against All Popery & Popish inovacons". They also defended their actions by mentioning the novelty of the rails, which had been installed just three years earlier, which they claimed had been the cause of much grief in the parish since.[155] They

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[153] HL/PO/JO/10/1/64: 30 June 1641 Petition (Petition of parson, churchwardens and others).
[154] HL/PO/JO/10/1/64: 30 June 1641 Petition (Petition of parson, churchwardens and others).
[155] HL/PO/JO/10/1/64: 30 June 1641 Petition (Petition of one churchwarden and others of the parish of St Thomas the Apostle).

included an anecdote about an elderly woman whose death was hastened by her moral discomfort at being asked to receive communion at the rails. Remarkably, this petition gathered around forty-one signatures, suggesting they had considerable support within the parish, compared to the ten on the initial petition. Their second petition, submitted the next day, did not include any elaboration on the actions which brought them to the attention of the House of Lords, and simply states that they had already sent a petition before the House, and would appear before them if they so wished.[156] There are significant issues with this version of events. For example, the "youths" they claimed removed the altar rails were not mentioned in the first petition.[157] Their claim that they wished the rails removed "in an orderly way" seems to contrast with their apparent intense loathing of Laudian paraphernalia. Therefore, it seems most likely that the initial petition described what occurred in the church with greater accuracy, whilst the second more effectively described how the perpetrators regarded Laudianism and how they justified their behaviour.

It seems clear that the Protestation Oath played a key role in causing such violence to unfold, calling for the removal of all "popery and popish Inovacons".[158] The rails were unequivocally seen as such an "inovacon" by Blackwell and many other parishioners.[159] How they saw the rails can also be seen in the invoking of Dagon. Dagon was an ancient Mesopotamian and Canaanite deity who was recorded in the Bible as the god of the Philistines, and was often used as a byword for idolatry as much as Baal.[160] It is clear then

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[156] HL/PO/JO/10/1/64: 1 July 1641 (The humble petition of John Blackwell Francis Webb and others the parishioners of St Thomas Apostles London).

[157] HL/PO/JO/10/1/64: 30 June 1641 Petition (Petition of parson, churchwardens and others).

[158] HL/PO/JO/10/1/64: 30 June 1641 Petition (Petition of parson, churchwardens and others); HL/PO/JO/10/1/64: 30 June 1641 Petition (Humble petition).

[159] HL/PO/JO/10/1/64: 30 June 1641 Petition (Humble petition).

[160] For example, in Joshua 19.27 and Judges 16.23, in which it is a temple of Dagon that is destroyed by Samson in his last act of defiance against the Philistines. Examples of this god being invoked as a symbol of idolatry, especially among godly writers, include George Lightbody, *Against the apple of the left eye of antichrist* (London, 1638), 60; Mark E. Dever, "Sibbes [Sibs], Richard (1577?–1635), *ODNB,* last modified 24 May 2007, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/25498; Richard Sibbes, *Evangelicall sacrifices* (London, 1640), 11; William Vaughn, *The Church militant* (London, 1640), 149.

that the taking of the Protestation Oath emboldened those parishioners who disapproved of the rails to destroy them. As an order of Parliament it gave them permission to ignore any other sources of power and purge their churches themselves.

The form this new-found agency took shows how far Blackwell, Calley, Robinson, Tye and Robert were willing to go to cleanse their church. They viewed the communion rails as sinful pollutants within the church, much like those at St Olave's, and they also used acts of violence to purge the church of their presence, and to frighten their clergymen into following their lead. The first instance of violence mentioned was against the churchwarden who, according to the first petition, was "stricken", most likely whilst blocking the removal of the altar rails.[161] Given that this action was justified by the view that the rails were immoral, and the Protestation Oath gave free licence to remove such sinful objects, it follows that those defending them should also be punished for doing so. This shows how far the perpetrators felt they could take the Oath; it meant they could ignore and even attack those who opposed them.

The second form of violence was of course the burning of the altar rails. In burning objects they saw as corrupt, Blackwell and the others were following in a long Protestant tradition of burning profanities. Throughout the Reformation, rood screens, fraudulent relics and other objects considered idolatrous, had been condemned to fire by Protestants.[162] Burning had long been a way to purify such objects so they would not infect the rest of the Church and even society.[163] The act of burning the rails shows that like in St Olave's, the perpetrators at St Thomas the Apostle saw the rails in the same way, and so had to be cleansed from the church. This was also far from the only example of altar rails being burned,

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[161] HL/PO/JO/10/1/64: 30 June 1641 Petition (Petition of parson, churchwardens and others).

[162] Marshall, "The Rood of Boxley", 696; Aston, *England's Iconoclasts*, 283; Atherton and Morgan, "Revolution and Retrenchment: The Cathedral, 1630-1720", in *Norwich cathedral church, city and diocese*, 540.

[163] Margaret Aston, "Rites of destruction by fire", in *Faith and Fire: Popular and Unpopular Religion, 1350-1600,* ed. Margaret Aston (London: Hambledon Press, 1993), 291-313, 300.

as such acts were carried out across much of the country, showing that this view of altar rails was commonplace among zealous Protestants.[164]

In St Thomas the Apostle, the threat of burning was extended to people; the last violent act was the threat that "if the Parson came to Reade service in a Surplice they would burn him and the surplice with the railes".[165] Burning as a way to purify society was not limited to objects, but had also been used against heretics since the medieval period.[166] The threat, however, was specifically linked to the wearing of the surplice. The surplice had been another sore issue in the Caroline Church and indeed throughout the Reformation. The key objections were that they were Catholic in origin and as such contaminated the Protestant Church of England, that they were mere covers for the hypocrisy of priests.[167] Perhaps the most provocative example of this was an anonymous dialogue in which the House of Commons and St Paul's Church in London were personified as Doctor Commons and Pauls Quire with Paul being ill and the Doctor attempting to cure him. The piece describes Laudian changes literally as an illness afflicting the church. The surplice is written about twice and in extremely derogatory terms. Firstly, Paul describes surplices as being literally dirty and secondly, and much more aggressively, Paul coughs up some copes and surplices.[168] This dialogue portrayed the surplice as a diseased object with the implication that it must be purged for the Protestant Church to survive. The threat of burning the parson, William Cooper, shows that they subscribed to this view, and also that for the parson to wear it warranted his own death by the same manner as the object itself.[169] There may also have been

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[164] Walter, "Abolishing Superstition with Sedition", 83.

[165] HL/PO/JO/10/1/64: 30 June 1641 Petition (Petition of parson, churchwardens and others).

[166] Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society,* 15.

[167] For example, see Anonymous, *A Description of the Round-head and rattle-head* (London, 1642), 3; Henry Burton, *A replie to a relation, of the conference between William Laude and Mr. Fisher the Jesuite* (London, 1640), 341; George Gillespie, *A dispute against the English-popish ceremonies* (London, 1637), 139; Anonymous, *The first and large petition of the Citie of London* (London, 1641), 5; A. B. C. D. E., *Novembris Monstrum* (London, 1641), 120.

[168] Anonymous, *Saint Pauls potion prescribed by Doctor Commons* (London, 1641), 2, 5.

[169] HL/PO/JO/10/1/64: 30 June 1641 Petition (Petition of parson, churchwardens and others).

a more personal reason why the parishioners would have wished to intimidate Cooper; he was later imprisoned for being a royalist.[170] Given the Parliamentarian allegiance of Blackwell, the threat made against Cooper may also have been a result of their political differences. However, given the intense religious meaning attached to burning, a primarily religious motivation is the most likely. The threat both shows that they saw the surplice as heresy and those who wore it as heretics. However, it was a threat, which shows not necessarily that the perpetrators possessed the will or mind to carry it out, but instead wanted to continue the agenda of purifying their church by terrifying their parson into acceding to their wishes. This again shows the desire of those involved to purify their church, either by words or deeds.

The events of 7 June 1641, much like that in St Olave's the day before, show the extent of the popular opposition to Laudianism and how violence was utilised to remove aspects of it from their churches. The violence that accompanied the burning of the altar rails in St Thomas the Apostle also shows much more clearly how the context of the 1640s enabled such violence. The taking of the strongly-worded Protestation Oath clearly made some of those present feel that they had been given permission to act on long-held resentments. They intended to purge their local churches of the ceremonies and ornamentation of Laudianism, believing them to be distractions at best and idolatrous at worst.[171] They also wished to punish those who had allowed or defended such aspects of religious practice.[172] They used violence or the threat of it to force such people to change their behaviour. In St Olave's, the aims seem to have been more or less achieved, but in St Thomas the Apostle this is less clear. What is clear is that the context of intense religious divisions and the catalyst of the Protestation Oath gave power to parishioners to reform their churches themselves. In Chapter Two, the godly seemed most determined to remove objects

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[170] Jenkinson, *London Churches,* 171.
[171] HL/PO/JO/10/1/64: 30 June 1641 Petition (Humble petition).
[172] HL/PO/JO/10/1/64: 30 June 1641 Petition (Petition of parson, churchwardens and others).

deemed dangerous, but these instances show a new willingness to extend the violence to those most associated with Laudianism, most importantly for what was to come: ministers.

**The Radwinter Troubles: Radwinter, 1641-2**

For the remainder of this chapter we will leave behind the powder-keg that was London in the 1640s, and venture into the surrounding county of Essex, which saw some of the most extreme examples of popular violence in the months prior to the Battle of Edgehill on 23 October 1642. We will start with the village of Radwinter. From early 1641 to early 1642, the clergymen of this rural village were beset with resistance from their own congregation. As aforementioned, the rector Richard Drake recorded over twenty instances of aggression towards himself and his curate in his account of his time in the parish, although three officiated at Radwinter at different times: William Shepherd, Augustine Rolfe and Thomas Garnham. Both Rolfe and Garnham signed documents connected to what occurred later, so most likely both experienced violence, but Shepherd seems to have left before any occurred.[173] On 18 February 1641, a cobbler named Abraham Chapman entered the church armed and attempted to take away the surplice. When Drake resisted there was a struggle, while the curate managed to slip out of the church taking the surplice with him. When Chapman realised he had failed in his original intention, he stole two service books instead.[174] On 10 March the wives of John Montford and Thomas Cornel broke into the church and mutilated the surplice by cutting a foot of fabric from the front and back.[175] On 24 March after a funeral, a number of women attacked the officiating curate, held a knife to his throat, cut the surplice off him, and carried the tattered remains away laughing.[176] The next violent confrontation was on 15 January 1642 when Drake was attacked and hurled out of the church,

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[173] Bod.L Rawlinson D 158 f. 52.
[174] Bod.L Rawlinson D 158 f. 43.
[175] Bod.L Rawlinson D 158 f. 43.
[176] Bod.L Rawlinson D 158 f. 43.

