

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE SURVIVAL OF CATHOLICISM IN POST-
REFORMATION LANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE, 1559-1603

by

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A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of History

Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario
9 June 2006
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Your file *Votre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-18261-1
Our file *Notre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-18261-1

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines women's involvement in the preservation of Catholic practice in Lancashire and Yorkshire beginning with the passage of both the Acts of Uniformity and Supremacy in 1559 until the death of Queen Elizabeth I in 1603. It assesses how Catholic women who adhered to the 'old religion' in the post-Reformation period were able to cope with religious change and develop methods that enabled them to function successfully in preserving elements of their faith within their environment. As Catholic practice was removed from the parish church, Catholic women applied their skills pragmatically and, together with lay men, became effective agents in the preservation of Catholicism.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor David Dean for his encouragement and support; Professors Susan Whitney and Micheline White for agreeing to read this thesis and for their comments and suggestions; and Joan White for working on my behalf in setting up a timely examination. I would also like to thank my family for their unyielding confidence in me, and in particular parents who listened to my frustrations and offered words of encouragement at crucial moments. Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude to Andrew Wilson for his patience, understanding and love.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Add.	Additional Manuscripts
APC	J.R. Dasent, ed. <i>Acts of the Privy Council of England</i> , 32 vols. (London, 1890-1963)
BL	British Library, London
E	Records of the Exchequer
CRS	<i>Catholic Record Society Publications</i> , 80 vols. (London, 1904-2003)
HMC	Historical Manuscripts Commission
PRO	Public Records Office, London
RH	<i>Recusant History</i>
Salis. MSS	HMC, <i>Calendar of the Manuscripts of the most Hon. The Marquis of Salisbury, K.G., Preserved at Hatfield House, Hertfordshire</i> (London, 1883-1976)
SP	State Papers, Public Records Office
Troubles	J. Morris, ed. <i>The Troubles of our Catholic Forefathers Related by Themselves</i> , 3 vols. (London, 1872-1877)

NOTE CONCERNING DATES AND SPELLING

All quotations from and citations of contemporary manuscripts printed primary sources retain original punctuation, capitalization and spelling, with the exception that i is transposed to j and u to v.

Spelling of person and place names vary greatly in contemporary manuscripts and printed primary sources: outside direct quotations, I have used the current versions of persons' names and places.

INTRODUCTION

With the passage of both the Acts of Uniformity and Supremacy in Parliament in April 1559 Protestantism was established as the official religion in England. While religious conversion was by no means immediate at the parish level in the months and early years following the Elizabethan settlement, with the gradual implementation of the government's religious reforms in English communities churches would become 'protestantized' in their services and furnishings by the end of the reign of Elizabeth I in 1603.¹ Indeed, in the latter decades of Elizabeth's reign Protestant prayer book services were implemented with much more rigour and the traditional forms of worship associated with the 'old religion' would progressively disappear.² Parish churches throughout the country would be stripped of their relics, saints, high altars and images of the Virgin Mary and the Crucifixion. The Latin Mass would no longer be celebrated, plates, crosses, copes and chalices were removed and communion tables were erected. Roods would be dismantled, books and images were burned and the vestments would be sold for cushions and bed-hangings. Patron statues, latten pyxes and paxes and holy water stoops were destroyed in parish churches throughout the country in the later decades of the sixteenth century and altar stones and sepulchers were broken up. Moreover, the vibrant Catholic culture of rural and urban communities gradually disappeared. By 1603, the religious

¹ A series of comprehensive studies pertaining to religious change in particular communities or counties have been undertaken. See H. Aveling, *Northern Catholics: The Catholic Recusants of the North Riding of Yorkshire, 1558-1790* (London, 1966); idem, *Catholic Recusancy in the City of York* (London, 1970); R. Manning, *Religion and Society in Elizabethan Sussex* (Leicester, 1969); C. Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (Cambridge, 1973); E. Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village* (New Haven, CT, 2001). The phrase 'protestantized' was taken from C. Haigh, "The Continuity of Catholicism in the English Reformation," in *The English Reformation Revised*, ed. Christopher Haigh (Cambridge, 1987), p. 179.

² The shift in the effectiveness of religious conversion at the parish level will be detailed in Chapter One.

processions, feasts and festivals were no longer observed by the majority of the population; the devotion to religious images was outlawed and the elaborate internal structure of the Catholic Church.³

However, a small, but vibrant and dynamic Catholic community persisted despite the Elizabethan government's religious programme. Its members remained committed to Catholicism, undertaking measures as best they could to safeguard their faith. Refusing to accept the conditions of the religious laws, these individuals preserved traditional rituals and observances outside of the parish church as Catholic practice progressively disappeared within the church. The household became an important space in which spiritual elements of the Catholic Church could survive and indeed it would become the only place where the faith could be practiced. Since household routines were predominantly women's responsibility, their role in safeguarding Catholicism was correspondingly important. Indeed, they played a significant role in its survival. As this thesis will examine, they refused to attend their parish church, catechized and preserved traditional practices and forms of worship within their household and within their community and they were involved in the network of support which allowed priests to move around the country offering mass to the faithful.

³ Some historians have argued that the once vibrant Catholic culture persisted well into the Elizabethan period and beyond through print culture. For example see T. Watt *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640* (Cambridge, 1991), Chapters 3 and 4. However, caution must be taken regarding such an assertion. While individuals purchased material which would seem to confirm that Catholic imagery of the late medieval and Marian period persisted to be appealing, it is difficult to evaluate the extent to which such material can be considered part of a vibrant popular piety or popular culture.

Female Activist Piety

The predominant view in recent scholarship about the role of women in the survival of Catholicism in early modern England is that they almost single-handedly preserved their religion in the face of intense government persecution of Catholic practice as they selflessly risked their lives and livelihoods as priest harbourers, recusants and catechizers. Historians assert that women played a much more active role in the Catholic resistance than men and suggest that in the years following the Elizabethan Reformation the English Catholic community owed its existence to them.⁴ Although many Catholic women's husbands chose to yield to the state religion, they remained fearless "matriarchs" for whom no sacrifice was too great for their faith.⁵

It has been argued that religious non-conformity was especially attractive to women as the Reformation had not been designed with them in mind. According to this view, under Protestantism, a whole range of women's religious functions, such as regulating fasts, abstinence and the celebration of holy days within the home were removed from their jurisdiction. Moreover, they were put at a disadvantage by the Protestant emphasis on literacy as a condition for salvation.⁶ As Christine Peters writes: "[Their] roles [in safeguarding the 'old faith'] was a consequence of a natural affinity between women and Catholicism, or, perhaps more precisely, of a female apathy towards

⁴ John Bossy for example writes, "...to a considerable degree, the Catholic community owed its existence to gentlewomen's dissatisfaction at the Reformation settlement of religion, and they played an abnormally important part in its history", J. Bossy, *The English Catholic Community, 1570-1850* (London, 1975), p. 158. Similarly, Sarah Bastow argues that women were *the* key players in the survival of Catholicism. She writes: "Women were not passive participants in their religion, but played [the] vital part in allowing Catholicism to continue," S. Bastow, "'Worth Nothing, but very Willful': Catholic Recusant Women of Yorkshire, 1536- 1642," *RH* 25 (2001), pp. 591- 603.

⁵ For example, Clare Cross argues, "Recusant women seem rather to have cherished the freedom to engage in religious exercises which their fathers, brothers, and sons did not have the inclination to emulate", C. Cross, "The Religious Life of Women in Sixteenth- Century Yorkshire," in *Women in the Church*, eds. W.J. Shiels and Diana Wood (Oxford, 1990), p. 324.

⁶ Bossy, p. 157.

a bibliocentric Protestantism that required a standard of literacy that few women could reach, and did not value their roles as maintainers of ritual.”⁷ Indeed, in an age when the average gentleman had achieved a reasonable education while the average gentlewoman received few opportunities to read and write, it is suggested that this made for genuine differences between men and women towards the new state religion.

Historians, in hypothesizing as to why women were so involved in the Catholic cause, have argued that women felt a stronger link to Catholicism because of their very gender.⁸ Indeed, it is asserted that while men and women might attend the same worship and take in the same theology, they experienced religion differently. Studies of women and religion in early modern England suggest that on the eve of the Elizabethan Reformation women may have felt a deeper commitment to their faith and it has been noted that their spirituality was more intense. As Anthony Fletcher writes:

...for some deeply pious women, their whole experience of gender, their understanding of themselves as women, could become focused upon their spiritual lives. In this case there was no easy dividing line in their minds and emotions between engagement in the household religion and their private devotions and meditation.⁹

Historians have postulated that “womanhood” predisposed the female sex (on some unexplained, genetic or organic level) to uphold Catholicism, the mysticism and the rituals of which appealed to feminine sensitivities.¹⁰ Moreover, drawing on the scholarship of late medieval historians, it is argued that women’s connection to Catholicism was rooted in the characteristics of their gender. The stories and symbols of

⁷ C. Peters, *Patterns of Piety: Women, Gender and Religion in Later Medieval and Reformation England* (Cambridge, 2003).

⁸ For example see Bossy, pp. 157- 158; Cross, p. 324; P. Crawford, *Women and Religion in England, 1500-1720* (London, 1993), p. 59.

⁹ A. Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England, 1500-1800* (New Haven, NJ, 1995), p. 348.

¹⁰ G. Anstruther, *Vaux of Harrowden, a Recusant Family* (Newport, NJ, 1953).

Catholicism were feminized, whether the nurturing and mothering image of the Virgin Mary or the tender and maternal presentation of Christ and God, and therefore women could identify more easily with the Catholic religion.¹¹ It has been suggested that the Protestantism which emerged in the years after the Reformation emphasized hierarchy and authority in the churches and became much more 'masculinized' in its imagery. Images of the Virgin Mary, the suffering sorrowing Christ and the female saints, which exemplified the ideal characteristics of women such as motherhood and chastity, were removed from religious practice under Protestantism, and in their place was an emphasis on the majesty and might of Christ the redeemer. Converting to Protestantism, it is argued, meant that women would have to re-conceive their relationship to Christianity.

As the current literature has established Catholic women as the predominant figures in the preservation of Catholicism, their activities have become overemphasized. They are depicted as extraordinary women who not only challenged state authority but the social order as well. In identifying women as playing a vital part in allowing Catholicism to continue in the years after the Elizabethan settlement, historians have emphasized their agency in making their own history within a social structure which was not of their making and have depicted women as having achieved more than their traditional role dictated. According to the literature, as men of the Catholic household attended the parish church, women were required to assume a more energetic role in safeguarding its spiritual integrity, a role which was a significant departure from the norm. Men who conformed, it is argued, put themselves morally and spiritually in a position inferior to women and thus their actions inverted the hierarchical arrangement

¹¹ Fletcher, p. 348. For a comprehensive study of late medieval female piety see C.W. Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York, 1991), pp. 27- 51.

expected in the patriarchal order. On the other hand, in a Protestant household, Catholic women were ‘unruly’ in their disobedience not only to the state’s authority but their husband’s as well. In refusing to attend Protestant services, Catholic women asserted their personal, individual religious autonomy.¹² Given that gender and social historians have asserted that sixteenth century England was very much a patriarchal society, in which women were expected to be subject to their husbands and fathers and in which male authority reigned supreme, justified under divine and natural law, scholarship has suggested that the activities of Catholic women upset patriarchal power and indeed the basis of social order.¹³

However, the emphasis placed on women’s roles in the preservation of Catholicism in the Elizabethan period bears further examination. Scholarly analyses of Catholic women’s experiences and actions remain rare.¹⁴ Indeed, Mary Rowlands’ thirty

¹² A. Marotti, “Alienating Catholics in Early Modern England: Recusant Women, Jesuits, and Ideological Fantasies,” in *Catholicism and Anti-Catholicism in Early Modern English Texts*, ed. Arthur Marotti, (New York, 1999), pp. 4-5.

¹³ *Ibid.* For a thorough examination of public and private dichotomies see P. Crawford and L. Gowling, *Women’s Worlds in Seventeenth Century England* (London, 2000) and S. Amussen, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1998).

¹⁴ The lack of studies of recusant women does not reflect any general academic disinterest in the history of post-Reformation Catholicism. Rather, debate between revisionist and traditionalists over the nature of the Catholic community in the period after 1559 has occupied major scholarly interest over the last three decades. See for example, J. Bossy, “The Character of Elizabethan Catholicism,” *Past and Present* 21 (1962), pp. 39-59; idem, “The Counter Reformation and the People of Catholic Europe,” *Past and Present* 47 (1970), pp. 51-70; idem, *The English Catholic Community, 1570-1850* (London, 1975); C. Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (Cambridge, 1973); idem, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics and Society Under the Tudors* (Oxford, 1993); A. Plowden, *Danger to Elizabeth: the Catholics under Elizabeth I* (London, 1973); A. Morey, *The Catholic Subjects of Elizabeth I* (Totowa, NJ, 1978); A. Dures, *English Catholicism, 1558-1642: Continuity and Change* (London, 1983); J.J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People* (Oxford, 1984); A. Walsham, *Church Papists: Catholicism, Conformity, and Confessional Polemic in Early Modern England* (Suffolk, 1993); D. Lunn, *The Catholic Elizabethans* (Bath, England, 1998). Revisionists typically emphasize that there was a vibrant and active Catholic community in England that sought to preserve Catholic practice immediately following 1559. Traditionalists argue that the English Catholic community largely disappeared in England in the years following the initial reforms of the Elizabethan government only to re-emerge after 1574 with the arrival of missionary priests in England. For general overviews of the debate between revisionists and traditionalists see C. Haigh, “The Continuity of Catholicism in the English Reformations,” *Past and Present* 93 (1981), pp. 37-69; idem, “From Monopoly to Minority: Catholicism in Early Modern England,” *Trans. Royal Historical Society*, 5th Series 31 (1981), p. 129-147; idem, “Revisionism, the Reformation and the History

page article “Recusant Women, 1560-1640” stands as the major study of the topic.¹⁵

While in recent years some historians have focused their attention on women’s role in the Catholic cause, each study has its limitations. One of the most important is Roland Connelly’s *The Women of the Catholic Resistance in England, 1540-1680* in which the role of women as active members of the Catholic resistance and their contribution to the Catholic cause is explicitly studied.¹⁶ However, because Connelly chose to write a series of biographies (devoting one page to each) he fails to offer a thorough analysis. While his work suggests that women did play a significant, if not the predominant, role in resisting the state religion, he fails to acknowledge the various ways in which women were involved, particularly in comparison to men. Similarly Sarah Bastow’s “‘Worth Nothing, But Very Wilful’; Catholic Recusant Women of Yorkshire, 1536-1642,” examines the extent to which women were involved in recusancy by analysing ecclesiastical commission records.¹⁷ But, as her study covers a large time period in only a few pages, it is rather impressionistic.

Most often, academic attention devoted to Catholic Englishwomen occurs only in brief examinations of particular families or counties.¹⁸ While women’s roles in the Catholic cause have been acknowledged in passing in more general analyses of

of English Catholicism,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 36 (1985), pp. 394- 406; P. McGrath, “Elizabethan Catholicism: a Reconsideration,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 35 (1984), pp. 414- 428; A. R. Muldoon, “Recusants, Church- Papists, and “Comfortable” Missionaries: Assessing the Post-Reformation English Catholic Community,” *Catholic Historical Review*. 86 (2000), pp. 246-257.

¹⁵ M. Rowlands, “Recusant Women, 1560-1640,” in *Women in English Society, 1500-1800*, Mary Prior ed., (London, 1985), pp. 149-180. In her article she explores women’s roles in maintaining Catholicism within their household and within their communities.

¹⁶ R. Connelly, *The Women of the Catholic Resistance in England 1540- 1680* (Durham, 1997).

¹⁷ S. L. Bastow, “‘Worth Nothing, but very Willful.’

¹⁸ For example see J.D. Hanlon, “‘These Be But Women,’” in *From the Renaissance to the Counter-Reformation: Essays in Honor of Garrett Mattingly*, ed. Charles H. Carter, pp. 371-400 (New York, 1965); on women in Essex see M. O’Dwyer, “Recusant Wives in Essex,” *Essex Recusant* 9 (1967), pp. 43-60; on women in Durham see C.M. Fraser, “Recusant Wives, Widows and Daughters,” *Northern Catholic History* 33 (1992), pp. 3-8.

Catholicism in the post-Reformation period, often women's historians primarily contribute to the ever-growing scholarship on Protestant women.¹⁹ Though some historical overviews of Englishwomen and religion in the Elizabethan period do acknowledge women's contribution to the Catholic cause, Catholicism is not meant to be their primary concern.²⁰

As examinations of Catholic women in early modern England are rare and as a comprehensive analysis of women's involvement in the Catholic cause has yet to be undertaken, the argument that women exerted the primary role in the preservation of Catholic rituals and beliefs is perhaps premature. Current assessments limit their analyses to only the experiences of a few women, often martyrs, such as Anne Line and Margaret Clitherow, or founders of female religious houses on the continent, such as Mary Ward, whose efforts were documented by missionary and Jesuit priests.²¹ The current literature on Catholic women in the post-Reformation period fails to recognize the plurality and complexity of women's participation in safeguarding their faith. Indeed, in analyzing the actions of simply one or two individuals, only a very narrow and limited understanding of women's involvement in safeguarding Catholicism can be ascertained.

¹⁹ Hugh Aveling has written about nuns who devoted their efforts to the maintenance of their faith, see H. Aveling, *The Handle and the Axe: The Catholic Recusants in England from Reformation to Emancipation* (London, 1976), pp. 150-159. Both John Bossy and J.J. Scarisbrick briefly mention women, emphasizing the importance of women's traditional role in the Catholic household, see Bossy, *The English Catholic Community*, pp. 153-158 and Scarisbrick, pp. 150-159.

²⁰ See for example, R. Warnicke, *Women of the English Renaissance and Reformation* (Westport, CT, 1983); D. Willen, "Women in Early Modern England," in *Women in Reformation and Counter-Reformation Europe: Public and Private Worlds*, ed. Sherrin Marshall, pp. 149-165 (Bloomington, IN, 1989); P. Crawford, *Women in Religion in England*; M. Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1993).

²¹ Indeed, the most current study to be published regarding women and Catholicism in the post-Reformation period is limited to the examination of one particular women (Mary Ward). See L. Luz-Streerit, *Redefining Female Religious Life: French Ursulines and English Ladies in Seventeenth Century Catholicism* (Aldershot, England, 2006).

Women's decision to preserve Catholicism and the extent to which they were involved was influenced by many factors, including family of origin, marriage, social situation and their neighbourhoods as well as their own individual choice and conscience.²² Indeed, different women did different things in order to preserve their faith depending on their circumstances. For example, some women took advantage of their family's status to play a prominent part in sustaining regional Catholic networks. As will be seen in Chapter Three, women of prominent gentry and noble families welcomed travelling priests into their homes where they arranged for mass to be said for both members of the household and neighbouring Catholics. At a more middling level, without the space and resources to harbour a travelling priest, women turned to other activities. As will be seen in Chapter Two for example, women ensured that virgils, fasts, feasts, ember and rogation days within the household were observed. Moreover, at a humbler social level, Christine Peters notes the importance of women as peddlers and hucksters which meant that they could have a vital role in the distribution of Catholic literature, whether concealed in baskets of fish, as in the area around Newcastle, or on sale semi-openly as part of a broadsheet stock.²³

In order to argue that women played a more predominant role in the preservation of the Catholic faith, a comparative analysis of men and women would need to be undertaken. Currently no such study exists. The argument stressed in the history of Catholic women in the post-Reformation period perhaps over-emphasizes their role and theoretically, the examination of the role of women need not undermine the importance of the role of men. Rather, gendering the subject should offer a different lens through

²² Crawford, p. 59.

²³ Peters, pp. 159-160.

which to examine a particular period of time. In fact, at times of intense persecution, measures undertaken to preserve Catholicism was often a collective co-operation between men and women. For example, as will be detailed in Chapter Three, men and women worked together to establish networks of safe houses whereby travelling priests could move around the countryside offering mass to the faithful.

Moreover, it must be understood that while both men and women contributed to the survival of the Catholic faith, often they did so in different ways and perhaps at different times. Indeed, as will be detailed in Chapters Two and Four, while the recusancy statistics would seem to illustrate the idea of a greater female attachment to Catholicism, in reality these figures must be interpreted in the context of the legal position of married women, as they could not be penalized for their refusal to attend the weekly Protestant services in the years prior to 1593 since they owned neither money nor property.²⁴ As will be seen, the severity of the recusancy laws, which were implemented with much more rigour in the years after 1570, and the ambiguities of married women's legal status meant that such statistics instead reflect pragmatic family compromises. Given the practical advantages of married women's legal position, the recusancy statistics do not confirm a greater or more dominant commitment to Catholicism, but rather, in this specific circumstance, a particularly significant role.

Furthermore, the argument that Catholic women may have felt a deeper commitment to the Catholic faith than men is problematic. First, the current evidence available for use in a comparative exercise in the immediate post-Reformation period has not been equal in quality or quantity. Second, the question of the Catholic religion's benefits for women risks endowing women with an extraordinary sense of rights and

²⁴ The specifics regarding penalties imposed for recusancy are detailed in Chapter One.

personal autonomy as they confronted a religious choice. While certainly some women chose to remain committed to Catholicism in the spiritual, intellectual or even material way (so for example, preserving the veneration of Mary and female saints and the maintenance of household rituals that were traditionally women's special and important duty), the fact remains that most women's religious preferences were compatible with the traditions of their families.²⁵ Moreover, most women, like most men, would convert to Protestantism by the end of Elizabeth's reign. While images of the Virgin Mary, female saints and a 'feminized' Christ were displaced and the value of ritual was redefined under Protestantism, there was a continuing emphasis on the female as the model of piety and a considerable continuity in the particular appeal of religion to women.²⁶ Female personifications continued to be drawn on by Protestants, such as the secular images of Charity, Faith, Hope and Justice, and the new doctrine of salvation by faith alone made religion no longer the preserve of one sex more than the other.²⁷

In contrast to current historiography, my thesis argues for another view by discussing systematically the resistance of many Catholic women to religious conformity in the Elizabethan period. I believe that the conventional portrayal of Catholic women in post-Reformation England overemphasizes their public resistance and inadequately addresses women's pragmatic activist piety. Moving away from a quantitative analysis of women's involvement, this thesis will examine how women were able to cope with religious change and develop methods of negotiation and accommodation that enabled them to function successfully in preserving elements of their faith within their

²⁵ Crawford, p. 59.

²⁶ Peters, p. 154.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 170-206.

environment. Going beyond scholarly generalizations about female resistance, this thesis uncovers the daily mechanisms of women's religious opposition and concentrates on church attendance, household resistance, the harbouring of priests as well as the consequences that some women suffered for their efforts. It will be seen that women took their role much further than the purely domestic expression of their faith. As the Elizabethan government took a much firmer line in implementing the religious reforms, resistance developed into something more active. As Catholic practice was removed from the parish church, Catholic women distinguished themselves by applying their skills pragmatically where they were most needed and, together with lay men, became effective agents of the mission.

While it will be argued that women played an important and significant role in the Catholic cause, the purpose of this thesis is not to confirm the apparent consensus that they were the predominant figures in the Catholic resistance. A comparative analysis of the participation of men and women will not be undertaken in this study. It will be assumed that both men and women both played important and significant roles in the survival of the 'old faith'. Moving away from a discussion over who was more or less involved, this study instead acknowledges women's involvement by assessing the ways in which women were able to secure their objective, the defence of Catholicism. In analyzing the daily mechanisms of women's resistance, and by assessing the activities of married women as well as those who were widowed and single, this thesis illustrates the pluralities in women's experiences and the complexity of their history.

Similarly, while this thesis will examine women's 'activism,' it will not be argued that women became matriarchs who defied the social order. While sixteenth century

England was unquestionably a patriarchal society, in which the authoritative figure of the male was upheld both in culture and institutions, male dominance is not synonymous with the oppression of women and, conversely, women who resisted religious forms of authority were not necessarily engaged in a war against patriarchy.²⁸ There was space for women to assert an authoritative role in certain circumstances for pragmatic reasons. Moreover, there was a greater amount of fluidity to the public/private dichotomy than is often assumed. Certainly, women were excluded from many areas of public political life, but then so were many men. Indeed, in a predominantly agrarian society the household was the focus of both men's and women's lives. Many households operated as 'cottage economies,' occupying the daily production needs of the home. The household economy was part of public life itself as it was here that much economic activity took place.²⁹ The dichotomy between women at home and men at work did not really exist.

Furthermore, women could acquire positions of authority and autonomy, at least women at the highest levels of the social and political spectrum. The privileges to which upper class women had access could do a very great deal to mitigate the 'disabilities' conferred by gender, especially when class carried with it both power and responsibility.³⁰ Though women were expected to follow, but not formulate, religious and secular law, records show that some women of landed households were accountable for the administration of estates and related social, economic, and legal responsibilities and women could, for example, hold such positions as overseers of the poor as well as act as Justices of the Peace and sheriffs.³¹ Further, while Catholic women were systematically

²⁸ Lawrence, p. 4.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 238.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 239. It should be noted that women very rarely exercised such power as Justices of the Peace.

prevented from occupying any official position within the ecclesiastical hierarchy, there were no clear cut gender distinctions in church business and decision making at the parish level. Catholic women in the pre-Reformation period could acquire positions as church wardens and were involved in the management of stores. Thus, while women who adhered to Catholicism in the post-Reformation period exerted roles outside of the 'traditional' socially prescribed roles of the private sphere their involvement in the preservation of Catholic practice should not be considered exceptional.

Sources

Given that few women were literate during this period, and have thus left behind little documentation regarding their participation in preserving Catholicism, this thesis draws its evidence from a wide variety of material. Evidence of women's involvement in the Catholic resistance can be found in the government documents in the Public Records Office and in the British Library. In particular, the *State Papers, Domestic* as well as the Harley and Cotton manuscripts, have been drawn on extensively in this thesis. Within these collections can be found commissioner reports, prison lists and interrogations of suspected priests and priest harbourers.

The question of why Catholic women chose to resist the state religion and to undertake the day-to-day activities to preserve their faith is very difficult to answer when examining the government documents noted above. Indeed, while the respective authorities were concerned about the activities of committed Catholics in preserving their faith, often the reports simply indicate the name and location of non-conformists and only at times indicate detailed specifics of women's involvement. Thus, this thesis draws on

collections compiled of Catholic women's lives, like Margaret Clitherow (d.1586), Dorothy Lawson (1580-1632) and Magdalen Montague (1538-1608), as well as contemporary published works related to individuals active in the Catholic resistance in order to acquire information regarding the various activities these women undertook. As Chapter Three is concerned with the harbouring of Marian, seminarian and Jesuit priests, its evidence is largely drawn on published priests' memoirs as well as those found in the *Records of the English Province of the Society of Jesus* and Richard Challoner's *The Seminary Priests: Elizabethan 1558-1603*. I have closely examined references made to women involved in their harbouring, discussions of networks established, and methods which women undertook to both make available their services and safeguard the priests.

In addition, the *Acts of the Privy Council of England* and the *State Papers, Domestic* are utilized to inform this study of the discussions regarding ecclesiastical and religious affairs from the activities of, and the policies towards, Catholics. Moreover, individual cases and the response of Privy Councillors to local situations as well as national polity can be found in the *Lansdowne Manuscripts* and the *Salisbury Manuscripts*. By examining reports, statutes and personal letters, this thesis discusses the concerns evident at the time with respect to the perceived seriousness of the activities undertaken by Catholics.

