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Abstract

This thesis examines the subject of popular belief and how devotional life was expressed by parishioners and officials of the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate, a large extramural parish in London, during the reign of Elizabeth I. This work delves into an analysis of over 600 pages of primary source material; 495 pages from memoranda books, firsthand accounts and annotated notes taken by the curate and parish clerk, and 140 pages from churchwardens’ accounts, both sources providing the main focus of this analysis. Using these accounts, it is argued that this parish successfully blended official and unofficial practices of Protestantism. While officials, secular and ecclesiastical, worked fastidiously to meet the requirements of official religion, they and the parishioners were also willing to tolerate and even incorporate some examples of unofficial religion to serve the people’s needs, demonstrating how the Reformation in this parish was a mixture of concerns, ideological and practical.

Keywords: St. Botolph’s Aldgate; Reformation; Protestant; parish; popular belief; religion; early modern; churchwardens; memoranda; London; England; 1580s; Puritan; 16th Century; Church History; Elizabethan.
For Jenny and Isaiah.
“After God my joye.”

-Robert Heaz, Curate of the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate, 1564-1594
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Chapter One: Finding “Thick Description” and the Problem of Popular Belief

Understanding popular belief in past societies is a difficult task for historians. We cannot simply recreate patterns of belief, nor can we go back and ask people about their faith. Instead, we can only extrapolate what people thought and practiced by analyzing the records they left. Although this issue is not a new line of inquiry for historians, this challenge remains pertinent, especially to the field of Reformation studies. This thesis aims to contribute to the debate about popular belief in Reformation studies by looking closely at a case study drawn from English sources, specifically the churchwardens’ accounts and memoranda books for the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate.

During the English Reformation, England underwent tumultuous religious, political and social upheaval as a result of Henry VIII’s (1509-1547) reforms. By seceding the English Church from Papal authority, and declaring himself the Supreme Head of the Church of England, Henry VIII opened the door wide for religious change. His long-desired male heir, Edward VI (1547-1553), implemented vigorous Protestant

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1 Anthropologist Clifford Geertz has elaborated upon philosopher Gilbert Ryle’s term “Thick Description” to help social scientists understand our semiotic culture. Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture.” The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays (New York, 1973), 3-30.

2 King Henry VIII’s “great matter” – his divorce – his inability to produce a male heir from his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, his infatuation with Anne Boleyn, and his subsequent annulment which led to the English Church’s secession from Rome are well documented. For a couple of examples amidst the vast amount of work done on Henry VIII, see J. J. Scarisbrick’s Henry VIII (Berkeley, 1968); George Bernard’s The King’s Reformation: Henry VIII and the remaking of the English Church. Furthermore, thanks to the Act in Restraint of Appeals 1533, the Act of Succession 1533 and the Act of Supremacy 1534, Henry was able to initiate another crucial act of reform – the Dissolution of the Monasteries, in which Henry VIII, and his chief minister, Thomas Cromwell, dissolved the monasteries in England, Wales and Ireland, largely to increase royal revenues. For more on this see Geoffrey Baskerville’s English Monks and the Suppression of the Monasteries (London, 1937); Philip Hughes’ A Popular History of the Reformation (Garden City, N.Y., 1957); Dom David Knowles’ The Religious Orders in England: III. The Tudor Age (Cambridge, 1961); see Ethan Shagan’s chapter, “Selling the sacred: Reformation and dissolution at the Abbey of Hailes” in Popular Politics and the English Reformation (Cambridge, 2003).
reforms. Following his death, these reforms were enthusiastically reversed by his half-sister, Queen Mary (1553-1558). Mary I’s reversal of reforms were driven by a deep desire to reconcile with Rome and purge England of heresy; she succeeded, the English church was restored to the papal fold and many ‘heretics’ were executed. Yet before long, she died. Upon Mary’s death, her half-sister came to power, and Elizabeth I (1558-1603) carefully re-established the Protestant reforms reversed by Mary. Unlike her two immediate predecessors, Elizabeth remained on the throne for many years, ensuring that her reforms would be implemented. The shifting agendas of religious reform, both conservative and evangelical, were felt not only by monarchs and politicians but also by the common people; their religious beliefs, rituals and practices would undergo a transformation which would have had a profound effect on the lives of those it touched. The English people’s religious practice was significantly changed as a result of the English Reformation.

The English Reformation has been largely debated between historians who believed that the English Reformation was successful, and those who believed that it failed. Although the terms of the debate are problematic, an examination of the historiography is still a helpful way to introduce some of the major scholars writing about the English Reformation. Christopher Haigh, often considered a leading spokesman of the revisionist movement in the field, has framed the debate in oppositional terms: top-

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3 For a masterful text on Edward VI’s reign, see Diarmaid MacCulloch’s *The Boy King: Edward VI and the Protestant Reformation* (New York, 1999), also known as *Tudor Church Militant* (London, 1999) in its U.K. version. In it, MacCulloch argued that to overlook Edward VI’s six year reign is a grave error. Edward VI’s passionate and stringent Protestant views were the dynamic element in religious reform.


5 See Susan Doran’s *Elizabeth I and religion, 1558-1603* (New York, 1994); Christopher Haigh’s *Elizabeth I* (Harlow, England, 2001); or Carole Levin’s *The reign of Elizabeth I* (New York, 2001).
down vs. bottom-up, and quick vs. slow.\textsuperscript{6} He suggested that the central tenets of English Protestantism were essentially unattractive to the populace, since they depended so much on private reading of the Bible and an unfamiliar theology, two barriers to embracing Protestantism that would have been difficult for people to overcome.\textsuperscript{7} Furthermore, he suggested that the medieval Church was not in need of major reform nor was there any impetus from the populace for change. Thus for Haigh the English Reformation was a slow, drawn-out process that did not take root until the latter part of Elizabeth I’s reign. Moreover, by both pluralizing the concept of the “Reformation” and using a lower-case “r” in the title of his influential \textit{English reformations} (1993),\textsuperscript{8} Haigh emphasized his point that there was no one single Reformation, but rather a sequence of smaller reform movements instigated from above, which resulted in gradual religious change.

Whereas other scholars such as A. G. Dickens, in \textit{The English Reformation} (1964), emphasized the innate power of the Protestant message, Haigh preferred to focus on the power of politics and intrigue that helped ensure the success of the Reformation.\textsuperscript{9} Haigh believed that Catholicism was still a popular force for years after Protestant ideas took root in England. Ronald Hutton has similarly argued that Catholicism was in full vigour at the parish-level long after the Reformation became official.\textsuperscript{10} Akin to Haigh in terms of argument, John Bossy, in \textit{Christianity and the West} (1985), and Eamon Duffy, in \textit{The Stripping of the Altars} (1992), challenged the idea that the populace was eager to

\textsuperscript{6} See Christopher Haigh, “The Recent Historiography of the English Reformation,” \textit{The Historical Journal} 25 (1982), 995-1007, for more on Haigh’s divisions and explanations of English Reformation scholars and their views of Protestantism’s successes and failures.

\textsuperscript{7} Christopher Haigh, \textit{The English Reformation Revised} (New York, 1987), 6.

\textsuperscript{8} Christopher Haigh, \textit{English reformations:  Religion, politics, and society under the Tudors} (Oxford, 1993).

\textsuperscript{9} Haigh, \textit{The English Reformation Revised}, 7-8.

overthrow Catholicism. In *The Stripping of the Altars*, Duffy suggested that Protestantism did not gain popular acceptance until the 1580s. Furthermore, he believed that the laity’s religious beliefs and practice were already well-developed and entrenched before the Reformation. Duffy argued that the clergy was not nearly as corrupt as previously thought by some historians, nor was there any great clamour for rebellion by most parishioners. According to Duffy, a majority of the people accepted the teachings of the pre-Reformation Catholic Church and did not see it as an institution in need of reform. Almost ten years later, Duffy echoed this same point in *Voices of Morebath* (2001), his micro-level analysis of the Reformation at the parish level, which reads like an extension to *The Stripping of the Altars*. In this work, Duffy covered the years 1520-1574, the heart of the Reformation movement in England, during which Morebath’s vicar, meticulously recorded the parish churchwardens’ accounts. When pieced together, the vicar’s account describes a small English community resisting conformity with the changes introduced by the Reformation and suggesting that Catholicism was still seen as viable by its many ardent adherents. Duffy argued that Protestantism’s only gains resulted from official imposition, and even then, it was fiercely resisted.

In addition to the historiography of the English Reformation, the historiography of popular belief, particularly the works of Peter Brown and Robert Scribner, are pertinent to my thesis. Brown, writing in the mid-1980s, has mostly worked on late antiquity and was part of a larger movement amongst historians debating how to approach popular

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13 See Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* (New Haven, 1992) for more information on Duffy’s argument that Catholicism was well-entrenched and accepted in early-modern England.
belief. He made an important contribution with *The Cult of the Saints* (1980), in which he argued that a “two-tiered” historical model, which has typically been used to distinguish between “elite” and “popular” belief, was a false dichotomy. Brown traced the development of various ideas regarding popular belief, taking as an example David Hume’s *Natural History of Religion* (1757), which affirmed the power behind the religious practices of those Hume referred to as “the vulgar.”¹⁴ Brown suggested that in order to distinguish their own ideas from those of the commoner, Anglican and Catholic historians, amongst others, have “had to draw with even greater harshness the boundaries between their own versions of ‘true religion’ and the habitual misconception of these by the ‘vulgar.’”¹⁵ These imposed boundaries led to the notion in Protestant and Catholic scholarship that vulgar religion was expressed as “popular,” or “unofficial” religion, whereas learned religion was expressed as “elite,” or “official” religion. More importantly, Hume’s ideas of who belonged in each group still influences scholarship today: the vulgar are comprised of the “intellectually and culturally limited” masses.¹⁶ This categorization has led to a false dichotomy, leaving historians to make assumptions regarding religious practices, such as the cult of saints, said to be a “result of the capitulation by the enlightened elites of the Christian church to modes of thought previously current only among the ‘vulgar.’”¹⁷ Thus much of Church history has been explained as the upward and downward movement of beliefs, giving rise to ideas like the cult of saints which originated with the “vulgar,” but whose influence was also found amongst the “elite.” The use of this two-tiered model with its implicit assumptions is

¹⁵ Ibid., 16.
¹⁷ Ibid., 17.
problematic, however, in that it only offers explanations for “religious change among the elite.” This model excludes the religion of the “vulgar,” thus giving the impression that their beliefs are static, and only able to cause change amongst the elite, but in itself, unchanging. Brown stated,

‘Popular religion’ is presented as in some ways a diminution, a misconception or a contamination of ‘unpopular religion.’ Whether it is presented, bluntly, as ‘popular superstition’ or categorized as ‘lower forms of belief,’ it is assumed that ‘popular religion’ exhibits modes of thinking and worshipping that are best intelligible in terms of a failure to be something else. For failure to accept the guidance of the elite is invariably presented as having nothing to do with any particular appropriateness or meaningful quality in ‘popular’ belief: it is always ascribed to the abiding limitations of ‘the vulgar.’

Brown argued that it was time to move beyond this two-tiered model and toward a model that takes into account the “greater whole” of what was happening. The cult of the saints, for example, was not a limited interaction between the “elite” and “vulgar” but part of broader dynamic changes occurring at the time with different segments of society contributing to new beliefs.

If Brown’s inclusive use of the term “popular” was an important challenge to the dominant analysis, Robert Scribner provided the first thorough explanation of the concept of popular belief. In his work on the continental, especially German, Reformation, Scribner suggested that popular belief is critical to our understanding of historical developments, and offered a systematic analysis of key components that comprised popular belief. He acknowledged the difficulty in defining “popular” and “belief,” owing partially to their inclusion in a wide range of disciplines; different disciplines used the terms in a variety of ways. Furthermore, Scribner noted the ambiguous nature of the term

17 Ibid., 18.
18 Ibid., 19-21.
popular, something alluded to by Brown as well.19 Just who and what constitutes what is “popular?” Scribner limited the use of the term “popular” to include what people believed in the most general, broad sense. This allowed for malleability in deciphering what a particular culture finds “popular.” “Belief” was simpler to define; it encompassed a system of faith-related ideas held by a people. Scribner drew attention to certain critical factors for understanding popular belief: of greatest importance for our purposes, the delineation between “official religion,” sanctioned by clerical authority, and “unofficial” religion, which is not prescribed, but nonetheless was practised independently by the people. This demarcation, according to Scribner, is more critical than other dichotomies, such as the “elite” vs. “popular” model. The distinction acknowledged that religious expressions often developed through “non-institutional channels, often in opposition to, sometimes in creative tension with, ecclesiastical and secular authorities.”20 We can thus learn from the ways in which religion materialized in daily life. As a result, we cannot analyze “official” and “unofficial” religion as a dichotomy, but rather, as a development, constantly acted upon by external and internal forces that left behind historical traces. Popular belief encompassed the constant metamorphoses of religion as it was affected by “official” and “unofficial” means. The result is a system of beliefs that mirror institutionally-sanctioned practices, as well as other religious rituals and beliefs that sprung from other cultural and social channels.

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19 Although studies in popular belief were written well before the 1980s, Scribner noted that they saw a sharp increase in the late-1980s to the early-1990s, primarily fuelled by medieval studies, the *Annales* school, studies in religious reform and anthropological approaches to studying popular culture. From this diverse background, Scribner argued that there is great difficulty in defining the terms “popular” and “belief.” These dates are those offered by Robert Scribner in “Elements of Popular Belief,” in *Handbook of European History: Late Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Reformation*, ed. Thomas A. Brady, Jr., Heiko A. Oberman, James D. Tracy, 2 vols. (New York, 1994), 1: 231.

Popular belief can also be expressed through resistance, regardless of whether it is overt or covert. James Scott’s influential older work on superstructure and resistance in the village of Sedaka, Malaysia, *Weapons of the Weak* (1985), offers key insights into exploring the popular beliefs that existed in early-modern England. Scott argued that although people may outwardly conform to the overarching system, or superstructure, underneath that veneer, they can be planning resistance. There exists a “... disguised, low-profile, undeclared resistance that constitutes the domain of infrapolitics.”\(^{21}\) These seemingly trivial acts of resistance can eventually, under the right circumstances, “... set off an avalanche.” The implications are that beneath what may seem to be compliance with “official” religion, popular religion can still exist as a form of ideological resistance. Careful analysis is required to uncover the effects of subtle undercurrents of resistance.

My thesis has also been influenced by Andrew Pettegree’s more recent work, *Reformation and the Culture of Persuasion* (2005), in which he focused on a small group of believers whose daily actions exemplified popular belief, and who tried to persuade the larger group to follow their beliefs. Protestant reformers throughout Europe used a variety of techniques to create what he calls “new solidarities” to form a “culture of belonging,” turning what was new and unfamiliar into something non-frightening and comfortable.\(^{22}\) Moreover, Pettegree made an intriguing and important distinction between personal and private religious choice. As decisions were often made communally, rather than individually, in order for an idea to be convincing, it would have to persuade groups, not necessarily individuals. Explosive ideas circulated first in the public sphere, in such places as churches, pubs and the market place: individuals usually

did not come by these ideas reading on their own. This process demonstrated the manner by which reformers worked toward implementing Protestant beliefs, while conservatives also enacted their own solidarities and worked towards invigorating Catholic beliefs. Pettegree’s work demonstrates what can be achieved when the overly simplistic distinction of elite versus popular beliefs is abandoned.