which prompted his departure from the parish.[177] The following five months were relatively peaceful, but this ended on 4 June 1642, when the curate entered the church to perform evening prayer. He was confronted by some of the parishioners, including Abraham Chapman and Edward Montford, who challenged the curate that if he read the prayers "he with his companions would go to ringing".[178] It is not clear what Montford meant by this but given that Drake mentioned a "Wait" or travelling musician was present in his account, it seems most likely that they intended to drown out the prayers with music, rough or otherwise.[179] When the curate made a defiant reply and read the service as normal, they acted as Montford had promised, interrupting the service with shouting, laughter and some form of musical disruption which Drake referred to as "jangling".[180] They then approached the curate in the reading pew, told him he must pray with them, and proceeded to force him out of the pew.[181] Sensibly the curate decided to leave, and Montford mockingly remarked that he liked his obedience now, whilst another remarked that "he had been well enough serv'd to have been taken by ye heels & haud his brains beaten out".[182]

A related incident had occurred two years earlier in 1640, when soldiers on their way to fight in the Second Bishops' War arrived in Essex. One Sunday they broke into the parish church, tore up the altar rails, took down some images Drake had installed in the church at his own expense, tied the images to trees, whipped them and then burned them, using the wood to heat their fires. Then, in the most brazenly violent act of all, they caught a duck, killed it,

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[177] Bod.L Rawlinson D 158 f. 48.
[178] Bod.L Rawlinson D 158 ff. 43-44.
[179] Martin Ingram, "Ridings, Rough Music and the "Reform of Popular Culture" in Early Modern England", *Past & Present* 105, 1 (November 1984), 79-113, 79.
[180] Bod.L Rawlinson D 158 ff. 43-44.
[181] Bod.L Rawlinson D 158 ff. 43-44.
[182] Bod.L Rawlinson D 158 ff. 43-44.

and threw the unfortunate animal's remains into the church, stating that they would treat Drake himself the same had they found him.[183]

Radwinter by 1638, when Drake was given the living, was a parish inclined towards godly religion. Among the previous clergymen in the village were William Harrison, author of the *Description of England*, and his godly curate Richard Rogers.[184] After Drake's departure the town reverted to a more austere form of religious practice under the godly preacher, William Voyle.[185] Alongside this tendency towards godly Protestantism in Radwinter was also a sense of religious freedom. John Walter has reasoned that prior to Drake's appointment, the village had enjoyed an unusual level of independence due to the manorial lords being absent, and so a clique of godly middling sort dominated the religious direction of the village. It was from this section of Radwinter society that the resistance to Drake and his curates emerged. By terrific contrast, Richard Drake was a committed Laudian with a great regard for religious images, ceremony and all the trappings that comprised Laud's vision of the "beauty of holiness".[186] For the first two years of his ministry, Radwinter seems to have been calm, but as Drake steadily implemented his Laudian agenda, the godly fought back.[187] In 1640, some of Drake's godly opponents presented a set of articles to the House of Commons, complaining of every particular of Drake's ministry. He was called to answer, which he did in flippant and trivialising terms.[188] However, the case did not result in any formal action against Drake, which left violence as the only recourse for those parishioners who would oppose him.

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[183] BL Additional MS 21935 f. 89.

[184] Patrick Collinson, John Craig and Brett Usher, eds., *Conferences and Combination Lectures in the Elizabethan Church, 1582-1590* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003), 244-6.

[185] For a detailed biography of Drake and an analysis of how and why he gained the living of Radwinter see John Walter, "'Affronts & Insolencies': The Voices of Radwinter and Popular Opposition to Laudianism", *The English Historical Review* 122, 495 (February 2002), 35-60, 44.

[186] Walter, "Affronts & Insolencies", 35.

[187] Walter, "Affronts & Insolencies", 44.

[188] Bod.L Rawlinson D 158 ff. 45-47.

However, the first episode of violence did not originate from within Drake's congregation. Soldiers had been a presence in England since the Bishops' Wars of 1639 and 1640, and throughout both they had been associated with acts of violence.[189] The letters of Nehemiah Wharton, a godly man who enlisted in the Parliamentarian army under the Earl of Essex in July 1642, list many examples of him and his fellow soldiers taking the Reformation into their own hands.[190] For example, in a letter written in August 1642, he described the pillaging of a Catholic home, how they converted a surplice into handkerchiefs at Hillingdon, and burned altar rails from Chiswick, Uxbridge and Wendover.[191] Such soldiers took their faith seriously. Wharton regularly mentioned hearing sermons throughout his service, especially from godly preachers such as Obadiah Sedgewick.[192] His last letter was dated 7 October 1642, so his eventual fate is unknown.

In Radwinter the iconoclasm the soldiers performed was deeply personal. Nehemiah Wallington, another godly man who kept a detailed account of current events, wrote that Drake had paid for the images out of his own pocket, which he claimed was the emblematic amount of 30 shillings in mimicry of the 30 pieces of silver Judas was paid to betray Christ in the New Testament.[193] This comment shows how the soldiers and the godly saw the images: as a betrayal of the church. The whipping of the images was perhaps intended to symbolically punish them, or the man who placed them in the church. Whipping was a punishment most used against those at the bottom of the social order; such as Margaret Knowsley, a domestic

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[189] Jacqueline Eales, "Iconoclasm, Iconography, and the Altar in the English Civil War", in *The Church and the Arts,* ed. Diana Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 313-328, 327; BL MS Sloane 1457, fs. 60-67.

[190] Ismini Pells, "Wharton, Nehemiah (fl. 1641–1649?)", *ODNB,* published 28 May 2015, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/107338.

[191] SP 16/491 f. 265 (Nehemiah Wharton to his [late master] and much honoured friend, George Willingham).

[192] SP 16/491 f. 309 (Nehemiah Wharton to George Willingham, merchant); SP 16/491 f. 345 (Nehemiah Wharton to George Willingham); SP 16/492 f. 3 (Nehemiah Wharton to George Willingham); SP 16/492 f. 49 (Nehemiah Wharton to George Willingham, merchant); SP 16/492 f. 68 (Nehemiah Wharton to George Willingham); SP 16/492 f. 87 (Nehemiah Wharton to George Willingham); Barbara Donagan, "Sedgwick, Obadiah (1599/1600–1658)", *ODNB,* last modified 3 January 2008, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/25016.

[193] BL Additional MS 21935 f. 89.

servant who was whipped for "slander", after revealing that her employer, the minister and preacher Stephen Jerome, had made advances towards her in Nantwich in 1627.[194] The Quaker, Dorothy Waugh, was savagely whipped in Carlisle in 1655 for transgressing gendered boundaries by daring to preach.[195] Whipping was also proscribed as a punishment for vagrants, children and trespassers.[196] The use of whipping against the images suggests the soldiers wished to demean them or show how profane they were. Using such religious images as kindling to heat their ovens had the same subtext of purification. There was also an element of testing the images as the soldiers were reported to have said "if you bee gods deliver yourselves."[197] Putting images and relics into fires to prove, or rather disprove, their divinity had also been a common practice in earlier phases of the Reformation.[198] The reference to them as "gods" also shows that the soldiers supposed that the images were being worshipped as deities. Given that the soldiers, at least in Wallington's account, were aware of the images' connection to Drake, they may have had co-operation from amongst the parishioners.

The animal killing appears to be another symbolic act against Drake.[199] The choice of animal is important; the name for a male duck is drake, and killing an animal with the same name as Drake himself suggests the animal was a substitute for him. The throwing of the animal's remains into Drake's own church suggests they were showing that they believed Drake had polluted his church through his adherence to Laudianism, as well as adding shock value and immediacy to their threat against his person. This event serves as an effective

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[194] Steve Hindle, "The shaming of Margaret Knowsley: gossip, gender and the experience of authority in early modern England", *Continuity and Change* 9, 3 (December 1994), 391-419, 604.

[195] Dorothy Waugh, *A Relation Concerning Dorothy Waugh's Cruel Usage by the Mayor of Carlisle* (London, 1655), 1.

[196] Anonymous, *A Manuell, or, A Justice of peace* (London, 1642), 11, 14, 23.

[197] BL Additional MS 21935 f. 89.

[198] Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Tudor Church Militant: Edward VI and the Protestant Reformation* (London: Allen Lane, 1999), 71.

[199] BL Additional MS 21935 f. 89.

prequel to what was to come the following year. It demonstrates that at least some of the parishioners strongly opposed the presence of images in the church and resented Drake, even if the vehemence derived from the soldiers.

By 1641, the parishioners had gained the confidence to act on their grievances themselves. Several of the incidents of violence in Radwinter focused on the surplice. Abraham Chapman explicitly stated that he wanted to take the surplice away from the church.[200] The two women who broke into the church damaged the surplice to render it unusable.[201] Even the most violent act was intended to destroy the surplice in relation to the clergy, as the perpetrators specifically chose to cut the surplice off their curate.[202] The destruction of the surplice shows the perpetrators probably held the surplice in the same light as their counterparts in St Olave's did, as a contaminating mask for corruption and secretive Catholicism within the church, which they believed it was their duty to destroy. However, in Radwinter this was taken a step further, as the violence illustrates that it was specifically the wearing of the surplice by clergymen that the perpetrators so vehemently opposed. This not only shows that the perpetrators wanted to purify their church of this poisonous object, but also that they were attacking the power it gave the clergy.

Laudian scholarship presented the surplice as an object which elevated the clergy. Suffolk clergyman James Buck, in a book on the Beatitudes, suggested that the wearing of a surplice symbolised the "pureness" of the clergy from sin and wrongdoing.[203] In 1634 another clergyman named Henry Greenwood defended the surplice, in a book dedicated to a prominent courtier, as a way of distinguishing the clergy from the laity during services.[204] Another anonymous writer took this even further and suggested in a 1641 work, confuting the

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[200] Bod.L Rawlinson D 158 f. 43.
[201] Bod.L Rawlinson D 158 f. 43.
[202] Bod.L Rawlinson D 158 f. 43.
[203] James Buck, *A treatise of the Beatitudes* (London, 1637), 145.
[204] Henry Greenwood, *Markes and no markes, of the Kingdome of Heauen* (London, 1634), 16.

cleric Lewis Hughes, that the surplice aligned ministers with angels. With some of these views was a connotation with more generalised power. For example, the same anonymous writer aligned the surplice with the robes worn by groups with secular power, such as Parliamentary Lords.[205] In terms of material appearance the surplice symbolised the wealth and power of the clergy, and conformity to the Laudian elevated view of the priesthood. Therefore, the surplice was a symbol of the clergy's claim to moral, spiritual, and to some extent secular, authority under Laudian theology and ecclesiology. The surplice was held by Laudians to symbolise their elevated status, but for zealous Protestants it was a garment intended to mask hypocrisy and sinfulness. By destroying the surplice from the body of the clergymen, the parishioners of Radwinter were asserting that Drake and the curate were not special beings with a sacred vocation, but merely ordinary men.