Timeframe

This thesis is limited to the period of the reign of Elizabeth I from the passage of the Acts of Uniformity and Supremacy in April 1559 until the death of the Queen in 1603. However, an emphasis is placed on the decades after 1570 as the Elizabethan

government took a much firmer line with regards to implementing its religious reforms thus resulting in greater recorded evidence of recusancy and resistance. Existing information from records from the period prior to 1570 has been incorporated in this study, illustrating both the development of Catholic women's resistance to the religious reforms throughout the period of Elizabeth's reign, as well as shifts and changes in their efforts as a result of state persecution. While previous studies have extended their examinations to include the reign of James I, a more focused and comprehensive examination can be undertaken by concentrating specifically on the period of the Queen's forty-five year reign. Though not as well documented as the seventeenth century, the Elizabethan period is an important period of investigation for the history of post-Reformation Catholicism as it was during the reign of Elizabeth I that religious consolidation occurred and identification as 'Protestant' and 'Catholic' was solidified.

Geographical Restrictions

This study will be largely drawn from Lancashire and Yorkshire. As the two Catholic strongholds in Elizabethan England there was a somewhat larger Catholic population in these two counties than found elsewhere.³² Whole communities within both counties did not take much notice of the 1559 religious laws of the Elizabethan government for the first fifteen years and there was much neglect towards conformity in the parish churches. For at least a decade, church images, shrines and crosses remained, parishes kept their vestments and the instruments to perform the mass. Others were without the required service books and some churches were without access to ministers to

³² H. Aveling, *Northern Catholics: The Catholic Recusants of the North Riding of Yorkshire, 1558-1790* (London, 1966); Haigh, *Rebellion and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (Manchester, 1975).

perform the weekly Protestant service. Moreover, the number of Justices of the Peace willing to execute the laws in both counties was small and many themselves were Catholic men. Indeed, a series of recommendations were made to replace the Justices of the Peace with individuals who would ensure that recusants were indeed punished. Reports often indicate that unless changes were made the Reformation in both counties would be slow or would not happen at all.³³

While a more serious effort to establish Protestantism followed in the years after 1570, many individuals continued to adhere to the 'old religion.' Attendance at church in both counties declined as the religious laws were implemented with much more rigour. Letters written by Protestant commissioners in both counties noted that the number of individuals who reconciled themselves to the Pope was great, that many individuals sent books and letters abroad and that they were actively involved in harbouring priests who provided communicants with the Catholic service.³⁴ Of those who attended weekly Protestant services, it was reported that they disrupted the church service, by walking and talking throughout the church and churchyards during the sermons and service and that they profaned the holy exercises with pastimes and games.³⁵

Given that Catholicism was strongest in both Lancashire and Yorkshire in the Elizabethan period, the crown's attention was constantly directed towards these two counties and Catholic activity was more consistently recorded. It is for this reason that both counties have been chosen for this thesis. As women's involvement has not been as

³³ PRO, SP12/74/22; SP12/117/20; SP12/135/18.

³⁴ For example see BL, Add. MS 48019, fol. 24; Lansdowne MS 17, fol. 18; Lansdowne MS 72, fol. 44; *Salis. MSS* I, pp. 575-576 ; PRO, SP12/74/22; SP12/ 152/78; SP12/ 235/68; SP12/240/138.

³⁵ For example see BL, Add. MS 48019 fol. 25; Add. MS 48068, fol. 68.

well recorded as that of men's, I have turned to these two counties to acquire a much larger volume of data for the understanding of Catholic women's activities.

CHAPTER ONE

Setting the Stage: The Rise of Protestantism

From the beginning of her reign in November 1558, Elizabeth I set out to establish the Protestant Church in England. While she had conformed and openly practiced Catholicism under the Marian settlement of religion, there was little chance that she would keep England attached to the papacy during her own reign. Indeed, as a convinced Protestant, for Elizabeth, the choice in religion was clear. Following her accession to the throne the Protestantism which her late half-brother Edward VI developed would be re-imposed.¹ The religious programme which Elizabeth would embark on was as much a matter of circumstance as it was a matter of her own personal beliefs. The events of her life had made it impossible for her to accept Catholicism as the official religion in England. As the living symbol of her father's break with Rome, she had never been recognized as a legitimate heir to the throne by the Catholic Church. She could hardly accept a religion whose authority would never embrace her as queen. Moreover, there had been a growing dislike in England for papal authority and the dominance of Spain during the Marian years and, under Mary's reign, Catholicism had been tainted by heresy persecutions, Spanish hegemony and a disastrous war with France.

¹ There has been much speculation (and debate) regarding the religious reforms of Elizabeth I. The older literature suggests the religious programme which Elizabeth would undertake in 1559 was largely the result pressure from a puritan body in the House of Commons, see J.E. Neale, *Elizabeth I and her Parliaments*, I (London, 1953). However this argument is now largely viewed as flawed. Indeed, it is argued that when Elizabeth ascended the throne she pursued and implemented a religious policy which was of her own making which was not influenced by puritans in the Commons, see G.R. Elton, *The Parliament of England, 1559-1581* (Cambridge, 1986); N. Jones, *Faith by Statute: Parliament and the Settlement of Religion* (London, 1982); idem., *The Birth of the Elizabethan Age. England in the 1560s* (Oxford, 1993). For a detailed discussion of this debate see N. Jones, "Parliament and the Governance of Elizabethan England: A Review" *Albion* 19 (1987), pp. 327-346.

Both English patriots and Protestants alike turned to the 'Protestant' Elizabeth as their champion; if she ascended to the throne as a Protestant queen, papal authority could be eradicated and possibly the imposing influence of Spain would be cast out. Elizabeth could not abandon her surest supporters.²

The process of achieving religious conversion however, would prove to be difficult. Before Elizabeth could embark on a religious programme, she needed a government which would work for her. To achieve this, she replaced those who had served on Mary's council who would not serve her interests and at the centre of Elizabeth's new Privy Council lay six staunch Protestants who returned to England following her accession to the throne: Sir William Cecil; Sir Francis Knollys; Nicholas Bacon; Lord Admiral Clinton; Lord William Howard and Lord Chamberlain.³ However, while Elizabeth established a council which would support her religious programme, it was Parliament which threatened Elizabeth's ability to achieve her goals. While most members of the House of Commons were Protestants, or at least willing to follow their sovereign into Protestantism,⁴ the members of the House of Lords were predominantly Catholic. Twenty Marian bishops sat in the House of Lords following Elizabeth's accession to the throne and they, coupled with the conservative peers, could block the passage of reforming legislation through the Upper House. They would be a threat to the Queen's religious policy and they did indeed nearly foil the Protestant settlement.

In February 1559 the Council introduced to the Commons a bill to established Elizabeth as the 'Supreme Head' of the Church in England and two bills designed to restore the Protestant prayer book service of 1552. By 21 February these three bills were

² Jones, *The Birth of an Elizabethan Age*, p. 28.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

amalgamated into a single bill, which if enacted would have revived royal supremacy and changed the form of the Church of England. While it would receive approval in the Commons, the Lords, after hearing its first reading, were strongly against it. The liturgical provisions of the bill for the planned restoration of Protestantism were removed by the Lords and while they stipulated that Elizabeth could claim royal supremacy if she wished, they would not recognize it. The Lords passed the truncated bill, ruining the government's planned reforms and the Commons passed what was left of the supremacy bill and uniformity bill, accepting the Lords' changes largely because they had no other choice. The Elizabethan Reformation had been blocked almost before it got started.⁵

Elizabeth and her Protestant councillors had miscalculated the strength of the Lords. Never before had the bishops behaved in such a manner. Indeed, previous alterations in religion had passed in the House of Lords easily, and the Elizabethan government, seeing its religious programme ruined, was taken off guard by the effective attack on its legislation.⁶ The destruction of the bill for uniformity and supremacy in the House of Lords left Elizabeth in a difficult position. If she chose to dissolve Parliament before Easter (25 March 1559), she would have to accept the retention of Catholicism as the national religion in England. Recognizing this, Elizabeth came to a sudden decision to try again for royal supremacy and a Protestant settlement after the Easter Holy Week.⁷ However, given that the bishops and the Catholic laity in the House of Commons were a stumbling block to Elizabeth's and her councillors' efforts to establish a Protestant settlement, coercive measures were undertaken to ensure its enactment. Indeed, the council utilized its political muscle and arrested and charged the two most outspoken

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-38.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

bishops (Lincoln and Winchester) in Parliament with disobedience to common authority and thus reduced the number of Catholic votes in the Upper House.⁸

New bills for supremacy and uniformity were introduced when Parliament reconvened after Easter. To prevent a repetition of what had happened earlier, both supremacy and uniformity were to be dealt with separately, so the government would be assured of obtaining the supremacy, if it did not achieve the form of worship it desired.⁹ The new bill of supremacy, which would become the statute, made Elizabeth 'Supreme Governor' of the Church of England.¹⁰ It required an oath for clergymen and royal officials acknowledging her as governor of the Church of England. It repealed the Marian heresy laws which guaranteed freedom to worship for Protestants in case the uniformity failed to pass and provided for communion by reviving a statute of Edward VI's first parliament.¹¹ Elizabeth and her Protestant advisers, sure that the new supremacy would pass, included these reforms to ensure that even if the uniformity bill failed, England would be more reformed than it had been on the death of Henry VIII.¹²

The new supremacy bill won the commons approval but came under much heavier fire in the House of Lords. Only at the insistence of Archbishop Heath was it committed.¹³ Amendments were made to the bill in ways to give conservatives some protection; the most important of these was the insertion of a statement that the

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁹ Haigh, *English Reformation: Religion, Politics and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford, 1993), p. 240.

¹⁰ While Elizabeth was made 'Supreme Governor' of the Church of England rather than 'Supreme Head' of the Church of England she was endowed with the same responsibilities as Henry VIII and Edward VI. It is suggested that Elizabeth was made 'Supreme Governor' rather than 'Supreme Head' to ease the anxieties of individuals in both the House of Commons and Lords who believed that the idea of a woman taking on the role as the head of church as blasphemous. See for example, C. Levin 'The Heart and Stomach of a King': *Elizabeth and the Politics of Sex and Power* (Philadelphia, 1994), Chapter Two.

¹¹ Haigh, p. 240

¹² Jones, *The Birth of an Elizabethan Age*, p. 44.

¹³ *Ibid.*

Commission for Ecclesiastical Causes created by the bill could not judge anything to be heresy unless it had been declared so by ‘the authority of the canonical Scriptures, or by the first four general councils.’¹⁴ Archbishop Heath argued that the general councils of the early Church had approved the basic beliefs of Catholics, and so the Commission could not declare Catholicism to be heretical. In the end the supremacy bill was approved by the House of Lords.¹⁵

The new bill of uniformity however, came much closer to defeat. Designed to establish a new uniform order of worship imposing the *Book of Common Prayer* on the nation, it was disliked by a significant number of lay peers because, although they were willing to break with the Pope, they could not reject transubstantiation.¹⁶ To ensure passage of the bill, the Protestants were forced to make concessions to their opposition.¹⁷ The bill nearly failed. When the vote was taken in the House of Lords it passed by twenty-one votes to eighteen. If the bishops of Lincoln and Winchester had not been in the Tower, and if the Abbot Feckenham of Westminster had not been inexplicably absent from Parliament that day, England would not have had a new religious order.¹⁸

The Decline of Catholicism

The Act of Uniformity which passed in Parliament officially established a uniform, Protestant religion in England. It required all clergymen to use the Matins, Evensong and to administer the sacraments according to the 1552 Edwardian *Book of Common Prayer* and ordered every man and woman to attend their parish church every

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ The details of these concessions will be discussed below.

¹⁸ Jones, *The Birth of an Elizabethan Age*, p. 45.

Sunday and holy day. It stipulated that any clergyman who refused to use the common prayers or administer the sacraments as they were set out in the prayer book, upon conviction, forfeited “the profit of all his spiritual promotions” for a year and faced imprisonment for six months. A second conviction would deprive a minister of all his spiritual promotions and he would be imprisoned for a year. Upon a third conviction a clergyman would face imprisonment for life. The Act further established that any lay person who, either spoke derogatively of the prayer book, who caused the minister to perform the Catholic mass, or who interrupted church services, could be fined 100 marks for a first offence, 400 marks for the second offence and could receive life imprisonment for the third offence.¹⁹ Anyone who was absent from church services without sufficient cause would be fined twelve pence for each offence or would suffer the “censure of the church.”²⁰

The Royal Injunctions issued in June 1559 were intended to ensure conformity to the Act of Uniformity. It declared that all deans, archdeacons, parsons, vicars and all other ecclesiastical persons were to keep and observe the laws and statutes regarding the restoration of the crown’s jurisdiction over religion.²¹ The worship of images, relics and miracles was to cease, the altar was to be replaced by a communion table, all shrines and images were to be removed from parish churches and the clergy were required to preach only the ‘Word of God’. Vicars, parsons and curates who did not have a license to preach

¹⁹ However, fines for speaking in derogation of the prayer book, for causing the parish minister to perform the Catholic mass and for interrupting church services were rarely issued in the first decade of Elizabeth’s reign.

²⁰ A. Plowden suggests ‘censure of the church’ could involve lesser or greater excommunication which could in turn involve the loss of certain civil rights, see A. Plowden, *Danger to Elizabeth: the Catholics under Elizabeth I* (London, 1973), p. 10.

²¹ Paul Hughes and James Larkin note that the omission of bishops from the list of ecclesiastical persons was because the Royal Injunctions were issued following the deprivation of bishops who refused the oath of supremacy and yet prior to the appointment of new bishops, see P. Hughes and J. Larkin, eds. *Tudor Proclamations*, II (New Haven, CT, 1969), p. 118.

were instructed to read from the *Book of Homilies*. Within three months from the issue of the Injunctions each parish church was to have one English bible and within a year each was to have a copy of *The Paraphrases of Erasmus*.²² Moreover, no lay person was to keep images or shrines of miracles and pilgrimages in their homes and they were to attend the Protestant service at their local church each week.

While the establishment of a Protestant church in England had been achieved relatively quickly in law, and further measures were undertaken to remove Catholic objects and forms of worship, there was not an immediate transformation in the parish churches. Whereas the Royal Injunctions ensured that parish churches would be altered in a decidedly Protestant way and that new Protestant forms of worship were introduced, this disguised the fact that the Act of Uniformity had been a religious compromise. While the Act had stipulated that the government sought to re-establish the Edwardian *Book of Common Prayer*, modifications were made to it to appease religious conservatives.²³ Ambiguous wording had been added allowing the Eucharist to be interpreted as both a commemoration and a physical presence of Christ which enabled the Catholic communicants to interpret the Eucharist as the transubstantiation of the body and blood of Christ.²⁴ Moreover, while the proper Mass vestments were abolished, the use of the

²² This was a distinctively Protestant move, one which echoed Edward VI's Injunctions of 1547. *The Paraphrases of Erasmus*, which was a commentary on the Gospels, was ordered by Edward VI to be posted in all parish churches in 1547.

²³ The words used during the administration of the Eucharist in the 1549 Book of Common Prayer were added to the 1552 Book of Common Prayer. The Protestant tone of the 1549 Book of Common Prayer was not as severe as in the second prayer book. For a comprehensive study of the religious changes in 1559 see C. S. Meyer, *Elizabeth I and the Religious Settlement of 1559* (Saint Louis, MO, 1960).

²⁴ For example, in the breaking of the bread the phrase "The body of our Lord Jesu Christ which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul in everlasting life..." implied a physical presence and the phrase "and take, and eat this, in remembrance that Christ died for thee..." suggested a sense of commemoration. For further discussion see Meyer, pp. 57-74.

cope by the priest when communion was celebrated was restored.²⁵ Communicants were allowed to kneel to receive communion, the sign of the cross was permitted in baptism and the ring could still be used in marriage.²⁶ Thus, while there was a change in some of the elements of the Catholic service, given the ambiguities in the new Protestant form of service, an individual, in good conscience, could attend their parish church and remain a Catholic at heart.

However, while the accession of Elizabeth and the establishment of a new religion in England had given Protestants control over the Church of England, they did not have control of the parish church where Catholic priests and laity were still the majority.²⁷ Indeed, committed Protestants in 1559 were a minority and there were probably few who accepted the Book of Common Prayer.²⁸ Recent scholarship has suggested that the Reformation was a largely unwelcome development in England and far from complete even ten years after Elizabeth's accession.²⁹ There had not been particularly strong ties to Protestantism in the decades prior to Elizabeth's reign. Protestantism during the reign of Henry VIII had limited success while the officially sanctioned Protestantism of Edward VI's reign lasted only six years. Moreover, the religious reforms of the Marian government resulted in the re-introduction of religious

²⁵ Jones, *The Birth of an Elizabethan Age*, p. 45.

²⁶ D. Newton, *Papists, Protestants and Puritans, 1559-1714* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 7.

²⁷ J. Guy, *Tudor England* (Oxford, 1988), p. 261; Haigh, p. 252; Newton, p. 7.

²⁸ Disapproval with the Book of Common not only rested with Catholics. Patrick McGrath notes that many committed Protestants (many of whom had returned from exile in 1558) had become accustomed to forms of religious worships considerably more Protestant than the prayer book of 1552, see McGrath, *Papists and Puritans under Elizabeth I* (New York, 1967), p.12.

²⁹ R.B. Manning, "The Spread of the Popular Reformation in England," in Carl S. Meyer, ed., *Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies*, (Saint Louis MO, 1960); D.M. Palliser, "Popular Reactions to the Reformation During the Years of uncertainty," in *Church and Society in England: Henry VIII to James I*, eds., Felicity Heal and Rosemary O'Day, (London, 1977), pp. 35-56; P. Collinson, "The Elizabethan Church and the New Religion," in *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, ed. Christopher Haigh (London, 1984), pp. 169-194; J.J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People* (Oxford, 1984); W.J. Sheils, *The English Reformation 1530- 1570* (London, 1989); A. Walsham, *Church Papists. Catholicism, Conformity and Confessional Polemic in Early Modern England*, (Suffolk, 1993).

practices and observances of the late medieval church which had been overturned under the religious programmes of both Henry VIII and Edward VI. Displays of devotion were given to construct shrines of saints or other religious images, saints days were celebrated and feasts and bell-ringing were conducted in the saints' honour.³⁰ Additional religious ceremonies, including prayers and masses on behalf of the dead, the invocation of saints, and the veneration of images and relics were re-established and the roods and altars were re-erected.³¹ There was regular attendance at Mass as well as at the numerous processions and other traditional rituals which had been revived since the beginning of Mary's reign. The rapid restoration of the mass and altars, roods and images and the re-introduction of traditional practices and observances under Mary I was not an external act inflicted on the parishes by official decree and enforced by bureaucratic procedure. Rather, it was achieved at the popular level in the parishes. As Christopher Haigh writes: "The *real* hallmark of the Marian Church... was [the] local enthusiasm [to the Marian reforms]."³²

Nevertheless, despite the strength of Catholicism that existed at Elizabeth's accession and the cautious introduction of Protestantism in her reign, some Catholics fled England early in Elizabeth's reign, particularly members of the clergy and academics from the universities of Oxford and Cambridge who refused to accept the religious settlement and there were others, particularly devout Catholics, who remained in England who would not attend church services. However, the majority of Catholics, taking advantage of the ambiguities in the Act of Uniformity, did abide by the law and attended the services in the parish churches, merely appearing 'Protestant' in order to avoid

³⁰E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars. Traditional Religion in England, c. 1400- c.1580* (New Haven, CT, 1992), p. 590.

³¹R. Whiting, *The Blind Devotion of the People: Popular Religion and the English Reformation* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 1.

³²Haigh, p. 214.

possible punishment.³³ Indeed, there were many more ‘church papists’ than ‘recusants’. While the exact numbers are not known, the current historiography suggests that conformity was one of the more prominent characteristics of Catholicism during the first decade of Elizabeth’s reign.³⁴ Indeed, submission rather than dissidence embodied Catholicism in this period.

The Elizabethan government had hoped that peoples’ commitment to Catholicism would gradually disappear in England as they conformed to the new established Church and thus the initial punishments imposed by Parliament to rid England of the ‘old religion’ were relatively lenient. Only a modest fine of twelve pence per week for recusancy had been issued under the Act of Uniformity and, while an inducement to conform, it was neither systematically nor universally enforced. The Elizabethan Reformation was a slow, laborious and difficult process at the popular level as it had been imposed by the crown from above and the legislation introduced in Parliament did not result in an immediate change in religion.

The laws of Parliament could only be enforced in the counties with the co-operation of the gentry, who alone had the authority to ensure obedience. Brian Magee writes: “The Tudor Government was, in reality, not authoritarian and bureaucratic but

³³ P. McGrath, p. 29. For example one church papist wrote “A papist is one that parts religion between his conscience and his purse, and comes to church not to serve God, but the King. The fear of the Law makes him wear the mark of the Gospel, which he useth, not as a means to save his soul, but his charges. He loves popery well, but is loth to lose by it, and thought he be something seared by the Bulls of Rome, yet he is struck with more terror at the apparitor. Once a month, he presents himself at the church, to keep off the churchwardens and brings in his body to save bail; kneels with the congregation, but prays by himself and asks God’s forgiveness for coming thither...” BL, Harleian MS 1221, fol. 5. Printed in H.N. Birt, *The Elizabethan Settlement* (London, 1907), p. 52; J.S. Leatherbarrow, *The Lancashire Elizabethan Recusants* (Manchester, 1947), p. 23; B. Magee, *The English Recusants: A Study of the Post-Reformation Catholic Survival and the Operation of the Recusancy Laws* (London, 1938), p. 2.

³⁴ For example see C. Haigh, “The Continuity of Catholicism in the English Reformation,” *Past and Present* 93(1981), 37-69; idem. “From Monopoly to Minority: Catholicism in Early Modern England,” in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th Series 31(1981), pp. 129-147; idem, “The Church of England, the Catholics and the People,” in *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, ed. Christopher Haigh (London, 1984), pp. 195-220; Walsham, *Church Papists*, cf.

rather political and consensual. For general application, policy needed consent in Parliament, consent in the county government and, since even church wardens, constables and jurors had to co-operate, consent in the parishes.”³⁵ Elizabethan Protestantism owed much to its identification with authority. Penry William writes: “In the first place it was backed by the Crown and required acceptance from the regional elites. General respect for the policy of the Crown, the formal institutions of the Church of England and State, and the informal pressures of patronage and influence were all necessary ingredients of the Anglican achievement.”³⁶ Indeed, without the support of the local authorities religious conversion could not be achieved. The Earl of Derby, who headed the ecclesiastical commission in Lancashire for example, was not a staunch Protestant. Rather, it has been noted that he held ‘a certain skepticism’ with regards to dogmatic convictions and thus committed Catholics were able to enjoy relative freedom to practice their faith, at least between 1560 and 1570.³⁷ Prior to 1570, on the whole leniency was obtained as imprisonments for non-conformity were few and fines for non-attendance were rarely levied. Joseph Leatherbarrow has suggested that had Derby been more wholehearted and thoroughgoing in his determination to bring about religious change Catholicism would have had a very different history in Lancashire.³⁸

In the early years of Elizabeth’s reign the hold of Protestantism in the country was demonstrably weak and lay and clerical leaders uttered constant warnings about the strength of Catholicism. The Church of England required a strong Protestant clergy

³⁵ Magee, p. 297

³⁶ P. Williams, *The Tudor Regime* (Oxford, 1979), pp. 291-292.

³⁷ BL, Cotton MS Titus B II, fol. 239; Leatherbarrow, p. 21.

³⁸ Leatherbarrow, p. 21. Leatherbarrow also notes that good number of his family were Catholics themselves including his wife, his sisters and his brother-in-law. While a Protestant himself, the government was always suspicious of his actions.

willing to implement the religious reforms. However, for at least a decade the Church of England was a Protestant church with Catholic clergy. Many Catholic priests had retained their position in the church following the religious settlement and many remained attached to the old rituals, images and ornaments of the Catholic Church. There were communities, particularly in the north, which did not take much notice of the new religion for ten or twenty years after the religious settlement and there was neglect towards the religious laws.³⁹ For at least a decade, church images, shrines and crosses remained and parishes kept their vestments and the instruments to perform the Mass. Others were without the required service books and some parish churches were without access to ministers to perform the weekly Protestant service.⁴⁰ Indeed, a lack of religious instruction was particularly noted in Yorkshire, as there were few Protestant preachers and ministers. One report noted:

...the preachers are few, most of the parsons unlearned, many of those learned not resident, and divers unlearned daily admitted into very good benefices of the bishop. The youth are for the most part trained up by such as profess papistry.⁴¹

As there were so few Protestant clergy to perform the weekly Protestant service by the late 1560s, church doors were being shut.⁴² Where clergy were available they were unwilling to perform the prayer service and refused to administer the sacraments as required by the Act of Uniformity.⁴³

Thus, during the first decade following the religious settlement, many individuals continued to attend their parish church, as often the Catholic service remained. Indeed,

³⁹ Haigh, "The Church of England, the Catholics and the People," p. 197.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ PRO, SP12/48/35.

⁴² Haigh, "The Church of England, the Catholics and the People," p. 197.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

there is little evidence to suggest that an exceptional number of committed Catholics refused to attend. As the apparatus and the instruments of Catholic worship were retained, as a result of the commitment of the Catholic priests to their faith as well as the unavailability of Protestant ministers to ensure ecclesiastical changes, it would have been unnecessary for the more zealous Catholics to refrain from attending their parish church. With the survival of Catholic practices there was no need for recusancy. Indeed, in any community, only with the removal of Catholic priests and an increase in measures against the continuation of Catholic practices, would individuals withdraw from their church and seek alternative means to worship.⁴⁴

However, Mary Queen of Scot's arrival in England in 1568, the revolt of the northern earls in 1569 and the Ridolfi plot in 1571 fuelled a willingness in parts of the country to see the restoration of the Catholic religion in England. These events revealed the possible dangers Catholicism posed and the government's attitude to individuals' continued adherence to the Catholic religion changed.⁴⁵ Indeed, official concern about the survival of Catholicism became much more noticeable beginning in the 1570s and measures were undertaken to enforce the 1559 laws more strictly. In a proclamation delivered on 11 June 1573 Elizabeth stated that she and her government:

...doth straightly charge and command all her majesty's faithful and true subjects themselves to keep, and to cause others such as be under them to keep, the order of common prayer, divine services, and administration of the sacraments according as in the said book of divine service be set forth, and none other contrary or repugnant, upon pain of her highness' indignation, and of other pains in the said act [the Act of Uniformity] compromised.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ C. Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (Cambridge, 1975), p. 248.

⁴⁵ G.R. Elton, *The Tudor Constitutions: Documents and Commentary* (Cambridge, 1960), p. 421. For further discussion pertaining to the flight of Mary Queen of Scots, the revolt of the northern earls and the Ridolfi plot see Guy, p. 298; McGrath, p. 48 and Haigh, *English Reformations*, pp. 257-261.

⁴⁶ Hughes and Larkin, p. 376.