Thus my thesis draws upon both the historiographical literature of English Reformation history and popular belief to explain how the common people navigated the changes of their time, and enacted religious rituals as expressions of their beliefs and community in the 1580s. I argue that it is possible to get beneath the level of the articulate to understand popular belief, and place that understanding within the framework of early modern English social history, and how that affected, and was also affected by the Reformation’s changes.

In England, much of the historiographical debate has focussed on arguments based upon parish evidence. To explore popular belief within the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate, I will turn to detailed information held by the churchwardens of early modern England, their accounts and memoranda books. Parish life is one area of study that, when examined, can reveal great detail about the religious beliefs and practices of a people. The surviving records from the London parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate are an incredible source because, in addition to a detailed run of churchwardens’ accounts, they contain an extremely unusual source not found in any other English parish – a set of memoranda books compiled by the parish clerk. When examined alongside the

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23 Churchwardens are middle-level ecclesiastical officers of a parish. They oversaw parish resources, kept track of revenues, and served the church. Furthermore, they were also in charge of religious and civil duties, while having the responsibility of enforcing policy and giving and recording information; these officials stood at the intersections of important aspects of parish life. Much of their daily workings were recorded in their own accounts.
churchwardens’ accounts (1558 – 1634), these memoranda books provide an opportunity to reconstruct a detailed account of daily parish life, and by extension, popular beliefs held by parish members. These books run from 1583-1597. Hence I will pay closer attention to the 1580s, deep in the heart of Elizabeth’s reign. This in turn will establish the context for understanding and measuring Protestantism’s reach in the parish.

The churchwardens’ accounts and memoranda books hold detailed information that allow me to explore the development of religious belief through Clifford Geertz’s concept of “thick description.” Geertz, an anthropologist by training, suggested in the early 1970s in his essay, “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture,” that “the concept of culture . . . is essentially a semiotic one.” Borrowing from Max Weber, Geertz implied that if humans have created culture, spinning “webs of significance,” then analyzing culture is “therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning.” If culture is semiotic, Geertz argued that in order to derive meaning from certain behaviours, essentially signs and symbols of culture, one must examine the context in which the behaviour is occurring. Acknowledging culture as semiotic leaves actions open to interpretation, and renders it difficult to pin down any certain answers regarding culture. This however, does not necessarily mean that historical analysis of culture is meaningless or irrelevant. Geertz stated,

25 Ibid., 29.
Cultural analysis is intrinsically incomplete. And, worse than that, the more deeply it goes the less complete it is... There are a number of ways of escaping this—turning culture into folklore and collecting it, turning it into traits and counting it, turning it into institutions and classifying it, turning it into structures and toying with it. But they are escapes. The fact is that to commit oneself to a semiotic concept of culture and an interpretive approach to the study of it is to commit oneself to a view of ethnographic assertion as... 'essentially contestable.' Anthropology, or at least interpretive anthropology, is a science whose progress is marked less by a perfection of the consensus than by a refinement of debate. What gets better is the precision with which we vex each other.

Geertz summarized Ryle in order to elaborate upon “thick description.” Ryle used the example of a winking eye. If someone winks at another person, the person being winked at cannot comprehend what the wink means without knowing the context of the wink. It could mean attraction, confirmation, mischief, or even malice. The wink itself is merely “thin description,” whereas the meaning behind the wink is “thick description.” As an anthropologist, Geertz was concerned with ensuring that his ethnographical work employed sufficient contextualization when describing cultures. However, historians can also use “thick description,” as it is essentially useful for sorting through “structures of signification . . . and determining their social ground and import.” Geertz argued that cultural analysis involved “guessing at meanings, assessing the guesses, and drawing explanatory conclusions from the better guesses, not discovering the Continent of Meaning and mapping out its bodiless landscape.” Thus I will strive to decipher the “thick description” of the churchwardens’ accounts and memoranda books.

The sources themselves give richly detailed information on the transformation of the religious landscape of the parish. We can use them to tabulate and analyze what

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26 Ibid., 6-7.
27 Ibid., 9-10.
28 Ibid., 20.
people did and how they practiced their religious rituals and beliefs. By tallying the number of communicants, churchings, baptisms, weddings, burials, sermons and the quantity of wine consumed at communion services, we can reconstruct how people expressed and acted upon their religious beliefs. The quantification of rituals give insight into how the parish engaged with their values. Furthermore, there is also extensive information on catechising. With this wealth of information, it is possible to track efforts at reform as well as resistance to reform and sort out the meaning that can be derived from the data. In doing so, I can address issues of the social history of religion in the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate and will be able to assess the character of the Reformation and the changes it brought.

Keith Wrightson, in his essay, “The Politics of the Parish in Early Modern England” (1996), proposed that there was always a political dimension to parish life, and that the political was a critical factor of the social history of early modern England, “if we did but realise it.” Thus historians can study social history and discover the latent forces of politics negotiated in everyday interactions by the non-elites. Wrightson works out this proposal by slightly redefining “political” to include “the manner in which relationships of power and authority, dominance and subordination are established and maintained, refused and modified.” According to this definition, much of early modern English history already dealt with politics, and “the history of social relationships and of the culture which informs them, its concern with the political dimensions of everyday life.” Wrightson’s important redefinition encouraged the social historian to deeply appreciate the political processes behind local community practices at the parish level:

30 Ibid., 11.
“For the world of the parish was nothing if not a political forum . . . The parish was in many respects an ‘authentic unit of everyday life’ . . . replete with power laden situations.” Thus a history from below includes the history from above. Wrightson listed five “principal spheres of parochial politics” that comprised the life for plebeian early modern England; the politics of patriarchy, neighbourhood, custom, reformation and “state formation,” and subordination and of meaning. As Andy Wood, one of Wrightson’s former pupils, pointed out, this new social history and redefinition of politics has included as a main focus the politics of the local communities, the politics of the parish. Thus I seek to take heed of Wrightson’s call to look for the politics already present within the parish. I acknowledge that the parishioners were agents of their own governance and expressed their religious beliefs in ways that did not necessarily obediently conform to official means, but rather were active players in their own pious beliefs and religious practices, whether Catholic or Protestant.

Ethan Shagan has combined work on the English Reformation and popular politics which incorporates Brown’s and Scribner’s ideas on who comprises the “popular” and Wrightson’s explanation of “politics.” In *Popular Politics and the English Reformation* (2003), Shagan stressed that “popular politics” included a much larger number of people, or more importantly, breadth of action, than was previously thought. He stated:

In using the term popular, I do not mean to imply that ‘popular politics’ was somehow hermetically sealed from or antithetical to ‘elite politics.’ On the contrary, the two were irrevocably intertwined and in constant dialogue with one another, and popular politics could involve priests and gentlemen as often as

31 Ibid., 11.
32 Ibid., 11.
peasants and artisans. . . . ‘Popular politics’ simply refers to the presence of ordinary, non-elite subjects as the audience for or interlocutors with a popular action [emphasis original]. Hence, in practice nearly any political action by peasants was ‘popular,’ since even actions directed towards the king presumed auxiliary audiences who were asked to assent to and legitimate those actions. Political actions of the social elite, on the other hand, could sometimes be called ‘popular’ and sometimes not, depending on their perceived audiences . . . What defined popular politics, then, was not the social class of the people politicking, but rather the extent to which the governed played a role in their own governance. Popular politics presumed, in practice if not in theory, that issues of substantial importance to the life of the nation would be discussed and debated in public, and popular politics accepted, again in practice if not in theory, that those debates would significantly affect how the issues were decided.34

The implications of this revised definition is that popular politics also involves efforts to bring about change by non-elites at the local level. This is the nexus where popular belief intersects with social history at the local level.

Chapter Two: the Parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate

Parishes in early modern London were made distinct by their geography. Physical composition and location mattered, especially for the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate. This large extramural parish was located near the tower of London, bounded on the south by the Thames; it truly was a sprawling parish. Its large size meant that administratively, St. Botolph’s Aldgate straddled the limits of three City’s jurisdiction; the parish was part of the Portsoken ward, within London’s ambit, but also part of the liberty of East Smithfield, outside London’s jurisdiction, in the county of Middlesex.\(^{35}\) The parish was situated near Portsoken’s ancient eastern gate.\(^{36}\) In 1500, gates still controlled passage in and out of many English towns, directing the bustle and varied traffic of early-modern life: the commercial trading, toll payments, pleading beggars and the daily business of visitors and residents. To manage these busy entry points, the civic authorities often enacted legislation regulating life around the gates, such as an ordinance requiring that the gates be guarded by two serjeants who would keep watch on the people leaving, and more importantly entering the town gates, “that so no evil may befall the city.”\(^{37}\) The tumult near the gate reminds us of the powerful influence of the city’s geography on this primarily suburban parish.

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\(^{36}\) The other three were the parishes of St. Botolph’s Aldersgate, St. Botolph’s Billingsgate and St. Botolph’s Bishopsgate. Furthermore, there were at least fifty churches in England dedicated to St. Botolph. One possible explanation for this high concentration of parishes dedicated to St. Botolph near the city’s eastern periphery is that St. Botolph was the patron saint of beggars, many of whom would go to the gates looking for relief. St. Botolph was also the patron saint of East Anglia, which may also explain the position along the Eastern gate whose road leads to East Anglia. A. G. B. Atkinson, *St. Botolph Aldgate: the story of a city parish* (London, 1898), 62-3. Another fact which supports this theory is that another parish church named after St. Botolph was formed around Trumpington gate in Cambridge. N. J. G. Pounds, *A History of the English Parish: the Culture of Religion from Augustine to Victoria* (Cambridge, 2000), 528.

Figure 1: Map of London parishes 1520, including extra-parochial areas.\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{38} This map is adapted from Mary Lobel’s \textit{City of London from prehistoric times to c. 1520}. Mary Lobel, \textit{City of London from prehistoric times to c. 1520}, vol. 3 in the series, \textit{Historic towns: maps and plans of towns and cities in the British Isles, with historical commentaries, from earliest times to 1800} (Oxford, 1969).
This large extramural parish’s suburban character distinguished it from the non-suburban parishes within the jurisdiction of London’s government and its economy. London’s rapid growth, from ancient city contained within its walls to a “sprawling metropolis,” meant that the city had to develop its infrastructure to rule effectively from the suburbs.\footnote{Vanessa Harding, \textit{The Dead and the Living in Paris and London, 1500-1670} (Cambridge, 2000), 26.} Administratively, the city struggled to keep up with its growth. By the
early seventeenth century, approximately three-quarters of London’s population lived outside the ancient walls, and thus also largely outside of the jurisdiction of the mayor and aldermen. While the inner city was sufficiently administered, “outside the city, London was much less effectively governed.”

The extramural parishes were primarily run by the parish vestries, elite groups of parishioners, but they were plagued with difficulties, including a lack of resources and limited authority. The vestry was charged with the task of running the parish; they were responsible for controlling parish resources, looking after poor relief and assessing parishioners for tax purposes. The City was responsible for all affairs falling within its walls and parishes, and St. Botolph’s location mandated a unique balance of secular and clerical obligations.

The parish was large in population as well as in size. With at least 3500 inhabitants in the 1560s, rising to about 5500 by the late 1580s, the population exploded to 11 500 by the 1620s. Despite its large mass, the suburban parish was densely populated, with twenty-seven households per acre by 1638. Another large parish, St. Saviour’s, Southwark, had only nine households per acre in 1631. The tremendous size, population and density made caring for the inhabitants of St. Botolph’s Aldgate a challenge for the authorities, especially when it came to providing for the many who were destitute.

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44 Ibid., 137.
St. Botolph’s Aldgate was one of London’s poorest parishes, a hardship common to extramural parishes. During the 1570s and 1580s, the parish received little redistribution aid from the wealthier, mostly inner-city, parishes – only £7 in 1573, about the annual sum throughout the 1580s. Giving patterns indicate that the wealthy often gave according to their own long-standing associations. Thus even though the extramural parishes comprised 44% of the poor in the 1598 survey, they received only 24% of the cash bequests during the years 1594-7. Endowment patterns tell a similar story: only 23% of the 1597 poor relief endowments were given to the extramural parishes.

Undeniably, St. Botolph’s Aldgate was among the poorest of the poor parishes. Its per capita expenditure was a measly 33 shillings (s). In comparison, city parishes such as St. Michael Cornhill, or St. Stephen Walbrook, parishes closer to the city centre with smaller populations, around 350 for the latter, had per capita expenditure rates of 87 s or 48 s respectively. Rental rates for rooms were possibly as low as ten shillings per annum for poor widows. Furthermore, 44% of the Portsoken householders were on record asking for relief in 1595. When the vestry recorded parishioners’ occupations in 1618, most were simple labourers. To help relieve the burden of the poor, the parish established land endowments in 1557. But despite its large size, the parish generated little income, and remained in dire poverty, receiving financial assistance from other parishes until 1598. The 1541 and 1582 subsidy rolls for London give glimpses of the parish’s

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46 Ibid., 188.
47 Ibid., 192.
48 These included the following: porters, carmen, waterbearers, chimney sweepers, servants in silk mills, brewers servants . . . the rest carpenters, bricklayers, plasterers, coopers, smiths, butchers, chandlers, keepers of silk mills, priests, schoolmasters, victuallers, and brokers. Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability*, 189.
wealth. A subsidy was a direct tax assessed on an individual’s annual income of land and salary, or the capital value of any movable goods, whichever was higher. During the 1535-6 and 1541-2 subsidies, only those assessed at over £20 were taxed, while after 1571, the Crown used a standard rate instead. Individuals’ lands assessed at 20s or more were taxed at 4s in the pound, whereas those with goods or animals worth £3 or more were levied at 2s 8d to the pound. Moreover, in 1541, the Portsoken ward’s subsidy rolls recorded 157 individuals totalling: £153, 17s, 8d. Of this total, three members alone combined for £80 in taxation. Were these three removed from the list, the total for the parish would be significantly reduced as was reflected in the 1582 rolls which documented 178 people with a total of £57 11s and 4d. This is one of the lowest totals among London’s parishes, and the parish’s destitute status made governance there particularly challenging. There were clearly many poor among its residents. Although the subsidy was based on self-assessment, the data in this case is so overwhelming that we can be sure it reflects genuine poverty.