As much as this violence was made possible by the immediate context, the controversy and violence around vestments in the English Reformation had a much longer history. The most significant period of conflict over vestments that saw violence had occurred some seventy-five years earlier in the reign of Elizabeth I. This was the Vestiarian controversy of 1565-6, essentially a recurrence of a controversy from the reign of Edward VI, which began in 1551, when John Hooper was appointed Bishop of Gloucester. An uncompromising Protestant who had spent the 1540s travelling between cities which had seen far more drastic reformations, such as Strasbourg and Zurich, Hooper refused to wear the rochet and chimere required for his consecration. His conviction was that there was no support for vestments in scripture, so their use was unjustified, and as vestiges of Catholicism, they were morally abhorrent.[206] Hooper eventually acquiesced, but disagreements over vestments would not disappear so easily.[207]

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[205] Anonymous, *A Confvtation of M. Lewes Hewes his dialogve* (London, 1641), 81-82.
[206] Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 72.
[207] D.G. Newcombe, "Hooper, John (1495x1500–1555)", *ODNB,* last modified 26 May 2016,

During the reign of Edward VI's fiercely Catholic sister Mary I, vestments were once again an integral part of traditional worship, which did little to aid their acceptability in the eyes of Protestants.[208] Her successor, Elizabeth I, sought to decide the question of religion with the Elizabethan Settlement of 1559, an incongruous fusion of medieval structure and ornament, with Protestant doctrine and theology.[209] The Settlement was considered conservative by many Protestants, especially those returning from exile from more zealous Protestant churches in Geneva or Zurich.[210] The so-called ornaments rubric in the 1559 *Book of Common Prayer* decreed that ministers should use ornaments as they would have done during the reign of her late brother.[211] The queen's expectation was essentially that all clergymen should wear appropriate vestments when performing religious functions and duties.[212] These unwelcome aspects of the Settlement survived a vocal attack at the convocation of 1563, leaving the matter unresolved again.[213] The controversy finally broke in 1565 when the queen wrote to Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury, of her displeasure at the diversity of opinion regarding vestments and commanded that he impose conformity to her own. Parker, whatever his private doubts, followed the demands of his queen, and began commanding ministers to conform to the queen's wishes, or be deprived of their livings.[214]

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https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/13706.

[208] Caroline Litzenberger, "St Michael's Gloucester, 1540-80: the cost of conformity in sixteenth-century England", in *The Parish in English Life 1400-1600,* eds. Katherine L. French, Gary G. Gibbs and Beat A. Kümin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 230-249, 245.

[209] Brett Usher, "New wine into old bottles: the doctrine and structure of the Elizabethan church", in *The Elizabethan World,* eds. Susan Doran and Norman Jones (London: Routledge, 2010), 203-221, 209-10.

[210] Andrew Pettegree, "The Marian Exiles and the Elizabethan Settlement", in *Marian Protestantism: Six Studies,* ed. Andrew Pettegree (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1996), 129-150, 132.

[211] John E. Booty, *The Book of Common Prayer 1559: The Elizabethan Prayer Book* (Charlottesville: Published for the Folger Shakespeare Library (by) the University Press of Virginia, 1976), 48.

[212] Winthrop S. Hudson, *The Cambridge Connection and the Elizabethan Settlement of 1559* (Durham N.C: Duke University Press, 1980), 6.

[213] David J. Crankshaw, "Preparations for the Canterbury provincial Convocation of 1562-63: a question of attribution", in *Belief and Practice in Reformation England: a tribute to Patrick Collinson from his students,* eds. Susan Wabuda and Caroline Litzenberger (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 60-93, 63.

[214] Matthew Parker, *Correspondence of Matthew Parker, D.D.,* ed. John Bruce (Cambridge: Printed at the University Press, 1853)*,* 224, 234-5, 275-6.

The first victim of this policy was Edward Brocklesby, who was deprived in 1565.[215] In the end, thirty-four ministers lost their livings during the crisis.[216]

London ministers were regarded as being the most vocally opposed to vestments, a matter not assisted by the fact that the sympathies of the Bishop of London, Edmund Grindal, were largely with the non-conformists.[217] This finally came to a head on 26 March 1566, when over one hundred London ministers were summoned to Lambeth Palace for a confrontation with the Archbishop of Canterbury, who vowed deprivation if they did not conform within three months. The dispute ran far deeper than this issue of vestments. It was fundamentally a debate about what should be allowed in worship, and who had the right to make such decisions: the monarch and the Church hierarchy or the worshippers. The violence engendered by this crisis is important in understanding the later violence of this chapter because it prefigures the disputes of the Laudian era. It illuminates the godly suspicion of ornamentation and their will to act which would resurface in the 1640s.

There were several instances of violence over vestments in London in 1566, but the most significant, which prefigures what took place in Radwinter, transpired on 3 June 1566 in

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[215] Usher, "Edward Brocklesby", 47.

[216] Exactly why the crisis erupted, and who was behind, it has long been disagreed upon by historians. The fullest study of the controversy remains John Primus' 1960 monograph, which comprised a detailed study of printed literary sources and therefore focuses on the theological aspects of the controversy, which suggested the impetus behind the push for vestments came from Parker himself. William Haugaard, however, argued that Elizabeth I was the prime mover behind the Church of England throughout her reign, and therefore it was she who wanted a more aggressive enforcement of her settlement. Susan Doran has suggested that this drive to enforce the wearing of vestments was an attempt to assist Elizabeth I's ongoing marriage negotiations with the Catholic Archduke Charles of Austria. Others have sought to understand the crisis from the perspectives of those apparently beyond the fray, such as Karl Gunther, who has studied the controversy from the Catholic perspective. Peter Marshall's recent account in *Heretics and Believers* emphasised the Queen's determination for uniformity, the lack thereof both before and during the crisis and the intense conflict generated by it. For further reading see John H. Primus, *The Vestments Controversy: an Historical Study of the Earliest Tensions within the Church of England in the Reigns of Edward VI and Elizabeth* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1960), 93; W. Haugaard, *Elizabeth and the English Reformation: the Struggle for a Stable Settlement of Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 93, 94, 204, 216; Susan Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony: The courtships of Elizabeth I* (London: Routledge, 1996), 94-95; Karl Gunther, *Reformation Unbound: Protestant Visions of Reform in England, 1525-1590* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 194; Marshall, *Heretics and Believers*, 470-8.

[217] Patrick Collinson, *Archbishop Grindal, 1519-1583: the Struggle for a Reformed Church* (London: Cape, 1979), 170.

the church of St Margaret Pattens.[218] The cause of the debacle was an unnamed Scottish

preacher who prior to this point had been a vociferous opponent of the surplice.[219] However,

his hatred proved no match for his apparent desire to keep his position in London. On 3 June

1566 he gave a sermon in the church of St Margaret Pattens, wearing the surplice. This

caused great displeasure to some women in the congregation, who threw stones at him during

his sermon and then pulled him out of the pulpit altogether, tore the surplice and scratched his

face.[220]

Why stoning, an ancient form of violence, appeared here is explained by examining

how vestments were viewed by their zealously Protestant opponents. One text which

demonstrates most of the key arguments was *A pleasavnt dialogve Betweene a Souldior of*

*Barwicke, and an English Chaplaine* by Anthony Gilby. It was intended as a response to

Matthew Parker's *A briefe examination,* a text written in defence of the government's policy

on vestments and church ornamentation more generally.[221] Gilby probably wrote the text in

1566 at the height of the controversy, but published it some years later in 1573.[222] Anthony

Gilby, one of many Protestant ministers who spent the reign of Mary I in exile in Geneva,

was inspired by his time there to create a more radical form of Protestantism on his return to

England.[223] In the text, a zealously Protestant soldier tries to convince his former comrade,

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[218] John Stow, *Three Fifteenth-Century Chronicles with Historical Memoranda,* ed. James Gairdner (London: Camden Society 1880), 128-147: On 7 April, in the church of St Mary Magdalene on Milk Street the communion bread and wine were stolen. On 21 April, a minister at St Mildred's Church on Bread Street performed the service in the required vestments flanked by his churchwardens to protect him from feared violence by the congregation. On 23 April, Robert Crowley, of St Giles-without-Cripplegate, refused to allow a funeral party, including several ministers in surplices, to enter his church.

[219] Stow, *Three Fifteenth-Century Chronicles*, 128-147: In the Church of All Hallows the Less in the City of London on 7 April 1566, which was Palm Sunday, this Scottish preacher gave a sermon fierce in opposition to the surplice, and the minister of the church was beaten by two of his parishioners, Mr Wilson, a dyer, and a fishmonger named Mr Dickinson, for allowing the sermon.

[220] Stow, *Three Fifteenth-Century Chronicles*, 128-147.

[221] Anonymous, *A briefe examination for the tyme* (London, 1566).

[222] Antoinina B. Zlatar, *Reformation Fictions: Polemical Protestant Dialogues in Elizabethan England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 146, for a more in-depth study of these texts and others throughout the controversy see chapter 6 "Puritans against the Bishops".

[223] Claire Cross, "Gilby, Anthony (c. 1510–1585)", *ODNB,* published 23 September 2004, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/10709.

now a creature of the Archbishop of Canterbury, that he has made a mistake by becoming a preening, self-aggrandising minister in Parker's image.[224] Gilby painted his caricature of the conservative Protestant ministry as uneducated, largely ignorant of scripture and dependent on sycophancy to the powerful for position. In this context, the surplice was a disguise for such clergymen "beyng voyde of all true holynesse".[225] The disagreement between these two men is epitomised in their attitudes towards vestments: the soldier Miles Monopodios seeing them as manifestly wrong, and his former brother-in-arms Bernarde Blynkarde seeing them as harmless. Gilby used Monopodios as a mouthpiece from which he systematically dismantled the arguments in *A brief examination*, arguing, much like Hooper before him, that no true Church should diverge from the word of God, and that vestments were leftovers from the Catholic Church that should be purged.[226] The anxiety underpinning these arguments was that the inclusion of any previously Catholic practice would lead Protestant worshippers into idolatry and worship of the Antichrist. Monopodios described in passionate terms how Christ had removed all superfluous trappings that had predated him, to eliminate all distractions and confusions about true faith.[227] Gilby, and the godly who would come later, saw vestments as part of a much grander ploy to mislead the faithful into immorality, which must be rejected in any truly Reformed Protestant Church.

This debate was also heightened by the recent memory of the persecution of Protestants under Mary I, during which Hooper himself had been burned for heresy, along with hundreds of others. Monopodios argued that wearing such vestiges of Catholicism transformed the wearer into the servant of the pope, much as any other uniform would; moreover, that the surplice was the very uniform of those who had presided over the deaths

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[224] Zlatar, *Reformation Fictions,* 147.
[225] Gilby, *A pleasant dialogue, "*Preface", vii.
[226] Zlatar, *Reformation Fictions,* 148.
[227] Gilby, *A pleasant dialogue,* 5.

of some 300 Protestants.[228] This attempt to capitalise on the memory of the Marian

persecution was also used by an anonymous writer who created an emotive scene of Nicholas

Ridley, who was also burned for heresy under Mary I, refusing to wear vestments as an

allegory that true Protestants could not yield "one iote" to the Catholic Church.[229] The

memory of the intense persecution of Protestants under Mary I, especially among Londoners,

must have been a powerful reason to reject vestments, which had been worn by the Marian

priests who had presided over the deaths of their co-religionists.