Proclamations commanded all archbishops, bishops, Justices of the Peace and mayors to enforce the Act of Uniformity. Individuals found preaching, writing or printing contempt about the *Book of Common Prayer* were to be immediately apprehended and imprisoned and individuals who did not attend the common prayer service or receive the sacraments according to the prayer book were to be punished more diligently.⁴⁷ Further, writing seditious words or spreading rumours about the Queen could lead to fines of ten pounds per month which would be imposed on individuals and corporations for employing recusant schoolteachers.⁴⁸

Moreover, the Parliament of 1580-81 extended the Treason Laws to include anyone who withdrew subjects from their allegiance to the Queen or the Church of England, or who had converted others or who had themselves been converted to Roman Catholicism. Individuals caught saying Mass were fined two-hundred marks and imprisoned for a year and any persons over the age of sixteen who was caught hearing mass was to be fined one-hundred marks for a first conviction and two hundred marks for subsequent convictions and in each case would also face a year imprisonment. Fines for non- attendance were increased from twelve pence per Sunday to twenty pounds per month and anyone who was absent from church services without sufficient cause for over a year was required to produce two sureties of at least two hundred pounds until they

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 379-380.

⁴⁸ SP12/154/14. For examples of proclamations delivered enforcing penalties for writing or spreading rumors about the queen see Hughes and Larkin, pp. 341-343, 347 and 376-378.

conformed.⁴⁹

Yet, while Elizabeth and her advisors were concerned about church attendance and the committed Catholics continued adherence to their faith, it was fear of an international Catholic threat which led to the most coercive measures to be enacted by the government. The issue of the Papal Bull of Excommunication (*Regnans in Excelsis*) in 1570, the arrival of seminary priests in 1574 and the arrival of Jesuit priests in 1581 were the particular reasons for the enactment of more stringent laws by Parliament.

The issue of the Papal Bull on 25 February 1570 excommunicated Elizabeth on the charge of heresy, called for her removal from the throne and released her subjects from loyalty to her.⁵⁰ While it had little impact on the people of England, as there were few supporters of papal supremacy among Catholic families and few believed that it was justifiable to overthrow the Queen, the Elizabethan government reacted quickly to it as it could not take for granted that English Catholics' loyalty would rest with the Queen and not with Rome.⁵¹ In 1571 the Treason Laws were extended to include all those who conformed to papal bulls or kept sacred objects, who reconciled others to Rome, or who were themselves reconciled. It made it high treason to write that Elizabeth was not the lawful Queen, or to publish in speech or in writing that she was a heretic, schismatic or a usurper. Proclamations were also issued which legislated that all individuals found in

⁴⁹ Despite an increase in measures undertaken by the Elizabethan government to curb recusancy, many individuals went unpunished. Indeed, in a report conducted by the government in 1586 it was determined that there were still recusants who were escaping fines. Between 1581 and 1586 only sixty-nine persons had received fines for non-attendance and of those sixty-nine convictions, few had actually paid. Thus, in October 1586 a new act was passed in Parliament which stipulated that once a Catholic had been convicted of recusancy they were to pay one twenty pound fine. Individuals who did not pay the required amount were to forfeit two-thirds of their land, goods and chattels. For discussion regarding the difficulties in implementing the 1581 Act see McGrath, p. 198.

⁵⁰ For further discussion pertaining to English Catholics and Papal Disposing power see T. Clancy, "English Catholics and the Papal Deposing Power," *RH* 6 (1961), pp. 114-140.

⁵¹ Pritchard, p. 38; Elton, pp. 422-423; McGrath, pp. 102-105.

possession of copies of bulls and books which slandered the Church of England and the Queen would be imprisoned.⁵²

The government perceived the presence of seminary and Jesuit priests in England as a particular threat as they embodied everything the government disliked about Catholicism, specifically the danger of subversion from within.⁵³ For example, in a proclamation issued on 10 January 1581 the purpose of their presence in the country was described as an attempt by the international Catholic community to:

...train and nourish them [the English people] up in false and erroneous doctrine, which by means divers of her good and faithful subjects have been thereby perverted, not only in matters of religion but also drawn from the acknowledgement of their natural duties unto her highness as their prince and sovereign, and have been made instruments in some wicked practices tending to the disquiet of this realm and other her majesty's dominions.⁵⁴

The government viewed the seminary and Jesuit priests as 'seductors of our said loving subjectes' and thus felt the need to banish such persons from England and its dominions. It was believed that unless they were prevented from entering England they would be a great danger in the future.⁵⁵

While the harbouring of the Marian priests had occurred before the 1570s, such an act was not as dangerous for Catholics as it would become for harbouring the seminarians and Jesuits. Indeed, prior to their arrival, in some parts of the country, priests were able to conduct Catholic services and seek shelter in the households of Catholic families fairly openly.⁵⁶ However, with the increasing presence of seminary and Jesuit priests in the

⁵² For example see Hughes and Larkin, II, pp. 534-535; *Ibid.*, III, pp. 13-17.

⁵³ Plowden, p. 145; W.R. Trimble, *The Catholic Laity in Elizabethan England, 1558-1603* (Cambridge, MA, 1964), pp. 68-121.

⁵⁴ Hughes and Larkin, II, pp. 481-482.

⁵⁵ A.G. Petti, ed. *Recusant Documents from the Ellesmere Manuscripts*, CRS LX (London, 1968), pp. 19-23.

⁵⁶ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire*, p. 278.

country, harbouring became a much more dangerous activity by the mid-1580s. The Parliament of 1584-85 passed an act which ordered that all priests who were ‘ordained by the authoritie of Rome’ since the first year of Elizabeth’s reign were to leave England within forty days. Any priest who disobeyed would be guilty of high treason punishable by death and any lay person who ‘willingly and wittingly’ received, harboured or maintained a priest would be guilty of a capital felony. Moreover, as the seminary and Jesuit priests were English born men, the act ordered that all individuals who had children ‘beyond the seas’, without special permission from the Queen, were to procure their return. Otherwise they would be fined one hundred pounds for every offence and would “yield them selves prisonere until their sonnes shalbe returned.”⁵⁷ Further, all individuals who knew the whereabouts of priests residing in England who failed to notify authorities could be fined and imprisoned at the Queen’s leisure.

The more coercive measures undertaken by the government beginning in the 1570s and their resulting penalties would have been a powerful inducement to conform. The legislation imposing penalties of high treason, thus resulting in imprisonment or death, would have had significant consequences. While death was by no means the more common penalty imposed on individuals in the latter part of the sixteenth century, the number of individuals willing to even risk death was small. As a result, it seems likely that many Catholics would have avoided having priests perform the mass in their household.⁵⁸ The more common penalty of imprisonment would also be a deterrent as the consequences disrupted the lives of those penalized. Indeed, since imprisonment could last for years, there were consequences for their estates often leading to an uncertain

⁵⁷ Quote taken from PRO, SP12/154/14.

⁵⁸ McGrath, p. 273.

future and leaving families torn apart and destitute.⁵⁹ Imprisonment could also result in death. The majority of individuals who died for the Catholic cause would die from conditions in the prisons. As a result, as persecution and the severity of consequences increased, the number of individuals who rendered service to the survival of Catholicism became more limited.

For the remainder of Elizabeth's reign, legislation became increasingly severe and the methods for locating recusants and enforcing penalties became much more organized. Lay persons who assisted the priests received the particular attention of the government. Patrick McGrath has noted that between 1590 and 1603 there were eighty-eight executions for contravening the new religion, thirty-five of which were lay persons.⁶⁰ Moreover, the government kept continual pressure on Catholics to conform. In 1593, Parliamentary statutes ordered all recusants to submit their names in writing to authorities, required them to remain within five miles of their homes, and imprison those who were found to be harbouring priests. Orders were given to local officials to draft schedules of lists of recusants, instructions were given to search the households of known Catholics for weapons and priests, and the government undertook measures to remove recusant Justices of the Peace as well as those with recusant wives and children. Further, Exchequer records were put in order and new methods for collecting recusancy fines were introduced.⁶¹

While the Elizabeth government would never eradicate Catholicism in England, by 1603 its legislative efforts to eliminate Catholicism had succeeded in gradually

⁵⁹ P. McGrath and J Rowe, "The Imprisonment of Catholics for Religion under Elizabeth I," *RH* 20 (1991), p. 418.

⁶⁰ McGrath, p. 256.

⁶¹ D. M. Dean, *Law-Making and Society in Late Elizabethan England. The Parliament of England, 1584-1601* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 67-70.

reducing the size of the Catholic population as a whole. In 1603 it was reported that there were approximately 2,075 recusants and 2,393 non-communicants in Lancashire, making up some six or seven percent of the county's adult population.⁶² A Yorkshire census of 1604 recorded 1,839 recusants and 622 non-communicants, not more than one and one half percent of the communicant population.⁶³ Given that both Lancashire and Yorkshire were the two Catholic strongholds in Elizabethan England it must be assumed that the numbers of Catholics in other counties were substantially less. Within two generations Catholic adherence had dwindled to numerical insignificance.⁶⁴ Without political change, time would consolidate the Protestant victory. Older Catholics conformed little by little and children grew up in an increasingly Protestant environment. The only future for the Catholics was in a separated Catholic Church and from the 1570s they were indeed building one. While the underground Catholic Church grew in the 1570s, by the 1580s its development was checked by the more coercive laws. The church was increasingly driven into the houses of the gentry where the missionary priests were hidden.⁶⁵ Many Catholics outside of the gentry strongholds now lacked the pastoral care it needed for their continued adherence to the Catholic faith and abandoned their religion. The Catholic community thus contracted both socially and geographically.

'The English Catholic Community'

As the religious legislation enacted in 1559 did not result in an immediate conversion to popular Protestantism, the prospects for the survival of Catholicism

⁶² Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire*, pp. 275-278.

⁶³ A.G. Dickens, "The Extent and Character of Recusancy in Yorkshire," *Yorkshire Archeological Journal* 35 (1941), p. 27.

⁶⁴ Haigh, *English Reformations*, p. 266.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

following the religious settlement was quite good. While Catholicism lost its hierarchical structure in 1559, the Church of England was not immediately ‘protestantized’ in its furnishings or in its services.⁶⁶ Aspects of Catholic worship were kept in the public arena. Indeed, as Keith Wrightson writes, “the vigour, richness and the creativity of the late medieval religion was undiminished, and continued to hold the imagination and elicit the loyalty of the majority of the population.”⁶⁷ The Elizabethan government had indeed inherited a Catholic country. Many traditional religious practices remained available, as individuals continued to observe fasts, feasts and holy days, and images, holy water and signs of the cross were preserved. Moreover, the structural changes to the parish churches decreed in 1559 were slow to take effect. In many areas iconoclasm was a gradual process and visitation articles and churchwardens’ accounts all bear ample witness to the resilience of the ‘old religion.’⁶⁸

Demolition of stone altars and their replacement with communion tables often remained incomplete before the mid-1570s and it was reported in some counties, like

⁶⁶ The phrase ‘protestantized’ was taken from C. Haigh, “The Continuity of Catholicism in the English Reformation,” in *The English Reformation Revised*, ed. Christopher Haigh (Cambridge, 1987), p. 179.

⁶⁷ K. Wrightson, “The Politics of the Parish Church in Early Modern England,” in *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England*, eds. P. Griffiths, A. Fox and S. Hindle (New York, 1996), p. 479. For further discussion pertaining to the survival of Catholicism in the Elizabethan Churches see example Birt, pp. 326-328, 349-250, 428-429; Sacrisbrick *The Reformation and the English People*; Haigh, “The Continuity of Catholicism in the English Reformation,” in *The English Reformation Revised*, ed. Christopher Haigh (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 176-208; Whiting *The Blind Devotion of the People*; Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altar*, Chapter 17; idem, E. Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village* (New Haven, Connecticut, 2001); Haigh, *English Reformations*; Walsham, *Church Papists*; M. Questier, *Conversion, Politics and Religion in England, 1580-1665* (Cambridge, 1996); C. Haigh, “The Church of England, the Catholics and the People.”

⁶⁸ In the visitation returns of 1566 for Lincolnshire for example, only thirteen percent of the 152 churches in the county had removed their images and only fifty percent had removed vestments and mass equipment. In 1571 surviving churchwarden accounts for Cumberland indicate that chalices, candlesticks, pyxes, banners, vestments and ‘other monuments of popery, superstition, and idolatry’ continued to be used in the parish churches, Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p. 16. See also R. Hutton, “The Local Impact of the Tudor Reformations,” in *The English Reformation Revised*, ed. Christopher Haigh (Cambridge, 1987). For accounts of the persistence of Catholic practices and observances in both Lancashire and Yorkshire see for example *Salis. MSS*, I, pp. 575-576; PRO, SP12/74/22; BL, Cotton MS, Titus B III, fol. 65; Add. MS 48019, fols. 25- 26.

Lancashire, that the roods had yet to be dismantled in the 1570s and 1580s.⁶⁹ Furthermore, ritual customs did not immediately conform to the rubrics of the *Book of Common Prayer* in some counties. Services of the Eucharist in some parish churches were performed after the old tradition and gestures like administering the sign of the cross over the sacramental bread and wine persisted.⁷⁰ Bell ringing and intercessions for christenings carried on and the communal and festive life of the pre-Reformation parish church remained as the village wakes and ales, interludes and seasonal revelries were observed. Attempts to prevent the destruction of images and ornaments were certainly very widespread throughout the country and mass vestments were entrusted to parishioners for safekeeping.⁷¹ Crosses still stood on many graves, and the use of candles and crosses about corpses persisted at funerals as did the ringing of peals before funerals and on All Souls' eve.⁷²

As evidence of the survival of traditional religious practices and observances in the Elizabethan period suggests, the English Catholic community undertook measures to preserve and sustain Catholic beliefs and forms of worship within their parish church following the religious settlement. In the first fifteen or twenty years following 1559 the English Catholic Community approached the religious situation in a pragmatic and cautious way. The separation of Catholics from the worshipping village community was a slow process. It began with conformity, took the next step in non-communicating and achieved severance in the refusal to attend the weekly Protestant services much later.

⁶⁹ For example see, BL, Add. MS 48019, fols. 24-26; PRO, SP12/74/22; SP12/138/18.

⁷⁰ See for example, PRO, SP12/74/22; BL, Cotton MS, Titus B III, fol. 65; Add. MS 48019, fols. 25- 26.

⁷¹ In Chester for example, Mrs. Dutton was reported to have been entrusted with the rood, two pictures and a Mass book and Peter Fletcher was reported to have 'certin ymages whiche he kepithe secreatlye,' Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p. 570.

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 577-584.

Regular acts of compliance to the dictates of the Church of England were tolerated and attendance at the Protestant services was not in itself regarded as a sign of schism or heresy according to the Catholic Church in Rome.⁷³ As Christopher Haigh has pointed out, “refusal to attend services at the parish church was not a natural reaction to the theological revolution of 1559.”⁷⁴ Clear cut divisions between ‘Catholicism’ and ‘Protestantism’ did not pass smoothly or rapidly into being in rural and urban localities in the years immediately following the religious settlement. Indeed, for several decades, continuity was more marked than change. After the abrupt religious reversals under Henry VIII, Edward VI and Mary I, Elizabeth’s new reformation was largely anticipated to be an equally impermanent affair.

Counties throughout England reported few individuals for their refusal to attend their parish churches in the first two decades of Elizabeth’s reign. In 1559 for example, only two individuals from Lancashire and three individuals from Yorkshire were noted for refusing to attend their parish church. Only ten individuals were identified as recusants in Yorkshire and in 1568 only eight men were recorded recusants in Lancashire.⁷⁵ Most committed Catholics made at least frequent appearances at their parish church during this period, like Anne Scarisbrick of Chester who attended her parish church monthly to hear the Protestant service and Edmund Pelham and his wife and daughter of East Anglia who attended their parish church three times a month.⁷⁶

⁷³ In the early decades of Elizabeth’s reign the Elizabethan casuists agreed that attendance at church was required in order to evade paying the penal fines for recusancy, see P.J. Holmes, ed., *Elizabethan Casuistry*, CRS LXVII (London, 1981), pp. 49-51 and pp. 103-105.

⁷⁴ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire*, p. 247.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Walsham, p. 75.

Catholics who regularly attended Protestant services in churches that had adopted the Protestant ritual and fabric often felt that a church was the most appropriate forum in which to dramatise one's ridicule of the Reformation and to enact a form of resistance to the Protestant religion. Sir Richard Shireburn for example, blocked his ears during Protestant sermons, Sir Thomas Cornwall of Suffolk 'perused' a Lady Psalter while others were on their knees at prayer and Sir Nicholas Gerard of Derbyshire loudly chanted Latin psalms when his parish minister began the reformed service. Many offered only their mere presence at their parish church with no intention of following the liturgy and deliberately disrupted the church services. Some church papists refused to take communion such as Mrs. Kath Kay of Yorkshire for example who, in 1569, was reported for kneeling before the communion table and removing the communion bread from her mouth. Some committed Catholics brought Latin primers to Protestant services and ecclesiastical records noted that women and elderly people plied their beads during prayer book services. John Wilkinson of Essex walked in and out of his parish church as the weekly Sunday service was performed and Thomas Wintringham mocked the Eucharist. Church papists were a mixed blessing for officials. While they willingly attended the weekly Protestant services, one disgruntled Protestant wrote about their presence at church: "it dothe more hurte, then their absence."⁷⁷

The nature of the English Catholic community would change in the 1570s as the Elizabethan government took a much firmer stance to ensure popular conformity to the 1559 religious legislation. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the revolt of the northern earls in 1569, the publication of the Papal Bull *Regnans in Excelsis* in 1570, the Ridolfi Plot of 1571 and the arrival of the first missionary priests in 1574 forced authorities to

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

adopt a more stringent implementation of the religious settlement of 1559 and greater efforts were made to transform the established Church into a reformed church. As parish churches became much more ‘protestantized’ in their furnishings and practices in the latter decades of Elizabeth’s reign, the English Catholic community increasingly became estranged from the Protestant majority and it came to embody resistance, non-conformity and persecution.⁷⁸

The English Catholic Community which developed in the period after 1570 and women’s role within it will be detailed in subsequent chapters and as such only a brief discussion of its characteristics will be described here. It was a community which made up only a small proportion of all ‘Catholics’ in Elizabethan England and most were predominantly gentry families and yeomanry. Those who were particularly committed to Catholicism began to take a much firmer line in their opposition to the state imposed religion and were thus became more susceptible to the penalties outlined under the religious laws of the Elizabethan government.

Often particularly committed Catholics carried out their resistance in the private sphere, frequently in the confines of their household. They perpetuated forbidden beliefs and practices, protected outlawed persons, namely priests, and supported prohibited gatherings within the confines of their home. Others publicly displayed their resistance to the state religion by refusing to attend the weekly Protestant services. However, whether through private or public displays of resistance, in the period after 1570 a new, separated, self-defined, non-conforming community emerged.

⁷⁸ See A.G. Dickens, “The First Stages of Romanist Recusancy in Yorkshire, 1560-1590,” *Yorkshire Archeological Journal* 35 (1941), pp. 157-181; idem, “The Extent and Character of Recusancy in Yorkshire,” pp. 24-48; Trimble, *The Catholic Laity in Elizabethan England, 1558-1603*; Meyer, *Elizabeth I and the Religious Settlement of 1559*; J. Bossy, *The English Catholic Community, 1570-1850* (London, 1976); A. Morey, *The Catholic Subjects of Elizabeth I* (Towota NJ, 1978).

The English Catholic community of the latter decades of Elizabeth's reign has largely been characterized as one which was sustained by the households of the gentry and reliant on the services of the travelling Catholic priests. In the years following 1570, committed Catholics had established their own underground church in England. Within the confines of the household and under the guidance of a resident priest, committed Catholics arranged for the sacraments to be performed and the Latin Mass to be said, they collectively came together to hear services conducted by Catholic priests and arranged for Catholic baptisms, marriages and funerals to be performed. They heard catechisms, said their confessions and listened to religious instruction. Traditional objects of worship were hidden within the household and holy days and feast days were celebrated.

CHAPTER TWO

'These be but women who...thus dared to live according to their conscience':¹
Women's Public and Private Displays of Resistance

Introduction

As outlined in Chapter One, the passage of the Act of Uniformity in April 1559 had a profound effect on the people of England. The initiative for, and the eventual implementation of, religious change within the country had significant repercussions for the population. The settlement meant the establishment of a policy to both suppress the Catholic faith and to establish Protestantism as the official religion in England. While some individuals welcomed the government's decision for religious change and the gradual conversion to Protestantism, those who were particularly committed to the Catholic faith did not. As mentioned in Chapter One, through a variety of methods individuals who adhered to Catholicism increasingly undertook measures to preserve and sustain it both within their household and within their community and some refused to attend the weekly Protestant services thus publicly displaying their resistance to the new state imposed religion.

Women would figure prominently among these groups. Through a variety of methods they sustained and preserved Catholic rituals and forms of worship within their household and they played a significant role in influencing the survival of Catholicism both within the family and within the community. They were also involved in publicly displaying their resistance to the enforcement of the Protestant religion, often figuring

¹ J. Hanlon, "These be but Women," in *From the Reformation to the Counter-Reformation*, ed. Charles H. Carter (New York, 1965), p. 392.

prominently in the recusant lists of the local ecclesiastical commissions and the pipe rolls and recusant rolls of the Exchequer. This chapter will examine both women's efforts to preserve Catholicism in their households and in their communities and it will discuss their involvement in recusancy, particularly in the period after 1570 as the Catholic community in England became increasingly estranged from the Protestant majority. It will examine their traditional role within the home, uncovering their traditional duties and responsibilities, in an effort to assess how women were able to safeguard their religion within this environment. Moreover, by examining recusant lists of local ecclesiastical commissions as well as the pipe rolls and recusant rolls of the Exchequer, this chapter will examine women's refusal to attend their parish church in an effort to establish their importance to the recusant community. In order to understand why women undertook measures to resist Protestantism, it is necessary to understand why some women could not and chose not to conform. Thus, prior to an examination of the efforts which women undertook to preserve their faith in the household and in the community as well as their involvement in recusancy, a brief discussion of Catholic women's reasons for non-conformity is necessary.

Lay Catholic Belief

It is easier to catalogue Protestant actions against Catholicism than it is to establish the varied meanings that the Mass, relics and miracles held for English Catholics themselves in the post-Reformation period. It is even more difficult to determine the religious beliefs specific to English Catholic women both before and after the Elizabethan Reformation as the necessary sources detailing their piety are scattered

and few.² Indeed, because of widespread illiteracy and the dangers of producing Catholic texts, most Catholic women did not detail their religious beliefs in personal diaries, polemical tracts, written prayers or devotional treatises.³ Further, surviving wills, which have become the staple tool for historians seeking to uncover lay piety in the early modern period, are a much maligned source. The idea that they are ‘windows into men’s and women’s souls’ has been shattered by the critiques of numerous researchers, who have indicated that they tell the reader as much about the scribe’s religious beliefs as they could the testator.⁴ As a result, it is necessary to turn to the scattered contemporary testimonies and defences of Catholic women in court records outlining their adherence to their faith as well as reports of the practices and observances which they preserved in the post-Reformation period to uncover information with regards to what it was about Protestantism that led some women to choose not to conform.

Testimonies seem to indicate that a sense of tradition inspired the activist behaviour of some Catholic women. Indeed, it was an often invoked rationale for adherence to Catholicism.⁵ Lady Cecily Stonor for example, when presented on charges of recusancy in Oxford in 1581, told the judges:

I was born in such a time when Holy Mass was in great reverence, and brought up in the same Faith. In King Edward’s time [1547-53] this reverence was neglected and reproved by such as governed. In Queen Mary’s, [1553-58] it was restored with much applause; and now in this time it pleaseth the state to question them, as now they

² C. Peters, *Patterns of Piety: Women, Gender and Religion in Late Medieval and Reformation England* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 160.

³ Peters, p. 160.

⁴ For a discussion of the difficulty in reading wills as a means of uncovering the religious beliefs of the person in question see J.D. Alsop, “Religious Preambles in Early Modern English Wills as Formulae,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 40 (1989), pp. 19-27; C. Burgess, “Late Medieval Wills and Pious Convention: Testamentary Evidence Reconsidered,” in *Profit, Piety and the Professions in Later Medieval England*, ed. M. Hicks (Gloucester, 1990), pp. 14-30.

⁵ For example see J. Morris, ed. *Troubles*, III (London, 1872), pp. 131-143; BL, Add. MS 34250, fols. 8-9; Harleian MS 859, fol. 44.

do me, who continue in this Catholic profession. The state would have these several changes, which I have seen with mine eyes, good and laudable. Whether it can be so, I refer it to you Lordships' consideration. I hold me still to that wherein I was born and bred; and find nothing taught in it but great virtue and sanctity; and so by the grace of God I will live and die in it.⁶

Narratives presented before the courts like the example of Stonor's defence, illustrated a radical alternative to the Elizabethan government's claim of Protestant reformers' triumph over Catholic 'superstition.' For some, they would remain faithful to Catholicism, despite the state's religious programme and, as the defence given in Stonor's narrative suggests, Catholic women resisted the pressures to convert because of their faith in their religion's eternal goodness, no matter what their country's rulers might dictate.

Women brought before the ecclesiastical commissions also often argued that the established Church was not a proper church, that it lacked the leadership of the priests and that the sacraments were not properly administered.⁷ For example, several women appeared before the Lord Mayor and Alderman of York in 1576 on charges of refusing to conform to the religious laws. They demonstrated belief in a variety of Catholic doctrines, such as the legitimacy of Catholic baptisms and communion:

Jane West stated that she thinketh it is not the right church, and that if she should come there it would damn her soul...Elizabeth Wilkinson, wife of William Wilkinson, mylner, says she comes not to church, because there is neither priest, altar nor sacrafice...Janet Strickett, widow, says she comes not to church because her conscience will not serve her; for the bread and wine is not consecrate, as it has been in time past...Alice Lobley, wife of Richard Lobley, tanner, says her conscience will not serve her; for she says she thinks the baptism is not as it has been; and says she will not receive [communion] so long as she lives.⁸

⁶ A. G. Petti, *Recusant Documents from the Ellesmere Manuscripts* (London, 1968), p. 36.

⁷ Morris, pp. 131-143

⁸ J.B. Milburn, *A Martyr of York: Being a Narrative of the Life and Sufferings of the Venerable Margaret Clitheroe* (London, 1900), p. 20.

Indeed, personal conviction as well as the theological correctness of specific doctrines in the Catholic religion played a part in the fervour of recusant believers as well as some church papists who, while attending the weekly Protestant services to evade penalty, secretly called upon the services of the recusant Marian and missionary clergy within the confines of their home. Both communion and baptism were an important part of achieving salvation and absolution under the Christian faith. Believing that the Protestant service could not provide either, Catholic women looked elsewhere.

Moreover, sources of devotion to Catholicism were presented as both historical tradition and religious doctrine, as in the case of Thomas Dalton who argued before the ecclesiastical courts in 1596:

...if I should go to your [Protestant] church I should sine against God and the peace and unity of the whole Catholic church, exclude myself from all holy sacraments and be in danger to die in my sins like a heathen ...I hear say that England hath been a Catholic Christian country a thousand years afore this Queen's reign and her father's. If that were the old highway to heaven then why should I forsake it?... My soul doth hunger by make, God made man, under the form of bread, whom none but the priests can give me; while you do keep both them and me from the old Mass, I dare not go to your communion.⁹

As the Dalton example demonstrates, some believed that conversion and the rejection of both sacraments and of his country's tradition would place him in mortal danger.