49 Steve Rappaport, Worlds Within Worlds: Structures of Life in Sixteenth-century London (Cambridge, 2002), 166-167. The subsidy was taxed against people according to their estate’s supposed value. The subsidy was created, most likely by Cardinal Wolsey, to augment the tenth and fifteenth. See S. A. Peyton, “The Village Population in the Tudor Lay Subsidy Rolls,” The English Historical Review (30) no. 118 (1915), 234-5 for Peyton’s argument that due to the extensive fiscal records left intact, subsidy rolls are helpful indicators of wealth distribution across Tudor and Stuart England. In contrast, Rappaport warned against using subsidy rolls as a measure of parish wealth since every parishioner was not required to pay tax. An alternative method would be to use the poor surveys; however, even they only account for the best possible numbers since they were only recorded during peak times of poverty. Nonetheless, so long as we remember the caveat about subsidy rolls not being complete indicators of a parish’s wealth, and refrain from drawing conclusions regarding wealth distribution, they are still a helpful snapshot of a parish’s wealth.


Poverty was a matter of serious concern for the authorities in this large extramural parish church in the late sixteenth century, since it carried with it the potential for social instability. Although accounts of London’s streets bristling with spontaneous mass riots have been challenged by at least one historian as exaggerated, the restlessness of the impoverished masses worried the London authorities.\(^{53}\) During the mid-sixteenth century, a limited bureaucracy and weak relief capacity hampered city officials’ efforts to alleviate the plight of the destitute, often causing maldistribution of relief. Thus City officials turned toward what they thought would be a much more effective vehicle of administration, the parish. As in other London parishes, the parish records of St. Botolph’s Aldgate noted many instances of charity towards the resident poor. As a result of poor law legislation, culminating with the all-encompassing Poor Law of 1598, each parish was placed in charge of caring for its own rapidly growing underprivileged population.\(^{54}\) This system helped London effectively tackle the difficult problem of helping the large number of unfortunates finding refuge in its jurisdiction, and the parish would from then on play an increasingly larger role in governance.

St. Botolph’s Aldgate’s dense population brought along challenges for taking care of its poor. The parish’s population, like the rest of London, had exploded. London itself grew from approximately 70 000 in 1500 to at least 120 000 one hundred years later, whereas the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate, one of London’s largest, grew from about 1500 in the late 1550s to at about 5000 in the early 1600s.\(^{55}\) During this time, the parish was struggling to cope with an overwhelming influx of immigrants, made up mostly of


\(^{55}\) Forbes, *Chronicle from Aldgate*, 80.
poor foreign vagrants. The lack of suitable housing led to overcrowded tenements, unsanitary conditions and widespread disease. London also struggled to deal with the challenges posed by waves of immigrants searching for jobs and housing. By midway through the sixteenth century, five-sixths of freemen were immigrants, many coming from other regions in England, especially the northern and western counties, but with sizeable numbers from the Low Countries, mostly the Netherlands, as well as from Scotland. Often the immigrant groups congregated around the “riverside wards,” forcing the City to pass laws preventing foreigners from renting out vacant lots in those wards, with the hope of preventing health risks, such as the plague. These measures did not work, as more immigrants continued to gather around wards bordered by the Thames, the City being largely unable to prevent them. Londoners feared an epidemic; the churchwardens of the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate even recorded that on 28 February, 1583, Master Heaz read a “presept from the Lorde maior conservinge the avoidinge of the Infection of the plague.” The City battled severe outbreaks of plague in 1563, 1593 and 1603, which killed between 20 000 and 32 000, while there were two less devastating epidemics in 1578 and 1583. The dilapidated housing of the mostly poor population of the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate meant a lower quality of life, and a lower life expectancy. Londoners in the latter half of the sixteenth century lived to be, on average, 35 years old. The parish seemed to have a high mortality rate, with as many as 166 burials occurring in 1587, the only year of complete burial records available to us. On

60 Guildhall Library (GL) London, MS 9235/2, fos. 161-246.
average, 16 people were buried every month in the parish (see Figure 3). While these numbers do include some non-parishioners and stillborn babies, they still represent an unusually large number of deaths and burials recorded in the large parish. The authorities had to find a way to minister to the many dying people, parishioners and non-parishioners alike.

Figure 3: Burials in the parish of St. Botolph's Aldgate: 1583-1587

Besides presenting the City with challenges surrounding poor living conditions, London’s immigrants, many of them religious exiles, often carried with them a reputation for Calvinist influences, especially from within the French and Dutch populations.61 These immigrants held reformed ideas about religious organization and found willing listeners not only in the “stranger,” or “refugee” churches, but also in the larger,

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established churches as well.\textsuperscript{62} Records from the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate are liberally sprinkled with references to immigrants: Jost Williamson, a Dutchman who did penance on January 26, 1583; or Jacomyne La Forge, a Dutchwoman who had her daughter baptized by Master Heaz on August 18, 1584; Cornelius, a Dutchman and leather dresser, not a parishioner but was nonetheless buried in Aldgate on September 7, 1584; or Dutchman Bartell Skevender who, along with Thomas Cotton, both parishioners, received a relief offering on November 1, 1584; Dutchman Leonard Phillips’ daughter, buried December 19, 1586; Gillian Omo, a Dutch shipper who was buried on January 16, 1587; Selkin Stemares, a Dutchmaiden, buried also on August 20, 1587. The presence of French and Dutch communities was easily evident within the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate.

As London’s population grew, “the nature of community at the local level” was challenged.\textsuperscript{63} Often, new immigrant groups resisted assimilation. Added to this mix were disbanded soldiers, the unemployed and vagrants from other parts of England. Each group added to the growing rate of poverty.\textsuperscript{64} The city struggled to manage this large influx of immigrants. Its housing, hospitals and poor relief system could not provide for the totality of the immigrants’ needs.\textsuperscript{65} Hence the crucial nature of the parish: its relatively small size, as compared to the large wards and precincts in the city, made its structures particularly effective. With the passing of the poor laws, not only was the parish made responsible for looking after its own destitute population, but it was also freed from any responsibility to look after outsiders. Individuals had to reside within the

\textsuperscript{62} Pettegree, \textit{Foreign Protestant Communities in Sixteenth-Century London}, 293.
\textsuperscript{63} Harding, \textit{The Dead and the Living in Paris and London}, 35.
\textsuperscript{64} Archer, \textit{The Pursuit of Stability}, 255, 83.
\textsuperscript{65} Pettegree, \textit{Foreign Protestant Communities in Sixteenth-Century London}, 293.
parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate for three years before applying for regular poor relief; they needed up to six years of continual residency in order to live in the parish’s almshouses, where they would have received greater assistance.\footnote{Archer, The \textit{Pursuit of Stability}, 86.} Thus it was in the interest of the resident poor to prevent even poorer immigrants from moving to the already overburdened parish. Scottish immigrants were of particular concern for some, since they often turned out to be dissenters and radicals who threatened to upset the equilibrium of the parish church and community. Their demands included greater emphasis on sermons and regulated communion services; though these reforms in and of themselves were not a particular worry, the fear that the reformers and their measures would be linked with political dissent caused a great deal of apprehension among some native Londoners and some churchmen.

Parishioners found much-needed wellsprings of identity and community in rituals, worship and maintenance of the parish church. Despite the many secular functions taken on by parish authorities, their primary duty was to maintain the church itself. Church and parish were intertwined; they developed together.\footnote{Pounds, \textit{A History of the English Parish}, 373. For more information on church maintenance, see Parts II and III.} Parishioners bonded with the church, since their most important rites of passage were performed there; the cycle of baptisms, churchings, marriages, communions and funerals ensured that every important milestone in life was passed under the church’s roof. The onset of the Reformation and its religious implications only further increased the importance of the parish church, as parishioners would find themselves spending multiple days at church listening to sermons from their hired preachers and visiting lecturers. Whether it was the youth using the church as a school, families celebrating a marriage, or the vestry meeting to discuss matters
concerning the governance of the parish, the church was of great significance to its parishioners. The parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate exemplified these trends. The church itself straddled the centre of the parish, dividing the Upper End, mostly comprising the Ward of Portsoken, and the Lower End, which included the Liberty of East Smithfield.\(^{68}\) The building stood before the Minories, a significant ex-parochial liberty, at the south east corner of Houndsditch.\(^{69}\)

Currently, there are only a few comprehensive studies of the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate. They are A. G. B. Atkinson’s *St. Botolph Aldgate: the story of a city parish* (1898), Thomas Robert Forbes’s *Chronicle from Aldgate: life and death in Shakespeare’s London* (1971), and Dorothy Ann Williams’s “London Puritanism: the Parish of St. Botolph Without Aldgate.”\(^{70}\) Atkinson’s and Forbes’s works, although useful as references from which some information can be gleaned, are problematic. Atkinson wrote a nostalgic antiquarian account in the late-nineteenth century marred by various errors, including dates.\(^{71}\) Forbes’s *Chronicle* is limited in scope, dealing specifically with questions of mortality in the 1590s. Both works lack scholarly rigour and fail to probe deeply into the meaning of the parish’s story against the backdrop of the

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\(^{68}\) At least by 1617, the parish was further divided into four precincts: “Houndsditch Precinct, the Precinct next Aldgate, the Precinct next to the Bars, and the Precinct next to Tower Hill.” Forbes, *Chronicle from Aldgate*, 2-3.

\(^{69}\) For more information on the Liberty of the Minories and its non-conformist, radicalism, see H. Gareth Owen’s “The Liberty of the Minories: a study in Elizabethan religious radicalism,” *East London Papers* 8, (1968), 85.


\(^{71}\) For more information on nostalgic antiquarianism, see Patrick Collinson’s piece on John Stow’s *Survey of London*. Collinson critiques Stow’s beliefs on “Merry England.” Specifically, Collinson analyzes Stow’s “selective nostalgia, relating it to a religious position and religious attitudes which were evidently in a process of evolution throughout the forty years of his antiquarian activity.” See Patrick Collinson, “John Stow and nostalgic antiquarianism” in *Imagining Early Modern London*, ed. Julia Merritt (Cambridge, 2001), 27-51. However, this does not necessarily negate all of Atkinson’s points, many of which are useful for understanding the development of St. Botolph’s Aldgate’s parish. In a similar vein, despite Forbes’s narrow focus, we can still benefit from his legwork on the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate. So with caution, I will continue to use both pieces for informative purposes.
English Reformation. Furthermore, although both authors mention the memoranda books, neither uses them to construct the parish’s history. Atkinson suggested that the memoranda records are unique and useful sources, but chose not to analyse their content; Forbes limited his analysis and critique of the memoranda books to questions regarding mortality. Neither work attempted to place the parishioners’ beliefs in a larger context. Williams’s article, while scholarly, is focused on searching for signs of radicalism in the 1620s and 1630s’ London, and does not primarily engage with a comprehensive approach to the parish’s devotional life.

Ian Archer’s *The Pursuit of Stability* (1991), is an essential preliminary for any study of the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate, but there is still much more that can be written about St. Botolph’s Aldgate’s parishioners and the various ways they expressed their devotion. Although Archer tabulated much of his data from the memoranda books, he used this data to suggest that London’s elite, the middling groups and the poor helped maintain London’s stability, and his work was more concerned with London in general, than with the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate in particular. In “The Limits of Formal Religion” (1984), J. P. Boulton examined popular religion by compiling attendance figures at communion services in the parishes of St. Botolph’s Aldgate and St. Saviour’s Southwark. Yet a detailed study of the parish, its inhabitants and their religious beliefs and practices, combining both the memoranda books and churchwardens’ accounts has yet to be done.

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73 J. A. Dodd’s discusses contention between Presbyterians and independents during the 1650s, looking specifically at the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate. J. A. Dodd, “Troubles in a City Parish under the Protectorate,” *The English Historical Review*, 10, no. 37 (1895), 41-54.
The parish is the most effective level at which to study the effects of the political and religious changes occurring in London. There were over 9000 parishes in England during the early modern period, with 100 of them found within the bishop of London’s jurisdiction. In the sixteenth century, the importance of these units of “ecclesiastical administration and pastoral care” would only be increased, as their role in overseeing civic duties expanded, especially with regard to caring for the poor. With the passage of the Elizabethan poor laws in 1601, parishes assumed a greater secular function to their existing ecclesiastical role. Moreover, during the early modern period, Londoners’ high degree of attachment to their parish made it a more “meaningful unit of identity” than even the ward or precinct, rendering it an ideal level at which to seek insights into the religion of early modern Londoners.

St. Botolph’s Aldgate’s records begin in 1547 with the accession of Edward VI, who vigorously implemented Protestant reforms. This is significant, because we can reconstruct the parish’s religious leanings by mapping out changes to its worship services throughout the reigns of Edward, Mary, and Elizabeth. One of the most noticeable alterations during Edward’s reign was the use of the vernacular during worship.

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75 The parish has successfully been analyzed as a microcosm of broader religious change by various historians. See Michael Berlin’s article for information on the importance of the parish and its officers’ roles in early modern English religious life. Michael Berlin, “Reordering rituals: ceremony and the parish, 1520—1640,” in Londinopolis: Essays in the Cultural and Social History of Early Modern London, eds. Paul Griffiths, and Mark S. R. Jenner (Manchester, 2000). See also Eamon Duffy’s Voices of Morebath for an excellent example of how a parish’s religious life can be tracked over time to study a parish’s response to overarching pressures to conform.  
77 Ibid., 238.  
79 St. Botolph’s Aldgate’s churchwardens’ accounts run from 1547-1837, while the memoranda books run from 1583-1600 and 1614-1625. Edward VI ordered the parishes to keep records on marriages, births, funerals, churchings, and other important events. Pounds even described the Edwardian inventories as “amongst the most comprehensive” parish records. Pounds, A History of the English Parish, 432.
services. While this change was welcomed by evangelicals, it proved contentious for conservatives. Alongside the use of the vernacular, the first injunctions announced by Edward VI in September of 1547 stated that, at least once per quarter, preachers give a sermon against the use of candles, tapers, relics, images, praying with beads and other rituals considered superstitious by reformers. Thus the parish church sold off its candles, wax, altar cloths and the church plate, and removed its altars and rood lofts. Even the impressive collection of vestments, possibly from the dissolved priory of Holy Trinity was sold or destroyed. Further complications ensued with Edward’s premature death. After her accession in 1553, Mary successfully reversed her half-brother’s reforms. When Mary rode through the gates of Aldgate, “the bells were rung joyfully in her honour,” as they were later for Philip of Spain’s landing. Upon Mary’s death, Elizabeth cautiously restored some of the reformers’ earlier gains, and the church was in effect re-Protestantized. By the 1580s, the parish which had been pushed and pulled by evangelicals and conservatives for the previous thirty years was fully embracing Elizabeth’s reformed religion.

Under Elizabeth’s reign, the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate quickly adapted to her prescribed forms of religious expression. While much of the physical fabric of the Marian church had already been destroyed under Edward’s reign, some walls were whitewashed again, and any remaining altars were destroyed. Under Elizabeth’s rule, ministers were required to engage themselves in the preaching and teaching of the Word

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to parishioners, young and old alike. Hence each parish purchased, or brought out of hiding, English copies of the Bible, the Book of Common Prayer, the Psalter and Erasmus’s *Paraphrases on the Gospels*, all useful for instruction in the new Protestant regime. The parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate fully participated in these “government-inspired” acts, following orders issued by Elizabeth and her ministers to the bishops and then passed down to the parish officials.  