Given that vestments were viewed as a threat to the Protestant church, it is hardly

surprising that throwing stones was deemed a suitable punishment for those who allowed

their encroachment. The act of stoning has extended roots as a punishment for religious

transgressions in scripture. The Book of Leviticus described God commanding a blasphemer

to be stoned to death, which he promptly was.[230] One of the most influential examples came

from Numbers, in which a man was stoned to death for gathering wood on the Sabbath

Day.[231] The Book of Deuteronomy commanded that anyone deemed to be leading a person

away from true faith or found to be sacrificing animals, which was considered an

abomination, should be stoned to death.[232] Stoning therefore was a Biblical punishment for

offenders against God, and the use of this punishment shows the perpetrators saw the surplice

as such an abhorrence, along with the clergymen who were willing to wear them.

The impact of this intensely negative view of vestments and the clergymen who wore

them can also be seen in the pulling of the preacher from the pulpit. This shows that his

wearing of the surplice rendered him unworthy of his position; after all, as an anonymous

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[228] Gilby, *A pleasant dialogue,* 24.
[229] Anonymous, *An ansvvere for the tyme* (London, 1566), 133.
[230] Leviticus 24:22-23.
[231] Numbers 15:35-6.
[232] Deuteronomy 13:9-11; Deuteronomy 17:1-5.

writer commented in 1570, "A popish priest is no lawful minister of the gospel".[233] This would have been heightened by the fact that preaching was often considered a clergyman's most important duty by Protestants.[234] The act of tearing the surplice seems iconoclastic in nature. Protestants throughout the Reformation destroyed objects they deemed idolatrous, as has been established: the surplice was an object of superstition for many zealous Protestants.[235] Tearing it from the minister also appears to be about the distribution of power. One of the many anxieties surrounding the wearing of vestments was that it elevated the clergy and gave them too much power; as Anthony Gilby suggested, it was a mere disguise for hypocrisy.[236] Matthew Parker referred to this fear in *A briefe examination,* but his writing would have hardly assuaged it; he associated ministers with angels, much as James Buck did, above ordinary people by definition.[237] The surplice therefore, at least for zealous Protestants, both symbolised the corruption of the Church of England and the wrongful veneration of the clergy, and by extension its destruction was also an attack on both these wider implications. The desire to destroy the surplice was rooted in the belief that it was a malignant object which could cause the whole Christian community in England to sicken. For a group of people so clearly afraid that their community was vulnerable to attack from all sides, it seems likely that, in the face of a lack of official support, some of them felt that the only way to

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[233] Anonymous, *Foure paradoxes* (London, 1570), 1.

[234] Susan Wabuda, *Preaching during the English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 65.

[235] For examples during this period see Margaret Aston, "Puritans and Iconoclasm, 1560-1660", in *The Culture of English Puritanism,* 92-121.

[236] Gilby, *A pleasant dialogue,* 33.

[237] Anonymous, *A briefe examination*, 57: the full quotation reads "The Ministers of the Church (as the prophete Malachy witnesseth) be Angels and Gods messengers: but Angels for the most part appeared, being clothed in whyte garmentes. I pray you, howe shall we debarre the Church of this libertie, that it can not signifie some good thyng, in settyng foorth theyr rites and ceremonies, especially beyng so done, that no maner of Gods honour is attributed vnto them, and that they be in sight comely, and in number few, and that Christian people be not with them ouerburdened, & matters of greater importaunce be omitted. Peraduenture you wyll say to me: Let Ministers of the Churche declare themselues to be Angels, & not represent Angels by signification."

fight their cause was with violence. The surplice was not an article of theoretical objection to be begrudgingly tolerated, but a source of spiritual corruption that had to be eradicated.

How perpetrators of such violence saw their actions was exemplified when one of the women involved in another instance of protesting against vestments was punished by a public shaming ritual.[238] On 26 January 1566, the Bishop of London came to the church of St Margaret's Old Fish Street to preach, wearing the appropriate vestments, including a four-cornered cap. The congregation responded by heckling the Bishop throughout the service.[239] At least one of them, the unnamed wife of a local tinker, was sentenced to be punished on a makeshift cucking stool. The punishment was intended to humiliate her for such irreverence, but it had the opposite effect. Instead of showing any remorse, she celebrated her punishment, as did others involved in the incident, as they thought it a great honour that God "had made hir worthy to soffer persecution".[240] This shows how people involved in opposing vestments regarded their protests as a sacred responsibility, and suffering persecution only compounded their sense that their actions were approved by God.[241] This may well have also been the view of those who attacked the preacher.[242] They used violence to destroy the surplice and to punish the clergyman who agreed to wear such a dangerous garment, as it posed a threat to the spiritual health of the country. These examples of violent conflict over vestments seventy-five years prior to events in Radwinter, show both the long lineage of this debate, and how violence against vestments was shaped by the aim of purging the Church of England from the idolatry they represented.

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[238] Robert B. Shoemaker, "The Decline of Public Insult in London 1660-1800", *Past & Present,* 169 (November 2000), 97-131, 97.

[239] Stow, *Three Fifteenth-Century Chronicles*, 128-147.

[240] Stow, *Three Fifteenth-Century Chronicles*, 128-147.

[241] Susannah B. Monta, *Martyrdom and Literature in Early Modern England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 83.

[242] Stow, *Three Fifteenth-Century Chronicles*, 128-147.

Returning to events in Radwinter, an incident that took place on 17 March 1641 is also indicative of the mindset of those behind the violence, when a parishioner threw a book at the curate whilst he was sitting at the reading desk and demanded he read it. The book was entitled *An Answer of ye Roundheads to ye Rattleheads.*[243] "Rattle-head" was an insult coined in the early 1640s which is roughly equivalent to how we use the terms "hypocrite" or "two-faced" today. George Traps, the parishioner who demanded the curate read the book concerned, probably meant the "Rattle-head" persona to affiliate with the curate, given that the term "Round-head" referred to a would-be godly Parliamentarian.[244] "Rattle-head" denoted a person in power who appeared loyal to Protestantism but was in fact a Trojan horse, using their position to advance the Roman Catholic agenda. An anonymous 1641 poem *A Description of the Round-head and rattle-head* exemplified this, describing a Rattle-head as an ally of Rome intended to surreptitiously return England to the Catholic fold.[245] We have seen that one of the key objections to the surplice was that it was a hypocritical object, allowing its wearer to project an image of holiness whilst being corrupt in life. Another work which used this idea, an anonymous dialogue titled *A dialogue betwixt rattle-head and round-head,* also portrayed this message. In the text, a "Round-head" tries to convert a "Rattle-head" from revering "Papisticall Images".[246] This incident shows that those involved in the violence in Radwinter internalised this same message, and regarded their clerics as such hypocrites.[247] This consolidates the argument that the perpetrators who committed violence

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[243] Bod.L Rawlinson D 158 f. 44; The actual text of this particular book has not survived, but the Rattlehead/Roundhead comparison text was something of a mini-genre in the early 1640s. Examples which do survive today include Anonymous, *A Dialogve betwixt rattle-head and round-head* (London, 1641): John Taylor, *Cornu-copia, or, Roome for a ram-head, Wherein is described the dignity of the ram-head above the round-head, or rattle-head* (London, 1642); Anonymous, *See, heer, malignants foolerie retorted on them properly The Sound-Head, Round-Head, Rattle-Head well plac'd* (London, 1642); Anonymous, *Grand plvtoes remonstrance* (London, 1642); Anonymous, *A Description of the Round-head and rattle-head* (London, 1642).

[244] Bod.L Rawlinson D 158 f. 44.

[245] Anonymous, *A Description of the Round-head and rattle-head*, 3.

[246] Anonymous, *A dialogue betwixt rattle-head and round-head* (London, 1642) 3.

[247] Walter, "Affronts & Insolencies", 58.

against the surplice saw this object as a disguise for a Catholic agenda. It also poses the question of what Traps intended by aggressively presenting the curate with a text that argued for this view of his own ministry. It may have been intended just to be a threat, but there is also the possibility that Traps wanted to illustrate the curate's refusal to submit to the Word of God.[248]

As mentioned in Chapter Two, many godly people were taught by preachers that part of their duty was confronting others with their sin to convert them, often referred to as "holy violence".[249] By giving the curate a book outlining all the reasons why Laudianism was wrong, Traps may have intended to change his mind. The idea of "holy violence" may also have been the justification behind the acts of violence themselves. Thomas Wilson wrote in 1641 that true Christians should violently remove all impediments to reaching the kingdom of Heaven "as Israel tooke Canaan".[250] In Radwinter, the first acts of violence share this objective; however, as 1641 ended, it seems the perpetrators stopped seeing objects as impediments, but the clergy themselves as the obstacles in the road to salvation.

The last two clashes Drake recorded against him in January 1642, and against the curate five months later, share a key feature: both resulted in the victimised clergymen being forced out of the church. The first, in which Drake was attacked by William Voyle alongside John Smith, Richard Smith, Matthew Spicer and Stephen Sillon, and thrown from the church amidst many threats, resulted in his departure from the parish to London.[251] In two certificates Drake used this event to prove why he could not go back to Radwinter; both

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[248] Bod.L Rawlinson D 158 f. 44.
[249] For example, see Brinsley, *The preachers charge,* 16.
[250] Thomas Wilson, *Davids zeale for Zion* (London, 1641), 23-4.
[251] Bod.L Rawlinson D 158 f. 48.

Garnham and Rolfe signed statements that Drake would be in mortal danger should he return.[252]

William Voyle, who appeared to have orchestrated this attack, was of a godly persuasion: he was connected to Robert and Brilliana Harley, he had educated their children and advised Sir Robert on church reform.[253] His explicit opposition to images, kneeling for communion and the surplice must have made him a welcome change to the bullish ceremonialism of Drake.[254] He was listed as the minister in the Presbyterian classis of 1648, with Richard Durden as the only elder and introduced closed Communion in Radwinter.[255] He and his supporters made a concerted effort to seize control of the parish in early 1642, which seems to have been successful by the end of February that year.[256] The similar action perpetrated against the curate, probably Thomas Garnham, in June 1642, strengthens this conclusion, as he was also thrown out of the reading pew at the parish church and compelled to leave.[257] Given that Voyle seems to have been in control of the parish, in practice if not officially, the curate involved may have been under pressure to conform or leave for some time and this attack was the final straw.[258] Therefore, these two attacks were part of a power struggle between the Laudian Drake and the godly Voyle, but they also demonstrate an evolution in how the godly of Radwinter saw their clergy.

Until this point, the godly faction of Radwinter had focused upon removing the trappings of Laudianism from their church. However, these last two attacks were different: they removed not the trappings of Laudianism, but the physical presence of the Laudian

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[252] Bod.L Rawlinson D 158 f. 48, f. 52.
[253] Eales, *Puritans and Roundheads*, 59, 106-7.
[254] Walter, "Affronts & Insolencies", 54.
[255] Anonymous, *The Division of the county of Essex into severall classes* (London, 1648), 13; Walter, "Affronts & Insolencies", 44.
[256] Walter, "Affronts & Insolencies", 40.
[257] Bod.L Rawlinson D 158 f. 43.
[258] Walter, "Affronts & Insolencies", 40.

clergy. This could partly be the result of growing frustration; after all, this was the culmination of almost a year of violence that had failed to motivate any change in Drake's conduct. Much anti-Laudian violence up to this point had focused on objects, but these acts also suggested the godly of Radwinter had begun to see the Laudian clergy themselves as equally polluted as the Laudian ornaments they despised. For the perpetrators, objects like the surplice or the altar rails, and practices such as kneeling for communion, or indeed any other ceremony mandated by the *Book of Common Prayer,* was a cancer within the church that needed to be eradicated. The logical extension would be that those who allowed or celebrated such paraphernalia were also a disease within the church. These acts which literally removed the offending clergymen from the body of the church suggest the godly view of what constituted pollution of the church had evolved from purely object-focused, to one which believed such pollution emanated from those who supported idolatry.

