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RELIGIOUS BELIEF AND PIOUS PRACTICE AMONG LONDON'S ELIZABETHAN ELITE*

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ABSTRACT. *Since the late 1960s, the English Reformation has often been represented as a process of change forced upon an unwilling people by an educated social elite. The religious system of the elite, by this view, is seen as inimical to a broad range of popular practices and beliefs, with puritan ideology giving extreme expression to socially repressive tendencies. Although recent scholarship has sought to modify this view, the relationship of popular and elite culture in London is still often perceived as confrontational. The present article seeks to examine patterns of religious behaviour among the social elite in London during the later sixteenth century, arguing that continuity in certain traditional forms of piety, such as charitable benefaction and funerary practice, expresses a complex of fundamental attitudes and beliefs which operated across the social spectrum. These practices, when enacted, defined and legitimated the parish as a religious community. They also served to reattach a shared belief system to a historically changing religious context, a process of renegotiation in which the whole civic population participated.*

Since the late 1960s, the English Reformation has tended to be represented by historians as an unpopular and largely political process, forced upon an unwilling people from above. It is argued that Protestantism, as a bibliocentric religious system, was largely inaccessible to the illiterate, and confined in many respects to educated social elites. This split expressed and reinforced a broader divergence of elite and popular world-views, a divergence widened further by the increasing identification of Protestants with more extreme, puritan forms of piety. Elite religious impulses, characterized by increasing levels of hostility towards many traditional popular practices, can appear geared towards the construction of repressive mechanisms of social control, Protestant religion thereby becoming part of a network of devices exercised by lay and clerical elites over their social inferiors. The mass of the people are seen as falling between the extremes of committed Reformed Protestantism and Catholic recusancy. Confused by religious change and inclined towards caution or indifference, they exhibited an inarticulate nostalgia for some of the ritual

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aspects of the old religion. In consequence, apparent continuities in religious practice appear to be reflective of residual Catholic belief, or to demonstrate a failure on the part of the laity to adapt to the more text-based pieties of Protestantism.[1]

In the case of London, the perceived strength of the Reformed religion may make it untypical of the rest of the country.[2] None the less, the characterization of the Reformation described above has often been attributed to London too. The Elizabethan civic elite's religion has been described as an instrument of coercive social control, manifested in an increasing hostility towards many popular customs such as Sunday games, maypole-dancing, and theatrical performance.[3]

Much recent work, however, has challenged the polar division of popular and elite cultural worlds, instead treating religious change as a complex and dynamic process of continuing negotiation between traditional popular culture and Protestantism. In many respects, the traditional festive culture appears to have aided the integration of specifically Protestant ideas into the mainstream world-view, the continuity in certain forms of religious and ritual activity serving to provide a vehicle by which novel religious ideas could be recast in familiar forms.[4] In this article I argue that the elite of London were themselves integrally involved in this process. Their testamentary benefactions, for example, reveal the adaptation of many long-established patterns of pious behaviour to an explicitly Protestant context. At the same time, the underlying

[1] J. J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English people* (Oxford, 1984); C. Haigh, 'The continuity of Catholicism in the English Reformation', in idem, ed., *The English Reformation revised* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 176–208; idem, *English Reformations: religion, politics and society under the Tudors* (Oxford, 1993); E. Duffy, *The stripping of the altars: traditional religion in England, c.1400–c.1580* (New Haven and London, 1992); R. Whiting, *The blind devotion of the people: popular religion and the English Reformation* (Cambridge, 1989); idem, 'Local responses to the Henrician Reformation', in D. MacCulloch, ed., *The reign of Henry VIII: politics, policy and piety* (London, 1995), pp. 203–26. The seminal work on diverging elite and popular cultures is P. Burke, *Popular culture in early modern Europe* (London, 1978).

[2] F. F. Foster, *The politics of stability: a portrait of the rulers in Elizabethan London* (London, 1977), p. 5; I. Archer, *The pursuit of stability: social relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 45. Cf. S. Brigden, *London and the Reformation* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 409–10.

[3] Burke, *Popular culture*, ch. 2; R. Ashton, 'Popular entertainment and social control in later Elizabethan and early Stuart London', *London Journal*, 9 (1983), pp. 3–19.