Drawing on doctrinal issues concerning transubstantiation, this particular defence for non-conformity emphasizes the importance of the Catholic Mass for adherents to the Catholic faith. In the pre-Reformation Church the sacramental system, specifically the Eucharist, was the focal point of popular piety and great importance was attached to the

⁹ A. Raine, *York Civic Records*, 7 (York, 1950), pp. 130-131.

proper reception of communion.¹⁰ Indeed, the Catholic Eucharist was of particular importance to individuals and was sacred. In 1524 for example, Christopher Haigh notes that a riot in Kirby Ireleth was halted when a priest with the Host simply placed himself between the combatants and in 1530 a mob would have attacked Lytham Priory had not two monks gone out to meet the crowd carrying a consecrated Host.¹¹ Accusations of refusals to pay church dues before taking communion resulted in defamation suits, the people of the church were often angry if their mass was interrupted and it was noted that high reverence for the Host had ‘an unbalanced effort on unstable minds.’¹² Given that the doctrine concerning transubstantiation changed under Protestantism, for those who had high reverence of the Host, conversion was an impossibility.

Moreover, the realm of holy objects such as Angus Deis, rosaries, crosses and relics of saints, all of which were believed to be able to bring forth miracles, recurred repeatedly in the reports of the ecclesiastical commission which indicates that they remained an important part of Catholics religious customs in the post-Reformation period. As it will be seen later in this chapter such items were often located in Catholic households, whether talismans which were used for medicinal purposes, bones of saints, images of the Virgin Mary and/or rosaries and crosses. Further, as direct intercessors with God the devotion to saints, like Mary, was an important element of Catholic piety which continued in the post-Reformation period. According to Catholic belief, it was thought that saints intervened in believer’s daily lives and worked as sources of comfort, protection and cures. Under Protestantism, the meanings of these objects related to saints

¹⁰ C. Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (Cambridge, 1975), p. 63.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 64.

were outlawed and indeed overthrew an important aspect of their faith. As William Blundell wrote in c. 1590:

The time hath been that Saints could see
 Could hear and help our misery
 The time is now that fiends alone
 Have leave to range, saints must be gone.¹³

'Domestic' Resistance:

Women's means of practicing their faith on the eve of the English Reformation was predominantly within the domain of the private sphere and their method of religious observance had not been limited to the church. Indeed, most women in pre-reformation England embraced private piety. Female religious life had been less organized and there had been fewer occasions for communal piety, as often membership to confraternities was small in number.¹⁴ Religious life for women was much more private and informal. Even convents lacked vitality as centers of communal worship. Women's religious houses were fewer in number, they drew exclusively on noble and wealthy urban families for their membership and their members were isolated from other women in their communities. Therefore access to communal piety in these establishments was both limited and selective.¹⁵ For most women, the household, perhaps even more than the church, was an important place for worship. Indeed, often women only collectively observed Catholic rituals during occasions of pregnancy, childbirth and death.¹⁶ While the loss of the institution of the Catholic Church in England following the religious

¹³ T. E. Gibson, ed. *Crosby Records: A Chapter of Lancashire Recusancy* (Manchester, 1887), p. 30.

¹⁴ N.Z. Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, California, 1975), p. 75; P. Crawford, *Women and Religion, 1500-1720* (New York, 1993), p. 74; A. Lawrence, *Women in England, 1500-1760: A Social History* (London, 1994), pp. 193-196

¹⁵ Davis, pp. 75-76.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 74-75; Crawford, p. 75; Peters, pp. 10-39.

settlement would have affected women, the need for the household as a place of refuge to observe Catholicism would not have changed significantly.

As the private sphere was the traditional environment for religious observance for most women it is not surprising that following the Elizabethan Reformation, those committed to Catholicism often continued to observe it within the confines of their home. For women who adhered to the Catholic faith, the home was the place where it could still be observed and practiced. Indeed, within the household, the full liturgical cycle was celebrated, the full rituals of the Holy Week were performed, the virgils, fasts, feasts, ember and rogation days were observed, and at special feasts they organized for mass to be heard.¹⁷ The women of the household organized their days around private prayer and ensured that morning and evening devotions were led for the whole household.¹⁸ They meditated daily, fasted regularly, and they frequently attended the Catholic communion in secrecy.¹⁹

Moreover, women played an important role in ensuring that the necessary items to perform the Catholic worship were available within the household after 1559. Elaborate vestments were embroidered by women, and they kept altar vessels, candlesticks and other ‘church stuff’ within their home.²⁰ Indeed, searches conducted by authorities in the homes of Catholic families often found items necessary for Catholic worship, and often the items identified as ‘popish’ were the personal possessions of the women of the

¹⁷ For example, see W. Palmes, ed. *Life of Mrs. Dorothy Lawson of St. Anthony's near New Castle upon Tyne* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1855), p. 28; J. Morris, ed. *Troubles of our Catholic Forefathers Related by Themselves*, ser. III (1872), pp.131-443; R. Smith, ed. *An Elizabethan Recusant House: Comprising the Life of Lady Magdalen Viscountess of Montague (1538-1608)* (London, 1954), pp. 60-62; M. Rowlands, “Recusant Women, 1560-1640,” in *Women in English Society, 1500-1800*, ed. Mary Prior (London, 1985), p. 163.

¹⁸ For example, see Palmes, p. 28; Morris, pp.131-443; Smith, pp. 60-62; Rowlands, p. 163.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

household. This is clearly illustrated in a report on the search of the home of the Bentley's on 20 June 1595. In searching the common rooms, those of Mr. Bentley, the children and the servants, no Catholic instruments of worship were located. However, upon entering the bedchamber of Mrs. Bentley, and searching her desk, trunks and coffers, a chalice, a crucifix, a surplice, a 'mass book', and 'divers other varyne things' were discovered.²¹ Proceeding to her study, the searchers further uncovered 'so many books [that] they did not have time to search [through] them.'²²

As the religious settlement forced individuals who adhered to the Catholic faith to observe their religion in secrecy, an increase in communal piety among committed Catholics resulted, as they congregated together on occasion to hear the mass performed either by the local Marian priest or a missionary priest harboured in the household of a neighbouring Catholic.²³ Catholic women in both Yorkshire and Lancashire did indeed participate and took leadership in communal worship. Margaret Webster in the West Riding of Yorkshire turned her home into a place of Catholic worship in the 1580s, allowing other committed Catholics within her community to worship.²⁴ Similarly, Margaret Clitherow's home became a principle mass center in the City of York by 1574, and when searched by officials on 10 March 1586, authorities located a priest's room

²¹ BL, Harleian MS 6998, fol. 199.

²² The location of where the Bentley's resided is not given in the report, *Ibid*.

²³ In this thesis the Marian priests are taken to include all those who received their orders according to the Catholic rite under Henry VIII, during the early part of Edward VI's reign, under Mary I or during Elizabeth I's reign before the religious settlement came into operation in 1559. I have identified the Marian priests as being the 'popish priests', 'old priests' and 'massing priests' mentioned in contemporary sources.

²³ Among those who refused to conform some publicly opposed the religious change, as they refused to take the Oath of Supremacy and thus suffered deprivation and sometimes imprisonment; others resigned from their livings, and some went into exile. Moreover, a number of Marian priests did not display their resistance until the Act of 1571, which required them to accept the Thirty-Nine Articles; others resisted the religious changes for even longer.

²⁴R. Connelly, *The Women of the Catholic Resistance in England, 1540-1680*, (Edinburgh, 1997), p. 45; Other women were involved in similar activities. For example, Lady Hilton often traveled to the home of Lady Margaret Clitherow to hear the Catholic mass. PRO, SP12/245/131.

with an altar, books and a chalice.²⁵ Mary Hutton, also from the City of York, lived close to the market place and business center of the city in the early 1570s and had mass said within her home with both her family and neighbours.²⁶ Dorothy Vavasour, as the wife of a doctor, organized a place within her home where Catholic mothers-to-be could come together safely and where babies could be baptized and their young children could receive Catholic instruction.²⁷ As the above examples illustrate, their efforts to sustain their religion meant that Catholic women increasingly participated in communal piety.

Women also worked together to preserve Catholicism in the wider context of the community by encouraging their friends and neighbours to continue to observe the Catholic faith. Margaret Clitherow, Dorothy Vavasour and Mary Hutton together ensured that Mass was celebrated regularly in one of their houses and the three women came together at childbirths, at christening parties, wedding banquets, and funeral feasts to ensure that the proper Catholic rituals were performed.²⁸ Clitherow, Vavasour and Hutton, in going to shops, to the marketplace or simply in the street, either together or separately, encouraged others to embrace Catholicism. Indeed, they met outside of the home to discuss religion amongst each other and with others and they frequently proclaimed ‘great truths of religion’ to their friends and neighbours.²⁹

Some Catholic women became powerful agents for conversion and catechizing. In less danger than both Marian and missionary priests, women could move around easily and gain entry to the houses of others without arousing suspicion. Elizabeth Vaux for example, converted the wife of Sir Richard Wenman to Catholicism when he was absent

²⁵ Smith, p. 120.

²⁶ Morris, pp. 137-140.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 135-136

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.131-145.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

abroad.³⁰ Similarly, Dorothy Lawson set about the task of catechizing her neighbours, she taught children about Catholicism and she discussed religion as she tended and served the poor.³¹ Ursula Middleton, the wife of Henry Farmer, used her skill in surgery to ‘save the souls of children.’³² She had a wide practice in surgery, and thus when children were brought to her and she found that they had not received a Catholic baptism, ‘she wou’d carry the Children up with some excuse & there in the Chappel desire the Priest to Christen them, or els baptise them herself.’³³

Contemporary socially prescribed gender roles also influenced the means by which women played a role in preserving their faith. Indeed, their gendered role within society was a significant influence in how women might sustain their religion, particularly for those who were married, and within the social constructs women made their own distinctive contribution to the Catholic cause. Women had an important role within the domestic sphere; specifically they held authority over the business of the household. Indeed, women had significant control over the day-to-day activities within their home, as it was women who were in charge of the direction and decision making about the conduct and activities of their young children and they would have instructed the servants, apprentices and sometimes day labourers as well.³⁴

³⁰ Crawford, p. 62.

³¹ Palmes, p. 72.

³² Crawford, p. 62.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ For example, conduct book writers, in discussion women’s role within the domestic sphere, affirmed their authority over the household. For example, in *Marriage Duties Couched Together* (London, 1620) Thomas Gataker explained simply that it was the wife’s duty to be directed in the ‘marshalling and managing of domestic affairs’ and in *Of Domestic Duties* William Gouge suggested that husbands should not be too exacting in restraining their spouses over details of furnishings, provisioning and control of maids. For Thomas Gataker and William Gouge see K. Aughterson, ed., *Renaissance Woman. Constructing Femininity in England*, (London, 1995), pp. 149-150 and 89-96.

Women, precisely because of their role within the household, carried on more responsibility for the day-to-day development of religious life amongst their family and women who adhered to the Catholic faith influenced its preservation amongst other members of the household. Indeed, it was often through women, rather than men, that the religion of their children was decided, particularly that of their daughters and younger sons.³⁵ One of the primary methods undertaken to raise their children as Catholics was through baptism, either with or without their husbands' knowledge. Indeed, the baptism of children, performed by either Marian or missionary priests, was one means by which women ensured that their children were brought up in the Catholic faith and many women in both Lancashire and Yorkshire who adhered to Catholicism made such arrangements. The wife of Mr Gayle of Yorkshire, for example, had all six of her children baptized by priests after 1559.³⁶ Similarly, the wife of Mr Walmesley of Lancashire had her son baptized by a Catholic priest prior to October 1580.³⁷ By baptizing their children, these women ensured that their sons and daughters were members of the Catholic community.

Women who remained committed to Catholicism after the religious settlement also ensured that their sons and daughters received Catholic instruction, both as children and as young adults, as women had significant control over their religious education. Women had the authority and the duty to educate their daughters throughout their childhood, as few girls attended day schools outside of the home, and thus they had a

³⁵ Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England, 1500-1800* (New Haven, New Jersey, 1995), p. 205.

³⁶ PRO, SP12/175/110.

³⁷ BL, Add. MS 48068, fol. 68.

particularly profound influence on their choice of religion.³⁸ Because their education was not directed towards employment opportunities, and because they were instead instructed in the business of the household, their education was geared towards the domestic sphere. In readying girls and young women for their future in the household as wives and mothers, the focus of their instruction was on meditation and prayer as well as feminine virtue, such as chastity, obedience, piety and silence. Indeed, meditation and prayer and more generally religious instruction made up a considerable proportion of their education. Existing diaries and letters of sixteenth century women discuss the importance of their religious education in the daily activities of their childhood and youth, as often they were required to spend several hours per day in private prayer.³⁹ Since, religious instruction was such a large component of girls' education it is most likely that those who received their religious education from Catholic mothers would have themselves been strict, observing Catholics. This was the case, for example, of three young women from Lancashire, Mary Garrard, Ann Garrard and Mary Clifton, who stated before the ecclesiastical commission for both Wigan and Prescott on 14 February 1583, that they had never been to a service of the Church of England.⁴⁰

While women's role in the religious education of their daughters was tremendously influential, their role in the religious instruction and the education of their sons was less direct as most sons were given the opportunity to attend the local grammar

³⁸ While indeed women were responsible for the education of their daughters, it must be noted that noble women and some gentry women had their daughters taught by governesses. However, for Catholic women, it is likely that they would ensure that their daughters would receive Catholic instruction.

³⁹ Fletcher, pp. 364-375; R. Warnicke, "Private and Public: The Boundaries of Women's Lives in Early Stuart England," in *Privileging Gender in Early Modern England*, ed. Jean R. Brink, (Kirksville, Missouri, 1993), pp. 132- 133.

⁴⁰ PRO, SP12/168/16.

school once they had reached the age of six.⁴¹ However, Catholic women still sought to ensure that their sons continued to receive Catholic instruction. This was most often accomplished by locating and sending their sons to study under recusant schoolmasters, as was the case for one woman from Lancashire:

Mrs. Houghton hath kepte sithence the deathe of hir husband one Richard Blundell Brother to Willm Blundell of Crosbie, who is an obstinate Papiste and acquainted with a number of Seaminaries, and he teacheth hir children to singe and praie upon the virginalles.⁴²

Similarly, a report from Lancashire, written in 1576 on the subject of recusant schoolteachers, noted that many of the children attending schools run by ‘papists’ were taught to help priests perform the mass.⁴³ When Catholic schoolteachers were not available to instruct the sons of Catholic families, some women would provide the necessary religious education to both their own sons and to those of neighbouring families outside of the daily hours of the grammar schools. Lucy Sedgwick for example, was described as “being a verey perverse and obstinate p[erson] and a corrupter of dyvers gentlemens children,” taking it upon herself to ensure that children learned and were exposed to the Catholic faith.⁴⁴ In the home of Margaret Clitherow for example, what was described as a ‘Catholic school’ was discovered when it was searched on 10 March 1586. Items found included an altar, books and all the requisites for mass.⁴⁵ Not only were the sons of Catholic families instructed in the theology of Catholicism, they were also taught the means by which to worship the Catholic faith and to assist in the celebration of the mass.

⁴¹ Grammar schools for boys were first established in England in the early sixteenth century, prior to the Reformation. Between 1560 and 1660 number of schools across the country greatly increased. Strictly confined to boys, the core curriculum was based on the classics, Fletcher, p. 299.

⁴² PRO, SP12/243/52.

⁴³ BL, Add. MS 48019, fol. 25.

⁴⁴ PRO, SP12/141/3.

⁴⁵ Southern, p. 120.

Perhaps the efforts of women to provide a religious education for their children and the success in raising them as committed Catholics can be best seen in recusant and prison lists as often women are listed alongside their children. Anne Foster of Yorkshire for example, along with two of her daughters, were noted for refusing to attend the services of the Church of England in August 1577.⁴⁶ In 1602 Anne Sacker from Yorkshire, along with her daughters Jane and Elizabeth Sacker, were all listed as recusants.⁴⁷ Similarly, in Lancashire Anna Southworth and her daughter Dorothy Southworth were listed in the recusant records of 1583.⁴⁸ Moreover, it was noted in the 1577 diocesan returns for recusants in the diocese of York that Margaret Thwaites' and her eldest son were recusants while her younger son was abroad training as a priest.⁴⁹ Mrs. Lindsey and Mrs. Neilson from Yorkshire were both listed alongside their sons for recusancy in 1580.⁵⁰

While men were at times listed alongside their sons and daughters as recusants, and while sometimes both men and women were listed alongside their children for recusancy, this was not always the case. Indeed, men whose children were recusants were not necessarily committed Catholics themselves. Mary Cole for example, the daughter of Robert Cole, was interrogated for recusancy on 18 April 1593.⁵¹ In her examination she stated that she had not been to church for at least seven years and that, while her mother had been sent to the Gatehouse for recusancy, her father was a staunch Protestant.⁵²

While at times men would have been influential in their children's religious choices,

⁴⁶ PRO, SP12/117/23.

⁴⁷ PRO, E/377/11.

⁴⁸ PRO, E/372/432.

⁴⁹ P. Ryan, ed. "Diocesan Returns of Recusants for England and Wales 1577," in *CRS Miscellanea XII*, CRS XXII (London, 1921), p. 14.

⁵⁰ PRO, SP12/146/137.

⁵¹ BL, Harleian MS 6998, fol. 81.

⁵² *Ibid.*

women did have a significant and sometimes independent influence over their children's religious upbringing.

The influence of women's authority over the day-to-day development of religious life in the home extended beyond that of their children. As the sixteenth century conception of the family included servants, apprentices and sometimes day labourers, and as women had authority over their day-to-day activities, the religious instruction of the household would have included them as well. Evidence suggests that servants and apprentices of Catholic families were also committed to Catholicism or had been converted. For example in a report written in 1586, six servants in the household of Lord Montague, five in the household of Lord Lumley and two in the household of Lord Compton were listed as papists.⁵³ Thus, women's efforts to preserve and practice Catholicism within the household was not only limited to their immediate families. Rather, as a result of their authoritative role within the domestic sphere, they played an important part in a broader range of individuals' continued connections to Catholicism.

Other methods aside from religious education within the household were undertaken to ensure children's upbringing and their adherence to the Catholic faith. Catholic families sent their sons to train abroad as priests and sent their daughters overseas to live in nunneries. For example, Mrs. Tildesley and Mrs. Anderson, both of Lancashire and Mrs. Lindsey from York each had one son abroad, while Mrs. Throckington of Chester sent her daughter, Margery Throckington, overseas.⁵⁴ Many committed Catholics sent their children to the continent. Often aristocratic and gentry families would send their sons and daughters to places such as Douai, Liège, Rome,

⁵³ PRO, SP12/195/107.

⁵⁴ PRO, SP12/185/85; SP12/243/70; SP12/146/137; SP12/173/26i.

Naples and Flanders.⁵⁵ Marie Rowlands has noted that at its peak, at least 300 children of Catholic families joined religious communities on the continent.⁵⁶ By encouraging and sending their children abroad they were able to provide the opportunity for their daughters to live a religious life in the Catholic faith in the open and to send their sons to train abroad in the hope that they would one day return to England to secretly administer the sacraments in the outlawed faith to families around the countryside.

Catholic families encouraged their children to marry fellow Catholics. Land and marriage became increasingly important for Catholic families and the construction of a Catholic marriage market emerged. John More, the son of Thomas More, married Anne Cresacre, the heiress of Barnburgh in the West Riding of Yorkshire. Similarly, Richard Webster of Earswicke in Yorkshire married a fellow Catholic woman Lucy Askwithes.⁵⁷ By marrying fellow Catholics women were given the opportunity to openly worship their faith within the domain of the domestic sphere, to raise their own children as Catholics, and to ensure that other members of the household practice the faith. As Sarah Bastow writes: “[marriage] allowed many...families to retain their religious adherence.”⁵⁸

Recusancy

While Catholic women ensured that forms of traditional worship were accessible within the household, that children were instructed and raised in the Catholic faith and

⁵⁵ For example, in 1580 a list compiled totaling all the known men and women who had left England that year to either enter into nunneries or to train as priests, noted that four were in Venice, five were in Naples; seven were in Milan, one was at Bologna; 2 were in Lorraine, three were in Rouen, two were in Flanders five were in Domain, thirty-four were in Paris, and twenty-five were in Reims, and sixty-four men were listed as being in the college in Rome. BL, Add. MS 48029, fol. 129.

⁵⁶ Rowlands, p. 167.

⁵⁷ BL, Harleian MS 6998, fol. 87.

⁵⁸ S.L. Bastow, “‘Worth Nothing, But Very Willful’; Catholic Recusant Women of Yorkshire, 1536-1642,” *RH 25* (2001), p. 592.

undertook measures to encourage others to convert or to continue to adhere to Catholicism, they also played a large and important role in public resistance, namely recusancy, making up a considerable proportion of all the individuals involved. Evidence suggests that it was predominantly gentry women and women of the middling group who refused to attend their parish church. Women comprised approximately sixty percent of all individuals penalized for recusancy and some communities, like the City of York, recorded much higher numbers of recusant women.⁵⁹

While married women, widows and spinsters all appeared in recusant lists of the local ecclesiastical commissions as well as the pipe rolls and recusant rolls of the Exchequer, the extent of their involvement was not the same. Married women would figure much more prominently in official records. As substantially greater in number than those who were widowed or single, the number of married women who refused to attend the services of the Church of England would naturally have been greater. At times there were great disparities between the numbers of married women and those widowed or single who were mentioned in the records. In the 1577 diocesan returns for the City of York for example, sixty-one married women were identified as recusants while only sixteen widows and eight spinsters were named.⁶⁰ Similarly, in the pipe roll of the Exchequer for 1584 nineteen widows and spinsters from Lancashire and Yorkshire were listed while fifty-one married women of the same counties were named. In the recusant roll of 1600, 127 widows and spinsters were listed as recusants while compared to the 216 married women who were identified for their refusal to attend church.⁶¹ In some

⁵⁹ In the City of York in 1576 fifty-one out of the sixty-nine persons identified for not attending their parish church were women.

⁶⁰ Ryan, pp. 12-36.

⁶¹ PRO, E/372/433; E/377/9.

recusant records however, the number of married women in comparison to those who were widowed and single was much more similar. In a Lancashire ecclesiastical court record dated 28 November 1577 four married women appeared on the list as did two widows and on 14 January 1598 three spinsters were noted in the ecclesiastical court records for their refusal to attend their parish church as did four married women.⁶² It should be noted however, that lists which reported relatively similar numbers of married, widowed and single women as non-attendees at their parish church were solely local ecclesiastical reports which never identified particularly high numbers of recusants at any one time.

Widows and spinsters of a competent age legally owned both their own money and property, were held responsible for their own actions and thus were bound to adhere to the religious laws.⁶³ Married women however, were not. Since the most common form of punishment levied on recusants was fines and forfeitures of property and, since married women legally possessed neither money nor property, the government faced difficulty in punishing them for refusing to attend the services of the Church of England. Until the introduction of the 1593 statute on recusancy, which imposed a ten pound fine on the heads of the households for every member of the family not attending the services of the Church of England, it was relatively easy for married women to evade the recusancy laws. As a result, Catholic women married to Protestant husbands, could publicly display their resistance, as they incurred no financial penalty. Similarly, Catholic women in Catholic families played an important role in the household's opposition to the state religion, as often it was their husbands who would attend the weekly Protestant

⁶² PRO, SP12/266/18iii.

⁶³ For example, see PRO, SP12/140/37; SP12/184/61; SP12/352/24; E/372/426; E/372/427; E/372 /428; E/372/429; E/372/430; E/372/431; E/377/1; E/377/2.

services in order to evade financial penalties. As Alexandra Walsham writes: “[within Catholic households] female recusancy [was] often a natural division of labour in the management of dissent.”⁶⁴

Local authorities were well aware of married women’s role in recusancy and thus, working within the confines of the law, attempted to achieve religious conformity among these women in the years prior to 1593. From 1575 onward married women were called before the ecclesiastical commissions in both Lancashire and Yorkshire to persuade them to take an oath to attend the services of the Church of England. However, authorities achieved little success in securing religious conformity as a number of those who appeared before the commission refused to concede to the law citing various doctrinal issues for their recusancy. This was the case at a hearing in Lancashire on 4 February 1583 whereby thirty-two women in Lancashire were brought before the commission to take an oath to attend the services of the Church of England.⁶⁵ While thirteen swore to conform, nineteen refused.⁶⁶ Moreover, on 2 August 1580 in Chester a number of married women did not appear before the ecclesiastical commission when summoned to pledge an oath to conform. Anne Wray stated that she was sick with a cold and could not attend and Katherine Bulmer similarly stated that she was sick in bed.⁶⁷ Furthermore, Marie Rowlands has noted that in other counties women left their communities in order to evade punishment. For example, she notes that Mrs. Bridget Badginton of Gloucestershire, Mrs. Brudiman of Bedfordshire and Mrs. Hancorne of Warwickshire all fled their homes

⁶⁴ Walsham, p. 81.

⁶⁵ PRO, SP12/168/16.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ PRO, SP12/141/3.

upon hearing that they were to appear before the courts.⁶⁸ Thus, while attempts were made by authorities to ensure married women's conformity, it proved to be a difficult task.

More often the ecclesiastical commissioners looked to recusant women's husbands to overcome their resistance. Some men who appeared before the commissioners argued that they had tried to make their wives conform, without success. Christopher Kinchingman, for example, stated before the Northern Court of High Commission that he had dragged his wife to church by force on one occasion and George Hall stated that he had beaten his wife for refusing to attend church. Others stated that they would have their wives attend the weekly Protestant service, as both Matthew Wentworth and Thomas Watterton stated on 20 August 1580.⁶⁹ Most husbands of recusant women, however, were also committed Catholics, and at times even recusants, and thus refused to comply, and in the years following 1593 they were willing to pay for their wives' recusancy as required by the 1593 law. Walter Rigmaden, Edward Norris, Lawrence Ireland, Thomas Southworth, Thomas Brockholis, George Middleton and Francis Tunstall for example, all from Lancashire, were required to pay for their wives' recusancy in February 1598.⁷⁰

While married women would be penalized for their refusal to attend their parish church in the years following 1593, they continued to be committed to refusing to attend the weekly Protestant services despite the financial penalties. On 10 March 1594 for example, fifteen women in Lancashire and Yorkshire were reported as recusants as were

⁶⁸ Rowlands, p. 152.

⁶⁹ PRO, SP12/141/70.

⁷⁰ PRO, SP12/266/80.

thirteen men.⁷¹ Similarly, in the same year, twelve women were listed as recusants in Yorkshire as were nine men. Moreover, in the recusant roll for 1592-93 approximately 2500 women from all of England were noted as were 2000 men and between 1593 and 1603 the number of married women whose names appeared in the recusant rolls remained relatively constant.

Women's involvement in resisting the state religion was clearly not limited to private and domestic measures. While the majority of Catholic women in the period were by no means recusants, as Marie Rowlands has noted, "[they were] vigorous, active, and capable of making an impression." In refusing to attend the weekly services of the Church of England women were not only demonstrating that they were key players in private resistance, but in public resistance as well.⁷²

Conclusion

Women played an important role in the English Catholic community, undertaking measures to both resist the state imposed religion as well as safeguarding their faith. Indeed, some women would not and could not conform to the state religion, citing both doctrinal reasons and ingrained Catholic practices in their defence for their refusal to adhere to the religious laws. Catholic women, as result of their traditional duties and responsibilities within the household, undertook measures to ensure that Catholic instruments of worship were available within the home and that children were raised in the Catholic faith and they were involved in instructing and catechizing others in their communities. Women, whether widowed, single or married, were also active members in

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Rowlands, p. 149.

recusancy. Married women in particular, as the result of their ability to evade the recusancy laws before 1593, played a particularly important role in the Catholic household. They were able to undertake the role of publicly displaying their resistance to the new religious laws without facing the penal fines. However, the role of widows and spinsters in recusancy was also important. They demonstrated that they were willing to risk everything to display their loyalty to their faith.