The culmination of anti-Laudian popular religious violence in Radwinter shows how the godly script for violence had evolved during the Caroline era. Whilst the godly had previously committed interpersonal violence in other contexts, using violence to effectively purge a minister and curate from their own church, and the community by extension, seems like a drastic evolution. Those the godly victimised in other contexts were often those with little power, such as musicians, or just ordinary members of a community. A clergyman, however, was a powerful participant in a village hierarchy. This escalation was partly the result of the breakdown of relations between the clergy and community of Radwinter which had clearly become untenable by 1642. However, the intensification of violence also shows how polarised religious divides had become. The godly of Radwinter had begun their campaign of violence by following a script they had inherited: removing objects deemed idolatrous, and challenging their adherents to reconsider their religious views. However, when all these attacks failed to bring about any change, they escalated into increasingly

threatening acts of violence, and finally sought to remove the Laudians from their church completely. This shows that they had come to view the clergy themselves as much a pollutant of the church as the objects and ceremonies they had promoted, and their confidence that they had the right to cleanse their church themselves.

In one sense, this was the godly script for violence taken to its logical extreme. The godly understood sin as part of human nature, so their violence was targeted towards anything they saw as a bad influence, encouraging sin in those around them. A minister was in a way the ultimate bad influence: they were perfectly placed to corrupt the Church from within, with wrongful doctrine and Catholic ornamentation, and cover it with a veneer of holiness. This contempt for the Laudian ministry was mirrored in the wider print culture, especially after the collapse of censorship. Laudian ministers were vilified as tyrants over the Church of England, emissaries of the Pope, and servants of Satan.[259] The godly had come to view their opponents as contaminations of the Church, that had to be cleansed, for the wicked influence they propagated to end. To some extent, these views may well have been latent within the godly understanding of sin, but the civil disorder and political unrest of the early 1640s allowed such views to intensify and the resulting violence to spiral to an extent which would have been impossible in peaceful times. The godly felt they had been abandoned by the authorities before the collapse of political stability, so they took advantage of the unsettled times to correct religious practice themselves.

What took place in Radwinter in 1641 and 1642 shows the clearest trajectory of anti-Laudian violence. When Drake first arrived, opposition was peaceful, those who opposed his agenda confined themselves to legal means of protest.[260] When this failed, they graduated to

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[259] Anonymous, *A Copie of a letter vvritten from His Holinesse court at Rome to His Grace of Canterburies* (London, 1642); Richard Newrobe, *Farewell myter, or, Canterbwies meditations and Wrenn's syllogismes* (London, 1641); R.B.K., *An antidote against Arminianisme* (London, 1641).
[260] Bod.L Rawlinson D 158 ff. 43-55.

small acts of defiance. When this also failed to force even the smallest concession from Drake, the violence against him and his curate progressed to acts of physical violence aimed at removing those objects of greatest indignation. When this also failed to purify the parish, the clergymen themselves became the target. The conflict between Richard Drake and his parishioners also reveals that acts of extreme violence did not materialize overnight, but emerged incrementally as more measured forms of conflict resolution failed to achieve the desired outcome. Parish conflicts were far from novel; however, Radwinter demonstrates how in the context of looming warfare, religious conflict could cascade from small acts of insubordination to violent assertions of authority. Those who sought to purify religious practice in Radwinter instigated their campaign of violence to remove objects they believed were corrupting their church, but in the end they grew to view their own clergy in the same way.

**"Essex is a Deep Country": The Violent Countdown to Civil War, Chelmsford, 1642**

Throughout the summer and autumn of 1642, the county of Essex was convulsed by successive waves of violence, predominantly against members of local nobility with royalist or Catholic connections, and Laudian ministers.[261] The most famous example is the Colchester Plunderers, immortalised in John Walter's *Understanding Popular Violence in the English Revolution,* the only major study of popular English violence prior to this thesis. In the summer of 1642, a failed attempt by a nobleman named Sir John Lucas to join the king's cause triggered a wave of violence and pillaging by angered locals against himself, his family and many local ministers and gentry, especially Catholic families.[262] John Walter analysed

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[261] For example, a man named John Floor of Hallingbury Magna attacked the village minister during a christening: ERO Q/CP 3, 130 ('Bridge Book': Extracts, compiled c.1675-1725); Brian Walton, the rector of Sandon and St Martin Orgar in Essex complained that his own parishioners had stopped him from preaching and threatening him with violence: ERO D/DEB 15 (Letter from Brian Walton, Rector of Sandon).
[262] Walter, *Understanding Popular Violence,* 31-68.

these events and their surrounding political and economic context in forensic detail. Whilst

his key argument was that the events were motivated by a burgeoning political consciousness,

Walter also scrutinised the religious context and motivations behind the violence in

considerable depth.[263] As such, there is little this thesis could add to Walter's analysis. Most

of the violence took the form of pillaging without any overt religious connotation and little

physical violence took place, although this was probably due to foresight on the part of the

victims. For example, the Catholic Countess of Rivers probably only avoided being subjected

to more extreme violence by repeatedly fleeing as the rioters pursued her across the country,

so they had to settle for stealing her property and torching her houses.[264]

  This section will focus on another series of incidents which happened concurrently

with much of that in and around Colchester, in the Essex town of Chelmsford. From summer

1641 until the autumn the following year, the vicar of Chelmsford, John Michelson, was

subjected to a sustained campaign of violence and intimidation, first from his own

congregation and then from soldiers billeted in the town. Little is known of John Michelson's

life before his arrival in Chelmsford, where he was appointed vicar in 1628, in plurality with

Asheldham, another Essex village.[265] This section will demonstrate that like anti-Laudians

throughout the county, the godly of Chelmsford sought to use violence to purge their church

of objects and practices they considered idolatrous, but like their compatriots in Radwinter,

they also came to view their Laudian clergy as a source of contamination in an even more

dangerous way.

  The key source for periods of violence in both Colchester and Chelmsford before the

outbreak of war is *Mercurius Rusticus,* a royalist newsbook published sporadically from 20

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[263] Walter, *Understanding Popular Violence,* especially part 3, 159-234.
[264] Walter, *Understanding Popular Violence,* 37.
[265] "Michelson, John (1615-1660)", *Clergy of the Church of England Database,* accessed 8 February 2021, https://theclergydatabase.org.uk/jsp/search/index.jsp

May 1643 to 16 March 1644, devoted to cataloguing the mistreatment of the king's subjects by Parliamentarian soldiers or supposed religious radicals. It was the work of Bruno Ryves, a chaplain of Charles I and royal polemicist.[266] Ryves' account of Chelmsford was published on 3 June 1643, as the third instalment. His account of events was greatly detailed, partly because he had been in contact with the victim of the violence, John Michelson, which also means his account contains some major omissions. As a royalist propagandist, Ryves' work was shaped to rouse readers against the supporters of Parliament, by portraying them as senseless rebels, bent on destroying the social order of the country. For example, in his account of the exploits of the Colchester Plunderers, he failed to mention the Catholic faith of many of the victims, as he knew this would diminish popular sympathy towards them.[267] He portrayed Michelson, as he did other Laudian ministers, as men unfairly persecuted by their ungrateful parishioners, and his attackers were generally dismissed as religious radicals.[268] Both Michelson himself and Ryves were unlikely to have acknowledged any culpability on Michelson's part in what took place, and so the resulting account is also decidedly one-sided.

Like events in London, popular religious violence in Chelmsford was set in motion by a Parliamentary order. Ryves described how an order came from the House of Commons in August 1641 that all "Scandalous pictures" should be removed from churches.[269] The first attempt by the churchwardens to carry out this order was deemed incomplete by some godly parishioners, who gathered on 5 November to destroy a church window.[270] This event shows how the publishing of the order clearly emboldened more zealous Protestants to act on their

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[266] Joad Raymond, "Ryves [Reeve], Bruno [Bruen] (c. 1596–1677)", *ODNB,* last modified 3 January 2008, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/24431.

[267] Walter, *Understanding Popular Violence,* 24-25.

[268] For example, see Bruno Ryves, *Mercurius Rusticus*, week 3 (June 1642), 21-22, where he listed a series of articles he claimed the godly of Chelmsford tried to use to rule the city in the 1640s, which were more concerned with social order than religion, such as "That Kings are the burdens and Plagues of those People over which they governe" which would have been profoundly shocking, even during the English Civil War.

[269] Ryves, *Mercurius Rusticus*, week 3 18.

[270] Ryves, *Mercurius Rusticus*, week 3, 18.

principles in ways that would have been previously unthinkable. The choice to perform such an act of iconoclasm on 5 November, one of the most religiously-charged dates in seventeenth-century England, illustrates how they regarded destroying the window as an attack on Catholic corruption of the true Protestant church.

What caused the violence to escalate from iconoclasm to assault was when Doctor Michelson spoke against the shattering of the window, preaching that authority could not lie with the common people.[271] Such an imperious comment could be relied upon to provoke a strong reaction from the fiercely godly members of the congregation. Some of these people both threatened Michelson, and challenged him that if he continued with such preaching he would "see how welcome such doctrine was unto them".[272] However, the situation escalated when a bullet was fired into the Doctor's chamber. Michelson only escaped harm due to an unforeseen commitment which took him away from his rooms.[273] This seems to have directly followed the previous incident, suggesting it was supposed to realise the threat to "ruine" Michelson.[274] Given the context, it seems unlikely that this was the only ongoing dispute between Michelson and his parishioners, so perhaps it was also an attempt to coerce Michelson into conceding on other issues as well. Little additional detail is given on the circumstances of this attempted shooting, so whether it was a genuine murder attempt thwarted by chance, or purely an effort at intimidation, remains ambiguous.