The parish elite of St. Botolph’s Aldgate thus increasingly played the role of “local government” in administering the government’s policies, focusing on use of the reformed liturgy as well as the parish government’s ever-increasing duties. Ultimately, assuming greater parish responsibilities meant more duties for the householder, the head of a family and a permanent resident of the parish paying the scot and lot, traditional taxes. The vestry, made up of the churchwardens and important parishioners, held executive power in the parish and regulated the householder’s role in parish government. The powerful and influential vestry also controlled many of the parish’s resources, including those funds intended for distribution to the poor. At the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate, the vestry met annually, such as on 9 December, 1580, with the churchwardens and “dyvers others” in attendance; or sometimes an additional vestry meeting was convened to ensure conformity to ecclesiastical and reformed ideals, such as on 25 June, 1581, when the vestry met and agreed that “the middell partition that is throwghout the church some tyme called the roodloft shalbe taken downne” at the

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86 Ibid., 51-2.
churchwardens’ discretion.\textsuperscript{88} Other entries show vestries were also held 10 December, 1581; 10 December, 1583 and 18 December, 1584; and 17 December, 1588. The vestries met for auditing of the church accounts. The vestry was one of the key parochial instruments for maintaining adherence to Elizabethan laws, and, mindful of this central duty, the vestry was careful to follow the dictates of the authorities.

Obedience was the hallmark of this parish’s elite. Over the last half of the sixteenth century, the parish elites were willing to make changes at the parish level, by getting rid of upper clergymen or officials who did not adhere to the religious climate of the time. Furthermore, there are strong indications of the parish’s willingness to adapt to royal authority, such as repeated instances of the parish paying for ecclesiastical articles. This parish dutifully exhibited the articles in the church;\textsuperscript{89} in 1584 the parish paid 8s to exhibit the Archdeacon’s articles to ensure that they were acting in accordance with official legislation. Similar instances of exhibiting articles are found in March, April and June of 1587.\textsuperscript{90} The articles were read out loud to the congregation by Master Heaz on at least a few sundry occasions during the 1580s: at morning prayer on 26 December, 1586; again at morning prayer “in the stead of his second lesson” on 1 October, 1587; at evening prayer on 8 October, 1587; and in the forenoon on 20 December, 1587.\textsuperscript{91} Although these may seem like trifling matters, the fact that this financially underprivileged parish worked so fastidiously to adhere to royal injunctions/orders indicates an eagerness to please the governing bodies.

\textsuperscript{88} Guildhall Library (GL) London, MS 9235/1, fo. 155.
\textsuperscript{89} GL London, MS 9235/1, fo. 174.
\textsuperscript{90} GL London, MS 9235/2.
\textsuperscript{91} GL London, MS 9234/1, fo. 9, 146, 150, 9.
The articles and injunctions outlined the standards for reformed worship. The “Iniunctions geuen by the Quenes Maiestie” (1570) prohibited “all superstition and hypocrisy.” Amongst other things, they stated that there be at least one sermon a month in every parish church by a specially licensed preacher. On holy days, when there was no sermon, ministers were instructed to “openly and playnely resyte to theyr parishioners in the Pulpitte, the Pater noster, the Crede, and the ten commaundementes in Englyshe . . .” The “Articles to be enquired in the visitacion . . .” (1570) asked whether the vicar, curate or parson teach youth, encourage private reading of the Bible in Latin or in English, banish “superstitious religion, pilgrimages, reliques, or images, or lyghtyng of candelles . . .” and exhort parishioners to avoid taverns and alehouses. Furthermore, the parish was to keep a register book to record “every weddyng, chrystenyng, and burying.” The churchwardens’ records are filled with examples of the parish’s conformity to these decrees, as will be further illustrated in the next chapter.

One striking example of the parish’s conformity with royal and ecclesiastical standards is demonstrated by the authorities’ administration of excommunication. Article 33 of “Articles, whereupon it was agreed by the archbishoppes and bishoppes of both prouinces,” states that the excommunicate is “ryghtly cut off” from the church until they “be openly reconciled by penance, and receyved to the Churche by a judge that hath


authoritie thereto." The parish clerk, Thomas Harridance, noted how the curate, Robert Heaz, gave a warning to the parishioners on 29 March, 1584, that they let him know by the night before whether or not they intended to receive communion, thereby inquiring into whether or not they “comunicate thryse everie yeare according to the queenes ma jes tyes Lawes or not.” Furthermore, Heaz also warned the “excommunicated that they shouldn’t presume to come to the Lord’s table before that they were according to the Laws ecclesiastical absolved . . .” Heaz was acutely aware of both the Queen’s and ecclesiastical articles, and did his part to ensure his parish’s conformity. Consider the entry on 8 November 1584 when Richard Casey was excommunicated and warned not to return to church “until that he has answered to certain allegations there in the court alleged against him by Henry Porder of this parish.” Thankfully for Casey, he was, as Harridance noted, “absolved.” In perhaps the most remarkable instance, Harridance’s words are the best proof of the parish’s obedience to royal authority. On 18 October, 1584, Jeane Martin, a widow living in Hogg Lane was excommunicated for slanderous words on 9 October, 1584 against Katheryne Shaw. In demonstration, however, of the parish’s submission to the authorities, not to mention Harridance’s meticulousness and concern with conformity, he wrote in the left-hand margin: “She is Receyved agayne into the churches congregations.” Harridance was deeply concerned with exhibiting three steps: that the parish minister excommunicated those who committed slander, as outlined

95 GL London, MS 9234/1, 35.
96 GL London, MS 9234/1, 35.
97 GL London, MS 9234/1, fo. 9.
98 GL London, MS 9234/1, fo. 102.
in “Iniunctions geuen by the Quenes Maiestie” injunction 50; the excommunicate could be urged to return upon penance; and finally, the excommunicate was thus restored and received again into the Christian community. Both Heaz and Harridance demonstrate a deep commitment for observing both secular and ecclesiastical law.

The parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate was at a crossroads during the mid-sixteenth century. Conservatives still held sway by the 1550s, most prominently among them the figure of the curate William Rofford, who resented the transformation of beliefs and rituals, such as holding the service in the vernacular as opposed to Latin, which he held dear. The farmer in charge of the tithes and the parishioner in charge of maintaining divine services “at whose charge communion was celebrated,” also protested the change. Yet the curate and farmer’s resistance to modification would itself be opposed by those in the parish who were happy to proceed with the English services as they tried to indict the curate to the Lord Protector. Significantly, even though he was close to the mayor, Rofford was asked to leave, and was eventually replaced with a curate who conducted the service in English. To cement the change, the books written in Latin were sold and replaced by the English Bible and Erasmus’s Paraphrases for the parishioners to use. Yet these were only the first steps in the process of the large-scale transformation.

The devotional lives of early modern English parishioners are best understood by poring over the records of the churchwardens. These ecclesiastical officers often left meticulous records that, with careful analysis, reveal much about parish life. Since the

100 Atkinson, St. Botolph Aldgate, 67.
101 While the records do not necessarily indicate whether or not these books were used, what is clear is that the parish bought them, thereby following official laws.
churchwardens were placed at a unique intersection of ecclesiastical and secular power, their records offer an opportunity to analyze how parishioners practiced their religion. Furthermore, what was included, and possibly left out of their records, can also be indicative of what the wardens themselves considered pertinent to religious worship. These detailed records of daily parish religious practices can thus build a layer of “thick description” against which we can question the manner in which religious rituals were practiced. These records provide the historian with an integral source with which to piece together aspects of past religious observances.

Chapter 3 describes and analyzes the memoranda books and churchwardens’ accounts from the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate. I will explore key components of the accounts that reveal the parish’s practices. Yet before this analysis of their records can occur, it is critical to establish first the importance of the record keepers themselves – the churchwardens.

Parishes typically employed a priest, churchwardens, sidesmen, and a host of other workers, but the churchwardens were possibly the most critical ecclesiastical officers of post-Reformation England.¹⁰² Churchwardens oversaw the parish’s resources and needs. They looked after the poor, buried transients who died in the parish, repaired roads and bridges, and even outfitted soldiers. Furthermore, the wardens were also in charge of religious and civic duties, while having the responsibility of enforcing policy and giving and recording information.¹⁰³ While others, such as the sextons and overseers of the poor, did the work itself, churchwardens held much authority. John Craig goes so far as to suggest that churchwardens were arguably the “most important of the

ecclesiastical officers from the standpoint of the parish, and arguably for the entire structure . . .” due to their particular position as both “overseers of parochial resources and . . . servants of ecclesiastical policy.” These integral officers were usually yeoman farmers but could even be wealthy craftsmen. Few were from the gentry, and even fewer were women. Becoming a churchwarden did not necessarily bring great wealth or honour, yet there always seemed to be a ready supply of willing men who rose to fill their parish’s needs. The office of churchwarden was a unique opportunity for many diligent individuals to serve their parish.

The churchwardens were, for the most part, trustworthy officials who kept fairly accurate records. From time to time, archdeacons would visit local parishes to unearth any financial or moral deficiencies left by the churchwardens in their records. Although churchwardens’ accounts were rarely, if ever, fiscally balanced, churchwardens tried hard to leave a little funding for their successors. This would cement their reputations as good stewards. In most parishes, parishioners, keeping their officers accountable, passed the churchwardens’ accounts at annual meetings without contention. Despite many opportunities for dishonest gain, most wardens were honest, careful, and accurate administrators. Pounds is particularly effusive in his praise: “Amongst the public servants England has known, the churchwardens must rank with the best.”

These well-placed and trustworthy ecclesiastical and administrative officers diligently recorded richly detailed accounts that offer a tool to explore, inspect, and correlate what the parish recorded about daily life – everything from births, marriages

104 Ibid., 357-9.
107 Ibid., 236.
and burials to vestry proceedings, inventories, incomes and expenditures. Although much of this information may initially seem mundane, the attentive historian can glean information from these accounts due to the meticulous detail left by the churchwardens. The importance of their position, as well as their records, is critical in any study at the parish level. Indeed, the main strength of churchwardens’ accounts is that they give “an important and thick layer of information against which the oft-deceptive records of the courts or the rhetoric of clergy can be properly contextualized.” These detailed accounts documented diverse aspects of parochial life at a particular time: the number of candles bought, prayer books purchased, and funeral arrangements made. The accounts show us when and how ritual life and daily devotional parochial practice occurred.

In addition to a long run of churchwardens’ accounts (1547-1691), the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate produced a unique set of memoranda books. These daybooks were assiduously kept by Robert Heaz (curate from 1564 – 1594) and Thomas Harridance (ironmonger and parish clerk in the 1580s), with a long run, albeit incomplete, from 1583 to 1625. The volumes, for the most part, show the original handwriting of Harridance. The clerks meticulously documented the parish’s daily activities – every communion given, every churcheing performed and every sermon


Some historians, though, have made extensive use of churchwardens’ accounts. Ronald Hutton used nearly two hundred churchwardens’ accounts in *The Rise and Fall of Merry England* to demonstrate that economic and social factors often trumped religious and even political reasons in bringing about England’s Reformation. Hutton acknowledged his debt to churchwardens’ accounts, and noted that although they can only create a “fragmentary picture,” they can be illuminated by other primary sources from the respective era. This demonstrates that churchwardens’ accounts, when used creatively and thoughtfully, can be rich wells of sources to draw from.


110 The parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate’s memoranda books: MS 9234/1-7, 1583 – 1597.

The parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate’s churchwardens’ accounts: MS 9235/1-2: CA 1547-1691.
preached, often even including the circumstances around which people were baptized, married or died. They also recorded how much wine and bread was bought for each communion; who was churched and for how much; who preached each sermon, and for what reason. In some cases, Harridance even added his own annotations for special events, such as when he noted the length of Master Cobhed’s two and a half hour voluntary sermon given on 2 February, 1586, a day of fasting. Indeed, the clerks kept close watch over the happenings of the parish. Atkinson was not exaggerating when he stated that these records contained “an account of everything done in the church.”

These memoranda books offer a far higher level of detail than the average churchwardens’ accounts, which often glossed over many activities. The memoranda records exhaustively detail daily parish church activities. Thus together, the churchwardens’ accounts and memoranda books form a more complete, accurate picture of parish devotional life, creating an even thicker layer against which we can analyze the records. Moreover, these combined records reveal that Harridance went to great lengths to meet official secular and ecclesiastical regulations.

From the many records found in the memoranda books and churchwardens’ accounts, as mentioned earlier, I have chosen to focus my work on the 1580s. The memoranda books during the 1580s mainly detail 1583, 1584, 1586 and 1587. The two most complete years of records are 1584 and 1587; records go from December 1583 until December 1584 and 11 December 1586 until September 1588. There are, however, a few gaps: from 21 – 26 April 1584 and also from 10 – 16 June 1584. The second book – MS 9234/2, covers the years 1588-92, but begins in December 1588, with the months of

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111 GL London, MS 9234/1, fo. 29.
September to December of 1588 missing. This leaves essentially two full years – 1584 and 1587 – which can be analyzed and compared. While other historians, such as Ronald Hutton and Eamon Duffy have used churchwardens’ accounts to trace the Reformation’s growth and decline at the national and local levels respectively, and Ian Archer and Steven Rappaport have looked at the memoranda books of St. Botolph’s Aldgate to construct a larger picture of London, I will tell the story of the parish itself, especially the interplay between ancient and reformed practice. Since these records read essentially like a church journal or log, noting the nuances of devotional life in the parish, it is possible to reorganize and categorize the line items and corresponding descriptions into various categories and dates: sermons, communion services, births, churchings, funerals and excommunications, for example. These records total 495 transcribed pages, or more than eighty-nine thousand words recorded by the clerks. These books are in addition to the official/formal churchwardens’ accounts from December 1579 until December 1590, another 140 transcribed pages, or just over twenty-four thousand, five-hundred words, dutifully recorded by the churchwardens. The analysis found in this thesis is based upon these two transcripts in order to tally each sermon, each communion, each churching, each birth, each burial and funeral, each excommunication, each article exhibited and even how much bread and wine was bought for each communion service. This approach allows me to identify and trace patterns, cross-reference groupings, build tables, track changes and create a more cohesive picture of when and how the parishioners engaged in religious rituals. Not only can these pages tell whether the parish was engaged in reformed religious practice, but they can suggest precisely how reformed the parish was. Furthermore, I can build a stronger argument that demonstrates the dialectic process
between conservative and evangelical elements that more accurately describes the parish’s worship as one that sought to embrace both adherence to authoritative norms and godly activism. These essentially two full years of insight into a parish’s devotional life in turn provide a strong basis of comparison with pre-Reformation beliefs and observances. Far more than just a statistical exercise, Heaz’s and Harridance’s notes and explanations of parish events help elucidate what was actually happening in the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate, bringing the simple line items to life.
Chapter Three: Elizabethan Protestantism in Practice

The memoranda books and churchwardens’ accounts contain a wealth of information on eight focal points of parish devotional life in particular that can be divided into two categories: ancient and reformed practices. Ancient practices comprise the baptising of infants, weddings, churching of women and burials and funerals with bellringing. Reformed practices, on the other hand, constitute sermons, catechisms, communions and collections for the poor or maimed. Each of these aspects of religious expression add uniquely to our understanding of how the parishioners exercised their devotion. The memoranda books and churchwardens’ accounts provide historians with insight into what was being taught, practiced and the manner in which religious rituals were carried out. For instance, how closely did parishioners follow royal ordinances and requirements? Did the parish completely follow the rules and guidelines outlined by the prayer book, or did they blend it with their own traditions and adapt it to particular situations? Addressing these questions allows us to gauge just how reformed, or as others have argued, puritan, the parish was.