[4] M. Spufford, 'Puritanism and social control ', in A. J. Fletcher and J. Stevenson, eds., *Order and disorder in early-modern England* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 44–7; M. S. Byford, 'The price of Protestantism: assessing the impact of religious change on Elizabethan Essex: the cases of Heydon and Colchester' (D. Phil. thesis, Oxford, 1988); T. Watt, *Cheap print and popular piety, 1550–1640* (Cambridge, 1991); P. Lake, 'Deeds against nature: cheap print, Protestantism and murder in early seventeenth-century England', in K. Sharpe and P. Lake, eds., *Culture and politics in early Stuart England* (London, 1994), pp. 257–83; M. Ingram, 'From Reformation to toleration: popular religious cultures in England, 1540–1690', in T. Harris, ed., *Popular culture in England, c.1500–1850* (London, 1995), pp. 95–123; P. Collinson, 'Elizabethan and Jacobean puritanism as forms of popular religious culture', in C. Durston and J. Eales, eds., *The culture of English puritanism, 1560–1700* (London, 1996), pp. 32–57; N. Tyacke, 'Re-thinking the English Reformation', in idem, ed., *England's Long Reformation, 1500–1800* (London, 1998), pp. 1–32.

cultural assumptions informing their religious impulses share many crucial elements with the wider population, while the apparent growth of a puritan civic ideology reflects a much broader consensus of opinion, built upon the pre-existing frameworks of local and civic bonds and obligations. It is for this reason that the elite were able to avoid division into 'godly' and 'backward' factions.

I

There can be little doubt that the moral economy of London's elite was underpinned by religious concepts. For the antiquarian John Stow, a member of the City's common council, the hand of God was actively present in the everyday world. Stow tells us that Sir John Champneys, alderman of London (1527–56) and lord mayor in 1534–5, owned a house at the end of Tower Street, on which he built a 'high Tower of Bricke, the first that ever I heard of in any private mans house, to overlooke his neighbours in this Citie'. Champneys's presumption did him little good, however, for 'this delight of his eye was punished with blindnesse some yeares before his death'. Failing to learn from Champneys's fate, Richard Whethell, common councillor of London (1554–62) and member of the Merchant Taylors' Company, 'builded a fayre house [in Lime Street], with an high Tower, the seconde in number, and first of tymber, that ever I learned to have been builded to overlooke neighbours in this Citie'. Whethell was no more fortunate than Champneys, for 'this *Richard* then a young man, became in short time so tormented with goutes in his joynts, of the hands and legges, that he could nether feede him selfe, nor goe further then he was led; much lesse was he able to climbe, and take the pleasure of the height of his Tower'.[5]

Likewise when the steeple of St Paul's was struck by lightning and burned down in 1561, it was noted that the fire was so fierce because of certain physical conditions – the age and dryness of the wood, and so forth – yet the major bone of contention was not whether God had caused the lightning to strike, but what his message was. It might mean that England had forsaken the true religion with the accession of Elizabeth, or that the realm had not gone far enough in uprooting the remnants of popery. Bishop Pilkington found it necessary to preach at Paul's Cross two days after the fire, explaining the disaster in terms of divine displeasure, not at the upholders of Reformation, but at the sinfulness of many of the citizens.[6]

Writing to Lord Burghley over twenty years later, on 14 January 1583, Lord Mayor Sir Thomas Blank broached the subject of 'a great mishappe at Parisgarden, where by ruin of all the scaffolds at once, yesterday a greate number of people are some presentlie slayne, and some maymed and grievouslie hurte'.

[5] John Stow, *A Survey of London*, ed. C. L. Kingsford (2 vols., Oxford, 1908), I, pp. 131, 151–2.

[6] 'The true report on the burning of the steeple and church of Paul's in London', in A. J. Pollard, ed., *Tudor tracts, 1532–88* (New York, 1964), pp. 403–8; Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, pp. 633–4.