Around a fortnight after the attempted shooting, Michelson was attacked in the parish church by several "proselytes", including a young clothier, who grabbed him by the throat and tried to tear his surplice.[275] Michelson only avoided serious injury through the

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271 Ryves, *Mercurius Rusticus*, week 3, 18.
272 Ryves, *Mercurius Rusticus*, week 3, 18.
273 Ryves, *Mercurius Rusticus*, week 3, 19.
274 Ryves, *Mercurius Rusticus*, week 3, 18.
275 Ryves, *Mercurius Rusticus*, week 3, 19.

intervention of some more sympathetic parishioners.[276] At the failure of their assault, which was aimed at the forcible removal of the surplice, the young perpetrators heaped upon Michelson a series of familiar insults: "Baal's priest" and "Popish Priest for wearing the Ragges of Rome".[277] These insults show that at least those involved in this particular incident shared the intense loathing for the surplice seen in St Olave's, in Southwark, London, and Radwinter. They also claimed the Protestation Oath justified their violent actions: Ryves wrote that they said explicitly that the Oath sanctioned the removal of Catholic ornamentation and that they regarded the surplice as such a sinful object.[278] The choice to attack the surplice whilst it was being worn also shows they shared the aim of attacking the power of the clergy seen in Radwinter, as well as destroying a garment they viewed as an emanator of immorality. This botched attempt to remove what they saw as a remnant of Catholicism from their church, which took place in the autumn of 1641, appears to have triggered an extended period of disorder. Ryves reported that there were disturbances during church services, and in the administration of sacraments, and Michelson himself and his curate Mark Mott were subjected to constant indignities.[279] This shows that the godly of the parish had both the desire and the will to forcefully purge such remnants of Catholicism from their parish, but despite this failed to do so. This may be explained through another detail: Ryves wrote that there were enough Laudian supporters, or at the very least anti-Puritans, in Chelmsford to counterbalance the godly.[280] What fragile peace existed in the town however was shattered in the summer of 1642, when several hundred soldiers were billeted in the town.

Events in Radwinter have already demonstrated how soldiers involved in the Bishops' Wars committed acts of iconoclasm on their way to fight, and these soldiers, preparing to

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[276] Ryves, *Mercurius Rusticus*, week 3, 19.

[277] Ryves, *Mercurius Rusticus*, week 3, 19.

[278] Ryves, *Mercurius Rusticus*, week 3, 19.

[279] Ryves, *Mercurius Rusticus*, week 3, 19.

[280] Ryves, *Mercurius Rusticus*, week 3, 19.

fight for Parliament in the English Civil War, were no different.[281] Bruno Ryves mentioned

that they were soldiers recruited, or possibly impressed, from Essex and the surrounding

counties of Suffolk and Norfolk, and Chelmsford was used as a temporary base for the

various companies to gather.[282] At least some of these soldiers shared the views of the godly

of Chelmsford, and proceeded to make Michelson's life difficult accordingly. Some were

billeted in his home and Ryves claimed they "commanded there as Lords".[283] Their first

religious interference came on a fast day when some of the soldiers ordered Michelson not to

pray for Bishops or use the *Book of Common Prayer*. When he did so anyway they drowned

out his voice, and then took his copy of the *Book of Common Prayer* into the centre of the

town, tore it into pieces and paraded through Chelmsford with some of the torn pages

displayed on their weapons.[284] Ryves claimed that the soldiers initially wanted to destroy a

copy of the Bible, but this seems unlikely for godly soldiers.[285] As already mentioned,

attacking the *Book of Common Prayer* was part of a much longer tradition of the godly

opposing it because they believed it was mired in Catholic superstition.[286] The last years

before the outbreak of war saw a groundswell of violence against the *Book of Common

Prayer;* for example, in Earls Colne, Essex, a man named William Harvie was prosecuted for

throwing a copy into a pond and leaving it there until the next day when he retrieved it and

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[281] Julie Spraggen, *Puritan Iconoclasm during the English Civil War* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003), 32; Eales, "Iconoclasm, Iconography, and the Altar", in *The Church and the Arts,* 317.

[282] Ryves claimed that they were serving "Lord Saye". Presumably, he meant the Parliamentarian leader William Fiennes, Lord Saye and Sele; but his forces were largely concentrated in and around Oxfordshire, where his home of Broughton Castle was located. This makes it unlikely that in the summer of 1642 he was raising forces in Essex. Instead, the soldiers were most likely recruited under Robert Rich, 2nd Earl of Warwick, another Parliamentarian general, who was Lord Lieutenant of Essex in 1642: David L. Smith, "Fiennes, William, first Viscount Saye and Sele (1582–1662)", *ODNB,* last modified 3 January 2008, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/9415; Sean Kelsey, "Rich, Robert, second earl of Warwick (1587–1658)", *ODNB,* last modified 3 January 2008, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/23494.

[283] Ryves, *Mercurius Rusticus*, week 3, 19.

[284] Ryves, *Mercurius Rusticus*, week 3, 20.

[285] Ryves, *Mercurius Rusticus*, week 3, 20.

[286] Cressy, *England on Edge,* 195.

tore it into pieces before burning it.[287] Harvie used both elements of punishment for

witchcraft and heresy in his attempts to destroy the book, showing how he regarded it as

deeply sacrilegious.[288] Both this and the example in Chelmsford show how the Book of

Common Prayer was effectively regarded as blasphemous by its opponents and how in the

polarised atmosphere of the 1640s, they believed the best strategy to combat its impact was to

destroy it.

A week later, when Doctor Michelson was officiating at the funeral of a local

gentleman, a number of soldiers interrupted and tried to force Michelson into the grave as

well. Michelson was only saved by some of his parishioners.[289] Michelson was in all

probability using the burial ceremony permitted by the *Book of Common Prayer*, and funeral

rites were one of many aspects of worship that the godly had opposed since the reign of

Elizabeth I. In *A view of Popishe abuses yet remayning in the Englishe Church* which

comprised the second half of the controversial *An admonition to the Parliament* of 1572, the

author condemned the traditional burial ceremony, from the funeral sermon to charitable

donations, from which he claimed, "spring many abuses".[290] This had continued throughout

the Elizabethan era and beyond.[291] Such objections were part of the backbone of challenges

to the Church of England into the seventeenth century and only became more dogmatic in the

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[287] Judith Maltby, *Prayer Book and People in Elizabethan and early Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 92-3; Cressy, *England on Edge,* 198.

[288] Maltby, *Prayer Book and People,* 92-3.

[289] Ryves, *Mercurius Rusticus*, week 3, 20.

[290] Anonymous, *An admonition to the Parliament*, 24.

[291] In 1590 Henry Barrow, a godly writer who later became a separatist, also levelled considerable criticism at burial rites, arguing they had no scriptural endorsement and pre-Reformation funeral traditions were "superstitious and prophane": Patrick Collinson, "Barrow, Henry (c. 1550–1593)", *ODNB,* published 23 September 2004, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/1540; Henry Barrow, *A brief discouerie of the false church* (Dordrecht, 1590), 126.

1640s.[292] The soldiers involved were continuing another dispute with a long pedigree:
opposition to the *Book of Common Prayer* and the "popish" ceremonies it sanctioned.

The attempt to bury Michelson alive shows that the soldiers believed that continued
Laudian practice should be punished by death: in fact that Michelson should be buried with
the corpse of the anonymous person whose funeral he was overseeing.[293] This incident shows
that the soldiers had come to view Laudian clergymen in much the same way as they viewed
the *Book of Common Prayer*: remnants of sin which must be cleansed from the church.
Burying someone alive had a Biblical precedent: in the Book of Numbers, a man named
Korah led something of a rebellion against Moses and whilst he and 249 of his followers
were consumed by divine fire, two of his lieutenants, Dathan and Abiram, their families and
possessions were swallowed up by the Earth.[294] In 1641, John Fenwicke wrote that the
prelates of the Laudian church both shared the sin of these Biblical rebels and deserved the
same punishment.[295] He argued that they were due such retribution because they had polluted
the worship of God with "late innovated abhominations of Jewish Popish and Heathenish
fopperies and Ceremonies".[296] This incident illustrates an escalation in how the soldiers
viewed Laudianism, that it was no longer only maintained by idolatrous objects, ceremonies
and garments, but also something personified by its ministers.

The final incident Ryves described in any detail shows a significant evolution of
Protestant violence in the 1640s. Ryves claimed that when news reached the town that
"Episcopacy was voted down by the house of commons", Chelmsford burst into

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[292] For example, see Anonymous, *The Abolishing of the Booke of common prayer by reason of above fifty grosse corruptions in it* (London, 1641), 6; M.T.S.T.R.A.I.S.H, *An answer to lame Giles Calfines Messe of pottage* (London, 1642), 4.

[293] Ryves, *Mercurius Rusticus*, week 3, 20.

[294] Numbers 16, especially 16:32: "And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods."

[295] John Fenwicke, *The dovvnfall of the pretended divine authoritie of the hierarchy into the Sea of Rome* (London, 1641), 29.

[296] Fenwicke, *The dovvnfall of the pretended divine authoritie,* 29.

celebration.[297] Bonfires were lit throughout the town, which were traditional acts of celebration, but they evolved into something more sinister.[298] In an act of spitefulness, the wood for some of the fires was taken from Michelson's own stores. However, once the fires were kindled, two companies of the soldiers and some of the godly citizens broke into Michelson's home, attacked him and attempted to throw him onto one of the bonfires.[299] It is the ultimate example of how, in the religiously polarised atmosphere of the 1640s, many godly, and soldiers especially, regarded not only the trappings of Laudianism but also Laudian clergymen as infected with the disease of Roman Catholicism, who must be purged to save the Church of England from a downward spiral into the pit of Catholicism.

Much of the most extreme violence which took place in Chelmsford in the summer of 1642 was perpetrated by soldiers, preparing to fight for Parliament in the English Civil War. These men were taught to believe they were God's soldiers, ordained to purge the country of the stain of Catholicism. Those who supported the King, cavaliers, were described as enemies of the Protestant religion.[300] This can be seen in a petition from newly-assembled soldiers in Buckinghamshire, who asserted their loyalty to Parliament and willingness to defend their country from Catholicism.[301] The Parliamentarian Earl of Essex, Robert Devereux, made a speech in September 1642 to his troops which echoed these sentiments, asserting they had assembled in "defence of his majestie, and the maintenance of the true protestant Religion".[302] Anthony Gilby's aforementioned text which used a dialogue between a soldier and a priest, originally published during the Vestiarian controversy of the 1560s, was

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[297] Ryves, *Mercurius Rusticus*, week 3, 20.
[298] Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells,* 105.
[299] Ryves, *Mercurius Rusticus*, week 3, 20.
[300] Anonymous, *Newes from the citie of Norwich* (London, 1642), 1.
[301] Anonymous, *To the right honorable, the Lords and Commons assembled in Parliament* (London, 1642).
[302] Robert Devereux, *A vvorthy speech spoken by His Excellence the Earle of Essex* (London, 1642), 1, 5; the same speech also commanded "You shall forbeare to prophane the *Saboth,* either by being drunke, or by unlawfull games for whosoever shall be found faulty must not expect to passe unpunished."

reprinted in 1642.[303] This may have been because some believed the character of Miles
Monopodios, the godly soldier who opposed all the trappings of Catholicism in a Protestant
church, exemplified the Parliamentarian ideal of a godly soldier. *The souldiers catechisme,*
published for soldiers in Parliament's army in 1644, used countless scriptural justifications
for Christian men to take up arms, taught soldiers they were fighting to release the king from
"Popish Malignant Company", and in "defence and maintenance of the true Protestant
Religion, which is now violently opposed, and will be utterly supprest in this Kingdome; and
the Popish Religion again advanced, if the Armies raised against the Parliament prevaile."[304]
Therefore, as Parliamentarian soldiers were taught they were fighting to protect England from
Catholicism, it seems logical that many would not restrict their violence to the battlefield, but
would also cleanse Catholicism from the country by force wherever they found it.