Baptisms, marked the integration of newborns into the larger community.113 All people were supposed to be baptized, and nearly everyone was. Before the Reformation, baptism supposedly cleansed the child’s soul of sin and welcomed the child into the Christian community.114 Baptisms were performed not only for the spiritual welfare of the child, but also to show those watching that this new person was becoming a full member of the Christian family.115 After the Reformation, babies were still baptized.

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115 Sharon L. Arnoult . “‘Spiritual and Sacred Publique Actions:’ The Book of Common Prayer and the
The articles written in 1562 stated that baptism was a sign of “new birth” and that the baptized were “grafted into the church.” They received “the promises of the forvenes of sinne,” and the “adoption to be the sonnes of God.” This important institution was not going to be removed: “The baptisme of young children, is in any wyse to be retayned in the Churche, as most agreable with the institution of Christe.”

The official post-Reformation ritual did not differ greatly from pre-Reformation times.

Yet baptisms were also sources of contention, not only between conservatives and evangelicals, but within those groups as well. The Elizabethan Book of Common Prayer in 1559 adapted the sacrament from earlier prayer books (1549 and 1552), themselves based upon the Catholic rite, for its own use. The 1559 Prayer Book encouraged public baptisms so that all watching “may be put in remembrance of his awne profession.” Thus baptisms were also for the edification of those watching, and the sacrament was administered in English for their benefit. Yet under “great cause, and necessity,” the Prayer Book allowed that children be baptized privately by the parish minister, or any other “lawful minister.” In addition, despite what the Prayer Book

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117 Ibid., 10.

118 Ibid., 10.


prescribed, unofficially there was room for variation to the performance of baptisms according to the minister’s discretion.\textsuperscript{121} Yet these dissimilarities of how baptisms were practiced are not necessarily revealed in the memoranda books.

\textit{Figure 4: Baptisms of Infants in the Parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate: 1583-1587}

At first glance, there does not seem to be anything extraordinary about the parish’s baptism data. In the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate, infant baptism was widely practiced and consistently reported between the years 1583 – 1587. Babies were baptized on an average of twelve baptisms per month (see Figure 4). Beyond this, there is little readily apparent information on baptisms that can reveal much about the parish’s religious inclinations. The memoranda books are limited in what they reveal about the actual practice of the ceremony: they do not mention how the ceremony was conducted,

\textsuperscript{121} Cressy, \textit{Birth, Marriage, and Death}, 107.
what words were spoken, who was present at the time, or what they believed the purpose
and effect of baptizing their infants would be. In addition, there was no religious
calendar governing baptisms, although as Cressy pointed out, they tended to peak in the
spring and autumn, paralleling the peaks of births.\footnote{Ibid., 100.} This was no different in the case of
the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate. Puritans disliked many Catholic aspects of the
ceremony, including the signing of the child with a cross, salting the mouth of the infant
and triple immersion into water, but little is revealed on these matters. Baptisms were
clearly still a source of contention for some reformers, although they were undisputedly
seen as a “sign” and “seal” of God’s grace among the evangelical.\footnote{Ibid., 110-111.} Questions arose,
though, when dealing with questions of salvation: was baptism a requisite for being
saved? Furthermore, divisions arose regarding liturgy. On one end of the reformed
spectrum were the High Ceremonialists, those who wished to preserve as much of the
liturgy and ceremony as possible.\footnote{Ibid., 136.} On the other end, Puritans desired simplicity,
identifying other aspects of the ceremony with its Catholic roots. The established Church
held that baptism did not cleanse an individual free from all sin. Puritans emphasized the
cleansing work of Christ’s blood itself, and not any ritual or part of the ceremony, in
bringing salvation. Yet they still believed in the importance of the sacrament and “its
role in joining Christians together as members of the universal church.”\footnote{Ibid., 113.}

What the accounts do reveal is that the parish obediently conducted baptisms of
their infants, faithfully recorded the administration of the sacrament and were willing to
do whatever it took to minister to their parish. Harridance dutifully documented the

\footnote{122 Ibid., 100.}  
\footnote{123 Ibid., 110-111.}  
\footnote{124 Ibid., 136.}  
\footnote{125 Ibid., 113.}
baptisms of each child in the parish, as demonstrated in, and any unusual circumstances involved. For instance, on November 12, 1584, Robert Heaz baptized Alice Woottum “in Pickeringe howse w[hi]ch in the parrishe of St. Andrewes . . . becawse th[a]t the child was weke.” In an intriguing note, on the same day, “the person m[iste]r Jhonson was cristened the Daye and yeare above written in the pr(e)sentes of m[iste]r Thomas Harridance and Dyveres otheres.” It is difficult to know for certain who this Mr. Johnson was, or how old he was, or why he was not previously baptized. Considering that this is an unusual incident in the parish, this is not necessarily indicative of any Anabaptist influence amongst the parish clergy. Rather, focusing on the latter part of Harridance’s annotation, he wanted to make clear that this baptism was performed publicly in front of witnesses. This demonstrates, at the least, Harridance’s desire to make clear that Heaz was following the Prayer Book rubric and that Harridance was adhering to the articles as much as possible. In “Articles to be enquired in the visitacion,” Article 10 states that a book must keep track of “every weddyng, chrystenyng, and burying.” The parish ministers insisted upon following the prayer book rubric that allowed for the greatest public viewing possible. On March 16, 1587, Harridance included Heaz’s baptism of

An Jhonson the Dawghter of Jhonson Being a man whose trade I cowld not learne The sayde chylde as I was enformed By Jhon Ivett who is one of m(aste)r Blackwelles clarkes was borne in the Dewkes place and At the request of the sayde Jhon Ivett and one m(aste)r Langlye a marchannt m(aste)r Heaz Ded cristen the sayde chyld in ower parrishe churche the

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126 Guildhall Library (GL) London, MS 9234/1, fo. 111.
Heaz was concerned with this family’s spiritual needs and desires, and thus ministered to them despite their not being parishioners. Although the records do not disclose any apparent conservative or radical elements, they reveal the clerks’ due diligence in adhering to ecclesiastical authority, even when performing the sacrament in anomalous circumstances.

Weddings were occasions whereby family and friends would recognize the new holy union, accompanied by secular celebration. This important ritual during Elizabethan times took on great significance for the reformers. The English Church demanded adherence to its prescribed order of service for all weddings. Although no longer officially considered a sacrament by the Church of England, marriage was still highly regarded as instituted and blessed by God. Thus weddings also carried great solemnity and were performed publicly and blessed by a minister. In the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate, many marriages were recorded during the 1580s. As Figure 5 shows, each month of the year in 1583 and 1584 had at least two recorded weddings. While the data could be interpreted to suggest that wedding date planning was subject only to the whims of the soon to be bride and groom, this was not necessarily the case. The Church of England prohibited weddings during certain holy seasons throughout the year, unmodified from the pre-Reformation calendar. Weddings were forbidden during Lent, Rogationtide, Trinity Sunday, and Advent. Furthermore, wedding planning was

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128 GL London, MS 9234/1, fo. 37.
129 Cressy, Birth, Marriage, and Death, 285.
130 Ibid., 294.
complicated by the annually shifting date of Easter. Thus Easter, and many of the associated pious seasons and banned dates for weddings changed annually, and all had to take care to be aware of these adjustments. During the Elizabethan era, weddings were officially prohibited 144 days of the year. Despite the official stance of the Church of England, Puritans objected to these proscriptions, stating that they were vestiges of the papacy; yet there were still many non-Catholics who adhered to the calendar believing in its importance for the maintenance of English tradition. The timing of English weddings was thus a controversial matter.

Figure 5: Weddings in the parish of St. Botolph's Aldgate: 1583, 1584 and 1587

To complicate matters people could actually purchase licenses from church officials that would allow them to marry during prohibited dates, thereby spurring criticism from many that the banned seasons were intended to generate income rather

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131 Ibid., 298-9.
than to show devotion.\footnote{Ibid., 299.} The year 1584 actually saw enough momentum for the House of Commons to pass a bill allowing marriage throughout the year, only to see it immediately defeated.\footnote{Ibid., 300.} Many local clergymen overlooked these banned periods and continued to marry people. While many chose to overlook the official ban, Lent and Advent saw fewer marriages than the rest of the year into the mid-seventeenth century. The data for the numbers of weddings in the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate during the 1580s are restricted to the first few months of 1583; May-December, 1584; a few months in 1586, and nine months in 1587. This being the case, the data still, with one exception, fall in line with other studies of Elizabethan weddings. For instance, weddings in March, when Lent typically occurred, were few, while November weddings tended to be many.\footnote{Ibid., 301.} Interestingly, December, the typical season of Advent, usually host to few weddings, saw a high number in this parish, at least in 1583, when nine weddings were performed. This exception can be partially explained since it is consistent with data from the rest of England;\footnote{Ibid., 305.} Advent weddings were more typical than Lenten weddings. Furthermore, in London, as in other parts of England, the Advent ban was typically ignored.\footnote{Ibid., 305-8.} This disregard for the official church calendar may indicate reformist teachings and tendencies. Puritans especially felt that following the liturgical calendar was reminiscent of the papacy and would have disregarded it completely. However, at least in the early seventeenth century, most ecclesiastical officials did not enforce the “matrimonial calendar,” and it was rare for violations to be cited in visitation articles,
while other matters of liturgy were still strictly enforced. While the low March numbers may suggest a conservative streak running through the parish, the numbers are not out of line with the rest of the capital. On the other hand, though the high December numbers do not necessarily indicate a puritan undercurrent, they do suggest, especially in the 1580s, a blatant disdain for the official liturgical calendar, consistent with a reformist position.

Churchings were another contentious, but popular ritual followed by many parishioners. This ritual welcomed the new mother back into society after giving birth, carrying with it notions of purification to some and thanksgiving to others. One month after giving birth, women would go to the parish church, enter, and kneel before the altar. Surrounded by her midwife, her husband and other women awaiting the gossiping feast to follow, the mother would await the minister to church her, signifying her safe passage through labour and thankfulness to God for getting her through it. Churching, although never considered a sacrament, was an integral part of parish life for medieval parishioners. This medieval purification and thanksgiving ritual performed on new mothers signalling their reentrance into society, was passionately debated. When the Reformation’s ideals transformed legislative policy during Elizabeth’s reign, churchings were not prohibited outright. Instead, as David Cressy has shown, churchings had

137 Ibid., 304.
138 Ibid., 304-9.
140 Cressy, Birth, Marriage, and Death, 202, 224.
evolved throughout their use in the church to something more akin to a thanksgiving ceremony, while for some it remained a purification ritual.  

Churchings were a service offered to mothers at a cost, hence its importance, whatever shape it took, as supplementary income for the church and its officers. On 21 August 1583, as Harridance was tallying the funeral costs for the recently deceased Agnis Shoope, he referred to the need “[f]or her churchinge for that shee was not purified” at a cost of 4d. The fees, paid by the mother, usually went directly to the clerk or perhaps minister. Usually churchings cost 2d for the parishioner, and 4d for the non-parishioner or mother of a stillborn child. There was, however, flexibility with the payments. Parishioners would pay anywhere from 1d to 4d depending on how much they could afford. In addition, women often gave an additional 4d to 6d for the baby’s chrisom, used as part of the churching; if the child died within the first month of its life, the chrisom would be used as a winding cloth for the baby, so mothers would frequently still pay for it. If a woman was too poor, she would often be exempted from any charges. Or she could offer a cloth as the chrisom to the church, which could later be sold for 3d. In other cases, the church could simply lend the chrisom to the mother, who would be asked on her own conscience to give an offering at a later time. If a mother did not make some kind of payment to the church, she could be considered a debtor and subject to

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141 David Cressy, “Purification, Thanksgiving and the Churching of Women in Post-Reformation England,” *Past & Present*, 141 (1993), 106-146. Cressy criticized how most gendered historical analysis had yet to study churching from the mother’s point of view, instead focussing on either the priest or child, with the mother simply being a means to other analysis. Cressy’s essay takes an important step in placing women at the centre of churching by arguing that the ritual was not a patriarchal burden thrust upon women, nor was it “an unreformed purification;” rather, it was a time that “women normally looked forward to” and they did not necessarily feel dirty and thus any need to be cleansed. 110.

142 GL London, MS 9234/1, fo 83.

143 Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, 211.
discipline.\textsuperscript{144} Cressy has pointed out that the readiness of so many women to pay the fees could be an indication of the ritual’s popularity or of the clergy’s effective enforcement of the policy.\textsuperscript{145} On 5 October 1584, Harridance recorded that John Hall paid for Joane Hall’s burial and “more he payde for the cristninge churchinge for the(a)t she died in chyldbed” at the cost of 4d.\textsuperscript{146} Typically, women were churched at their local church. In some cases, though, if the woman was either too ill or unable to attend church, the minister would perform the churching at her residence: on 6 January, 1583, John French’s wife was churched “at home in her howse” at 2d; this was one of eleven incidences of home churchings recorded.\textsuperscript{147} Just a few days later on 9 January, 1583, one woman was so eager to be churched that it did not matter to her that the minister was not available, and thus “I [Harridance] churched this wyfe for the m[aste]r Heaz was not at home.” If this was the case, the mother was not always charged for the service fee, and just paid 6d for the chrisom.\textsuperscript{148}

In another apparent indication of the eagerness of women to be churched, non-parishioners’ wives were often churched despite being charged double at 4d (see Figure 6). Women who gave birth out of wedlock also desired churching: on 6 May 1587, Margaret Braye, “a single woman” and a non-parishioner, was churched at 4d.\textsuperscript{149} The details of the many recorded instances may demonstrate the high level of willingness for mothers to pursue the ceremony. The numbers also indicate the church’s interest in rigorous application of a service that brought in supplementary income. The high number

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\textsuperscript{144} Ibid., 229. \\
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid., 229. \\
\textsuperscript{146} GL London, MS 9234/1, fo 99. \\
\textsuperscript{147} GL London, MS 9234/1, fo 9. \\
\textsuperscript{148} Cressy, \textit{Birth, Marriage, and Death}, 211. \\
\textsuperscript{149} GL London, MS 9234/1, fo 60.
\end{flushright}
of churchings most months is indicative that the parish priest, Master Heaz, was especially dutiful in carrying out the ritual. Most of the time, both Heaz and Harridance were present, raising important questions about the duties of the parish clerk. While Heaz, the curate, was the principal person to church the mother, the clerk was also present, and if in a hurry, could church the mother, too. Since the Prayer Book was quite vague in its instructions about the service, it was often open to interpretation. By allowing and having both officers ready to perform the ceremony, the Church of England demonstrated its willingness to tolerate a ceremony that many women and parish officials found integral to their needs. Mothers used churchings as an opportunity to celebrate with family and close friends after their labour; church officials ensured an extra source of income for their parish and also themselves. What is clear from these records is that the ritual of churching was popular and extensively practiced in this impoverished, extramural parish.