The agent of the disaster was clear; 'it giveth great occasion to acknowledge the hande of God for suche abuse of the sabbath daie, and moveth me in conscience to beseeche your Lordship to give order for the redresse of suche contempt of God's service'. The loss of life was perhaps less severe than Sir Thomas believed and it was well known that the stands at the bear-baiting ring were old and unpropped, but neither the City fathers nor the Privy Councillors had any doubt that God had meted out condign punishment for the profanation of the sabbath day by the spectators. A further sign was given early in 1623, when a tenement being used as a Catholic meeting place collapsed, with considerable loss of life. London preachers were not slow to point out the lessons of divine punishment of popery, while the presses produced a stream of lurid accounts of the tragedy.[7]

God's presence in the everyday world was thus immediate and palpable to everyone, as was that of the devil. John Stow records a story once told to him by his father, relating the appearance of the devil upon the steeple of St Michael Cornhill.

> Upon *S. James* night, certaine men in the lofte next under the Belles ringing of a Peale, a Tempest of lightning and Thunder did arise, an uglie shapen sight appeared to them, comming in at the south window, and lighted on the North, for feare whereof, they all fell downe, and lay as dead for the time, letting the Belles ring and cease of their owne accord: when the ringers came to themselves, they founde certaine stones of the North Window to bee raysed and scrat, as if they had been so much butter, printed with a Lyons clawe, the same stones were fastened there againe and so remayne till this day. I have seene them oft, and have put a feather or small sticke into the holes, where the Clawes had entered three or foure inches deepe. At the same time certaine maine timber postes at Queene Hith were scrat and cleft from the toppe to the bottome, and the Pulpit Crosse in Powles Churchyearde was likewise scrat, cleft, and over turned, one of the Ringers lived in my youth, whom I have oft heard to verifie the same to bee true.[8]

Stow's attitude was admirably empirical; he searched out the stones where the clawmarks were supposed to be, and having found them tested the depth of the marks with a stick. Satisfied that the marks existed as described, he accepted the story as proven. Consequently, his empiricism was employed to validate the traditional tales and reports of strange occurrences related by relatively humble parishioners, and it did not occur to him to seek another provenance for the marks. Although a man of letters and member of London's civic government, he lived in the same conceptual world as the parish bell ringers. Oral tradition and tales passed down by word of mouth were no longer quite sufficient as an authority for the educated man, and empirical proofs were becoming necessary to validate them, but the essential cultural assumptions providing a frame of reference for the story remained intact.

[7] T. Wright, ed., *Queen Elizabeth and her times: a series of original letters* (2 vols., London, 1838), II, pp. 183–4; Corporation of London Record Office (CLRO), Remembrancia, I, nos. 456, 498, 519; A. Walsham, '"The fatall vesper": providentialism and anti-popery in late Jacobean London', *Past and Present*, 144 (1994), pp. 36–87.

[8] Stow, *Survey*, I, p. 196.

Recent studies of the cheap print issuing from the London presses have provided considerable evidence for the persistence into the sixteenth century of much older frames of cultural reference, traditional assumptions occurring in songs, ballads, and pamphlets, and appealing to audiences across the social spectrum. Fundamental concerns such as damnation and salvation, the proper way to live and die, and the ultimate condign punishment of the egregious sinner by God permeate such works throughout the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, reflecting much broader attitudes towards authority, moral behaviour, and the social order.[9] The social order was legitimized by being placed in the context of a divinely ordained and unchanging social ideal, finding ritual expression in activities such as civic processions which presented the social hierarchy of the City in visual form, and involved the taking of religious oaths and the celebration of divine service by the participants in their ritual role as representatives of the whole civic community.[10]

As Christopher Haigh puts it, 'While politicians were having their hesitant Reformations, while Protestants were preaching their evangelical reform, parish congregations went to church: they prayed again to their God, learned again how to be good, and went off home once more.'[11] Yet here, religion retained its socially constitutive force and cultural meaning through the survival of religious attitudes and practices which owed rather more to older Catholic understandings of salvation, redemption, and the value of good works than to the successful spread of Protestant doctrine. Undeniably, Elizabethan and Jacobean Protestant divines often commented on the people's faith as one barely touched by the fundamentals of Reformed preaching, but their pre-Reformation forerunners, lay and clerical, had been troubled by popular misconceptions of orthodox practices. For example, *latria*, the veneration properly due to the saints, too easily shaded into *idolatria*, a blasphemous and heathen application to the saints and, by extension, to their images, of worship that was properly due only to God.[12]

The problem of inculcating true doctrine was thus not one unique to the post-Reformation period, and if an articulate and self-conscious adherence to the full range of Reformed doctrine is taken as the defining characteristic of the true Protestant, it is unlikely that many will be found to fit the category outside the educated lay social elites and the clergy.[13] However, a difficulty that arises from posing a dichotomy between literacy and illiteracy, and by extension between text-based religious expression and popular practice, is not only the

[9] Watt, *Cheap Print*, pp. 1–8, 81–127, 131–40, 168–77, 296–320, 321–32; Lake, 'Deeds against nature', pp. 269–74.