It was this logic which justified some of the most extreme violence during the Civil
War itself. One of the worst atrocities of the English Civil War was the sacking of Basing
House, Hampshire, in October 1645. The house was held by John Paulet, 5th Marquess of
Winchester, a royalist who survived two sieges of his newly-garrisoned home before the final
assault in 1645. The siege was a brutal one, and when the house was breached, many of those
inside were killed, in both hot and cold blood, regardless of military or civilian status.[305]
After the siege, the house was destroyed. This brutality was justified by military commanders
like Oliver Cromwell, whose troops had helped win the siege, and contemporary writers by
the belief that those inside were Catholics.[306] The pamphlet *A looking-glasse for the Popish
garrisons,* published soon after the end of the siege, epitomised this justification. The house

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[303] Anthony Gilby, *A dialogue between a souldier of Barvvick, and an English chaplain* (London, 1642).
[304] Robert Ram, *The souldiers catechisme* (London, 1644), 1-3.
[305] John Morrill, "The Drogheda massacre in Cromwellian context", in *Age of Atrocity: Violence and political conflict in early modern Ireland*, eds. Clodaigh Tait, David Edwards and Pádraig Lenihan (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007), 242-265, 244.
[306] Morrill, "The Drogheda massacre in Cromwellian context", 245.

was referred to as a "neast of uncleane Birds", a den of the Catholic Antichrist which had been "committed to the mercy of the fire".[307] This example shows both how the belief that Parliament was fighting the Antichrist and Catholicism could justify violence of the most extreme kind, and how fire was seen as a cleansing force, which could be used to purge the infection of Catholicism.

This is not to say that all atrocities which took place during the Civil War were justified by religion.[308] However, the violence at Basing House was seen as righteous by Parliamentarians because they believed the defenders were Catholic sympathisers, and that Parliament was the defender of Protestantism. If such beliefs could be used to justify the horrors that were perpetrated at Basing House, they could easily be used to legitimise violence against a minister forcing crypto-Catholicism onto an unwilling godly town. The threat and attempt to burn Michelson alive were motivated by the perception that he was an enemy, a pseudo-Catholic priest disguised as a Protestant minister, and the belief that the role of Parliament's soldiers was to cleanse the country of such men. The use of burning also supports this view; burning had long been a method for Protestants to purge perceived blasphemous objects throughout the Reformation, from rood screens and relics in the 1530s to altar rails and vestments in the 1640s.[309]

It is also true that by the summer of 1642, English popular culture had been awash with reports of Catholic violence in another context: Ireland. The previous year, Ireland had been convulsed by a rebellion led by embittered Irish Catholics. A reaction to decades of

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[307] Anonymous, *A looking-glasse for the Popish garrisons* (London, 1645), 3.
[308] For example, the massacre of surrendered Parliamentarian soldiers at Hopton House, Shropshire by royalist forces under Sir Michael Woodhouse, or the massacre at Bartholemy in Cheshire in December 1643, also by royalist forces, appear to have had little religious justification: Barbara Donagan, "Atrocity, War Crime, and Treason in the English Civil War", *The American Historical Review* 99, 4 (October 1994), 1137-1166, 1152; Will Coster, "Massacre and Codes of Conduct in the English Civil War", in *The Massacre in History,* eds. Mark Levene and Penny Roberts (New York; Oxford: Berghahn, 1999), 89-106, 89.
[309] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 381; Walter, "Abolishing Superstition with Sedition", 90.

brutal occupation and anti-Catholic oppression by English Protestant rulers, the rebels

perpetrated dozens of atrocities against any Protestants they encountered.[310] This was widely

reported in the English press, especially by those wishing to whip-up anti-Catholic prejudice

to fever pitch.[311] There were reports of towns and villages being plundered and burned, whole

populations being massacred, pregnant women being disembowelled and dismembered,

infants being impaled on spears and lurid descriptions of sexual violence.[312] All this

inflammatory literature was in the background as England slid closer to war, and only

inflamed anti-Catholic tensions. Therefore, it is possible that the escalation of violence

against those seen as perpetuating Catholic belief in one way or another was a form of

revenge. Retaliatory violence would become a common justification for brutality during the

Civil War, but it could also justify it beforehand, especially for those who saw themselves as

the avenging swords of Protestantism.[313] There are few direct examples of violence that

mirror Doctor Michelson's experiences in contemporary accounts of the Irish Rebellion. One

of those few is also a threatened burning; however, it was not carried out by the rebels. It was

supposedly a threat from the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, probably Thomas Wentworth, Earl

of Strafford, one of Charles I's most steadfast allies, against a powerful Irish Archbishop, for

blocking Laud's religious reforms.[314] However, the lack of direct parallels does not preclude

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[310] Darcy, *The Irish Rebellion of 1641*; Clodaigh Tait, David Edwards and Pádraig Lenihan, "Early modern Ireland: a history of violence", in *Age of Atrocity: Violence and political conflict in early modern Ireland,* eds. Clodaigh Tait, David Edwards and Pádraig Lenihan (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007), 9-33, 9-11; Marc Caball, "Innovation and tradition: Irish Gaelic responses to early modern conquest and colonization", in *Political Ideology in Ireland, 1541-1641,* ed. Hiram Morgan (Dublin: Four Courts, 1999), 62-81, 65; McGurk, *The Elizabethan Conquest of Ireland*, 5, 12.

[311] For example, see Ethan H. Shagan, "Constructing Discord: Ideology, Propaganda, and English Responses to the Irish Rebellion of 1641", *Journal of British Studies* 36, 1 (January 1997), 4-34.

[312] Anonymous, *A late and true relation from Ireland of the vvarlike and bloody proceedings of the rebellious papists* (London, 1641), 8; Anonymous, *The rebels of Irelands wicked conspiracie* (London, 1642), 2; Stephen Jerome, *Treason in Ireland* (London, 1641), 4-5; James Salmon, *Bloudy nevves from Ireland* (London, 1641), 4.

[313] Barbara Donagan, "Codes and Conduct in the English Civil War", *Past & Present* 118, 1 (February 1988), 65-95.

[314] Anonymous, *The charge of the Scottish Commissioners against Canterburie and the Lieutenant of Ireland* (London, 1641), 25; which Irish bishop was being referred to here is unclear, the text mentioned he was "Primate of Ireland", this means either the Archbishop of Armagh, who held the title Primate of All Ireland, which in the 1640s was James Ussher, or the Archbishop of Dublin, who holds the title Primate of Ireland,

the possibility that such accounts of Catholic brutality legitimised some form of retaliation against supposed Catholic agents closer to home. At the very least, such reports contributed to a wider context in which more extreme anti-Catholic violence became more acceptable.

The violence perpetrated against Doctor John Michelson in the last year leading up to the outbreak of the English Civil War, shows both how the context of the pre-war years legitimised action by the godly against those aspects of Laudian worship they found offensive. It also shows how the presence of soldiers escalated such violence dramatically. This was because Parliamentarian soldiers were trained to think of themselves as holy warriors, sent to save their country from Catholicism. In short, the escalation of violence suggests the development of a wartime mindset. Both parishioners and soldiers disregarded the fact that neither Michelson, nor any other Laudian clergyman, was a Catholic priest. Instead, they saw themselves as half of a moral binary: they were the godly Protestants, fighting to defend king and country. Michelson was their enemy, a Catholic cipher bent on undermining the true faith and government of England. This is not to say that they could not tell the difference between a Laudian and a Catholic, but that such nuances became irrelevant on the eve of civil war.

**Conclusion**

The final chapter of this thesis has shown how in the last five years before the outbreak of the English Civil War in the autumn of 1642, popular religious violence underwent a dramatic shift, becoming both more commonplace and more intense. It has shown how this rise in violence was enabled by evolving circumstances. The dominance of William Laud and his allies over the Church of England in the late 1630s allowed anti-Puritans to act on their

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Lancelot Bulkeley. Another example is some Irish rebels narrowly escaping being burned by some English soldiers mentioned in the anonymously written *The true and last newes from Ireland* (London, 1641), 4.

contempt for the godly, using violence to chasten and belittle them. The weakening of the political and religious order in the 1640s allowed ordinary godly people to punish those they disagreed with. Anti-Puritans carried out acts of threatened, symbolic or physical violence intended to mock the godly, whilst many godly parishioners took advantage of the destabilised political context to take the Reformation into their own hands and purge their parishes of aspects of worship, and later the ministers, they saw as spiritual adulterants. The violence against Laudians was so much more extreme than the mocking of the godly, because the godly saw the trappings of Laudianism as an existential threat to true religion, which had been ignored by secular authorities.

The major evolution in popular religious violence in the five years before the outbreak of the English Civil War was intensity and scale, which was enabled by deteriorating power relationships. All the examples of violence in this chapter were made possible either by a strong grip on power or, more prolifically, its absence. However, this was not because law and order was all that was standing between England's people and a perpetual state of warfare, as Thomas Hobbes argued in the 1650s, "that during the time men live without a common Power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called Warre".[315] This is demonstrated through the fact that little of the violence represented any significant change in form or focus: anti-Puritan violence continued being driven by mockery and inversion as it had for generations. Godly violence also fixated on the same aspects of worship that had angered them since the dawn of the Reformation. The deterioration of the political and religious order of the country instead allowed issues which had not been resolved for almost a century to forcefully resurface. This turmoil within the Church of England is also conclusive evidence that the supremacy of Protestantism was as much a burden as a strength. The absence of a unifying enemy heightened debate within the Church

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[315] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (London, 1651), 62.

about how it should worship and where power should lie. Despite the rampant anti-Catholic propaganda of the 1640s, the violence of the pre-civil war era shows how Protestant English perpetrators of violence believed that their true enemies were within.

# CONCLUSION: A "COLD WAR" OF RELIGION?

Popular religious violence has long been absent from our understanding of the English Reformation, but it was entwined with every twist and turn in the Reformation's course. Chapter One demonstrated how English Catholics in the 1530s and 1540s shared the same understanding of religious violence as their co-religionists in France and Ireland. Their acts of violence employed many of the same means to show that agents of the English Reformation were heretics, and to punish them for their sacrilege. Chapter Two examined the long conflict over popular festive culture, between the godly who saw such traditions as a diversion from true religion, and those who clung to them. The godly, who saw their actions as part of a cosmic battle to purify Church and country, used violence to remove what they saw as dangerous influences. Their opponents, however, used violence in a more spontaneous way, to force the godly to stop interfering, in the belief that such people were hypocritical meddlers with no right to impede the celebration of festive traditions. Chapter Three demonstrated the tenuous division between popular toleration of Catholics and violent persecution of them. Persecution could both endorse further violence and promote toleration, and inter-confessional social occasions could cause conflict as easily as engender harmony. The final chapter demonstrated how the dramatic rise of religious violence between different groups of Protestants that preceded the English Civil War was in many ways the culmination of the tensions at the heart of the Reformation since its infancy. Anti-Puritan violence remained an opportunistic expression of prejudice, and maintained its focus on mockery and humiliation. By contrast, the godly continued to use violence as part of what they saw as a Herculean battle for the soul of the country. Their acts were shaped to purge and purify the Church of what they saw as the stain of idolatry. Whilst both types of Protestant violence did remain much the same in form throughout the Reformation, the increase in intensity was the

result of the collapse of King Charles I's government, and the slide of the country into civil war.