CHAPTER THREE

'If God's priests dare venture themselves to my house, I will never refuse them':¹
Harbouring priests in Elizabethan England

Introduction

Without the Marian priests, the seminarians or the Jesuits, Catholicism would have declined and possibly even disappeared in England in the decades following the religious settlement. They were essential to its survival as they made available religious services and practices to individuals who remained committed to the Catholic faith. In the face of danger they provided religious instruction, performed the Mass, heard confession and administered the sacraments in a number of households and communities throughout the country. Their efforts to preserve the Catholic faith however, could not have been achieved without the support and help of the laity as they required private, safe havens from which to carry out their tasks. With a need for religious instruction from the Catholic clergy, some individuals and families would become involved in the act of harbouring priests, providing them with a safe place in which to both live and work.

This chapter will explore women's involvement in the act of harbouring and trace the extent of their efforts to support Catholic priests. Utilizing ecclesiastical and civic court records, prison lists and memoirs it will examine their participation in sheltering the Marian clergy, the seminarians and the Jesuits in order to draw general conclusions on their involvement and the initiatives they undertook to enable Catholic clergymen to perform their tasks. Moreover, a detailed assessment of the efforts and effectiveness of the Marian priests, the seminarians and the Jesuits in preserving Catholicism in the period

¹ Margaret Clitherow, 1586.

after 1559 will be undertaken in order to uncover the underlying role of women in the efforts to preserve Catholicism in Elizabethan England.

Marian Priests

Marian priests were important figures in the preservation of Catholic communities in Elizabethan England as they undertook measures to safeguard their faith, specifically by promoting Catholic beliefs and practices following the religious settlement. Some conformed to the 1559 religious laws, keeping their livings, but endeavoured to retain inside the established Church outward signs of Catholicism, particularly by making the new communion service much like that of the Catholic Mass; others kept as quiet as possible, administering the sacraments of the official church in public, but continuing to provide Catholic services in the households of gentlemen and women.² Those who resigned from their livings became activists, furthering the cause of Catholicism as best they could, moving around the countryside from one Mass centre to another, similar to the ‘underground’ activity more often associated with the seminary and Jesuit priests.³ Marian priests taught Catholic beliefs, served as chaplains in gentry homes and acted as religious tutors to children.⁴ Mass continued to be available for those who desired it in the

² Among those who refused to conform some publicly opposed the religious change, as they refused to take the Oath of Supremacy and thus suffered deprivation and sometimes imprisonment; others resigned from their livings, and some went into exile. Moreover, a number of Marian priests did not display their resistance until the Act of 1571, which required them to accept the Thirty-Nine Articles; others resisted the religious changes for even longer.

³ P. McGrath, “The Marian Priests under Elizabeth I,” *RH* 19 (1989), p. 103.

⁴ C. Haigh, “The Church of England, the Catholics and the People,” in *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, ed. Christopher Haigh (London, 1984), p. 197; J. J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People* (Oxford, 1984), p. 142.

households of sympathetic gentlemen and women and at times within their parish church.⁵

The number of Marian priests who resisted the government's religious programme was relatively significant, and the two counties under investigation were no exception. Hugh Aveling noted that between 150 and 160 Marian priests were involved in preserving Catholic beliefs and practices in Yorkshire between 1559 and 1603; between 50 and 60 had once held benefices within the county and between 90 and 100 had come from other parts of the country.⁶ In Lancashire, Christopher Haigh has noted that between 1563 and 1572 as many as twenty-five clergymen were brought before the church courts for continuing to observe the Catholic service in their parish church; ten of these men had been serving in Lancashire before 1559.⁷ In all, between 140 and 150 priests from Yorkshire and seventy-five priests from Lancashire resigned from their livings, but remained in the country offering their services to committed Catholics.⁸ The number of Marian priests involved in the Catholic cause was significant until the end of Elizabeth's reign. The Jesuit William Holt estimated that there were roughly forty to fifty Marian priests in the English mission in 1596; they constituted fourteen percent of the Catholic priests working in England at this time.⁹

⁵ The ability to hear the Catholic Mass within the parish church was largely restricted to the years prior to 1570 and there were some parts of the country (particularly in the southwest) where it was difficult to locate a parish church where the Catholic Mass was performed. C. Haigh, "The Continuity of Catholicism in the English Reformations," *Past and Present* 93 (1981), pp. 37-69; idem, "From Monopoly to Minority: Catholicism in Early Modern England," *Trans. Royal Historical Society*, 5th Series, 31 (1981), pp. 129-147.

⁶ H. Aveling, *Northern Catholics: The Catholic Recusants of the North Riding of Yorkshire, 1558-1790* (London, 1966), p. 43.

⁷ C. Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (Cambridge, 1976), p. 216.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

⁹ H. Foley, ed. *Records of the English Province of the Society of Jesus*, VII (London, 1966), p. 1240; P. McGrath and J. Rowe, "The Elizabethan Priests: their harbourers and their helpers," *RH* 19 (1989), p. 209. Patrick McGrath suggests that Fr. William Holt's figure may very well have been an underestimate, see P. McGrath, "Marian Priests," p. 108.

The efforts Marian priests made to preserve Catholic beliefs and practices enabled an ‘English Catholic community’ to persist in England well before the arrival of the seminary and Jesuit priests. Indeed, Catholicism was nurtured by the Marian priests in the 1560s and early 1570s, as the Rev. T.F. Knox wrote in his introduction to the *Douay Diaries*:

[The] renovation of Catholic life in England was brought about in the face of untiring and malevolent persecutors...But who were they to whom this change in the English Catholics was owing? For the first sixteen years of the schism...it was due to the priests, some regular, but more secular, ordained in previous reigns, and to them alone...A large number especially of the parochial clergy, remained steadfast at their posts, and through the long night of danger and persecution watched like true pastors over their flocks.¹⁰

The prospects for the survival of Catholicism after Elizabeth’s accession were very good, as conservative opinion remained widespread.¹¹ Indeed, as Christopher Haigh has argued, under the guardianship of a conservative Marian clergy the beliefs of some laypersons changed very little in the reign of Elizabeth I.¹²

While the actions of the Marian priests in the 1560s and early 1570s were essential for the survival of Catholicism after 1559, as they were responsible for safeguarding Catholic practices and observances at a time when the initial push for religious change was made, their involvement in preserving Catholicism was not limited to the early decades of Elizabeth’s reign. Rather, until 1603 and beyond, Marian priests continued to provide religious instruction to fellow Catholics. While their numbers decreased in the latter decades as a result of mortality, there remained a good number who continued to actively resist the religious change, often outside of the established

¹⁰ T. F. Knox, “Introduction,” in *The First and Second Diaries of the English College, Douay, with an Appendix of Unpublished Documents*, ed. Fathers of the London Oratory (London, 1878), pp. lx-lxi.

¹¹ Haigh, “The Church of England, the Catholics and the People,” p. 201.

¹² *Ibid.*

Church as the efforts of ecclesiastical and civic authorities to enforce religious change at the parish level were implemented with much more rigor in later years. Whether within or outside of the established Church they administered the Mass, provided religious instruction, heard confessions and performed both Catholic marriages and baptisms.

The effectiveness of the Marian clergy in preserving Catholicism is evident in the commissioners' reports from both Lancashire and Yorkshire, as there were concerns amongst officials that their activities threatened the success of the government's religious programme. One report for example, referred to them as "the wicked popisshe prestes" who caused "great Daunger and hurte to the comonweale."¹³ The initiatives, or lack thereof, of the priests who retained their livings to implement the required changes particularly concerned officials in their reports on the progress of religious conversion at the popular level. Within the parish church they often noted that certain ecclesiastical rites and ceremonies were not being observed and that the Catholic Mass was being publicly celebrated.¹⁴ They frequently argued that only with the removal of these particular priests would conversion be successful.¹⁵ However, the concerns of officials with the activities of the Marian priests were not limited to those who retained their livings. Of equal concern were those who resigned from the church. Officials reported that recusant priests were hiding within the Catholic households to a significant degree, performing the Mass, speaking ill of the Church of England and suggested that authorities seek out recusant priests and their harbourers.¹⁶ They accused the Marian priests more generally of being responsible for laypersons' non-conformity and the enduring presence

¹³ PRO, SP12/74/22.

¹⁴ For example see PRO, SP12/10/158; SP12/41/66; SP12/74/22; SP12/172/102; SP12/175/110; SP12/183/15; SP12/235/68; SP12/240/295; *Salis. MSS*, I, p. 575; BL, Lansdowne MS 25, fol. 80.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ PRO, SP12/74/22.

of Catholicism within the country, accusing them of reconciling parishioners to Rome and of urging the congregation to openly observe the Catholic Mass within the household under their direction.¹⁷

While officials attributed the enduring presence of Catholicism in England to the actions of the Marian priests, it is important to note that the effectiveness of their efforts to safeguard their faith required the assistance of the laity. Indeed, priests who refused to implement and/or observe the religious settlement of 1559 required the support of committed Catholics if they were going to continue to work as Catholic priests in spite of the law. Marian priests who preserved elements of Catholicism within the Church of England were, for the most part, able to do so with particular ease, as many laypersons in both Lancashire and Yorkshire as in other parts of the country were themselves committed Catholics in 1559. Indeed, as commissioner reports suggest, parishioners in both counties welcomed the observance of Catholic practices in the established Church. The Marian clergy, working within the established Church, were able to preserve the commitment of a significant number of individuals to the Catholic faith at a time of religious change.

The willingness of the laity to support the measures of the recusant Marian clergy however was much more limited as they faced serious risks. Indeed, recusant priests required much more from their supporters in order to achieve their goals as the act of harbouring was not without anxiety and danger.¹⁸ Some harbourers, like Sir Alexander Culpepper of Kent and his wife, suffered considerable harassment for keeping a priest. Both Culpepper and his wife were forced to leave their community and subsequent

¹⁷ PRO, SP12/10/158; SP12/41/66; SP12/74/22; SP12/172/102; SP12/175/110; SP12/240/295; *Salis. MSS*, I, p. 575; BL, Lansdowne MS 25, fol. 80.

¹⁸ McGrath and Rowe, "Elizabethan Priests: the harbourers and their helpers," p. 210.

dwellings because of the fear of persecution and harassment from their neighbours.¹⁹

Others however, faced more severe consequences. In 1576 Francis Tunstall of Thurland Castle, John Talbot of Salisbury, John Westby of Mowbreck, John Rigmaiden of Garstang, Edward Osbaldeston of Osbaldeston Hall, Matthew Travers of Chester, John Towneley of Towneley and John Mollineux of Melling were imprisoned and fined 300 marks.²⁰

Despite the risks which individuals faced for harbouring, evidence suggests that the recusant Marian priests were able to find sufficient shelter and protection as most found more or less permanent residence in the households of the nobility and the gentry. Others moved about and took shelter in a number of households.²¹ Indeed, while smaller in number, some committed Catholics recognized the necessity of harbouring recusant priests, as it was essential for the survival of Catholicism outside of the established Church. As the sacraments had to be administered by Catholic priests whose ordinations were valid, the only way for Catholicism to survive was within a separate community.²² Households were required to provide accessible space whereby the Catholic service could be performed for the Catholic residents of a particular community.

The Marian priests would find sufficient shelter in Catholic households throughout the Elizabethan period even after the arrival of the seminary and Jesuit priests in the latter decades of the sixteenth century. Priests ordained before the Elizabethan settlement had practical advantages over both the seminarians and the Jesuits and some known recusant families, like the Montagues, would only allow a Marian priest into their

¹⁹ J.S. Leatherbarrow, *The Lancashire Elizabethan Recusants* (Manchester, 1947), p. 120.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 33-35.

²¹ McGrath and Rowe, "The Elizabethan Priests: their harbourers and their helpers," p. 212.

²² J. Guy, *Tudor England* (Oxford, 1988), p. 301.

household to act as chaplain.²³ Marian priests were, for example, less provocative than the missionaries and they were less rigorous as they allowed their harbourers to put in an appearance at the local parish church from time to time, thus enabling them to escape the full oppression of the recusancy laws.²⁴ Since the early decades of Elizabeth's reign they tended to realise that it was expedient to make this concession now and then and noted that occasional conformity would not be a sin.²⁵ Moreover, because Marian priests knew their way around better than the missionary priests from overseas, they were less dangerous to entertain, and because they had been lawfully ordained in England, they could solemnise marriages which the established Church would recognize.²⁶

Women were very much involved in the activity of harbouring Marian priests, especially since the day-to-day activities within the household were traditionally their responsibility. Indeed, in cases where a married couple provided a priest with a home, it was often the wife rather than the husband who made the arrangements to welcome the visitor into their household, controlled the curiosity of their children and servants, ensured secrecy and organized for the Catholic Mass to be said.²⁷ Hundreds of married women throughout the country were involved in receiving recusant Marian priests for a few hours or a few days at a time so that the Catholic service could be performed for a small gathering.²⁸ In the Wharton household in Yorkshire for example, Lady Wharton arranged for John Devon to perform the Catholic Mass in Latin in the chapel next to her

²³ Scarisbrick, p. 143.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 143-144.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

²⁷ M.B. Rowlands, "Recusant Women, 1560-1640," in *Women in English Society, 1500-1800*, ed. Mary Prior, (London, 1985), p. 157.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

chamber for both the members of the household and two neighbouring women.²⁹

Similarly, the wife of Bartholomew Carus arranged for the Catholic Mass to be celebrated in her home in Yorkshire and for confession to be heard by a series of priests whom the family harboured, including Bovell, Boyce, Morton, and Taylor.³⁰ The wife of Ralph Sheldon similarly received Marian priests into her household in Yorkshire as did Alice Tully, Mrs. Williams and Dorothy Vavasour.³¹

Widows and spinsters were also involved in harbouring. With their own households and incomes they were especially well placed to receive them and the visiting priest had confidence in their Catholic landladies to protect them.³² Often disguising a visiting priest as a steward, a tutor or a relative, widows and spinsters were able to secretly harbour a recusant Marian priest in their home, while at the same time arranged for Catholic services to be performed for both herself and for members of her community.³³ In 1588 it was reported that one spinster from Lancashire harboured a Marian priest, coordinated Mass to be said, the sacraments to be administered, and arranged for him to teach neighbouring Catholics on the doctrines and instruct them on how to live a good Catholic life.³⁴ Similarly, Anne Vaux a widow from Lancashire, along with her sister harboured a series of Marian priests in the 1580s and they arranged for Mass to be said, for confession to be heard and for individuals to be reconciled to Rome.³⁵

²⁹ McGrath and Rowe, "The Marian Priests under Elizabeth I," p. 112.

³⁰ H. Aveling, *Northern Catholics*, pp. 31-32.

³¹ PRO, SP12/175/110; *Salis. MSS*, VII, p. 404.

³² Rowlands, p. 157.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ The name of this particular spinster from Lancashire is not recorded the report, nor is the name of the priest, PRO, SP12/215/79.

³⁵ *Salis. MSS*, XI, pp. 299-300 and 317.

Officials were aware that women participated in sheltering recusant Marian priests on a large enough scale to warrant concern.³⁶ Early lists of harbourers reported that Mrs. Henry Cumberseed of Lancashire was found to be sheltering a priest in 1570 as was Dorothy Vavasour of Yorkshire who was listed as a harbourer of Marian priests in 1578.³⁷ In later decades, Mrs. Barton, Mrs. Rotherby, Mrs. Foster and Mrs. Sherbourne all from Lancashire were found to be harbouring priests in 1584 as were Mrs. Cash, Mrs. Wood, Mrs. Claiborne, Lady Ingleby, Lady Constable, Mrs. Gayle, Lady Wharton, Mrs. Morton, Lady Bradford and Mrs. Smithson, all from Yorkshire.³⁸ In 1585 Mrs. Middleston of Lancashire was found harbouring a Fr. Bissbley and Mrs. Tildesley, also of Lancashire, was found harbouring a priest by the name of Robinson.³⁹ On 26 August 1591 Jane Lloyd and Anne Delahey, both from Lancashire, were recorded as harbourers of recusant priests.⁴⁰

The above records which identified a number of women from both Lancashire and Yorkshire as individuals who sheltered priests were part of a larger effort made to locate and search the households of suspected priest harbourers throughout the country. Initial efforts to locate clergymen and their harbourers began in the early 1560s, as the government swooped down on a number of gentry and priests throughout the country. Indeed, the households of Thomas Wharton of Essex, Mr. Stubbs of Westminster, Lady Carew of St. Dunstan's, London and Laurence Vaux of Lancashire were all found to be

³⁶ For example, one report from Lancashire noted that individuals in Lancashire were harbouring Marian priests on a large scale in 1570, PRO, SP12/74/22; SP12/10/158; SP12/41/66; SP12/172/102; SP12/175/110; SP12/183/15; SP12/235/68; SP12/240/295; *Salis. MSS*, I, p. 575; BL, Lansdowne MS 25, fol. 80.

³⁷ PRO, SP12/74/32; BL, Harleian MS 6998, fol. 5.

³⁸ H. Aveling, *Catholic Recusancy in the City of York, 1558-1791* (London, 1970), p. 221; PRO, SP12/175/110.

³⁹ PRO, SP12/185/85.

⁴⁰ BL, Harleian MS 6998, fol. 1.

harbouring priests in one search effort in 1561.⁴¹ Similarly, in another search effort conducted in 1568 Thomas Westby of Moorbridge Hall, Lancashire was reported to have harboured a Marian priest and Mrs. Allen, Mrs. Murren, the former Dean of Christchurch, the former vicar of Blackburn, and “one Norreys termining himself a physicial” were found to be “seditiously pervert[ing] and abus[ing] our good subjects” and were subsequently arrested.⁴² In 1569 Thomas Leyland was recorded to have provided shelter to Ralph Parker in Lancashire and in Suffolk Sir Thomas Cornwallis harboured Miles Yare.⁴³ The government’s efforts to locate harbourers of recusant Marian clergy were not limited to the early decades of Elizabeth’s reign, as surviving records indicate that searches continued to be conducted in the households of gentlemen and women in later decades. On 10 November 1570 for example, the household of the Countess of Northumberland was searched whereupon ‘masse’ priests were located.⁴⁴ Similarly, in searches conducted in the 1580s forty-three Marian priests were discovered to have been harboured in households in Cornwall, Essex, Norfolk and Warwickshire and in 1591 a priest was located in the home of Michael Hare of Bruisyard and several were found in the home of the Wisemans of Braddock.⁴⁵

The official records of suspected priest harbourers from Lancashire, Yorkshire and elsewhere both provide us with some clues as to the extent of women’s participation in the harbouring of the recusant Marian priests and enable us to draw some conclusions regarding women’s involvement in comparison to men’s. While the surviving records are

⁴¹ PRO, SP12/175/110.

⁴² T. F. Knox, ed. *The Letters and Memorials of William Cardinal Allen (1532-1594)* (London, 1882), p. 21; G. Anstruther, *The Seminary Priests: a dictionary of the secular clergy of England and Wales, 1558-1603*, vol. 1 (Ware, Herts., 1953), p. 159.

⁴³ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire*, p. 214 and p. 218; McGrath and Rowe, “The Marian Priests under Elizabeth I,” p. 116.

⁴⁴ PRO, SP12/74/32.

⁴⁵ McGrath and Rowe, “The Marian Priests under Elizabeth I,” p. 117; PRO, SP12/74/22.

by no means complete, by examining a selection of sources which cover the entire Elizabethan period, a general composition of women's involvement can be ascertained. Official lists of suspected or known priest harbourers seem to indicate that women made up a modest proportion of all individuals involved in harbouring the recusant Marian clergy and they seem to suggest that women's participation became of increasing concern in the latter decades of Elizabeth's reign. Furthermore, it is probable that women's participation in harbouring the recusant Marian clergy increased as the decades progressed and it is apparent that they were consistently involved in sheltering the recusant Marian clergy throughout the latter half of the sixteenth century.

Indeed, the cross-section of records examined in this chapter illustrates these conclusions. In an official list of prisoners from the Fleet prison on 22 April 1561 for example, three women (Lady Huckellthorne, Mrs. Sackfield and Lady Carew) are named as harbourers of priests along with seventeen men.⁴⁶ Another list of prisoners from April 1561 named two women (Mrs. Hodgkinson and Mrs. Story) as harbourers of priests along with eighteen men.⁴⁷ In 1574, one woman (Hillary Constable) and five men were identified as harbourers of Marian priests.⁴⁸ In 1577 six women were listed as harbourers of priests along with thirty men.⁴⁹ Another report from 1584 lists thirteen women as harbourers as well as twenty-five men.⁵⁰ In 1585 two women were listed as harbourers of priests along with three men.⁵¹ Moreover, both Jane Lloyd and Anne Delahey were the sole individuals named in a list from 21 August 1591.⁵²

⁴⁶ BL, Harleian MS 360, fol. 34.

⁴⁷ PRO, SP12/16/65.

⁴⁸ PRO, SP12/99/55.

⁴⁹ PRO, SP12/118/45.

⁵⁰ PRO, SP12/175/110.

⁵¹ PRO, SP12/185/85.

⁵² BL, Harleian MS 6998, fol. 5.

While the number of women listed in the reports were at times considerably less than the number of men named, it is most probable that the actual number of women involved was substantially greater than the records illustrate. Many of the women named in the reports of suspected harbourers and prisoners were in fact widowers or spinsters. Indeed, Mrs. Barton, Mrs. Sherbourne, Mrs. Rotherby, Mrs. Foster, Mrs. Claiborne, Lady Ingleby, Mrs. Middleton, Anne Delahey, Jane Lloyd, Lady Carew, Mrs. Hodgkinson, Mrs. Morton, Mrs. Smithson and Mrs. Story were all listed as widows.⁵³ It must be assumed that at times when husband and wife were collectively involved in harbouring the recusant Marian clergy only the names of married men would appear on the lists of suspected or known priest harbourers, as it was men who owned the property and thus were responsible for paying financial penalties. The names of married women seldom appeared alone; Mrs. Cash, Mrs. Wood, Mrs. Gayle, Mrs. Tildesley, and Dorothy Vavasour were all listed alongside their husbands and they are only listed because they were found in the process of hearing the Catholic Mass provided by the residing priest when officials searched their home.⁵⁴ Indeed, only Hillary Constable was listed without her husband.⁵⁵ While the exact extent of women's role in harbouring cannot be determined, they were involved in the process beginning in the early decades of Elizabeth's reign. Their involvement in harbouring the Marian clergy was only a stepping stone, as many would extend their efforts to safeguard their faith by providing shelter to the arriving missionary priests in the decades to come.

⁵³ PRO, SP12/175/110; Aveling, *Catholic Recusancy in the City of York*, p. 221; PRO, SP12/185/85; BL, Harleian MS 6998, fol. 1.

⁵⁴ PRO, SP12/118/23; SP12/175/110.

⁵⁵ PRO, SP12/175/110.

*The Seminararians*⁵⁶

Beginning in 1574 the seminary priests arrived in England, and in due course they were singled out for special treatment by authorities for their efforts to preserve Catholicism.⁵⁷ While by no means as numerous as the Marian priests, by the end of Elizabeth's reign their presence in England was significant. While there were only approximately forty to fifty seminararians working in England in the 1570s, by the 1580s and 1590s their numbers seem to have fluctuated between 120 and 150 in any one year.⁵⁸ Christopher Haigh estimates that in all approximately sixty-six seminararians worked in Lancashire and he further notes that there were roughly 14 seminararians active in the county in 1580, rising to 23 in 1585 and to 29 in 1590.⁵⁹ Similar numbers have been noted for the county of Yorkshire. In all, approximately seventy-five seminararians worked in the county and there were roughly 25 to 40 seminararians active in the area at any given time between 1580 and 1603.⁶⁰

The seminary priests came to England from the continent, yet they had been recruited from the existing English Catholic body. The vast majority were ordained in the English seminaries abroad and most of the early seminararians were Catholic university students from either Oxford or Cambridge who were anxious to escape the religious

⁵⁶ 'Seminary Priests' was a term coined by the Elizabethan government and first used in the Act of 27 Eliz. c. 2 (1585) to distinguish between a new generation of priests from the 'old priests' or 'massing priests' who had survived from the reigns of Mary I and Henry VIII. See Anstruther, *The Seminary Priests*, p. ix.

⁵⁷ Patrick McGrath suggests that between 1574 and 1603 more than a quarter of the seminary priests working in England were executed, see P. McGrath, "Elizabethan Catholicism: a reconsideration," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 35 (1984), 425.

⁵⁸ McGrath and Rowe, "The Elizabethan Priests," p. 209.

⁵⁹ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire*, p. 279.

⁶⁰ Fathers Dudley, Pattison, Middleton, Greene, Dakins, Metcalf, Gerrett, Elwood, Hemsworth, Claiborne, Douglass, Tippin, Clapin, Bugdale, Pearson, Featherston, Battyre, and Bardham were among the seminary priests who specifically worked in the northern parts of England, PRO, SP12/245/131; other seminary priests who resided in the north included Fr. Smith, Richard Hardgrave, Fr. Allett, Fr. Nelson, Fr. Davison, Fr. Marsh, James Clayton and Anthony Booliner, PRO, SP12153/76. For a complete list of the seminararians working in both Lancashire and Yorkshire see G. Anstruther, *The Seminary Priests*.

change in England in 1559; thereafter the trainees in the seminaries were the sons of the English Catholic gentry and yeomanry.⁶¹ There were however, a few who were ordained before the first seminary college was established but attended the seminary schools following their flight from England.⁶² In all, approximately 452 Englishmen attended the seminaries, and the northern parts of the country produced the largest number of recruits, particularly the counties of Lancashire and Yorkshire.⁶³ Indeed, approximately sixty-five seminarians came from Yorkshire and seventy came from Lancashire; comparatively, fifty came from London, which produced the third largest number of priests in the seminaries.⁶⁴ Lancashire and Yorkshire each contributed about one-sixth of the students.⁶⁵

The earliest priests were mostly exiles in Flanders and were ordained at Malines or Brussels. However, the number of seminary colleges would rapidly expand as the number of Englishmen who joined the seminaries dramatically increased during the latter half of the Elizabethan period. The most famous academic institutions erected were located in Douai (1568), Rome (1579), Valladolid (1589), Seville (1592) and Lisbon (1628). Initially the colleges were founded as places of refuge for exiled scholars and as places to train clerical leaders. Until the 1570s, the founders thought that training spaces were required as they believed that England would once again return to Catholicism; the mission in England was an afterthought.⁶⁶ However, by the early 1570s, as it became apparent that England would not return to the Catholic faith under Elizabeth, the

⁶¹ Haigh, "The Continuity of Catholicism in the English Reformation," p. 192.

⁶² Anstruther, p. x.

⁶³ Haigh, "From Monopoly to Minority," p. 135; idem, "The Continuity of Catholicism in the English Reformation," p. 193.