[10] Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, pp. 23–28, 141; M. Berlin, 'Civic ceremony in early modern London', *Urban History Yearbook* (1986), pp. 15–27.

[11] Haigh, *English Reformations*, p. 295.

[12] M. Aston, 'Popular religious movements in the middle ages', in idem, *Faith and fire: popular and unpopular religion, 1350–1600* (London, 1993), pp. 1–26.

[13] Haigh, *English Reformations*, pp. 268–84; Byford, 'The price of Protestantism', pp. 72–5, 407–16. I am grateful to Dr Byford for permission to cite from his thesis.

scheme's inability to take account of any overarching cultural frames of reference, but, as Peter Burke has noted, the overly schematic rendering of a reality where modes of referential discourse transcend social barriers.[14]

It is significant that while most post-Reformation parishioners probably could not fully grasp the implications of Reformed theology, the fundamental core of the traditional belief system was not necessarily inimical to specifically Protestant interpretations. For instance, the cheap and popular murder pamphlets of the period were pervaded by traditional notions of transgression and punishment, while a broader range of traditional shared beliefs and assumptions manifests in many different kinds of printed and pictorial material, appealing to all levels of society. These assumptions, which include a surprisingly predestinarian attitude towards sin and divine judgement, might lend themselves with relative ease to explicitly Protestant readings.[15] The literary productions of different social classes, aimed at widely varied audiences, were thus underpinned by a shared complex of beliefs and assumptions, which could readily accommodate the essential precepts of the Reformed religion.

To that extent, the possibility that precise doctrinal arguments meant relatively little to a large section of the lay public both before and after the Reformation does not necessarily mean that their religious beliefs were a hotch-potch of poorly understood, mechanically repeated observances isolated from the main cultural currents of the time.[16] In the sense that the basic cultural orientation of an entire society is expressed through the full range of its rituals, philosophy, religious, and scientific beliefs, both ritual and written religious expression are rooted in the same complex of ideas; in many respects the literary productions of socially elite groups are simply the reflective, analytical commentaries of the educated upon a much broader range of meaningful cultural activity, characterized by performative speech acts and ritual action.[17] Recent work on Colchester suggests that the popular belief system, expressed through a variety of ritual and festival practices, not only shared many basic assumptions with that of the social elite, but actively facilitated the long-term success of an essentially Protestant civic ideology. Public shaming rituals, such as the skimmington ride or the tumbrel, were used against cuckolds and adulterers to enforce a moral code essentially similar to that found in the sermons and writings of Protestant divines.[18] In London, official shame-

[14] P. Burke, *Popular culture in early-modern Europe*, 2nd edn (Aldershot, 1994), pp. 23–9.

[15] Watt, *Cheap print*, passim; Lake, 'Deeds against nature', pp. 277–83.

[16] Byford, 'The price of Protestantism', pp. 73–5. For general discussions of the expression of cultural norms through ritual performance see E. Schieffelin, 'Performance and the cultural construction of reality', *American Ethnologist*, 12 (1985), pp. 707–24; C. Bell, *Ritual theory, ritual practice* (New York, 1992).

[17] R. Redfield, 'The primitive world view', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 96 (1952), pp. 30–6; A. F. C. Wallace, *Culture and personality* (New York, 1970), pp. 142–3; N. Goodman, *Ways of worldmaking* (Indianapolis, 1978), pp. 7–17; J. Wirth, 'Against the acculturation thesis', in K. von Greyerz, ed., *Religion and society in early modern Europe, 1500–1800* (London, 1984), pp. 66–78.