By examining individual instances of violence to show its evolution throughout the Reformation, and some of the contexts which produced it, this thesis can enrich our understanding of the Reformation in several important ways. The most significant is the contribution of a nuanced understanding of popular religious violence in the English context specifically, which both overlaps with and differs from arguments made about such violence in sixteenth-century France. Catholics and Protestants in both countries used violence to purge their societies of wrongful religion, in the belief that it was their duty to do so. Perpetrators also mimicked official punishments to lend legitimacy to their actions, from French kangaroo courts to the English instinct to perform violence in public.[1] Natalie Zemon Davis' 1973 article famously posited that Catholics primarily attacked people, and Protestants objects, which does have some merit in the English context as well. The first chapter of this thesis, the only one focused solely on Catholic violence, was also the only one composed entirely of murders. This shows that Catholics in England did share their French counterparts' embodied sense of heresy, so their violence was shaped to destroy the bodies of supposed heretics.[2] However, they also showed far more restraint than their French co-religionists did. Far from committing the indiscriminate horrors seen in France or Ireland, English Catholics targeted those they blamed for the advance of the English Reformation, such as reformist officials like William Body, or those who supported it, such as William Hellyons. This suggests that the lack of an open religious war in England meant that English Catholics did not have the same desire to purge their society of Protestant heresy completely, as their French counterparts did.

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[1] Davis, "Rites of Violence", 57-58, 61-62.
[2] Davis, "Rites of Violence", 77.

The most original contribution of this thesis is its analysis of Protestant violence in the English context. Whilst there is some validity in the truism that Protestants primarily attacked objects, it is also clear how easily this could translate to violence against people, such as minstrels in Chapter Two, or Laudian ministers in Chapter Four. Godly Protestants used violence to disempower and destroy whatever, or whoever, they saw as a dangerous influence, leading others off the path of righteousness and onto one of sin. The frequent targeting of clergymen was also a feature of French Protestant violence, showing that Protestants in both contexts held the clergy to a higher standard of behaviour, and regarded their religious misconduct as particularly dangerous.[3] Protestants were not less violent than Catholics because they were more rational or less zealous, but because they had a very different view of the nature of sin and what religious violence should achieve.

Another major difference between popular religious violence in England and France was the wider range of conflicts in England. Whilst in France, the main religious conflict throughout the sixteenth century was a binary one, in England, as the Reformation advanced and Protestantism was firmly established as the state religion, various groups of Protestants engaged in as much conflict with each other as with Catholics.[4] Violent conflict between Protestants usually centred on how to reckon with pre-Reformation religious and cultural traditions. On one side were the godly, who believed anything with the slightest hint of pagan or Catholic history must be obliterated from the Church and country. On the other, were moderate and conservative Protestants who wished to maintain traditional religious and cultural practices in one way or another. This shows that the absence of a clear binary conflict which forced intra-confessional unity allowed a much wider range of conflicts to erupt.

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[3] Davis, "Rites of Violence", 77.
[4] This is not to say there was no intra-confessional conflict in France; for example, there was the growing gulf between Catholic moderates and politiques and the more extremist Catholic league: Stuart Carroll, *Martyrs and Murderers: The Guise Family and the Making of Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 228.

This thesis has also shown how the attitudes and beliefs which underpinned much popular religious violence were far more commonplace in England than the violence itself. For example, the medieval understanding of heresy as a choice, embodied by the heretic, was virtually universal in Catholic Europe. Anti-Puritanism was expounded everywhere in England from the Elizabethan era onwards, from popular literature to the stage, and anti-Catholicism was built into the core of English Protestant identity from the same period. Both heretics in the early Reformation, and Catholics in the post-Reformation period, were considered diseases within society, which would spread unabated if not cauterised with violence. The godly were not subjected to such treatment as fiercely, but they were accused of sexual depravity and hypocrisy, other strains of pollution rhetoric. Whilst such inflammatory language was not utilised as powerfully as it was in other contexts, it remained a part of religious and cultural discourses, even if the power of English censorship for much of the early modern period meant such speech had to remain shrouded. In short, popular religious violence was the ultimate expression of many wider cultural and religious forces that were endemic in Reformation England.

The findings of this thesis also have wider implications for our understanding of the English Reformation. One is the complex relationship between perpetrators of popular religious violence and authority. Most examples of violence were defined by the actions of the state; either the perception of governmental inaction, or official support. Those who acted in the perceived absence of the state recall E.P. Thompson's observations regarding the "moral economy" of the English crowd in the eighteenth century: the argument that authorities had a set of obligations to meet to maintain their legitimacy, and a failure to meet them sanctioned violence to correct the oversight.[5] Many people took the failure of the state to suppress religious crime as authorisation to remove heretical influences or heretics

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[5] Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd", 79.

themselves. Others took this further and were willing to challenge those in power in the name of God. Many of the victims of violence in this thesis held positions of influence; such as clergymen, from John Raynes to Richard Drake, or local officials, such as John Parker and Thomas Robinson. Commitment to a religious cause could overwhelm the staunch social order of early modern England, especially for the godly, who believed they were taking God's cause in an epic battle for the soul of their country.

The other side to this is the impact of perceived state support in legitimising popular violence, such as in Chapter Two, which showed how the *Book of Sports* gave validity and legal encouragement to festive traditions, and caused some to believe they had official backing to violently suppress the godly. The perception of state support justified the worst examples of popular religious violence in France during the Wars of Religion, most notoriously the St Bartholomew's Day Massacres of 1572.[6] Given that early modern England was an intensely hierarchical society, it is unsurprising that many perpetrators would only act in the perceived absence of the state, or if they thought they had official permission.[7] Ordinary people did not mindlessly follow the government's whims. They were willing to act in its stead, reinforce its rule or challenge its failures, but no matter what, their violence was inextricably tied to the state.

Those who committed popular religious violence had a clear understanding of their religious context, where they stood within it, and how to lend validity and meaning to their violent acts. Far from having the Reformation forced upon them, many perpetrators used violence to further the Reformation.[8] Conversely, there were just as many who were willing to use violence to block the Reformation's progress. Whilst examples of popular religious

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[6] Penny Roberts, "Violence by Royal Command: A Judicial 'Moment' (1574-1575)", *French History* 33, 2 (June 2019), 199-217, 201; Benedict, "The Saint Bartholomew's Massacres in the Provinces", 205, 215.

[7] David Cressy, *Society and Culture in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2003).

[8] Haigh, *The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven,* 3; John J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), 1.

violence represented a minority of responses to religious change, the motivations underlying violence were endemic. Popular religious violence shows that the Reformation was not only a national process, but also a communal and individual one. There were in effect, as many reformations as there were people in England. The English Reformation was an enormously traumatic process which remade the country in a new form, and its population was neither passive nor indifferent to this momentous process which transformed their lives. Accordingly, many were willing to fight, kill and die for their faith.

So with all this in mind, did England experience a "war of religion" in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries? This phrase is often used in wider historiography, as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were defined by religious wars in the fallout of the Reformation. However, historians usually dismiss the possibility of such a war in the English context.[9] There are some exceptions; John Morrill has argued that the English Civil War was "the last of the wars of religion".[10] Morrill's argument was that only religion had the power and appeal to recruit those who fought in the English Civil War.[11] Others have suggested that the extended religious conflict in England does represent some form of warfare, perhaps recalling Richard Baxter's remark that the English Civil War was waged on the streets long before the king and Parliament came to blows.[12] Patrick Collinson has called the numerous outbreaks of conflict that took place in England "street wars of religion".[13] Bernard Capp also used the

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[9] For an example see Marshall, *Heretics and Believers,* xiv: "In the sixteenth century England's wars of religion remained – largely – metaphorical ones."

[10] John S. Morrill, "The Religious Context of the English Civil War", *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 34 (December 1984), 155-178, 178.

[11] Morrill, "The Religious Context of the English Civil War", 157; John Morrill, "Renaming England's Wars of Religion", in *England's Wars of Religion, Revisited,* eds. Charles W.A. Prior and Glenn Burgess (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 307-326, in which he renames it "Britain's wars of religion", 322; for a more modern assessment of this argument see Charles W.A. Prior, "England's Wars of Religion: A Reassessment", in *The European Wars of Religion: An Interdisciplinary Reassessment of Sources, Interpretations, and Myths,* eds. Wolfgang Palaver, Harriet Rudolph and Dietmar Regensburger (London: Routledge, 2016), 119-138.

[12] Robert Baxter, *A Holy Commonwealth* (London, 1659), 456–7.

[13] Collinson, *Birthpangs of Protestant England,* 137, 139.

term in his 2012 book *England's Culture Wars.*[14] However, neither offer a clear definition of what they meant by this term, and instead used it as an informal way to refer to widespread conflict.

The violence documented in this thesis could not be characterised as a conventional military war, but it could be seen as a "cold war of religion". Like the Cold War of the twentieth century, the violence of the English Reformation had strong yet divisive ideological foundations: from defending traditional Catholicism to affirming radical Protestantism. It had many fronts, from popular celebrations to dinner parties. The leading players also shifted constantly, from priests and constables to blacksmiths and musicians; and lasted for decades, albeit in a much smaller geographic radius. Those who perpetrated popular religious violence had a clear sense of what they were fighting for and against, a sense of having taken a side, and often a Messianic sense of purpose. However, the lack of an open war also allowed a much wider range of conflicts to emerge. Violence was also greatly dependent on context, such as political stability, and so could fluctuate. Chapters Two and Three showed how much religious tensions and prejudices were ever-present in England throughout the Reformation, and needed only the right catalyst to burst into the open. Chapters One and Four also showed how brutal violence could become when the government could not restrain it. The English Reformation splintered the country into many competing visions of how the people should worship, from those who clung to age-old religious and cultural traditions, to those who wished to bulldoze those traditions and start anew. There was no single "war of religion" in England, at least prior to the English Civil War. Instead, the general population of the country was plunged into a state of "cold war", in which religious tensions became part of the landscape of everyday life, and violent conflict was always in the background, ready to ignite when circumstances would allow. The Reformation tore deep divisions into the fabric of the

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[14] Capp, *England's Culture Wars*, 3.

country, and those caught up in them and living alongside their enemies, could and did resort to violence to obliterate those with whom they disagreed.

This thesis has shown the key religious divides for ordinary people during the English Reformation, how those divides erupted into violence and how such violence evolved between 1533 and 1642. English popular violence progressed from a medieval Catholic form focused on destroying the body of the heretic, to a Protestant one based on destroying objects and the power and dignity of their enemies. Popular religious violence was a key part of the experience of the Reformation and how those who lived through it reckoned with its impact on their world and the one beyond it. The Reformation was a seismic change in England's history and, for many, fighting for it or against it was a matter of salvation or damnation of both their country and their immortal soul.

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