⁶⁴ G. Anstruther, *The Seminary Priests*.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Haigh, "The Continuity of Catholicism in the English Reformation," p. 192.

seminaries became missionary colleges which sent a steady supply of priests to England and the colleges became establishments to train missionary priests to sustain and preserve Catholicism amongst followers in England.⁶⁷

The presence of trained missionary clergy was a novelty in England. However, Christopher Haigh rightfully argues that it would be unwise to distinguish sharply between the mission of the Marian priests and of the seminary priests, as the arrival of the seminarians in the country was not a sign of a break in continuity with the post-Reformation Catholicism already established in England, nor was it a sign of the introduction and implementation of Counter Reformation reforms in the country.⁶⁸ As Haigh writes, “The seminary priests sent on the mission, especially in the early years, were not impressionable young men, who might have been moulded into agents of Tridentine reform; they were often older inheritors of an established English tradition.”⁶⁹ Moreover, the English mission was not an evangelical movement but rather a pastoral organisation; its objective was not the conversion of Protestants, but rather the conversion of Catholic church-papists into recusants.⁷⁰

While the seminary priests did not initiate a ‘new’ post-Reformation Catholicism in England, they were nevertheless essential for the ‘old religion’s’ continued existence. Catholicism could only be sustained in England after the death of the conservative and recusant Marian clergy with an adequate and properly distributed supply of seminary (and Jesuit) priests.⁷¹ It has been suggested that without a continuing supply of

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 194.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

missionary priests, Catholicism would have declined to mere superstition.⁷² Indeed, the role seminary priests played in maintaining and sustaining a Catholic community in England was significant. Their arrival marked a considerable change in the strength of Catholicism in the country. Indeed, by the end of the sixteenth century, parts of England, including Lancashire and Yorkshire, recorded high numbers of non-conforming Catholics. For example, between 1580 and 1582 there were approximately 4000 listed recusants in Yorkshire, Lancashire and Cheshire; in 1600 there were 1500 listed recusants in Yorkshire and 2000 or more in Lancashire.⁷³ Moreover, the seminarians can also be attributed with creating a more highly committed Catholic community, increasingly set apart from the Protestant majority.⁷⁴ Indeed, with the creation of networks among Catholic families to safeguard missionary priests and the efforts of the seminarians to create a non-conforming Catholic population in England a new, separated, self-defined, non-conforming community emerged.

While the seminary priests were essential for the establishment and ultimate survival of a separated and non-conforming English Catholic community in England, the efforts of committed Catholics, particularly the gentry and the nobility, to sustain it were equally essential. Indeed, they were important groups in preserving Catholic communities. Unlike some segments of the population, it was economically viable for noble and gentry families to support a visiting priest. They had the space to hide and shelter a priest and their households often had private chapels whereby the visiting priest could perform the mass for the family, servants and neighbouring Catholics. Indeed, a

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ H. Aveling, *The Handle and the Axe. The Catholic Recusants in England from Reformation to Emancipation* (London, 1966), pp. 66-67.

⁷⁴ A. Pritchard, *Catholic Loyalty in Elizabethan England* (Chapel Hill, 1979), p. 7.

number of gentry and noble families throughout the country became involved in harbouring the seminarians. Some had been long time harbourers of priests prior to their arrival, like the households of the Fitzherberts, Whartons and Wisemans which were served by the Marian priests in the years prior to 1574.⁷⁵ Other families became particularly involved in harbouring priests upon the arrival of the seminarians. Among these families were the Waldegraves, the Downes, the Jacksons, the Davies, the Sherbournes, the Earls, the Foliambes, the Babingtons, the Elles, the Ralstons, the Langfords and the Tytherberks.⁷⁶ In Lancashire no fewer than 157 households were reported for harbouring priests, among these households were the homes of the Blundells, the Towneleys, the Southworths, the Ashtons, the Standishes and the Heskeths, as well as the family of Edward Norris and the family of Laurence Yates.⁷⁷ Similarly, a number of Yorkshire families were involved in harbouring seminarians, including the Meynells, the Warcops and the Reresbys.

Women, whether married, single or widowed, played a particularly prominent role in harbouring and safeguarding seminary priests. As the reports noting Catholic families' involvement in harbouring indicate, married women were often collectively involved in safeguarding seminarians alongside their husbands. Similar to married women who harboured the recusant Marian clergy they were often responsible for welcoming the arriving priests into their household. They distracted authorities when searching their home, they arranged for the sacraments to be said and they provided the visiting priest with a safe place from which he could carry out his pastoral duties.

Moreover, some married women, including Lady Peckham, Mrs. Katherine Radcliff and

⁷⁵ Scarisbrick, p. 142.

⁷⁶ PRO, SP12/157/88.

⁷⁷ BL, Cotton MS Titus B II, fol. 240; PRO, SP12/153/121; *Salis. MSS*, IX, p. 18.

Lady Constable, assumed the spiritual leadership of their families, as they were often found to be involved in organizing Mass for their household and with fellow Catholics in their community.

Widows and spinsters, with their own households and incomes, played an important role in harbouring seminarians as well. Indeed, reports throughout the latter decades of the sixteenth century consistently note the names of widows and spinsters. In 1582 for example, Lady Peters of Thornton, Lady Pawlette of Borlay, Magdalene Waldegrave and her daughter of Essex, Lady Lorel of Harling, Lady Cornwallis of Brown Hall, Anne Rukwood and May Daniel of Norfolk, Mrs. Robert Downs of Norfolk and Mrs. Jackson of Mansfield were all listed as known harbourers of seminary priests.⁷⁸ Similarly, in 1584 it was reported that Mrs. Pitt harboured a priest named Smith, Mrs. Barber and Mrs. Sampson harboured a series of priests by the names of Smith, Chapman, Anslow, Cransham, Dowe and Tilbey; Mrs. Hades entertained two priests named Ashem and Ley, and Lady West and Lady Poulet each harboured one.⁷⁹ In 1586, Mrs. Metam of Lancashire was reported to be harbouring John Nelson and Mrs. Manley also of Lancashire was reported to be harbouring a seminary named Blackwell; in 1591 Lady Hesketh and Mrs. Lawes were both reported to be harbouring John Bancroft.⁸⁰ Like married women, spinsters and widows provided a space for their resident seminary priest to perform the Catholic Mass for their household and neighbouring Catholics. Viscountess Montague for example, frequently had as many as 120 people attend Mass in

⁷⁸ There is a lack of consistency between identifying the particular village, town or county which these women are from in the report, PRO, SP12/157/88.

⁷⁹ Mrs. Pitt and Mrs. Barber were Oxfordshire, Mrs. Hades and Mrs. Browne were from Berkshire, Lady Peckham and Lady West were from Buckinghamshire and Lady Poulet was from Southamptonshire, PRO, SP12/168/33.

⁸⁰ Mrs. Hesketh and Mrs. Lawes were also from Lancashire, PRO, SP12/193/13; SP12/240/105.

her household in the 1590s.⁸¹ They arranged for their resident seminarian to be available to hear the confessions of local Catholics as well as perform marriages and baptism.

A good deal of harbouring was simply a matter of arrangements made by individuals, including women, who perhaps had known a particular seminary prior to their departure to the continent for training or who had contact with the seminary priests stationed in England who oversaw the distribution of the new arrivals in the country. In 1583 for example, the brother of a seminary named Smith arranged for Lady Margaret Leavening to provide him shelter and the mother of the Jesuit Edmund Campion who was actively involved in the mission of both the seminarians and the Jesuits, harboured Anthony Booliner.⁸² Similarly, in 1592 the seminarian Danly resided in his mother's home in Lancashire upon his arrival in England.⁸³ In 1600 Mrs. Margaret Allott of Yorkshire was imprisoned for harbouring her brother, a seminarian.⁸⁴

However, there were also efforts to coordinate individual efforts into some kind of system. More often this was coordinated by the seminary priests residing in England who were responsible for allocating arriving seminarians to various parts of the country and this was indeed undertaken in both Lancashire and Yorkshire. In 1582 Fr. John Mush and Fr. Thomas Bell organized 'an underground railway' in Yorkshire whereby an assembly centre in the remote northern parts of the county was established and from which the new priests could be sent to their stations.⁸⁵ Mission stations were also established whereby the arriving seminarians would be provided with safe resting places

⁸¹ R. Smith, ed. *An Elizabethan Recusant House: Comprising the Life of Lady Magdalene Viscountess of Montague (1538-1608)* (London, 1954), p. 27.

⁸² The report does not indicate where Lady Margaret Leavening resided. The mother of Edmund Campion resided in Oxfordshire, PRO, SP12/153/76.

⁸³ BL, Harleian MS 6998, fol. 5.

⁸⁴ BL, Add. MS 34250.

⁸⁵ Aveling, *Northern Catholics*, p. 158.

and Hugh Aveling suggests that by the late 1580s a number of circuits had been established with the priests travelling from one place to another in pairs in the country.⁸⁶ In Lancashire Christopher Haigh notes that Fr. Thomas Bell organized a network of safe houses for arriving priests, knowing over 93 households in the county where seminarians could find shelter and help.⁸⁷ Committed Catholics, including women, were also particularly involved in this process of creating networks throughout the country enabling the seminarians to safely travel from one place to another. Mrs. Ursula Taylor, for example, welcomed seminarians upon their arrival into England into her home, Laurence Kellam provided them with money and George Errington guided them to the houses to which they were assigned.⁸⁸

Official reports identify the networks which were established in England as well as the role of women in preserving and protecting them. When William Rasse arrived in England in 1584 for example, he was first harboured in the home of Mr. Thomas Fitzherbert, then travelled to the home of Mrs. Thomas Clifton in Preston and then went to the home of Raffe Maxfield where authorities located him.⁸⁹ Similarly, in 1592 James Young, upon arriving in England, resided at the homes of a Mr. Dudley, Thomas Wiseman, Mrs. Throckington, Mrs. Mompester, James Jakeson, and Mrs. Fairbeck before authorities located and imprisoned him.⁹⁰ In 1593 Fr. Brixton travelled to Derbyshire where he was housed by Lord Windsor and his family and was taken care of by the

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire*, p. 289.

⁸⁸ McGrath and Rowe, "The Elizabethan priests: Their Harbourers and their Helpers," p. 215.

⁸⁹ PRO, SP12/164/50i.

⁹⁰ PRO, SP12/242/122.

tenants and servants. He then travelled to a Mr. Bentley's where he was cared for by Mr. Bentley's wife and daughter.⁹¹

The English Catholic Community which developed after the arrival of the first seminary priests was one which was reliant on the services of the gentry or noble household and roving priests.⁹² Indeed, within the households of noble and gentry families, the sacraments were frequently performed and both baptisms and marriages were occasionally carried out. While some of these households would only provide the services of the visiting priest to members of the household, like the Southworth household for example, most men and women involved in harbouring seminarians enabled members of the community at large to come to hear the Catholic service.⁹³ The household of Richard Bold and his wife of Prescott was used by a seminary priest as a mass-center in 1582 and a number of local people attended the services of the residing priest while the rest of the parish went to church.⁹⁴ Similarly, in 1583 the home of John Rigmaiden and his wife of Lancashire housed a series of priests where they said mass and were visited by neighbouring Catholics.⁹⁵ Mr. and Mrs. Edward Norris' home in Childwall sheltered two priests in 1599, which neighbouring Catholics frequently visited.⁹⁶ Without the access to priests, who were often located in the households of the gentry and nobility, the opportunity for many lay Catholics to practice their faith would have been limited.

⁹¹ PRO, SP12/245/98.

⁹² A. Muldoon, "Recusants, Church Papists and "Comfortable" Missionaries: assessing the post-Reformation English Catholic Community," *Journal of British Studies* 86 (2000), p. 243.

⁹³ It was reported that in the Southworth household only the six members of the family and the thirty servants on the estate were permitted to attend the Catholic Mass, A. G. Petti, ed. *Recusant Documents from the Ellesmere Manuscripts 1577-1715*, CRS, LX (London, 1968), p. 168.

⁹⁴ C. Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire*, p. 283; BL, Harleian MS 360, fols. 32v-33; PRO, SP12/155/35i.

⁹⁵ PRO, SP12/159/28i.

⁹⁶ PRO, SP12/153/121; *Salis. MSS*, IX, p. 18.

Mass was the most frequent service which the visiting seminarians provided in gentry households and reports identified a number of places as Mass centres and persons who employed the seminarians' services throughout the latter decades of Elizabeth's reign, including a number of women. In 1582 William Carew, William Tucker, John Taylor, Mr. Shellies, Joan Watts, and Mrs. Low frequently heard Thomas Hartley, a seminary, perform the Catholic Mass in the Shelley household.⁹⁷ Mass was also performed in 1582 in the household of Mrs. Gilford, Lady Throckmorton and at the Lord and Lady Vaux's which both members of the household and neighbouring Catholics attended.⁹⁸ In the parish of Prescott in 1584 Robert Ball, Mr. Eltonhead, Matthew Travers, John Travers, William Travers, Henry Rowley, Roland Hall, Mr. Biram, Peter Biram, William Turner, Edmund Ellen, Mr. Henry Latham, Henry Tailor, Edward Rowley, Henry Rowley, Thomas Doran and Brian Hayward, along with their wives were discovered hearing Mass.⁹⁹ It was reported in 1592 that Mrs. Jane Anderson and her son, Mr. Lanster and Mr. Colepeper, all of Lancashire, gathered to hear Mass at one household in Lostock.¹⁰⁰ In October 1593 Mass was heard in the Clayton household which George Errington, Bridget Francis and 'many others' attended.¹⁰¹ In April 1599 Mr. Richard Webster, his wife and his daughter were found hearing Mass performed by George Beasley, a seminary.¹⁰²

However, while Mass was the most frequent reason for gathering, Catholics and seminarians did gather together in gentry households for other purposes. At times,

⁹⁷ The location of the Shelley household is not given in the report, J.H. Pollen, "Official Lists of Catholic Prisoners during the Reign of Queen Elizabeth, Part II: 1581-1602," in *CRS Miscellanea II*, CRS, II (London, 1906), p. 221.

⁹⁸ PRO, SP12/152/54.

⁹⁹ PRO, SP12/175/21.

¹⁰⁰ PRO, SP12/243/70.

¹⁰¹ PRO, SP12/245/131.

¹⁰² BL, Harleian 6998, fol. 87.

Catholic families, particularly under the guidance of women, would send their young children to homes which sheltered seminarians where they would receive religious instruction. Often seminarians would act as religious tutors for children of both the individuals' who harboured them and neighbouring Catholics. In 1592 for example, it was reported that Mrs. Houghton, a widow from the Lea, employed and housed Alexander Gerard, a seminary, whereby "he teacheth hir children to singe and plaie upon the virginalles."¹⁰³ Similarly, it was reported that James Garnet, Gaile and Simpson, all seminarians who resided in Ripton at different times, taught the children of Mrs. Massey and Mrs. Robert Blundell employed a seminary priest named Gardner to provide religious instruction to her children.¹⁰⁴

However, the additional duties and services of the seminarians were not limited to providing religious instruction to children. They also provided a number of services for their harbourers, which they in turn made available to neighbouring Catholics. Seminary priests at times acted as chaplains in the households of some of their harbourers as, for example, Vernon was in the household of Joseph Constable and his family from Yorkshire.¹⁰⁵ These particular priests performed not only the Catholic Mass for the members of the household and the community, they also heard confession, they led prayer services and they provided counselling and religious guidance. Moreover, some seminarians provided additional services of worship and general religious instruction which women both organized and participated in. When the home of Bridget Strange was searched in April 1593 for example, certain 'popishe church stuff' were discovered which

¹⁰³ PRO, SP12/243/52.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ PRO, SP12/245/131.

were used for a variety of Catholic rituals.¹⁰⁶ Additionally, relics and books were among the possessions located at the home of Mrs. Shelley when it was searched on 24 August 1582.¹⁰⁷ Mrs. Shelley frequently arranged for religious instruction to be provided and services of worship to be performed by Thomas Hartley for herself as well as for Richard Shelley, William Carew, William Tucker, John Tailor, Joan Watts and Mrs. Low and by whom both the books and relics discovered would have been used.¹⁰⁸

As the seminarians were able to find sufficient shelter and as they were able to successfully provide Catholic services and rituals to members of various communities throughout the country, authorities were worried about the act of harbouring seminarians and they were particularly concerned about the Catholic noble and gentry families, as they had both the space in which to harbour the missionary priests in their home and there were concerns about the influence they might have over their tenants.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, Bishop Vaughn for example, thought in 1600 that the noble and gentry families in Warrington were so powerful that their tenants dared not conform and in 1604 he wrote that ‘backward landlords’ were responsible for the high rates of recusancy in Prescott.¹¹⁰ Similarly, it was reported that on the Blundell estate in Crosby there were only Catholic tenants by the end of the sixteenth century.¹¹¹ Other reports expressed concern for the involvement of women. In August 1580 John Dryland and his wife of Lancashire were sought out for harbouring a priest as was Mrs. Saywell, Mrs. Newton, Jane Ives and a Mrs. Myles.¹¹² Similarly in 1593, Lord and Lady Montague were sought out for

¹⁰⁶ BL, Harleian MS 6998, fol. 89.

¹⁰⁷ Pollen, p. 222.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire*, p. 282 and 283.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 283.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² BL, Harleian MS 360, fol. 32.

harbouring seminarians, as was Mr. William Bassett and his wife, whose home was known by authorities as a place to harbour priests.¹¹³ Sir Robert Dormer and his wife, Sir Henry Constable and his wife, and Sir Thomas Stanley and his wife were suspected by authorities of harbouring a number of priests.¹¹⁴

The act of harbouring seminarians was one of risk and danger for noble and gentry families, particularly after the 1585 legislation was enacted by the Elizabethan government. Now not only priests risked punishment but their harbourers as well; the Act stipulated that individuals who provided shelter to missionary priests would face either imprisonment or death. This legislation made it particularly dangerous for noble and gentry families to be involved in harbouring. As authorities were particularly concerned about the activities and influence of these families, they were often the target of investigation and persecution. Evidence suggests that the Catholic gentry were indeed sought out and penalties were placed on those who harboured seminary priests. Fifteen people including Anne Line and Margaret Ward were executed for harbouring seminarians; an additional five people, including Dorothy White, Mrs. Wells, Mrs. Eleanor Hunt and Mrs. Margaret Norton, were condemned but not executed and hundreds of men and women were imprisoned.¹¹⁵

While imprisonment and death (or the threat of imprisonment and death) which individuals encountered for harbouring the missionary priests will be detailed in Chapter Four, some general remarks can be made with regards to the reports of suspected or

¹¹³ PRO, SP12/245/98.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Anstruther, p. 347; R. Challoner, *Memoirs of Missionary Priests, as well Secular as Regular, and of other Catholics of both Sexes, that have Suffered Death in England on Religious Accounts from the Year of Our Lord 1577 to 1684* (London, 1924), p. 176, p. 250 and p. 238; BL, Add. MS 34250, fol. 4; McGrath and Rowe, "The Elizabethan Priests," p. 217.

known priest harbourers, prison lists and accounts of persecution which lay men and women endured for their involvement in safeguarding the seminarians. As both men and women were actively involved in harbouring the travelling seminarians it is difficult to conclude that one particular gender group was particularly more involved. While women actively participated in providing a visiting priest with a safe place in which to live and arranged for them to carry out their pastoral work, their actions do not indisputably demonstrate that they played a more pivotal part in the harbouring of priests. Rather, as the records illustrate, women and men worked together to ensure that the seminarians were able to carry out their work, whether by collectively creating networks through which travelling seminary priests could travel or by collectively providing a space whereby Catholic practices and rituals could be performed. Furthermore, for married women, the act of harbouring the seminary priests (as well as the recusant Marian clergy and the Jesuits) was very much a mutual arrangement made between themselves and their husbands. Indeed, husbands and wives are often noted together in reports. With the threat of imprisonment and death, married women required husbands who were themselves committed Catholics or who had lukewarm commitments to the Catholic faith to allow their wives to welcome priests into their home. Spinsters and widows had much more freedom with regards to harbouring priests. As the sole authority over the household devotions and with the means and willingness to harbour a priest, they could do so much more freely.

Nevertheless, while the measures involved in harbouring the seminary priests was a collective effort among both men and women, some activities which women undertook to ensure that the visiting missionary was able to carry out his work was specific to their

gender. As married women were responsible for the everyday activities of the household, they were often responsible for arranging for a visiting priest to perform that Catholic Mass for both members of the household and the community. Moreover, as noted earlier, they arranged for children to receive religious instruction and made available their homes for baptisms and marriages.

Furthermore, the fact that women (and men) willingly harboured the seminary priests under the threat of imprisonment and death indicates the importance of these men to the Catholic community. Indeed, despite the risks in which these men and women faced for their involvement in harbouring the seminarians, they provided them with safe places to carry out their work in the hope of maintaining and sustaining the Catholic faith in England. As Anne Line stated immediately prior to her execution:

I am sentenced to die for harbouring a Catholic priest, and so far am I from repenting for having done so, that I wish, with all my soul that where I had entertained one, I could have entertained a thousand.¹¹⁶

The Jesuits

In 1580 Robert Parsons and William Allen received approval from the General of the Society of Jesus to send a contingent of priests to England to provide support to the seminarians in their efforts to preserve Catholicism. However, almost immediately following the implementation of the Jesuit mission in England the Jesuits became targets of a particularly bitter and bloody persecution. They were persecuted for their mere presence in England, as they were seen by the Elizabethan government as a particular threat to the safety of the realm. It was their apparent connection to the expansionist aims of Spain and their endorsement of the spiritual authority of the Pope which caused

¹¹⁶ Challoner, p. 259.

particular concern.¹¹⁷ As a result, between 1581 and 1603 approximately thirty percent of the Jesuits who worked in England were tried and executed for their efforts to preserve Catholicism in England; another thirty percent were imprisoned and ten percent were exiled. However, the Jesuits were not the only ones facing persecution; beginning in 1585 the act of harbouring a Jesuit became an act of treason. Jane Wiseman for example, was imprisoned for seven years after a Jesuit priest was discovered in her home in 1598 and Anne Vaux was imprisoned in 1601. Moreover, fifteen individuals were executed for harbouring Jesuit priests, albeit only one was a woman, Margaret Clitherow, who was executed on 25 March 1586.

However, despite the swift reaction of the Elizabethan government to the Jesuits presence in England and the penalties imposed on those who harboured them, very few were active in the country in the Elizabethan period. Indeed, the growth of the Jesuit mission was very slow.¹¹⁸ In all approximately twenty priests worked in England during Elizabeth's reign and there were never more than three or four working in England in any one year in the 1580s and rarely more than twelve were active in the country in the 1590s.¹¹⁹ Only after the death of Elizabeth I would their numbers in England be of any particular significance. By 1607 there were forty-three Jesuits in the country and by 1621 it is estimated that their numbers had grown to one hundred and four.¹²⁰ Most Elizabethan

¹¹⁷ As the arrival of the Jesuit priests in England coincided with the country's troubles with Spain, the Elizabethan government believed that they had arrived to persuade many of Elizabeth's subjects to renounce their allegiance to the crown. The Society of Jesus on the continent had ties to Spain, specifically financial funds. Furthermore, the Jesuits were a cause of concern as they endorsed the spiritual authority of the pope. In 1570 the pope had issued the Bull of Excommunication which excommunicated Elizabeth and called on the English Catholics to renounce their allegiance to her.

¹¹⁸ T. M. McCoog, "The Establishment of the English Province of the Society of Jesus," *RH* 17 (1984), pp. 121-123.

¹¹⁹ McGrath and Rowe, "The Elizabethan Priests," p. 209.

¹²⁰ T. M. McCoog, "The Creation of the First Jesuit Communities in England," *Heythrop Journal* 28 (1987), p. 40.

Jesuits worked in the southern part of England as many had contacts in this part of the country, particularly in Oxford and Cambridge, and their entry route into England was through Dover.¹²¹ Indeed, at most only twenty-five percent of the Jesuits who took part in the English mission between 1580 and 1603 ever worked in the northern parts of the country, compared to approximately forty percent in the south-east at any given time.¹²² Among the few Jesuit priests who worked in Lancashire and Yorkshire were Richard Hotlby, Edmund Campion, Henry Garnet, John Mush, William Weston and John Nelson.

The Jesuits came to England from the continent and like the seminarians they were recruited from the existing English Catholic body. They were exiled Englishmen and many of the early English Jesuits were middle aged men, often ex-fellows of Cambridge or Oxford who had left England after the Elizabethan settlement in 1559.¹²³ Later recruits were often university students from Oxford and Cambridge and most were the sons of Catholic gentry families who resented the religious changes and fled during the 1570s.¹²⁴ Many English Jesuits studied and worked in the Society of Jesus for many years before the mission was founded and many trained in the Jesuit colleges in Rome, Douai, Saint Omer, Valladolid and Seville. Like the mission of the seminarians, the Jesuit mission to England had been an afterthought, as the possibility of a Jesuit operation in England was only first discussed in 1578.¹²⁵ Rather, the purpose of the Jesuit colleges was to train clerical leaders and scholars and most worked in the universities in Rome, Paris, Louvain, Triers, Antwerp, Cologne and Prague where they taught theology,

¹²¹ Haigh, "From Monopoly to Minority," p. 133.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ B. Bassett, *The English Jesuits: From Campion to Martindale* (New York, 1968), p. 14.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ T. M. McCoog, "The Establishment of the English Province of the Society of Jesus," p. 121.

philosophy, Latin, Hebrew and Greek.¹²⁶ Even after 1580 few would embark on the mission. Instead, most attended colleges for religious instruction and continued to live and work on the continent.¹²⁷

The small contingent of English Jesuits who would work in England beginning in 1580 was sent to the country to support the missionary operation of the seminarians and to provide ministerial care to the pre-existing English Catholic community, as Robert Parsons wrote in 1583:

...we are proposing to do here nothing more than our comrades are doing... viz. to teach those Christians who shall receive us, the rudiments of the Catholic faith and to make their habits conform to the most holy commandments of God.¹²⁸

The mission was pastoral rather than evangelical, as the Jesuits often acted as resident chaplains in the households of the Catholic gentry and nobility. They provided practical care, as they replaced old and worn altar furnishings in private chapels, ensured that proper vestments were available and they promoted the Catholic faith as they travelled about reconciling individuals to Rome.¹²⁹ They attempted to strengthen Catholic families' in their faith by instructing them as to how to examine their conscience, by training them to be pious, by repressing bad habits and by encouraging lay Catholics to meditate and pray.¹³⁰ Within the households in which they resided they performed the Catholic mass, heard confessions, preached on Sundays and holy days, read from ecclesiastical books and encouraged young men to join the mission.¹³¹

¹²⁶ Bassett, pp. 16-17.

¹²⁷ F. Edwards, *The Jesuits in England from 1580 to Present Day* (London, 1985), p. 28.

¹²⁸ Cited in E.E. Reynolds, *Campion and Parsons. The Jesuit Mission of 1580-1* (London, 1984), pp. 81-82.

¹²⁹ J. Gerard, *John Gerard. The Autobiography of an Elizabethan*, ed. Philip Caraman (London, 1951), pp. 24-28; PRO, SP12/235/68; C. Haigh, "The Church of England, the Catholics and the People," p. 204.