According to Keith Thomas, churching was officially considered a thanksgiving ceremony. However, for radical Protestants and Puritans, churching was considered a purification ritual rooted in Jewish laws and superstition. Puritans rejected themselves against the ceremony, considering it “as one of the most obnoxious Popish survivals in the Anglican Church . . .”\[150\] Officially, churching acknowledged the mother’s readiness to re-enter society. Her month of rest and refraining from her household “duties” had ended, and the mother was ready to participate in her pre-pregnancy routines.\[151\]

According to early modern folklore, the mother was no longer “green,” the period when her *menses* had stopped. Yet the ceremony also marked her transition into motherhood –


\[151\] Cressy, “Purification, Thanksgiving and the Churching of Women in Post-Reformation England,” 115-6. While doctors recommended one month of rest for new mothers, this was not often practiced.
into a strong, breeding woman. Thus in this view, churching was officially more concerned with thanksgiving than with purification. Yet Puritans still took great exception to the ceremony. Puritans were offended by the remnants of ceremonial style from the medieval form of churching. In some churching services, the woman was sprinkled with holy water, and often wore a white veil while carrying a lit candle. Seated near the altar in a “special seat” with her accompanying midwife behind her, the mother was the focal point of the ceremony. To Puritans, these ornaments and instructions seemed to exacerbate her unclean state, and her need to be “magically purified.” Thomas noted that the priest’s recitation of Psalm 121 and its promise that “The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night” only aggravated Puritan charges that the woman was undergoing some form of mystical transformation, protected from any harm. Because the Book of Common Prayer listed few specifics and simply stated that “the woman that cometh to give her thanks, must offer accustomed offerings,” many officials and women took the liberty of adding other elements. For most of the sixteenth and early seventeenth century, the details of the ceremony’s performance were negotiable. There is even an instance of one woman churching herself. That women went to such lengths to perform churching is a testament to its importance to new mothers across England. Furthermore, one available threat of sanction was the withholding of churching to anyone with an illegitimate child unless the father was named. Cressy rightly noted that this would not be a threat unless women wanted to undergo the churching service. Although not formally found in the Book of Common

152 Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic, 59-61.
153 Ibid., 61.
Prayer, many of these forms accompanying the ceremony echoed not only of Catholicism, but Jewish “superstition” based upon the Mosaic and Levitical traditions:

From the progression from the church porch, through the sprinkling with holy water, to the reference to purging with hyssop (the herb used to cleanse sacramental vessels), the ceremony was filled with priestcraft and popish superstition. Though the service was substantially rewritten for the Church of England, Puritan agitators of the 1570s (and later) asserted that little had improved.\(^{155}\)

Even by the 1570s, Puritans took great exception to the ceremony. Thomas stated bluntly, “Resistance to churching or to wearing the veil thus became one of the surest signs of Puritan feeling among clergy or laity in the century before the Civil War.”\(^{156}\)

Gilby Anthony (1510 – 1585), a Church of England clergyman and life-long Protestant, argued passionately against the churching of women.\(^{157}\) In 1581, he argued that “poperie . . . crept into Engelande,” churching being a prime example. Or consider Richard Bancroft (1544 – 1610), who would later become Archbishop of Canterbury, who effectively associated Puritans with treason while he was still a household chaplain for Archbishop Whitgift at Lambeth. In a 1593 treatise Bancroft assailed Puritans for

\(^{155}\) Ibid., 118.
\(^{156}\) Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic, 59-61.
\(^{157}\) Anthony Gilby, “A pleasant dialogue, betweene a souldior of Barwicke, and an English chaplaine Wherein are largely handled & laide open, such reasons as are brought in for maintenaunce of popishe traditions in our Eng. church. Also is collected, as in a short table, 120. particular corruptions yet remaining in our saide church, with sundrie other matters, necessary to be knowen of all persons. Togither with a letter of the same author, placed before this booke, in vvay of a preface.” 1581. Early English Books Online. http://gateway.proquest.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:99845321.

omitting the churching of women from their services.\textsuperscript{158} This implies that Puritans were, at the least, associated with a stance opposing the churching of women.

Puritans found one aspect of churching particularly disturbing: the wearing of a veil. This brought together a confluence of “anxieties about Jewishness, popery and superstition, the lingering stain of purification, and the exercise of ecclesiastical authority.”\textsuperscript{159} The Book of Common Prayer said nothing about veil wearing, and most Elizabethan clergy were indifferent about it. Archbishop Whitgift even responded to allegations of its Jewish roots by stating that “the veil was the woman’s affair, and the Puritans were making a fuss over a trifle: ‘let the women themselves answer these matters.’” To the archbishop and other clergy, veil wearing was more a “custom of our country, than a ceremony of the church,” and equated it to wearing gloves at a marriage.\textsuperscript{160} Furthermore, clergy argued that veil-wearing was a concession to the mother, not a demand forced upon her. It was not about penitence, but a cover for the new mother as she underwent the ceremony. However, veil-wearing was anathema to Puritans. The veil reminded them too much of a penitent white garment which made the woman look like an excommunicate. Yet veil-wearing continued. In fact, in 1607 Lincolnshire, some men were even charged for not letting their wives wear veils during


\textsuperscript{160} Cressy, “Purification, Thanksgiving and the Churching of Women in Post-Reformation England,” 132-3.

\textsuperscript{Ibid.}, 132.
the churchings. It was not until mid to late-Jacobean times that “a matter of taste became a matter of policy . . . less about purification than politics.” ¹⁶¹

The ritual’s name did not offer Puritans any comfort either. To many people, Puritans and non-Puritans alike, it was even confusing. In 1549, the ceremony was referred to as “the order for the purification of women,” only to become, three years later and in subsequent editions, a thanksgiving after childbirth, “commonly called the churching of women.” The word “purification,” though, was officially excluded in the Prayer Book and “all notion of a penitential cleansing was disclaimed.” ¹⁶² Despite being dropped from the Book of Common Prayer, the word churching lingered on in use. William Barlow (d. 1603), bishop of London, recorded how the churching of women was known “by the name of Purification,” and it was allowed for the practical purpose of eliminating any sense of shame that women had which may have prevented them from attending church. ¹⁶³ “Churching” remained part of the popular usage; even the Elizabethan bishops were known to use “churching” instead of thanksgiving. In 1577, Archbishop Whitgift’s visitation articles referred to a “thanksgiving or churching.” In fact, most of the opposition to churching came from radicals, including Puritans, because they believed in the inherent ills associated with the word. They charged that it was “‘heretical, blasphemous and popish foolerie . . . knavish presumption and presumptious knavery . . . idle babblement’ and altogether unnecessary.”

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 135-6.
¹⁶² Ibid., 135-6.
Yet despite these strong protests, records confirm how often women underwent the ceremony. Cressy noted that late-Elizabethan records in Salisbury show, depending on the month, a 75 to 93 percent compliance rate with churchings, and this is true for much of England, including London. The highly populated parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate also is proof of a high occurrence of the ritual. During the 1580s, the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate recorded many churchings. Harridance recorded 283 churchings in January – March and August 1583; April – December 1584, January, February and December 1586; and January – October and December 1587. As Figure 6 shows, churchings occurred all year round. With the exception of August 1583, there were many churchings recorded in the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate. These numbers included eight instances of women being churched at home; ten examples of parishioners not being charged a fee, most likely due to impoverished conditions; four occurrences of unmarried women being churched, also illustrating the importance some women gave to churching, and even one mention of the churchwarden churching a mother since Master Heaz was not available at the time, such was the urgency with which the mother regarded the ritual. These numbers show the intense desire of new mothers to be churched.
Churching was recognized as a thanksgiving service, but in popular practice and belief, was believed by some women to be a purification ceremony. Although churching was “abandoned by other reformed churches,” the ritual continued to be practiced in England. What is not always clear are women’s motivations for undergoing churchings. What is clear, however, is that women in this parish, as well as much of England, willingly underwent the ceremony.\(^{164}\) This strong demand for churchings makes it difficult to make a case for the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate as a radical Puritan parish, as it is highly unlikely that such a parish would have desired or performed such a large number of churchings. These high incidences continued even though churching was

\(^{164}\) “Cressy, “Purification, Thanksgiving and the Churching of Women in Post-Reformation England,” 140-3. Churching was officially reinstated during the Restoration, and was increasingly used as a conformity test. As Cressy pointed out, “Anglicans insisted that participation in the ceremony signified adherence to law and custom, quite apart from any spiritual benefits that might be thought to accrue from it.” By this point, though, many were questioning the role of traditional religious devotion in their lives and those who did not undergo churching often also did not get their children baptized, or even go to communion. However, in the late seventeenth century, compliance rates were still hovering in the high 60\(^{th}\) percentile, depending on the community. Furthermore, there were those who did not get churched for other reasons, such as distance from the parish church or even disapproval of the clergy’s way of life.
officially banned in 1645, the year when the Directory of Public Worship replaced the prayer book. Furthermore, Harridance’s constant references to the need for new mothers to be “purified” is challenging evidence for any who would claim that the parish was Calvinist. The numerous churchings, anathema to Puritans, suggests that by and large, the parish and the majority of parishioners, possibly excluding a minority of select vestrymen, were not Calvinist, and pursued the ceremony with unabashed fervour.

Figure 7: Funerals at the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate: 1583-1587

Beliefs surrounding death rituals, like burials and funerals, may have undergone the greatest transformation of all, especially with regard to purgatory.165 With the arrival of the Reformation, the belief in the soul’s journey to purgatory, a stage where one “suffered in proportion to its lifetime accumulation of sins,” was strongly challenged, as

165 See Ralph Houlbrooke, ed. Death, Ritual, and Bereavement (Routledge in association with the Social History Society of the United Kingdom, 1989).
was the related necessity for intercession by the living on behalf of the dead.\textsuperscript{166} The Protestant attack upon purgatory assaulted many of the rituals surrounding death, such as “month-minds, year-minds, obits, trentals, and chantry prayers . . .,” and in the eyes of Protestants, brought simplicity and truth to the death ceremonies. Yet reformers found difficulty finding consensus for a purely Protestant standard for funerals and burials. Although they agreed upon the soul’s immediate departure to heaven or hell, how they should commemorate that journey was hotly debated. The traditionalists, on the one hand, still kept remnants of the Catholic funeral and burial services alive throughout the country, such as laying wooden crosses before the body and kneeling to pray for the dead beside those same crosses.\textsuperscript{167} The Puritans, on the other hand, wished to strip the ceremony of any extraneous element, some even going so far as to do away with the whole funeral service, relying solely on a burial service conducted by friends of the deceased. Other Protestants, however, continued supporting the use of funerals as acts of affirming their faith, and not as a form of intercession.\textsuperscript{168}

Like many of London’s parishes, the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate’s funeral rituals did not change as much as one might expect, or as much as reformers had hoped.\textsuperscript{169} Of all the pre-Reformation rituals surrounding death, bell ringing was possibly the most engrained within English minds, and most resistant to change. Bells marked significant occasions in the parish, city and country, and were deeply rooted in English

\textsuperscript{166} Cressy, “Purification, Thanksgiving and the Churching of Women in Post-Reformation England,” 386, 403-4.
\textsuperscript{167} Ibid., 402.
\textsuperscript{168} Katherine L. French, \textit{The good women of the parish: gender and religion after the Black Death}, 228.
\textsuperscript{169} Harding, \textit{The Dead and the Living}, 207, 233, 272. Harding suggested that there was an increasing secularization and commodification of the funeral and burial, caused largely by the decentering of the need for intercession, which ironically contributed to a greater degree of continuity in the rituals surrounding death.
parochial life. They were used on many occasions: celebrating weddings, summoning parishioners to worship, marking holy days, noting the crowning of a monarch and commemorating the dead. Puritans desired the silencing of death knells and funeral ringing; if that could not be achieved, they wanted to severely restrict their use.

Officially, though, the ecclesiastical injunctions did not try to eliminate the ringing associated with death and funerals. Instead, they tried to curtail it. In Archbishop Edmund Grindal’s visitation articles to the province of Canterbury of 1580, article nine inquires

> Whether, when any man or woman is in passing out of this life, the Bell be tolled, to move the people to pray for the sick person, especially in all places, where the sick person dwelleth neere unto the Church? and whether after the time of his or her passing out of this world, there be any more ringing but one short peale before the burial and another short peale after the burial, without any other superfluous or supersticious ringing? And whether on all Saintes day after Evening prayer, there be any ringing at all, or any other supersticious ceremonie used, tending to the maintenance of Popish purgatorie, or of prayer for the dead, and who they be that use the same . . .

Grindal, a committed Protestant, was not concerned with trying to silence the bells completely; instead, he was interested in regulating their usage, and eliminating any extraneous ringing that might be associated with “popery.” Even Puritans realized that death knells were deeply ingrained in the English psyche and that they therefore could not easily silence them.

Bell-ringing was a fixture in early modern England. The parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate was no exception. The parish had at least four bells, as they paid 10 d “for

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171 Church of England. “Articles to be enquired of within the prouince of Canterburie in the metropolitcall visitation of the most reuerend father in God, Edmond Archbishop of Canterburie, primate of all England and metropolitan.” 1580. *Early English Books Online.*

mending of certain Irenne work about the forth bell.” In 1582, the parish took down the four old bells and replaced them with new bells; obviously, the bells were still a crucial element of the parish’s devotion. Parishioners ensured that the bells were maintained properly. In 1580 and 1581, the parish paid 8d annually for the “oylle and greace this wholle yere about the clock and bells,” and 1d for an iron pin for the new bell in the first year. The churchwardens’ accounts are filled with similar entries marking payments for mending the iron, replacing or fixing the clappers or “splycinge of a rope for the belles.” Throughout the 1580s, the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate unabashedly rang their bells throughout the year, especially at funerals. The following dates, chosen at random, show the prolific use of bell-ringing for funeral knells. On 8 January, 1583, the great bell rang an afternoon knell for the funeral of Henry Brown, one out of three knells rung that month for funerals. The record for 28 April, 1584, shows a charge of 14d for “the fowerth bell the sexten beinge payd for ringinge therof.” On 21 February, 1586, the third bell was rung for two hours to mark the funeral of “Franncis Stacye a widowe.” Even if the funeral was for a non-parishioner, the knell was still rung: Cornelius Cornelius was buried January 19, 1586, and 2s 8d was paid for “the pit and knell.” The parish enthusiastically threw themselves into commemorating their dead with simplicity, erstwhile exhorting the living with what they believed to be the truth. While the evidence of funeral sermons may initially seem to support a Puritan presence.