¹³⁰ Gerard, pp. 24-28.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

However, while the Marian priests and the seminarians sought to sustain a Catholicism which had existed in the pre-Reformation period, the Jesuits sought to implement Counter Reformation reforms. Some reforms meant little change from pre-reformation devotion, as faithful Catholics were to hear Mass every Sunday and holy days and were to receive the Church's sacraments other than confirmation from the parish priest, who would baptize them, marry them, give extreme unction on their deathbed and bury them. Catholics were to receive the Eucharist at least once a year and were to regularly attend confession.¹³² However, the post-Tridentine Church was a parochially-grounded institution and as such private devotion was limited.¹³³ Indeed, the English Jesuits attempted to enforce parochial conformity by abolishing the private celebration of the Mass and by limiting the importance of family gatherings in the administration of the sacraments such as baptism.¹³⁴ Moreover, the English Jesuits were instructed to limit fast days, they attempted to prevent attendance at the local parish church and they introduced new methods of prayer.¹³⁵

As access to the parish church in order to enforce parochial devotion was impossible for the Jesuits, they turned to the households of the Catholic gentry and nobility as they had large spaces whereby a resident Jesuit could perform the Catholic service for a large gathering. These households were to act as makeshift parish churches where the entire Catholic body of the community could celebrate. Moreover, access to gentry and noble households was essential for the Jesuits to carry out their mission in England, as they were not free to move around the country as they pleased. Only within

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 52.

¹³³ J. Bossy, "The Counter Reformation," *Past and Present* 47 (1970), p. 53.

¹³⁴ John Bossy defines the "private Mass" as the celebration of Mass by a priest for one particular family, Bossy, pp. 57-58.

¹³⁵ R. Warnicke, *Women of the English Renaissance and Reformation* (Westport, CT, 1983), p. 167.

the households of the Catholic gentry and nobility could they access the Catholic population of a particular community with some sense of safety.¹³⁶ Gentry and noble households throughout the country did indeed provide the Jesuit priests with shelter. Among those who accommodated the Jesuits were the Roberts of Northamptonshire, the Bentleys of Brixton, the Constables of Richmondshire, the Bellamys of Harrow, Margaret Bishop of Warwickshire, Lady Windsor, the Gilberts, the Petres, the Brinkleys, the Fitzherberts, Mrs. Heath of Hawkesley and Mrs. Jessop of Dorset.¹³⁷ Among the households in Lancashire and Yorkshire which harboured Jesuit priests were the Trollopes, the Craythorns, the Methams, the Hodgsons, the Scopes and the Vauxs.¹³⁸

Women encouraged a visiting priest to catechize and educate their children and they provided a space for a Jesuit priest to perform Catholic services within their home. Jane Wiseman for example arranged for mass to be said in her household for members of her family and neighbouring Catholics by a visiting Jesuit as did Mrs. Trollope, Lady Elizabeth Percy and Lady Constable.¹³⁹ Similarly, Viscountess Montague and her husband provided shelter to the Jesuit William Allen, whereby she arranged for services to be conducted including three daily masses in her private chapel for both her household and dozens of neighbours.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, Lady Vaux arranged for mass to be said in her home for both the members of her household and neighbouring Catholics by a series of Jesuit priests including Edmund Campion and Henry Garnet.¹⁴¹ Widows and spinsters similarly made the arrangements to welcome a priest into their home, including Lady

¹³⁶ M. South, *The Jesuits and the Joint Mission to England during 1580-1581* (Lewiston, NJ, 1999), p. 53.

¹³⁷ The places in which the Petres, the Brinkleys and the Fitzherberts resided are not given in the reports. BL, Lansdowne MS 97, fol. 21; PRO, SP12/245/98; SP12/245/24; Anstruther, p. 174; PRO, SP12/18/51

¹³⁸ J. Morris, ed. *Troubles*, I (London, 1872), pp. 114-115; PRO, SP12/193/13; SP12/244/5; SP12/245/24.

¹³⁹ PRO, SP12/245/24; SP12/249/13, Gerard, pp. 37-39.

¹⁴⁰ J. Bossy, *The English Catholic Community, 1570-1850* (London, 1975), p.112.

¹⁴¹ H. Garnet, *Henry Garnet 1555-1606 and the Gunpowder Plot*, ed. Philip Caraman (London, 1964), pp. 37, 350, 369 and 422.

Throkington who harboured James Young in 1592 and Mrs. Katherine Radcliff who welcomed Cuthbert Johnson into her home in 1593. Both enabled their households to act as a make-shift parish church.

Catholic women provided practical support to the Jesuits in order for them to carry out their work. Lady Mary West ensured that proper equipment was available for the visiting priest including books, massing apparel, chalices, communion bread, Mass books, manuals and catechisms.¹⁴² She further supplied two Agnus Dei and forty Latin service books.¹⁴³ Similarly John Gerard noted that Anne Vaux, Jane Wiseman and Lady Elizabeth Percy provided the necessary Mass equipment in their homes when he resided in their households and he further noted that in every household he visited the vestments and required Mass equipment were accessible.¹⁴⁴ In a search conducted in the home of Sir John Southworth and his wife in Lancashire one ‘canobie to hang over the alter’ and two candlesticks ‘used in the tyme of superstition’ were found as were fourteen images of ‘divers fashions’ in a secret vault.¹⁴⁵ When Lady Stonor’s household was searched on the 4 August 1585 Latin service books, vestments and ‘mass stuff’ were discovered.¹⁴⁶

Perhaps Catholic women’s greatest contribution to the Jesuit mission was their efforts to provide safe places from which the Jesuits could provide their services. As their presence in England was a serious risk to their safety, the Jesuits required networks of safe houses and routes throughout the country, enabling them to travel as safely as possible between Catholic households. Women were quick to open their homes to the

¹⁴² M. Hodgetts, “A Topographical Index of Hiding Places,” *RH* 16 (1982), p. 164.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ Gerard, p. 40.

¹⁴⁵ Petti, p. 168.

¹⁴⁶ Reynolds, p. 128; J.H. Pollen, ed. “Letters and Memoirs of Father Robert Persons, SJ. Introduction: Life up to 1588,” in *CRS Miscellanea II*, CRS, II (London, 1906) p.107.

arriving priests. Like those who harboured the seminarians, some were willing to harbour Jesuits who they had known prior to their training on the continent. Indeed, records indicate that Mrs. Morton of Lancashire harboured her brother in 1584, that Mrs. Metam also of Lancashire harboured her former neighbour John Nelson in 1586 and that Margaret Clitherow of York harboured John Mush, also of York in 1590.¹⁴⁷ Others had contact with the Jesuit priests stationed in England who oversaw the distribution of the new arrivals in the country. Richard Holtby and John Mush, two Jesuits involved in the distribution of new arrivals in the country, arranged for the arriving Jesuits to stay with Mrs. Margaret Clitherow in York, with the Trollopes in Durham and with John Hudson and his wife in Blackmore from which they would travel to other parts of the country.¹⁴⁸

Similar to the efforts undertaken to safely distribute the arriving seminarians throughout the country, measures were undertaken to organize individual efforts into some kind of system, which was often coordinated by Jesuit priests residing in England who were responsible for allocating arriving Jesuits to various parts of the country. Richard Holtby, a native of Yorkshire, along with John Mush, created a regular system of smuggling Jesuits into the county and dispersing them amongst Catholic households throughout the county in the 1590s, just as they had done for the arriving seminarians.¹⁴⁹ In January 1593 for example, both Holtby and Mush arranged for John Bennett to be harboured in the household of the Trollopes in Thorneley where he stayed for about a week. Following his stay with the Trollopes John Bennett resided with the Hudsons for six months and within a year he had stayed in the homes of Mrs. Katherine Radcliff, Mrs.

¹⁴⁷ PRO, SP12/175/110; SP12/193/13; Garnet, pp.127-129.

¹⁴⁸ PRO, SP12/244/5.

¹⁴⁹ McGrath and Rowe, "The Elizabethan Priests," p. 215.

Chambly of Whitby, Lady Constable of Richmondshire and Lady Scrope of Whitby.¹⁵⁰ Similarly William Weston arranged for the Jesuits Henry Garnet and Robert Southwell, upon their arrival in England, to stay at Mrs. Francis Browne's in London. They then travelled to the home of Richard Bold in Berkshire and further stayed with the family of William Byrd, from which he and his wife told them the names of Catholic houses where they might go to make their residences.¹⁵¹ Committed Catholics, including women, were also very much involved in the process of creating a network of safe houses to which the Jesuits could travel. Alice Thomas of Preston for example, arranged for Thomas Bancroft to not only reside in her home but also in the home of Mr. Mompesson in London in 1591.¹⁵² Similarly, in 1593 Mr. William Bassett of Derbyshire arranged for Francis Ridcall to reside not only with him but with his cousin Lady Throckington.¹⁵³ Moreover, Lady Vaux and Jane Wiseman both arranged to harbour Henry Garnet in 1594.¹⁵⁴

The efforts of committed Catholics extended beyond creating networks of safe houses enabling the Jesuits to undertake their mission. As the Elizabethan Jesuits were particular targets of the government, officials throughout the country sought out both them and their harbourers. In order to evade persecution it was essential for the individual or individuals of the household to ensure that the residing Jesuit could be hidden. Indeed, Catholic households went to great lengths to ensure the safety of both themselves and the visiting priest and reports indicate women's involvement. Mr. Trollope and his wife for example, created one hiding place below ground large enough to hide six priests at a

¹⁵⁰ PRO, SP12/244/5.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² PRO, SP12/240/105i.

¹⁵³ PRO, SP12/245/98.

¹⁵⁴ PRO, SP12/249/13.

time.¹⁵⁵ Robert and Grace Maire of Yorkshire constructed a hiding space about seven feet wide behind a chimney in their private chapel and approximately five hundred yards from their home there was an artificial cave which was used as a hide-out and secret chapel.¹⁵⁶ Edward Norris and his wife of Lancashire constructed two hiding spaces within their home for residing Jesuits. One was located on the upper right hand side of the fireplace in what was known as the green room which was accessible via a trapdoor next to the chimney stack in the attic; the other was located on the upper right hand side of the fireplace located in what was called the tapestry room which was also accessible via a trapdoor in the attic.¹⁵⁷ However, widows and spinsters could also be responsible for creating safe places within their home. Anne Line for example, constructed two hiding places in her home in London which were located behind a fireplace in a small room.¹⁵⁸

However, efforts to safeguard the residing Jesuit priest in their household extended beyond simply constructing secret places within the home. Indeed, efforts were undertaken by the members of the household to distract and ward off searchers who arrived at their home suspecting that a Jesuit priest was harboured inside. Women played a particularly prominent role in this activity often because the women of a household were more usually at home when officials arrived. Women exploited their supposed frailty and innocence, they provided searchers with meals which distracted their attention and they pleaded that they were ill and urged the searchers to come back another day.¹⁵⁹ When the home of Lady Vaux was searched, her daughter Francis Bouroughs told the officials that her mother was sick and could not receive visitors, declaring, "Oh! Put up

¹⁵⁵ Hodgetts, "Elizabethan Priest Holes V: The North," *RH* 13 (1975), p. 256.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 260.

¹⁵⁷ Hodgetts, "Elizabethan Priest Holes," pp. 275-277.

¹⁵⁸ H. Foley, ed. *Records of the English Province of the Society of Jesus*, I (London, 1888), p. 1441.

¹⁵⁹ Rowlands, p. 156.

your swords, or else my mother will die, for she cannot endure to see a naked sword.'¹⁶⁰ She then pretended to fetch some wine for her mother and ran to rooms which hid Henry Garnet and another priest and locked the doors.¹⁶¹ Similarly when Mrs. Bellamy's home was searched in 1584 she protested to the searchers that she had never heard of Father Parsons (whom she harboured) and claimed that they had made a mistake as to the house or the lady they were to search.¹⁶²

The willingness of the Catholic gentry and nobility to provide shelter to the Jesuits was not without risks and dangers. Indeed, John Gerard described the search conducted on the household of the Wisemans on 1 April 1594:

As we were preparing everything for Mass before daybreak were heard suddenly a great noise of galloping hooves. The next moment the house was encircled by a whole troop of men... We barred the doors; the altar was stripped, the hiding places opened and all my books and papers thrown in... I was hardly tucked in why the pursuivants broke down the door and broke in. They fanned out through the house, making a great racket. The first thing they did was to shut up the mistress of the house in her own room with her daughters... they began to search everywhere, even lifting up the tiles of the roof to examine underneath them and using candles in dark corners...they started knocking down suspicious looking places.¹⁶³

Similarly Fr. Greene wrote:

...they [pursuivants] enter the house with drawn blades, bent crossbows, and charged dags. If they find a priest or Catholic, they shout and cry as though they had won a field... When they find a priest they seize up and sweep away all the goods, and most barbarously execute their harbourers ...In these searches also with much diligence they observe one point of devilish cruelty, that is, wicked means to force servants to betray their masters and children their own parents, requiring no more for the murdering of father or mother than one child's word, barbarously extorted by fear and threats.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ P. Caraman, ed., *The Other Face: Catholic Life under Elizabeth I* (London, 1960), p. 211.

¹⁶¹ Garnet, p. 42.

¹⁶² W. Weston, *William Weston. The Autobiography of an Elizabethan*, trans. Philip Caraman, (London, 1955), pp. 3-4.

¹⁶³ Gerard, p. 58.

¹⁶⁴ J. Morris, ed. *Troubles*, III (London, 1877), p. 69.

Furthermore, searchers disrupted the homes and possessions of suspected priest harbourers. While the lives of these individuals might not have been at immediate risk, searches were a terrifying and destructive experience. Indeed, when the home of Thomas and Dorothy Vavasour of York was searched for example, officials broke down walls, pulled up floor boards, tore down tapestries and broke their furniture and goods as they searched for vestments, chalices and other church stuff.¹⁶⁵ When the home of the Hogdsons was searched in May 1590 forty officials arrived with bows, arrows and staves whereupon they similarly ripped up floor boards, tore down walls and broke furniture and goods and they cut the legs off one of their horses.¹⁶⁶ Moreover, Francis Boroughs, on one occasion in which her home was searched, was threatened with death if she did not provide the officials with the location of the suspected hiding priest in her home.¹⁶⁷ However, despite the destruction caused to their homes and the risks they encountered when searched, these women along with men were willing to risk their lives in an effort to ensure the success of the mission.

Conclusion

The Marian priests, the seminarians and the Jesuits were important figures in the survival of Catholicism in the decades after the Elizabethan settlement as they moved around the country providing religious services and practices to those who remained committed to the old faith. The Marian priests provided both services within the newly established Church and within the households of the gentry and the nobility, nurturing Catholicism as best they could in the years following the religious settlement. The

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 299-300.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ Caraman, *The Other Face*, p. 211.

seminarians, on their arrival into England in 1574, complimented the mission of the Marian clergy moving around the countryside offering the sacraments to the faithful in Catholic households and were responsible for creating a much more highly committed Catholic community in the latter decades of the sixteenth century which was increasingly estranged from the Protestant majority. While the number of Jesuit priests working in the country during Elizabeth's reign was never significant, they nevertheless played an important role in preserving Catholicism in England as they moved around the countryside offering a number of services to Catholic families and implemented the post-Tridentine reforms.

Women would play an important role in enabling the Marians, the seminarians and the Jesuits to preserve and sustain Catholicism and a Catholic community in Elizabethan England. Single, widowed and married women harboured a series of Marian priests beginning in 1559 making their households available for the Catholic Mass to be said. Others welcomed the continuation of Catholic services within the established Church. Women were involved in the process of creating networks of safe houses throughout the country, making it possible for the seminarians to perform the Mass, to hear confessions, to provide religious instruction and to reconcile individuals to Rome. Furthermore, women attempted to ensure safe residences for the Jesuits, whether by constructing hiding holes within their home, warding off searchers or by creating networks of safe houses throughout the country. They allowed the Jesuits to utilize their homes whereby the sacraments could be performed and the post-Tridentine reforms could be introduced.

Although there was relative leniency in the harbouring of the Marian priests, with the arrival of the seminarians in the 1570s and the Jesuits in the 1580s, the act of harbouring became one of increased risk and danger. Though the consequences of financial penalties and short-term imprisonment which were placed on individuals who provided shelter to a recusant Marian priest should not be underestimated, the penalties for such actions would never be as great as those for the act of harbouring the seminarians and the Jesuits. Indeed, perceived as a threat to the security of the Elizabethan government, the act of harbouring a seminarian or Jesuit was a capital offence and as seen in this chapter, women faced long-term imprisonment and at times execution. While the activities which women undertook in safeguarding travelling priests would first seem to illustrate that they remained static throughout the Elizabethan period, it is important to understand that the potential penalties for support changed.

Women's involvement in harbouring the Marian, the seminary and the Jesuit priests with a safe place from they could both live and work was important to the survival of English Catholicism. While women could maintain traditional observances, feasts and festivals within their home and arrange for their children to be brought up in the Catholic faith, as seen in Chapter Two, Catholicism could not have survived without the presence of priests to perform the necessary services of the Catholic Church. Indeed, without clergymen, and the lay women and men to support them, Catholicism would have declined to mere ingrained practices and observances.

CHAPTER FOUR

'God's will be done: I think I may suffer for this good cause':¹
Persecution

Introduction

As discussed in Chapter One, during the Elizabethan period a series of laws, statutes and royal proclamations were designed to punish lay Catholics for a wide range of activities, including non-attendance at Protestant services, attendance at Mass, harbouring priests and sending their sons and daughters to foreign Catholic schools, seminaries and convents. The religious laws in late sixteenth century England worked to erode the commitment to Catholicism of those who had decided to become church papists, to coerce the recusant laity into conformity and to seek out and punish the recusant Marian, seminarian and Jesuit priests who ministered to them. Committed Catholics and their priests represented a threat to the Elizabethan government's religious programme of establishing a unified Protestant religion in England. Their efforts in preserving Catholicism signalled a religious divide.

Since women were an important group in the survival of Catholicism, the state found it necessary to create special measures to control their behaviour.² Indeed, the documentation of women's activities in public records arose from the attempts of the state to restrain those who refused to compromise. Civic and ecclesiastical authorities were keen to note in their reports women who refused to attend the weekly Protestant services, heard the Catholic mass, maintained 'popish stuff' within their household and

¹ Margaret Clitherow, 1586.

² M.B. Rowlands, "Recusant Women, 1560-1640," in *Women in English Society, 1500-1800*, ed. Mary Prior (London, 1985), p. 149.

harboured priests, identifying women's names and often where they resided. However, despite the interest of authorities in their activities, they were considerably less likely than men to be prosecuted for their beliefs.³ Indeed, the state encountered a fundamental problem; specifically how far could a woman who broke the law be held responsible for her own actions?⁴

While this thesis thus far has examined women's religious opposition, this chapter will examine the state's response to women's involvement in such activities. It will analyze three forms of penalties which women of the English Catholic community endured for their efforts to preserve their faith: fines, imprisonment and death. An examination of the state's response to women's activism reveals something about the attitudes of the state to women's involvement in Catholic resistance. Moreover it indicates the importance of women's role in the history of post-Reformation Catholicism.

Penal Fines

Financial penalties were introduced in England as a coercive measure to curb recusancy and they were the most common form of punishment imposed.⁵ Penal fines were introduced at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign under the Act of Uniformity, as described in Chapter One, which stipulated that anyone absent from parish church services without sufficient cause would incur a twelve pence fine for each offence. Financial penalties for non-attendance at the weekly Protestant service would be reaffirmed in later decades as additional legislation pertaining to recusancy was specifically

³ A. Lawrence, *Women in England, 1500- 1760: A Social History* (London, 1994), p. 211.

⁴ Rowlands, p. 149.

⁵ S. L. Bastow, "'Worth Nothing but very Wilful'; Catholic Recusant Women of Yorkshire, 1536-1642 *RH* 25 (2001), p. 594.

enacted related to the payment of penal fines. The Parliament of 1580-81 extended the fines for recusancy from twelve pence for each week of absence to twenty pounds per month. The Parliament of 1584-85 upheld the 1581 twenty pound fine for recusancy and it demanded that individuals who failed to pay his or her fine forfeit to the Crown up to two thirds of their property. The yearly profit from the major part of a recusant's estate could be claimed by the Crown, even after the offender's death, until the total debt had been paid. Moreover, the Parliament of 1593 established a ten pound fine on the heads of households for every family member not attending the weekly Protestant church services.

Although financial penalties were the most common form of punishment individuals incurred for refusing to conform to the government's religious programme, women as a whole would not consistently suffer such penalties in the Elizabethan period. The fines established under the Act of Uniformity of 1559 and under the statutes in the Parliaments of 1580-81 and 1586-87, to penalize those who refused to attend the weekly Protestant service could not be imposed on married women as they legally possessed neither money nor property, and thus fines could not be enforced. Only with the enactment of the 1593 statute did Parliament implement effective legislative measures to curb their recusancy.

However, while married women would not incur financial penalties for recusancy until 1593, the state recognized the importance of women's refusal to attend weekly Protestant services. The treatment of married women by the state reveals interesting details about its concern for the role of women in the preservation of the Catholic cause. As mentioned in Chapter Two, authorities included married women in recusant lists despite the fact that neither they nor their husbands were financially responsible for their

refusal to attend their parish church and, as outlined in Chapter Two, they figured prominently in the recusant lists of the local ecclesiastical commissions and in the pipe rolls and recusant rolls of the Exchequer, more often appearing in greater number than widows and spinsters and at times in even greater number than men.

For officials, it was important to create accurate lists of married women who refused to attend weekly Protestant services as they threatened the success of the fundamental goal of the Elizabethan government's religious programme, specifically that of establishing religious uniformity within the country. Both the pipe rolls and recusant rolls of the Exchequer as well as local ecclesiastical recusant records did indeed note the names of married women and the location where they resided, enabling authorities to keep track of them. However, without a proper mechanism to force married women to attend weekly Protestant services, a particularly significant proportion of the English Catholic community were able to evade conformity. Indeed, in not effectively punishing their absence from their parish church, the authorities were unable to prevent women from refusing to attend the weekly Protestant services. Examples include Anne Weddell of Yorkshire, the wife of John Weddell, who was listed as a recusant in 1576, 1585 and 1592, Katherine Arlington, the wife of William Arlington, who was listed as a recusant in 1577, 1587 and 1590, Emma Halliday, the wife of Richard Halliday, who was listed as a recusant in 1576, 1577 and 1578 and Katherine Wildon, the wife of John Wildon, who was identified as a recusant in 1577, 1581 and 1589.⁶

However, the state's concerns over the activities of recusant wives extended beyond their refusal to attend the weekly Protestant services. Some local ecclesiastical

⁶ P. Ryan, ed. "Diocesan Returns of Recusants for England and Wales," in *CRS Miscellanea XII*, CRS XXII (London, 1921), pp. 13, 20, 25 and 29; H. Bowler, *Recusants in the Exchequer Piper Rolls, 1581-1592* (London, 1986), p. 191.

recusant lists provided not only the names of recusant wives and the place in which they lived. They also noted whether they knew of any recusant Marian or missionary priests, whether they maintained 'popish stuff' within their household or whether they attended mass. The absence of recusant wives from their parish church would have signalled to authorities that they were perhaps involved in preserving Catholic practices, whether in safeguarding traditional feasts, fasts and celebrating the full liturgical cycle within the household, hearing Mass, organizing Catholic baptisms and marriages, catechizing neighbours and harbouring priests. Moreover, married women were more likely to have children than widows and spinsters and as such compromised the long term success of the Elizabethan government's religious programme of achieving religious conversion. Indeed, as discussed in Chapter Two, women held more responsibilities for the day-to-day development of the religious life of their family and they were often responsible for the religious instruction which their children received. Women arranged for their children to be baptized, provided religious instruction to their daughters, arranged for their sons to be taught by Catholic schoolteachers and they, alongside their husbands, occasionally sent their children abroad. By bringing up their children in the Catholic faith they ensured that a non-conformist Catholic minority within the country would persist in future generations.

It is perhaps because of the perceived threat that married women specifically represented to the state that discussions would ensue in later decades with regards to punishing them for their refusal to attend the church services. Beginning in the late 1580s gentlemen in the provinces charged with the duty of maintaining the law sent a succession of queries to the Privy Council asking them for clarification, support and

guidance in the matter of married women, and of the men who ‘go to church themselves but have Mass at home for their wives,’ like the Sheriff of Cambridge in 1588 who appealed to officials for guidance on how to proceed against women recusants ‘whom he dare not presume to apprehend without advice.’⁷ Authorities began imprisoning recusant wives for their refusal to attend weekly Protestant services despite the lack of legislation authorizing them to enforce such punishment. In Lancashire for example, the Earl of Huntingdon committed twenty-three women to fourteen months in prison, including Lady Constable, Mrs. Metham, Mrs. Ingleby, Mrs. Balthorpe and Katherine Radcliff.⁸ Other women were put in the custody of Protestant leaders, like Margaret Throckmorton who was put in the care of the Dean of Gloucester and her mother in the house of Thomas Denys of Gloucester.⁹

Between 1591 and 1593 the attitude of the professional administrators of the law regarding recusant wives had hardened. Men like Lord Burghley, the Earl of Huntingdon, Chief Justice Popham and Recorder Fleetwood of London knew that the root of their difficulties in achieving religious conversion at the popular level lay with the failure to enforce the law the against ‘obstinate and influential wives in respect that by their example whole families refuse to resort to come to Church and continue in recusance.’¹⁰ Chief Justice Popham advocated on behalf of the judges in 1593 that much more direct and stringent measures for recusant wives be introduced, suggesting that married women who refused to attend their parish church services should be imprisoned and that children

⁷ Rowlands, p. 153.

⁸ C. Cross, *The Puritan Earl* (London, 1966), p. 234.

⁹ Rowlands, p. 154.

¹⁰ *APC*, XXIII, 1592, p. 193.

should be removed from recusant families.¹¹ Richard Topcliffe likewise made a similar suggestion, arguing that married women who refused to attend weekly Protestant services should be either fined or imprisoned and that their children should be removed from their care.¹² Lord Burghley, upon taking up the secretaryship of Lord of the Privy Seal in 1590, listed amongst his priorities that recusant wives be indicted, condemned and imprisoned and that their husbands should pay their fines.¹³

The concerns of local authorities as well as the professional administrators of the law for the activities of recusant wives coupled with renewed fears of a Spanish invasion in 1593 led to the introduction of a bill in the House of Commons concerning recusants which included substantial measures to deal with recusant wives. It stipulated that a recusant heiress was to lose two-thirds of her inheritance, a woman marrying a recusant could lose her dower or jointure, children were to be taken from their parents at the age of seven and heads of the household were to pay ten pounds a head for every member of the household not attending church.¹⁴ This new Commons bill marked a drastic departure from the previous religious legislation introduced in Parliament. For the first time in Elizabethan Parliaments the state sought to intrude into the realm of family affairs.

This Commons bill however, would not pass in Parliament as it would lack sufficient support because it concerned women.¹⁵ Instead, it would be dropped in favour of a new statute, as mentioned earlier, which confined itself to a ten pound fine to be levied on the heads of households for every member of their family not attending church. The failure of the Commons bill and the passage of the 1593 statute reveal something of

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² BL, Lansdowne MS 72, fol. 48.

¹³ Rowlands, p. 153.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

the state's attitude towards recusant wives' refusal to attend the weekly Protestant services. While women were a particular threat to the Elizabethan government's religious programme, and were monitored for their behaviour, Parliament would never cross the line of specifically penalizing them. Indeed, the greatest achievement of Parliament regarding recusant wives was to penalize their husbands. Married women would never be legally responsible for refusing to attend weekly Protestant services. Although administrators were able to gain their object of extending the penal fines to include married women's recusancy, the government had also been made to realize that the 'family was a sensitive area into which the government had entered at its peril.'¹⁶

In contrast widows and spinsters were always liable for their refusal to attend weekly Protestant services and they would experience very different consequences than married women for their recusant activities. They would figure prominently in the lists, particularly in the years following 1570 as the government tightened its efforts to enforce religious conversion. While it was noted in Chapter Two that married women figured much more prominently in the recusant lists of the local ecclesiastical commissions, the pipe rolls and the recusant rolls of the Exchequer, as mentioned above their names were noted out of concern for locating and identifying individuals who refused to conform. Widows and spinsters, with their own property and income, while similarly listed out of the concern of authorities for recusancy, were also recorded because they bore the financial burden if prosecuted.

While both widows and spinsters were officially under the supervision of their nearest male relation, they would be liable to bear the costs of their own actions. Dorothy Lawson of Tyneside for example, who, although under the supervision of her nearest

¹⁶ J. Bossy, *The English Catholic Community, 1570-1850* (London, 1975), p. 155.

male relation Sir Ralph Lawson of Yorkshire in the years after her husband's death, was convicted of recusancy on 3 September 1586, 4 September 1587 and 18 March 1588 and was required to pay the obligatory twenty pound fines.¹⁷ They consistently incurred penal fines for their refusal to attend their local parish church throughout the Elizabethan period, like Alice Simpson a spinster from York who was fined for recusancy in November 1577, July 1581 and in 1583, 1586, 1589 and 1592.¹⁸ Lady Ann Ingleby of Yorkshire was liable to pay for her refusal to attend weekly Protestant services in January 1586, March 1586 and September 1587 and Agnes Lowe of Lancashire was convicted and fined for recusancy in 1589 and 1590.¹⁹ As the above examples illustrate, according to the state, they were liable for their own recusancy.

While the state established a mandatory set fine for absences from their parish church, different degrees of enforcement between the local authorities in different communities resulted in different levels of pecuniary penalties. Some widows and spinsters who were punished for refusing to attend their local parish church, received relatively lenient fines, like Margaret Scrope of Lancashire who was fined 3s 3d for her refusal to attend her parish church in 1586, Anne Massey who was fined 20s for non attendance, Margaret Holden of Lancashire who incurred 16s 3d fine for her refusal to attend her parish church in 1594 and Elizabeth Townhill also of Lancashire who was fined 10s in 1594.²⁰ Others however, incurred much more severe financial penalties. In November 1585 for example, Mrs. Cattrall of Lancashire was fined 25 pounds and in

¹⁷ W. Palmes, ed. *The Life of Dorothy Lawson of St. Anthony's, near Newcastle-upon Tyne* (Newcastle, 1855), p. 29; H. Bowler, *Recusants in the Exchequer Pipe Rolls, 1581-1592*, CRS, LXXI (London, 1986), p. 107.

¹⁸ P. Ryan, "Diocesan Returns of Recusants for England and Wales," in *CRS Miscellanea XII*, CRS, XXII (London, 1921).

¹⁹ Bowler, p. 165, 93 and 114.

²⁰ BL, Harleian MS 6998 fol. 164; PRO, SP12/215/53.

1594 Elizabeth Pudsey of Yorkshire received a fine of 20 pounds.²¹ Moreover, Elizabeth Reiley of Litcham was fined forty pounds worth of land and goods, land valued at twenty pounds were seized from Mrs. Burton and Ellen Rogerley of Litcham forfeited goods worth two-hundred pounds.²² Mrs. Bridget Browne of Anton forfeited goods valued at one-hundred pounds, Mrs. Eves of Fishwick, Lancashire forfeited two-hundred pounds worth of goods and Elizabeth Nelson of Farnworth forfeited goods valued at one-hundred pounds.²³

The financial penalties which widows and spinsters endured did not differ from those which men incurred. Indeed, men who appeared in the above examined lists illustrate this conclusion. In November 1585 for example, Sir John Southworth and Richard Blundell were fined twenty-five pounds as was Mrs. Catrall, and in 1590 Thomas Wilford was fined thirty-four pounds and John Townley was fined twenty pounds as was Alice Clifton.²⁴ Moreover, like Mrs. Eves of Fishwick and Elizabeth Nelson of Fairhurst, both William Calverley and William Griffith of York forfeited property valued at one-hundred pounds. This seems to indicate that both widows and spinsters were treated in the same manner as men.

For widows and spinsters who would incur financial penalties, the consequences were great and the penal fines which they endured had significant financial repercussions. While the initial penalties imposed by the Elizabethan government were lenient in comparison to the financial penalties imposed in the latter decades of the sixteenth century, for most widows and spinsters they would have been a powerful inducement to

²¹ PRO, SP12/184/61; BL, Harleian MS 6998 fol. 164.

²² PRO, SP12/118/45.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ PRO, SP12/184/61; SP12/235/24.

conform. Not all widows and spinsters could afford to pay the required twelve pence for their refusal to attend their parish church. However, it was the financial penalties imposed under the Statutes of 1580-81 and 1585-86 which resulted in the most severe consequences. The fines were so heavy that many could no longer continue to be absent from their parish churches and those who would incur such fines faced financial ruin. Indeed, in order to pay the fines, widows and spinsters were often compelled to sell their estates piece by piece and when they were in arrears the government, by law, authorized the seizure of two thirds of their property leaving them with few possessions.

Imprisonment

While penal fines were the most common form of punishment which individuals incurred for their refusal to conform to the religious laws, imprisonment and the threat of imprisonment had a much more profound impact on the English Catholic community. For those imprisoned, it was an irritating deprivation of liberty at best and at worst it was a long ordeal which could result in death.²⁵ Moreover, imprisonment could seriously disrupt their lives. Lay men and lay women had to think about their families, who would maintain their dependents and some (specifically widows and spinsters) had to consider the consequences for their estates.²⁶ As not all the prison lists have survived and the resulting records remain incomplete, the exact number of laypersons who faced imprisonment is not known. With more complete records of the clergymen engaged in the Catholic cause, figures for this group have been suggested. Indeed, Patrick McGrath and Joy Rowe have estimated that roughly 130 Marian priests were imprisoned during

²⁵ P. McGrath and J. Rowe, "The Imprisonment of Catholics for Religion under Elizabeth I," *RH* 20 (1989), p. 415.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 418.

Elizabeth's reign as well as 285 seminarians.²⁷ Both McGrath and Rowe have suggested that lay men and lay women who endured imprisonment during the Elizabethan years were substantially greater than the number of clergymen.²⁸

All women, whether married, widowed or single, once they had fallen afoul of the law, were liable to face imprisonment and before 1593, imprisonment was the only punishment available for the state to punish married women's resistance to the Protestant religion. In a prison list from April 1579 two women are listed alongside fifteen men.²⁹ In August 1580 nine men were listed in the Wisbech Castle along with seven women.³⁰ In the Kidcote in York in the same year eight men were listed as prisoners along with nine women and on 22 March 1583 one women was imprisoned in the Poultry Compter along with eighteen men.³¹ In June 1586 one women was listed as a prisoner in Newgate prison alongside ten men and in 1598 two women were imprisoned alongside five men.³² As the above examples indicate, it is evident that women made up a small, but not insignificant, proportion of all individuals imprisoned and consistently faced imprisonment beginning in the 1570s.

Some women encountered short imprisonments like Mary Owen who was committed from 27 March until 29 April 1579; Alice Gravel who was imprisoned in the Poultry Counter from 3 December 1577 until 11 December 1577; Amy Wing who was imprisoned from 9 February 1577 until 22 February 1577 and Marie Oxenbridge who was imprisoned from September 1577 until April 1578.³³ Others however experienced

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 415.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ PRO/ SP12/130/43.

³⁰ PRO, SP12/141/28.

³¹ PRO, SP12/159/28i.

³² PRO, SP12/195/34; SP12/270/41.

³³ PRO, SP12/130/43; SP12/140/37; SP12/130/43.

much longer imprisonments. In 1582 Lady Loveth, and Lady Radcliff were imprisoned for two years for not conforming and in 1592 Katherine Sleepe was imprisoned for three years and in 1593 it was reported that Mary Cole had been in prison for three years³⁴ Dorothy Vavasour, Mary Hutton and Alice Ouldcorn of Yorkshire were imprisoned for seven years.³⁵ In 1594 it was reported that Alice Simpson was committed for seventeen years and Anne Lander of York was imprisoned for five or six years.³⁶ As it will be seen later in the chapter, long term imprisonments had severe consequences.

There were of course, a great many offences for which Catholics might find themselves imprisoned, and new offences were continually created from 1559 onwards. For example, individuals could be imprisoned for receiving recusant priests, for refusing to allow one's children to attend their parish church, for receiving papal bulls, for refusing to attend church services, for hearing the Catholic Mass, for being seen in the company of priests for possessing Latin primers as well as for 'conveying intelligence' to priests and 'others beyond the seas and some of this realm by unknowen means.' Lady Anne Wilstrobe was imprisoned in York Castle for not attending church in 1575.³⁷ Katherine Arthington was committed to York Castle in 1577, 1587 and 1590 for not paying recusancy fines as was Margarat Thwaites, who was imprisoned in November 1576 and Anne Lander who was imprisoned in 1576, 1577, 1579 and 1585.³⁸ Lady Huckellthorne was imprisoned in the Fleet on 22 April 1561 for hearing Mass as was Lady Carew and Mrs. Sackfield.³⁹ Alice Bowman of Yorkshire was imprisoned in 1584

³⁴ PRO, SP12/170/8; BL, Harleian MS 6998, fol. 58; Harleian MS 6998, fol. 81.

³⁵ Morris, *Troubles*, III p. 323.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 322, 302 and 323.

³⁷ Ryan, p. 12.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 12- 36.

³⁹ BL, Harleian MS 360, fol. 34.

for removing martyrs heads from the stakes on a prison roof.⁴⁰ Mrs. Salvery was imprisoned on 29 July 1580 for keeping a priest in her house, hearing mass and for helping the residing priest perform the sacraments.⁴¹ On 20 April 1590 an unnamed woman from Yorkshire was imprisoned for harbouring a recusant school master.⁴² On 24 December 1582 Mary Hutton was imprisoned for harbouring a seminary priest.⁴³

While laypersons and priests were imprisoned in some fifty different prisons in England, and thus there would have been some discrepancies with regards to individuals' experiences, surviving records of prisoners' accounts suggest that the conditions could be extremely unpleasant and the quality of life diminished.⁴⁴ William Weston for example, wrote of Thomas Felton's treatment in The Fleet in 1588:

In this imprisonment he was very cruelly treated; for, first he was put into *Little Ease* where he remained for three days and three nights, not being able to stand, or lie, or sit, and fed only with bread and water... Then he was hanged up by his hands, to the end to draw from him by way of confession, which priests he knew beyond the seas or in England. Which punishment was so grievous that therewith blood sprang at his fingers' ends.⁴⁵

The Jesuit John Gerard wrote the following of his imprisonment in the Poultry Counter:

It [his cell] was a small garret which had only a bed in it, and such a low ceiling that I could not stand upright except near the bed. It had one window, which was always open and let in the foulest air, and whenever it rained, the bed was soaked. The doorway was so low that I could not enter the room on my feet, and even when I crawled down on my knees I had to stoop to get through.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ Ryan, p. 28.

⁴¹ PRO, SP12/141/28.

⁴² This woman's name is not given in the report, BL, Harleian MS 6998, fol. 87.

⁴³ R. Connelly, *The Women of the Catholic Resistance in England, 1540- 1680* (Edinburgh, 1997), p. 65.

⁴⁴ Among the prisons which held the largest number of prisoners for religious reasons were the Marshalsea, Newgate, the Clink, the Tower, York Castle and Wisbech, McGrath and Rowe, p. 420.

⁴⁵ R. Challoner, *Memoirs of Missionary Priests as well as Secular as Regular and of Other Catholic of both Sexes, that have Suffered Death in England on Religious Accounts from the Year of our Lord 1577 to 1684* (London, 1924), p. 139.

⁴⁶ J. Gerard, *John Gerard. The Autobiography of an Elizabethan*, trans. Philip Caraman (London, 1951), pp. 89-90.

The Jesuit John Mush, harboured by Margaret Clitherow, described the conditions she was subjected to during her imprisonment in Ousebridge in 1586:

...a low, filthy prison...where they could not see at noontime of the day to eat their meat without a candle, the beds being loathsome with filth by reason of dredge...Peter Prison in York and the hold in Ouse Bridge were a disgrace to any civilized county. The cells in the latter place would almost have rivalled the Black Holes. Air, light, and ventilation were absent and the waters of the river pushed in when they were above their usual level.⁴⁷

Furthermore, the seminarian John Pollard wrote of the conditions which Lady Constable, Lady Babthorpe, Lady Ingleby, Dorothy Lawson, Mrs. Metham and Mrs. Hungate endured in Hutton Castle:

...they were locked up every one in a several great chamber, not one permitted to see or speak with one another, nor to have a maid of their own; how their husbands were not permitted to come to them, but with what suit and difficulty; how the company of the rest either before or after her travail, but only for the time present when she called; what shifts the poor gentlewomen used to get to one another, what devices they had to get open locks, to break windows, and to make passages.⁴⁸

As the first example indicates, individuals incarcerated would sometimes encounter torture. It should not be assumed that women were necessarily excluded from such events. Indeed, it was reported on Margaret Ward's execution that, "She was flogged and hung up by the wrists, the tips of her toes only touching the ground, for so long a time that she was crippled and paralyzed, but these sufferings greatly strengthened the glorious martyr for her last struggle."⁴⁹ Moreover, given that William Weston's account of Thomas Felton's experience was in the context of prison officials extracting a confession of priests which he knew beyond the seas, it must be assumed that women

⁴⁷ M.B. Milburn, *A Martyr of York: Being a Narrative of the Life and Sufferings of the Venerable Margaret Clitheroe* (London, 1900), pp. 41-43.

⁴⁸ Morris, p. 463.

⁴⁹ P. Caraman, *The Other Face: Catholic Life Under Elizabeth I* (London, 1960), p. 250.

experienced similar situations, albeit perhaps not always as extreme. The extracts from both John Gerard's account of the prison conditions and well as John Mush's account of the prison conditions which Margaret Clitherow encountered indicate that the prison conditions were quite poor. Indeed, as a result of the conditions of the prisons throughout the country, there were at least seventy-one men and twenty-seven women who died in prison.⁵⁰ In Ouldcorn prison alone, of the thirty women committed between 1580 and 1594 eleven of them died from the conditions of their environment.⁵¹ Of Dorothy Vavasour, Mary Hutton and Alice Ouldcorn it was stated 'that after seven years' imprisonment, being shut down on a cold winter night without their bedding into a low, filthy prison, where they took their death with cold, and coming up sick, they all died within three days.'⁵² Likewise, Mrs. Anne Lander of York, after being imprisoned for five or six years, died alongside her husband in prison.⁵³

Capital Punishment

As discussed in Chapter One, the 1585 statute against Jesuits and seminary priests decreed that all priests ordained abroad were liable to prosecution upon their entry into England. Yet, more significant for the English Catholic community, it put at risk all those who harboured them as, by the Act of 1585, any harbourers and helpers were liable to be prosecuted for a capital felony. While, as seen in Chapter Three, most individuals faced imprisonment for harbouring and aiding both the seminary and Jesuit priests, thirty-two lay men and women between 1585 and 1603 would face death. Though women played an

⁵⁰ McGrath and Rowe, p. 415.

⁵¹ Morris, p. 302.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

important role in harbouring and safeguarding the missionary priests, the number of women who were put death for their efforts was minimal in comparison to the number of men. Indeed, of the thirty-two lay persons who were put to death only three were women. Margaret Clitherow of York, pressed to death in 1586, was the first to die. Having refused to plead to harbouring a priest, she died under *peine forte et dure*.⁵⁴ Margaret Ward of Chester, the second to die, was pressed to death in 1588 after being convicted of aiding William Watson, a seminary priest, escape from prison. Anne Line of Essex, hung in 1601, the last of the Elizabethan female martyrs, was executed for pleading guilty to charges of harbouring priests.

Given that the numbers of executions of lay men and women carried out between 1585 and 1603 were few in comparison to the 93 households in Lancashire alone which housed the seminary and the Jesuit priests, death sentences were not consistently carried out throughout the latter part of the sixteenth century. Marmaduke Bowes, Margaret Clitherow and Richard Langley all of York were all executed within the year following the enactment of the 1585 Act. In the year of the Armada in 1588 six lay men and Margaret Ward were put to death, all executed in York. In both 1590 and 1592 two men were executed. In 1591 there were six executions and in 1597 Thomas Warcop was executed for harbouring the priest William Anlaby. In the following year Ralph Grimstone was executed for being seen with a priest. Following a gap of two years, both John Talbot and John Norton were executed and in 1601 two men and Anne Line were

⁵⁴ Though Margaret Clitherow refused to plead she did harbour the Jesuit John Mush.

put to death. The final execution to occur during Elizabeth's reign was Anthony Bates who was executed in 1602.⁵⁵

It is difficult to determine why these individuals and not others were sentenced to death, as the religious crimes for which they were convicted did not differ from those for which other individuals were imprisoned. Given that so few individuals were executed for their involvement in harbouring priests and that the executions were carried out at sporadic times in the latter decades of Elizabeth's reign it can be assumed that the execution of these individuals was the result of a heightened concern for the political threat the Catholic cause represented. Moreover, given that the executions carried out during Elizabeth's reign coincided with the arrival and the increased, albeit small number of Jesuits in the country, it is perhaps because of the fear of the Jesuit priests that the Elizabethan government sought to halt the Catholic laity from harbouring priests by taking severe action. Indeed, of those who would be executed for providing shelter to the travelling priests, fifteen individuals had harboured Jesuits which was significant given the small number of Jesuit priests who carried out missionary work in the Elizabethan period.

The fact that so few women faced death in their efforts to safeguard the missionary priests in comparison to men reveals something about the state's reluctance to impose a death sentence on Catholic women. As detailed in Chapter Three, women's role in the safeguarding of both the seminary and Jesuit priests was significant. They provided priests with safe places in which to both live and work and arranged for Mass to be performed for both members of the household and the community. The act of harbouring,

⁵⁵ McGrath and Rowe, "The Elizabethan Priests: Their Harbourers and their Helpers," *RH* 19 (1989), pp. 217-220.

particularly in the case of married women, was a collective undertaking between men and women and as such both men and women were prosecuted for their efforts to safeguard their faith. In the case of widows and spinsters the decision to, and the involvement in, harbouring was their sole decision and they were independently responsible for their actions. Indeed, two out of the three women who were executed were widows. Given the discrepancy between the extent to which women were involved and the number of women condemned to death, it would seem that there was something about women and capital punishment that the state authorities were hesitant to pursue. Perhaps given women's traditional roles within the household as the nurturer and their connection to motherhood influenced this discrepancy. Further, given that in the case of married women authorities would at times turn to their husbands to control their wives' behaviour, perhaps by putting women to death state authorities felt that they were overstepping their authority to discipline in family matters.

Though only three women were put to death throughout the Elizabethan period, five additional women had been condemned but not executed. Indeed, Mrs. Dorothy White was condemned in 1588 for harbouring a priest William Tedder. In 1591 Mrs. Swithin Wells was sentenced to death but was granted a reprieve and spent many years in prison. Mrs. Jane Wiseman was condemned but not executed for helping a priest in 1598 and Mrs. Eleanor Hunt was condemned for helping a priest Christopher Wharton in 1599 but the sentences were never carried out. The final woman to be condemned but not executed was Mrs. Margaret Norton who had been sentenced to death for harbouring a priest in 1600 because it was thought that she was with child.⁵⁶ While hers is the only

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 220.

case where a reason for exemption was noted, reprieve of a death sentence was almost exclusively restricted to women.

Conclusion

As the Elizabethan government sought to impose religious change in England, laws, statutes and proclamations were enacted to coerce the English Catholic community into conformity as the enduring presence of Catholicism in England threatened the success of the government's religious programme and since women were an important group in the survival of Catholicism, the state found it necessary to devise measures to control their behaviour. The treatment of Catholic women under the law reveals something about the attitudes of the state to women's involvement. Indeed, although recusant wives would evade the recusancy laws throughout the Elizabethan period, authorities were keen to note their names and the places in which they resided and legislative efforts were undertaken in the latter decades of Elizabeth's reign to punish them for their refusal to attend their parish church. For authorities, recusant wives posed a threat to the implementation of their religious programme as their absence from the parish church signalled to authorities that they were involved in preserving Catholic practices and perhaps even raising their children as Catholics. Recusant widows and spinsters were likewise a concern for the Elizabethan government as their absence from the parish church would have also signalled to authorities their efforts to preserve Catholic practice outside of the established Church. Given that they legally had their own income and property, the state, given the opportunity, sought to punish them in the same manner as men and the financial burdens which recusant widows and spinsters faced

could be severe. All women involved in the Catholic cause if found guilty of disobeying the law would be imprisoned. While much smaller in number than the number of men imprisoned, women were imprisoned both in the short and long term and were subjected to the poor conditions of the prisons. Penalties of capital punishment were not often imposed on Catholic women in the years after the 1585 and only three women would face such persecution. Given that women, whether married, widowed or single, were very much involved in harbouring and helping both the seminary and Jesuit priests, statistically they should have made up a greater number of those who would face death. It would seem that the state was reluctant to condemn women to death and it was more likely that women would face imprisonment instead.

CONCLUSION

With the passage of the Act of Uniformity in April 1559 Protestantism was established as the official religion in England. While the religious reforms introduced by Parliament were only slowly experienced at the parish level in the months and early years following the religious settlement, with the gradual implementation of the government's reforms in English communities, churches became increasingly 'protestantized' in their services and furnishings. However, while the traditional rituals and observances of Catholic practice progressively disappeared in the parish churches in the latter decades of Elizabeth's reign, a small but vibrant Catholic community persisted. Its members remained committed to Catholicism, undertaking measures to safeguard their faith. Refusing to accept the conditions of the religious laws, these individuals preserved traditional rituals within the confines of their homes.

As this thesis has illustrated, women of the English Catholic community played an important role in its survival. They were able to cope with the religious change and they developed methods of negotiation and accommodation that enabled them to function successfully in preserving elements of their faith within their environment. Indeed, as Catholic practice was removed from their parish church, Catholic women applied their skills pragmatically and became effective agents of the mission. They observed traditional practices and forms of worship within the household, catechized their neighbours, established spaces whereby the mass could be said, celebrated Catholic marriages and baptisms, and those with children arranged for them to be brought up in the Catholic faith. Moreover, noble and gentry women, whether married, widowed or

single, were involved in harbouring the recusant Marian, seminarian and Jesuit priests, providing them with safe places from which to both live and work.

The predominant view within the historiography about the role of women in the survival of Catholicism in early modern England is that they almost single-handedly preserved their religion in the face of intense government persecution as they selflessly risked their lives and livelihoods as priest harbourers, recusants and catechizers. Some historians assert that women played a much more active role in the Catholic resistance than men and suggest that in the years following the religious settlement the English Catholic community owed its existence to them. Although many Catholic women's husbands chose to yield to the state religion, they remained fearless "matriarchs" for whom no sacrifice was too great for their faith.

In arguing that women played the predominant role in the preservation of Catholicism in the post-Reformation period, women's public displays of resistance have been overemphasized. They are depicted as extraordinary women who very publicly challenged the state's religious reforms. Indeed, it has been suggested that because Catholic men attended the parish church, Catholic women had to assume a more energetic role in safeguarding the spiritual integrity of Catholicism. Men who conformed put themselves morally and spiritually in a position inferior to women and thus their actions inverted the hierarchal arrangement expected in the patriarchal order. In refusing to attend the weekly Protestant services, Catholic women asserted their personal individual religious autonomy.

The suggestion within the current literature that women were the "matriarchs" in the post-Reformation period underestimates the range of responses of women to religious

change. In concentrating on depicting women as activists who challenged the patriarchal social order, women's private displays of resistance are often overlooked in favour of their public displays of resistance. However, as this thesis has illustrated, in examining the daily functions of women's religious opposition, their methods of negotiation and accommodation needs to be re-evaluated. Resistance began as something low key and private, whether preserving chalices, books, mass apparel or preserving traditional religious practices within the home such as feasts, fasts and the celebration of the holy days. Only gradually did resistance to the state religion develop into something more active, especially in the years after the mid-1570s as the Elizabethan government's religious programme was implemented with much more rigour.

However, while resistance to the 1559 religious settlement developed into something more active in the latter decades of Elizabeth's reign, resistance moved in and out of the household and indeed the household itself became a place for public resistance. While the home was a private space in which women could express their piety, whether by preserving fasts and feasts and other religious observances for members of the household, it also functioned as a space where women worked to preserve Catholicism in the wider context of the community. Women utilized the private space of the household to preserve traditional practices, meeting together at childbirths, at christening parties, wedding banquets and funeral feasts, ensuring that the Catholic rituals were performed. Further, in transforming their homes into makeshift churches, they invited priests into their household and arranged for them to perform the Catholic Mass, for confession to be heard and for religious instruction and direction to be provided to neighbouring Catholics.

Moreover, it has been observed that the measures undertaken to preserve Catholicism were often a collective co-operation between men and women. Given that the acts of harbouring and helping the recusant Marian clergy and especially the seminarian and the Jesuit priests was one of risk and danger which could result in imprisonment and, in the case of the seminarians and the Jesuits could lead to death, it was necessary for men and women to work together. Indeed, men and women both established networks of safe houses to which the Marian, seminarian and the Jesuit priests could travel. In addition, given the danger which association with priests presented to households which remained committed to the 'old faith', the act of harbouring was very much a mutual arrangement made between married women and their husbands. Indeed, as the reports of suspected priest harbourers indicate, husbands and wives were collectively identified as harbourers, were involved in the celebration of the Mass within their household and constructed spaces within their home to keep a residing priest safe from possible searchers.

While the recusancy records of the local ecclesiastical commissions and the pipe rolls and recusant rolls of the Exchequer indicate that women played a significant role in the Catholic community by refusing to attend the weekly Protestant services, such records reflect pragmatic family compromises. In the years prior to 1593, as married women could not be prosecuted for their refusal to attend the weekly Protestant services, and persecution was enforced with much more rigour in the years after 1570, it was often the women of the Catholic household who would play the predominant role in the household's opposition to the state religion as often it was their husbands who would attend the weekly Protestant services in order to evade financial penalties. Indeed, as

Alexandra Walsham suggests, female recusancy was often a natural division of labour in the management of dissent.¹

For the women who preserved elements of Catholicism in the post-Reformation period the decision to resist the Elizabethan religious programme was a matter of public and private choice. While married women were able to evade the penalties introduced to curb recusancy in the years prior to 1593, as Chapter Four illustrates, women were not immune to prosecution under other circumstances. While women chose to publicly participate in the efforts of the greater English Catholic community to resist the state's authority, they also made the private choice to place both themselves and their families in danger. Indeed, women and their families would not be excluded from persecution. Those who harboured priests could witness the destruction of their households by searchers, widows and spinsters would incur heavy financial penalties for their refusal to attend the weekly Protestant services, could incur long periods and at times risked death. Clearly faith in the old religion was deemed to be more important than personal safety.

The increase in severity in punishment which Catholics suffered in the latter decades of Elizabeth's reign represented a failure of the 1559 strategy for religious conversion. While hoping that individuals would conform to the religious programme of the Elizabethan government in the years prior to the 1570s, by the end of the Elizabethan period it was clear that the attachment to the Catholic faith persisted. With the survival of traditional practices and observances amongst a minority of England's population, ultimately religious uniformity would not be achieved and women's private and public resistance contributed to its failure.

¹ A. Walsham, *Church Papists: Catholicism, Conformity, and Confessional Polemic in Early Modern England* (Suffolk, 1993), p. 90.

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