172 GL London, MS 9235/1, fo. 159.
173 GL London, MS 9235/1, fo. 168.
174 GL London, MS 9235/1, fo. 154, 159.
175 GL London, MS 9235/2, fos. 159, 168, 1587.
176 GL London, MS 9234/1, fo. 8.
177 GL London, MS 9234/1, fo. 46.
178 GL London, MS 9234/1, fo. 41.
179 GL London, MS 9234/1, fo. 21.
that conclusion would be a mistake. The continued use of parish bells for funeral bells indicates the presence of traditions that any Puritan would have seen as a remnant of a “superstitious” past. Yet this parish managed to find preachers to preach their sermons while ringing their bells concurrently. They were concerned with walking a middle path so as not to disturb their own parish, so that they could continue ministering to their parishioners’ needs while demonstrating obedience to the authorities, all the while being reformed through and through.

The focus surrounding funerals and burials shifted from the object of the service to those attending it. They reminded parishioners of their own finite lives, and ultimately “their membership of an eternal Christian community.” The emphasis of the services was not so much on commemorating the dead as it was to exhort the living. This emphasis, mixed with the reformers’ fervent desire to preach at every opportunity, led to the proliferation of funeral sermons. Initially, Puritans debated over whether funeral sermons should even be allowed. Those against funeral sermons likened them to trentals or obits, whereas others argued that they were opportunities to expound upon the gospels. By the 1570s and 1580s, the latter group won out and all manner of Protestants threw their weight behind funeral sermons as useful teaching tools. The parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate took every opportunity to preach at funerals. Comparing Figures 7 and 8, it is clear that many funerals were accompanied by sermons with a mean average of 1.8 funeral sermons a month. On average, the parish saw 4.9 sermons

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181 Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death*, 408. Some burials, though, were not even accompanied by funerals, but not for theological reasons; this was sometimes reserved for more “prominent parishioners.”
preached monthly, meaning that 38% of all funerals were accompanied by sermons. This was undoubtedly a parish eager for preaching.

Figure 8: Funeral Sermons in the Parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate: 1583-1587
Funeral sermons, then, were seen as a means to teach the parishioners the reformed message. A central feature of reformed practice, preaching was vital to the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate during the 1580s. The parish’s preachers delivered many sermons and actively catechized throughout the decade. Like many other Elizabethan London churches, St. Botolph’s Aldgate welcomed and employed full-time preachers or lecturers, Duncan Anderson and Christopher Threlkeld, who focused their entire ministry on preaching and catechizing, although after 1580 they sometimes took up other duties. Since these preachers did not have to concern themselves with other liturgical duties, this position often attracted those of a Puritan disposition. Hiring a full-time preacher helped free the curate for other duties, and filled “an intense citizen demand for sermons.”\(^{182}\) Indeed, records show that the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate had an impressive disposition toward sermons. From as few as one recorded sermon in January 1586, to as

\(^{182}\) H. Gareth Owen, “The Liberty of the Minories,” 90-1.
many as fourteen in February 1586, and a mean average of 4.8 sermons per month, preaching was central to the parish’s ministry, as shown in Figure 9. Not only were sermons important; the parish also aggressively catechized their parishioners, with as many as five catechism exercises or lectures a month throughout the 1580s, as evident in Figure 10.

*Figure 10: Catechism Exercises and Lectures Delivered in the Parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate: 1583-1587*

Based on these records, Dorothy Williams has argued that the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate practiced an early form of Puritanism.¹⁸³ There is some evidence for this claim, centering on the regular delivery of sermons throughout the year, the preachers who preached at the parish and also the frequent communion services held in the parish. Some of the preachers at St. Botolph’s Aldgate during the 1580s had ‘Puritan’

reputations, and were “termed puritan lecturers.” However, a closer look at the names of the preachers demonstrates that these were not radical Puritans. The Royal Injunctions of 1559 required that each parish church give at least one sermon per quarter; Puritans, though, would have desired far more.

Many of the preachers at St. Botolph’s Aldgate during the 1580s, though, were moderates, not radicals. Patrick Collinson has argued that the Elizabethan church primarily espoused and practiced an expansive and encompassing Protestantism. Puritanism was less of a radical movement than a deeply conservative alliance of peers, magistrates and ministers. Elizabethan bishops and archdeacons were fundamentally committed to preaching and worked closely with local ministers and preachers to advance their thoroughly reformed ministry. The reform movement was strengthened by the Church’s willingness to adapt to lay initiatives in worship, most notably the insistence on metrical psalm singing. Thus any attempt to describe Protestantism and Puritanism in diametrically opposed terms is misguided. The Elizabethan Church was not constantly sparring with Puritan dissent, but rather it allowed room for it to grow alongside official doctrine. This coexistence was exemplified by some of the preachers at the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate during the 1580s. George Gifford, a preacher from Maldon in Essex preached at Richard Pellett Sawyer’s funeral on 15 January, 1586. An influential clergyman “whose works blended practical piety with common sense and the level-headed defence of a moderate, evangelizing protestant tradition,” Gifford was charged in

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184 J. P. Boulton, “The limits of formal religion,” 137.
1583 for non-conformity and was temporarily deprived of his commission for not subscribing to Whitgift’s three articles on the point of the Prayer Book, ensuring that the Prayer Book was not contrary to the Bible. Gifford’s writings touched on a wide array of issues and Gifford was widely read by Protestants. Or consider Josias Nicholls, another notable Puritan preacher who made an appearance at St. Botolph’s Aldgate’s pulpit. Like Gifford, Nicholls challenged Whitgift’s subscription to the three articles regarding the Prayer Book and failed his test for conformity, desiring further Church reform. Although Nicholls was an outspoken Puritan leader in London, he made a brief moderate turn in the 1590s in hopes of acquiring political patronage. Put simply, although some of these preachers had Puritan associations, the overall ethos was obedient Protestantism. Sermons alone do not make a parish ‘puritan.’

St. Botolph’s Aldgate’s pulpit had other preachers who, although they might seem to have carried a ‘puritan’ message in the 1580s, are revealed as moderates upon closer analysis. The names of prominent preachers may indicate something of the parish’s devotional practice. Although there is little information on the preachers themselves, we can make connections to their devotional inclinations by noting those under whom they served. For instance, Thomas Cobhed, who preached on 2 February, 1586, served under Edmund Grindal, Archbishop of York (1570-1575) and then Archbishop of


189 Ibid.

Canterbury (1576-1583). Grindal, after deciding to go into exile during Mary’s reign despite the fact that his life was not in as much danger as many reformers of that time, returned and was frustrated by the Elizabethan settlement which did not, in his opinion, go far enough with its reform; in short, Grindal held ‘puritan’ leanings, although he was staunchly opposed to fanatics, separatists and the new Presbyterianism. His was a moderate ‘puritanism,’ reformed in theology, but insistent upon the royal supremacy and an established church. It is also unlikely that Cobhed would have held radical leanings while serving under Grindal during the late 1570s and early 1580s. Another preacher, Gabriel Holt, delivered two sermons in April 1587. He was appointed as a preacher in the London diocese under John Aylmer, bishop of London. In the late 1570s, Aylmer granted preaching licenses to moderate Puritans, including George Gifford and Gabriel Holt. Although a Protestant, Aylmer demanded conformity from recusants and radicals alike. The “Puritan” preachers were not extremists. Rather, they were ardent Protestants who sought to advance their agenda of teaching and beliefs to further the Reformation, but they also demonstrated a wariness of radicalism and separatism. Furthermore, when faced with deprivation or political sanctions, they more often than not were willing to temper their agenda in order to survive. In their teachings, these preachers were likely, in essence, moderate Puritans.

The vestrymen of St. Botolph’s Aldgate also hired David/Duncan Anderson, a Scotsman, as a permanent lecturer and agreed on 22 January 1583, that he should preach three times weekly at 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. on Sundays and 4:00 p.m. on Thursdays.

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and also on Candlemas. During 1583, there are also records of Anderson teaching at evening prayer.Interestingly, the information on catechetical preaching does not extend past 1583, but it does seem as though the parish was engaged in Master Anderson’s catechetical sermons throughout the year. Williams called Anderson a “Puritan radical,” and his Scottish ancestry may have affected his religious leanings, influencing him with a potential Presbyterianism. The parish did hear a great number of sermons in the 1580s. There were at least 107 sermons recorded during 1583, January and February of 1586; and 1587 (see Figure 9). Although 30 of the 107 were funeral sermons, not those designed for the regular service, this was still a considerable number. In addition to the high number of sermons and preachers of apparent Puritan creed, Williams also pointed to a small but “influential minority of those who regularly attended the vestry meetings” as those who “attempted to determine the religious policy of the parish.” While it does seem as though there were some influential Puritan members on the vestry, it does not necessarily follow that the parish shared its vestry’s “puritan complexion.” At most, the parish may have leaned toward a Puritan position – defined in terms of godly preaching and godly activism – yet it is too much to label the parish Puritan.

The churchwardens’ accounts list at least twenty names of preachers who regularly appear in the records in the course of the 1580s, and only one name is of significance: Robert Dowe. Dowe was a merchant and philanthropist, who made the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate his home by 1584. Although his religious sentiments are

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192 GL London, MS 9234/1, fos 19, 23, 31.
194 Ibid., 25.
not entirely clear, he was the main financial supporter of key London Puritan preachers Robert Hill and William Gouge. However, it is significant that Ian Archer, in his biographical account of Robert Dowe, avoided labelling his religious position. The same caution should be used with labelling the parish “Puritan.” The preaching of many sermons is not necessarily a sign of outright Puritanism; at most, it shows the inclination of the parish. Furthermore, having many sermons preached may reflect the beliefs of the curate and a minority of vestrymen, but it does not necessarily reflect the beliefs of the congregation. Between 1594 and 1597, the parish went without a lecturer for three years. If the parish had truly given itself over to ‘puritan’ teachings, why was there a gap between permanent lecturers? So while Williams’s point that Puritans highly valued preaching as the church service’s central focus is well taken, this claim does not tell the whole story of the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate.

Williams’s argument – that the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate was a hotbed of Puritan radicalism – at first glance appears to have some support as it is well known that Puritan parishes supported frequent communion services. The sacrament’s main value for reformers lay in its ability to reassure people of their salvation, something critical to Puritans. As Arnold Hunt has argued, since transubstantiation was considered the “key doctrinal error of the Church of Rome” by the reformers, views on the Lord’s Supper were a test of Protestant orthodoxy; a test for conformity during the 1590s – 1630s. Puritans were likely to desire multiple communion services to emulate the early church which held weekly communions; reformers often derided Rome for the infrequency with

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198 Ibid., 40-1.
which the laity actually communicated.\textsuperscript{199} By the early sixteenth century, most London parishes were practicing monthly communions. In the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate, the high Easter attendance and lower numbers during other communion services might well reflect puritan leanings within the vestry. The vestry may have implemented a closed communion service, which may explain why only the Easter service communions were so well attended. The remaining services, averaging around fifty members or so, probably represents only the vestry and the parish elite, for “Puritan thinking emphasized moral and spiritual preparation before taking the sacrament and denounced the incumbents of those parishes which, despite the requirements of ecclesiastical law, in practice admitted all and sundry to communion services.”\textsuperscript{200} Richard Bancroft (1544-1610), the Archbishop of Canterbury (1604-1610), was suspicious of some ‘puritan’ influence at St. Botolph’s Aldgate, when he challenged the appointment of the parish’s lecturer in 1598. To identify Puritans, Bancroft asked in his visitation articles whether the minister administered communion to communicants who refused to kneel, something that Puritans felt was “popish adoration.”\textsuperscript{201}

Communion services were clearly important services in the parish of St Botolph’s Aldgate. They provided parish officials the opportunity to assess parishioners’ beliefs, and the level of adherence to ecclesiastical law also sustained the parish by bringing in poor offerings and collecting communion dues. They were therefore important events for parish officials to record. Historians have often assessed popular religion by examining communion attendance rates.\textsuperscript{202} A close analysis of attendance figures in the parish of St.

\textsuperscript{199} Ibid.,” 51-54.
\textsuperscript{201} Ibid., 139.
\textsuperscript{202} Ibid., 137.
Botolph’s Aldgate yields enlightening results (see Figure 11). By the 1590s, parishioners were increasingly required to attend the Easter communion service. Dating back to 1559, the Anglican Church’s rubric mandated parishioners to attend communion three times a year, with the Easter service being the most critical, and Whitsun and Christmas closely following. The Easter service was important not only for its spiritual significance to the Church calendar, but also because ecclesiastical duties were due. Therefore, attendance at Easter was doubly significant for the local parish. The large parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate held ten and sixteen communion services during the Easter seasons of 1584 and 1587 respectively, reporting a turnout of over 800 and 1500 for the month of April of 1584 and of 1587 (see Figure 12). In order to accommodate the high numbers, churchwardens staggered attendance at Easter communion, a technique commonly used in England during the late sixteenth century. By staggering attendance, parish officials could contact and enforce attendance at communion at least once a year. Furthermore, the parish held monthly communion services throughout the year; in some months they even held one to four services in addition to their regular monthly communion services. The amount of money spent on bread and wine for the communion services corroborate the high attendance rates. A 1580 receipt from the churchwardens’ accounts records 28s and 7d; in 1581 they spent 30s on the bread and wine; in 1582 they spent £2, 3s and 4d; in 1584 they spent 16s and 7d; in 1587 they spent 36s and 11d. As Figures 11 and 12 show, throughout 1584, there were eighteen recorded instances of communion; for January and February 1586, there were three instances, while there were twenty-nine

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203 Ibid., 138.
204 Ibid., 140.
205 GL London, MS 9235/1, fo. 155.
206 GL London, MS 9235/1, fo. 168.
207 GL London, MS 9235/1, fo. 174.
records of communion noted throughout 1587. Despite fluctuations in expenditures on communion, what is evident is the consistent level of attendance, and that the parish was intent on performing communion services. In the 1581 and 1587 churchwardens’ account entries, Master Harridance recorded the parish’s purchase of a mat and hassock for the communion table for 1s and 6d respectively. If the parish only held an annual communion service at Easter, this would seem like an unnecessary purchase. However, St. Botolph’s Aldgate’s parish held at least twenty-eight communion services in 1587, precipitating the purchase of a new mat and a hassock the same year for 6d, possibly after extensive use.\textsuperscript{208}

\textsuperscript{208} GL London, MS 9235/2, fo. 154.
Figure 11: Communicants at the parish of St. Botolph's Aldgate: 1584-1587

Figure 12: Communions in the parish of St. Botolph's Aldgate: 1584-1587
Adhering closely to the official Prayer Book, the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate conscientiously used the communion service as a primary means of charity. Throughout the 1580s, the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate diligently held monthly or even weekly poor relief offerings, depending on the circumstances and needs of the destitute. At each of these communion services, the churchwardens took collections of good will in the poor box. In three and a half months in 1583, they held nine collections for the poor; in nine months in 1584, forty-two; in three months in 1586, thirteen; and in ten months in 1587, forty-three offerings.209 On 25 February, 1583, the vestry nominated names of pensioners worthy to receive a monthly stipend from the poor box. Just under a month later on 22 March, 1583, some of the “well disposed people gathered and gave toward two poor men those who were impoverished” from illness 7s and 2d to one, and 6s to the other.210 This pattern of giving to the poor was carried on, with the wealthy parishioners giving gifts, like on 20 April, 1584, when Henry Hooke’s Good Friday gift was distributed to the poor. The parishioners heard requests on behalf of the poor. On 16 August, 1584, James Londie, a Scottish man who had suffered great loss at sea, was given 17s from the parish at Master Anderson’s request.211 At times, ecclesiastical and secular officials would also request the parish to make specific bequests on behalf of certain poor people. The bishop of London John Aylmer, on 23 August, 1584, even petitioned the mayor of London to ask the churchwardens of the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate to give money to help a poor, newly married couple from Christchurch near Newgate.212 This time seemed to be an exception, since the parish was consistently

209 GL London, MS 9234/1, fos 7-28.
210 GL London, MS 9234/1, fos. 28-47.
211 GL London, MS 9234/1, fo 81.
212 GL London, MS 9234/1, fo 83.
delivering poor relief. For instance, funerals were a time of sombre reflection upon mortality, but also occasions for giving relief to the poor, in money, or even in bread. These poor box collections demonstrate the generosity with which the parish assisted the poor throughout the year. Whether at a communion service, funeral or in response to a specific need, the parish officials seized opportunities, actively and even enthusiastically, to fulfill their ministry of poor relief. Far from completing this task half-heartedly, they used discernment to make what they believed were prudent choices to help parishioners, and sometimes even non-parishioners, in need.

However, many sermons and frequent communion services alone do not a ‘Puritan’ parish make, and Williams’s use of the term does not help to clarify the matter. Furthermore, the parish officials were diligent in their careful observance of the ecclesiastical injunctions. For instance, Master Heaz

Ded give warninge to all the parrisheneres in the parrishe church of St Buttolhps extra algate xxixth Daye of marche in Ano 1584 That all that ded meane to Receyve the holly communione should from herre Forthe com and give hem warninge therof the nyght before the they do meane to com to the comunion or else he would not suffer them to go there unto For that he ded meane to Reape a just note whether that the people do comunicate thryse everie yeare accordinge to the queenes ma jes)ties Lawes or not And also he ded give such warning as weare excomunicated that they should not presume to com the Lordes table before that they weare accordinge to the Lawse eclesiasticall absolved willinge allso that allmen shoulde Dischargde ther dewties unto the Farmar according to owlde accostomed order.213

Warnings such as these do not reflect a radical parish; rather, the parish diligently adhered to the diocesan authorities and their decrees. The parish worked to ensure that parishioners attended three communion services annually, where possible, and they also took steps to keep the excommunicate from the sacrament. As J. P. Boulton noticed, in

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213 GL London, MS 9234/1, fo. 35.
1584, the minister made “particular efforts to enforce ecclesiastical regulations governing communion services,” even repelling two parishioners from communion, in May 1584, for misbehaviour that had not been pardoned.\textsuperscript{214} Williams also overlooked other critical evidence regarding the parish’s religious leanings; most notably the high frequency of churchings and the close relationship between the parish officers and ecclesiastical authorities. A close reading of the parish records renders Williams’s account of St. Botolph’s Aldgate’s ‘Puritanism’ implausible.

\textsuperscript{214} J. P. Boulton, “The Limits of Formal Religion,” 142.
Conclusion: Elizabethan Conformity and Robert Heaz

The problem of popular belief remains. If the records from the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate permit the historian to uncover a layer of “thick description” and to raise questions concerning the beliefs of parishioners, it is clear that historians have been too hasty in declaring this parish as “puritan.” The evidence simply does not suggest it. On one hand, the ancient practices maintained by the parish – baptisms, weddings, churchings and burials – reflect a deeply traditional form of Christianity, albeit liturgically shaped by the religious politics of the sixteenth century. On the other hand, the distinctively reformed practices of the parish – preaching, catechizing, frequent communion services and charitable collections – reflected the current concerns of the reformed agenda throughout Europe. Above all, the records suggest a striking obedience to authority, both royal and ecclesiastical. They reveal a parish deeply concerned with adhering to the law, as they provided services for parishioners. Conformity has not been served well by historians, invariably dismissed as ‘mere conformity.’ This case study calls for a more sympathetic treatment of Elizabethan conformity.

The parish records repeatedly drew me back to the central figure whose determination to record the daily events of this community permitted this glimpse into life in Elizabethan London. Few aspects failed to go through the filter of the curate, Robert Heaz. In the final analysis, this case study perhaps reveals as much about the man who kept the records than it does about the parish in which he worked.

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215 I’d like to thank John Craig for his close guidance in forming this chapter. Dr. Craig’s reading of and analysis of the parish register of St. Botolph’s Aldgate while in London was invaluable. I’m extremely grateful for his expertise and his generosity in sharing his notes, thoughts and images with me.
Robert Heaz began work in St. Botolph’s Aldgate’s parish in July 1564. He lived with his father, Peter Heaz, or Peter de la Hais, until Peter’s death in 1577. Robert was married to Alice Heaz, “deare wiff to me Robart Heaz curat of this parishe was buryed the 19 daye of october in Anno predicto 1592.” She was 69 and died of “tympenye” – a tumor. They had at least one son together. Not long before Alice died, their grandson, Peter Heaz, tragically died at the age of three and a half years old of “wormes.” Robert performed an undoubtedly difficult burial service: “Peter Heaz deare sonne and first begotten childe of my deare and onely sonne John Heaz letter fownder to the printers, sonne I saye unto me Robart Heaz minister of this Churche was buryed the 27 daye of June in Anno predicto” (1592). Heaz served as curate for almost thirty years, carefully accounting for parish funds, and taking tremendous care to follow church laws. He recorded these details with his distinctive handwriting in the parish register. In this register, Heaz noted the names of many godsons and goddaughters, demonstrating his closeness with many families in the parish, including those in the French and Flemish or Dutch migrant communities. There are even places where Heaz observes that he is baptizing the second generation – such as in 1584 when he baptizes “William Snealing, son unto Francis Snealing, beer brewer” and in the margin’s annotations mentions “whose mother I RH baptized.” Furthermore, his wife, Alice, also stood as godmother to many girls in the parish. Heaz’s life was intimately involved with this parish.

Heaz was a French Huguenot. Heaz comments in the register of the death of “Anthony Champion, a Jentilman, my old frend borne in piemount [Piedmont] under the dominion of the Frenche king who dyed in Robart Bowers howse a gonne maker

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216 The Guildhall Library. The Parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate’s Parish Register, MS 9221.
217 Ibid.
dwelling in the east Smithfield a man whome I did love, was buried the 13 of Maye,”
1590. Furthermore, the churchwardens’ accounts for 1589-90 record the purchase of
prayer books “for the good success of the French” and for “the copy of certain newes
out of Frounce.” Heaz clearly loved his homeland, but the evidence does not merely
suggest a patriot. Rather, it shows a sociable man who valued relationships. He was on
excellent terms with a number of musicians living in the parish, many who were
employed as musicians for the Queen – he knew Ferdinand and Peter Lupo and Gomer
Osterwick, royal musicians. There are also salient remarks of affection in many of his
entries. His wife was “deare wiff to me.” Anthony Champion was “my old frend” and “a
man whome I did love;” Osterwick was “my good neighbour;” Elizabeth Conway was
“my old dear friend” and so on. Heaz, while having the opportunity to mention his
Huguenot affiliations in his records, does not necessarily do so. Instead, he is more
concerned with his parishioners, his friends and his family. Heaz was steadfastly
focussed upon his ministry and found no difficulty in squaring his Huguenot origins with
his work as a minister in a large extramural parish in England’s capital city.

Heaz was meticulous in his chronicling of important events. Throughout the
records, he tallies up the marriages performed, children baptized and even burials
performed. For instance, in June 1581, Heaz wrote, “here is to be noted that I Robart
Heaz curat of this church under hir Mates beganne in my service the 14 of Julye anno
1564 frome the wch tyme & daye untill the 18 of this present June Anno 1581 I have
buryed 2722 R.H.” Lest there be any doubt, he recorded, “here is to be noted that this
nomber was collected by me the said Robart Heaz in the twenty-three yeres of our quenes

218 GL London, MS 9235/2, fo. 29.
mates Raigne whom god preserve.” Heaz also tallies numbers for baptisms and marriages. The results are astonishing. As the memoranda books attest, the rituals of burials, marriages and deaths grew with mind-numbing repetition. Heaz must have been completely familiar with the words of the burial service, as on average, Heaz buried 160 people each year, or one every 2.2 days. This was also true of the marriage service and the sacrament of baptism. Even in his death, he demonstrated a generous spirit, and also a punctilious attitude toward authority. Records show that Heaz left 20s to his kinsman, Daniel Pidway, and also clothing and unpaid wages to his maid servant, Katherine Francke.\textsuperscript{219} His executors were George Clarke and John Ivatt, his ‘very great fryndes.’ Once all his debts were paid, legacies discharged and funeral expenses covered, the rest of his estate went to the parish poor, further evidence of Heaz’s obedience to authority, ensuring that all his affairs were dealt with properly. As a testament to his sociability and importance to the parish, Heaz’s close friend and parish clerk, Thomas Harridance, along with four others, witnessed the will. Evidently, Heaz desired that all his outstanding debts be paid and that the poor be served in his death, just as they were in his life.

Dorothy Williams referred to Robert Heaz as “probably a Puritan.”\textsuperscript{220} This is unconvincing. An examination of his sole extant printed work, “A Christyan exhortation,” translated from French, and predominantly concerned with exhorting the

\textsuperscript{219} GL London. The parish register of St. Botolph’s Aldgate. MS 9221.

\textsuperscript{220} Furthermore, Thomas Swadin was the curate from 1628. Swadin was an ardent supporter of the Bishop of London, William Laud, known as “the Puritans’ arch-enemy.” Williams, \textit{London Puritanism}, 26-31. If the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate’s vestry was dominated by a powerful Puritan minority, why would they have hired such an ardent supporter of Laud and Arminism? In Williams’s own words, Swadin was the very “antithesis of a Puritan,” and she does not adequately address his hiring.
Christian preparing for death, reveals a Protestant but no ‘puritan.’

Heaz compiled scriptures to comfort the terminally ill, even encouraging them to recite them “with lowd voice . . . if nede so require.” He also included a “godly praier for the sick drawing to an ende of this life” and also a catechism to help instruct and “refreshe his memorye, with the great mistery of our redemption.”

Although written before he became the parish’s curate, his writing is hardly radical or antagonistic toward ecclesiastical officials. Instead, Heaz fixes his words on the “worde of God” in order that the sick reader may be better able to prepare for death, and be assured of salvation. Urging readers to “[a]cknowledge from the botome of your heart” and “repent,” Heaz repeatedly displays passionate concern for his readers’ souls.

Heaz’s catechism outlines an exchange between a sick person and a minister. Nowhere throughout the reading is there any form of radicalism; instead, there is a pronouncement upon the belief in “the holy universall churche, washed and purified in the precious blood of Jesus Christe.”

The sick person would then recite the importance of baptism, communion, charity and instruction of the word. Clearly Heaz was not interested in any significant subversive acts against the established authorities, but instead was most concerned with orienting the physically and spiritually ailing parishioner’s soul toward God. Heaz’s writing demonstrates a close observance of proper ecclesiastical form, and shows his genuine desire for his parishioners to follow that form as well as they prepare for their own death.

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222 Ibid., 2.

223 Ibid., 6.

224 Ibid., 21.
It is revealing that Heaz’s conformity was undoubtedly shaped by a brush with the ecclesiastical authorities, the details of which remain obscure. Besides ministering at the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate, Heaz was also curate of the neighbouring parish of Holy Trinity, Minories, from 1574 to 1586. While at the Minories, Heaz was involved in a serious disciplinary crisis. Along with Thomas Cobhed, his deputy in the Minories who also preached in St. Botolph’s Aldgate, Heaz was considered to be “of a moderate puritan disposition.”

In 1578, these men were threatened with an “ecclesiastical censure of an interdict,” an extremely rare form of discipline since the Reformation. Heaz and Cobhed almost brought this punishment upon the Minories after failing to conform with the prescribed order in administering the sacraments, and refusing to use the surplice. Upon being severely chastised, they relented and followed the prescribed order as found in the Book of Common Prayer. This episode at the Minories seems to have clung to Heaz’s memory throughout his ministry as there is no further record of his being disciplined over nonconformity, the significance of which should not be overlooked.

Heaz must have learned that in order to pursue his agenda – that of teaching and catechizing – inviting down the wrath of ecclesiastical officials was not the most effective path to take. His records show this.

While the Minories struggled in the late sixteenth century to bring together its disparate elements, the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate managed the strains of conformity and nonconformity and moved forward with its ministries. Although the parish undoubtedly had ‘puritan’ parishioners and vestrymen, conformity triumphed. The officials sought a reformation of society along reformed lines, but in close cooperation

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226 Ibid., 90.
227 Ibid., 90.
with the ecclesiastical authorities. The parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate held firmly to its
course of ministry, navigating carefully to ensure that it met official requirements in order
to press forward with its preaching and teaching ministry – including catechizing,
churchings, its generous system of poor relief and its efforts at discipline. If this was
‘Puritanism,’ it was a ‘puritanism’ that worked hand in hand with the ecclesiastical
authorities. This is nowhere else made so clear as in the life of their curate. Whatever
the motive behind Heaz’s ministry, he was not preoccupied with ecclesiological debates.
Rather, he was absorbed by his ministerial duties to his parishioners: preaching and
teaching; administering sacraments and enforcing discipline; churching new mothers and
helping the needy. This suburban parish practiced a fervent, conformist Protestant,
devotional life that worked within the episcopacy and with the ecclesiastical authorities.

The significance of St Botolph’s Aldgate goes well beyond the confines of
Elizabethan London. Herein lie the seeds of an important argument about the role of
conformity in the success of the Reformation in England. Despite the claims made by
Christopher Haigh that the Reformation in England was ultimately a failure, the records
from the parish of St. Botolph’s Aldgate beg to differ.228 The large, lively parish was
filled with signs of abundant, unabashedly, Protestant behaviour. The vast numbers of
baptisms, weddings, burials and funerals demonstrate remarkable Protestant attitudes and
actions expressed daily. This was a parish with a fervent devotional life. This was a
parish that met its royal and ecclesiastical obligations. And ultimately, this was a parish
that made Protestantism work. In doing so, they managed to obey the Queen’s
injunctions, church new mothers, catechize their youth, ring their bells and provide for

228 Haigh, Christopher. “The Church of England, the Catholics and the People” in C. Haigh ed., The Reign
of Elizabeth I (Houndmills, Basingstoke, 1984).
their poor. All this involved hundreds of parishioners but the achievement owed much to Robert Heaz.
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