[18] Byford, 'The price of Protestantism', pp. 388–416.

punishments imposed on brothel-keepers and other such offenders bore a strong resemblance to the skimmington ride, and were reinforced in practice by the ritualistic targeting of brothels by the City's apprentices during their annual day of misrule on Shrove Tuesday.[19]

In this context, London's civic elite may be seen as participants in an ongoing process of cultural change and adaptation which was taking place across the whole social spectrum. It is evident that the process of Reformation between the 1530s and the early 1560s, where the aldermen and common councillors played an important role in implementing crown policy, entailed traumatic changes in the religious life of English parishioners. The ending of papal supremacy, the dissolution of the monasteries, the denial of belief in purgatory and a host of long-standing forms of lay devotion dependent upon purgatory marked a shattering break with the past, even if some of the customs abolished had been of relatively recent origin.[20] However, many of the basic structures of parochial religious life, and the bonds and obligations between rulers and ruled that found expression through them, survived the Reformation.

The conception of the parish as a religious community remained pivotal. Seating in parish churches was arranged to reflect the idealized social order in the sight of God, and any perceived infraction of this order could generate considerable controversy. In the wealthy London parish of St Dunstan-in-the-East, home to a high proportion of aldermen and common councillors, the churchwardens were obliged to set down schedules of pew-rents for the different parts of the church in 1567 and 1586 'for avoyding contencion' among the parishioners.[21] At the same time, the parochial focus of religious life was explicitly linked with the broader obligations of service in the City hierarchy as a whole. In August 1591 the vestry of the same parish obliged the churchwarden Richard Wood to 'repayre amende and bewtyfye the churche with glasse, pewes, whyte wasshinge and payntynge, and other thinges nedefull agaynst the mayralty of Mr William Webbe, alderman of London and of the parishe'.[22]

The ritual surrounding civic funerals also served to reaffirm and validate the social order at local and civic levels. When Sir Thomas Curtes, alderman of London (1551–9), died in December 1559 he

> was bered in sant Dennys parryche in Fanchyrche stret, the chyrche and the qwyre hangyd with blake, and the plasse and the strett … ther was iij haroldes of armes, and ther had my lord mare and the sword-bayrer and dyvers althermen had blake, and the

[19] M. Ingram, 'Ridings, rough music and the ''reform of popular culture'' in early modern England', *Past and Present*, 105 (1984), p. 92; P. Burke. 'Popular culture in seventeenth-century London', *London Journal*, 3 (1977), pp. 143–61.

[20] Duffy, *The stripping of the altars*, pp. 379–503; R. Hutton, 'The English Reformation and the evidence of folklore', *Past and Present*, 148 (1995), pp. 89–116; idem, *The rise and fall of merry England, the ritual year, 1400–1700* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 49–110.

[21] Guildhall Library (GL) MS 4887, fos. 96v, 129r.

[22] GL MS 4887, fo. 140r.

residew in vyolett; and there was a C. in blake gownes and cottes … and ther dyd preche master Recherdson the Skott; and after to the plasse, and the mare and the althermen to dener, and poore men in gownes and the clarkes of London syngyng; a great denner for all men that wold come.

Such elaborate ceremonies were not restricted to the highest civic luminaries alone. In the same month an elderly tallowchandler named Thomas Cuttell, one of the humbler members of common council, was at work in St Dunstan-in-the-East when he fell through a trap-door and was killed. 'The xvj day of Desember was the sam man bered in sant Donstones in the est, master Cottel … and he had a sermon, and all ys compene in ther clothyng, and a grett dener, for ther was mad mon for hym, and a dolle.' Cuttell's will, dated 7 March 1557, provides the interesting additional information that he wanted the eight poor men to whom he bequeathed gowns to pray for his soul.[23]

The provision of gowns, dinners, and doles reflected the importance of charity as a Christian duty deeply embedded in traditional notions of good lordship. Such pious benefaction, while deriving in large part from pre-Reformation modes of religious behaviour, were gradually retranslated into the altered religious context. Among the other bequests in his will of July 1577, Common Councillor John Riley, haberdasher and parishioner of St Magnus London Bridge, left his town house to the parson and churchwardens of Barwick in Elmett, Yorkshire, where he had been born. The proceeds from the property were to provide a penny loaf and a penny coin for each of twelve poor parishioners there every Sunday, which they would receive 'betwixt the redinge of the Epistle and gospell in the service time'. In October 1612 Florence Caldwell, also of the Haberdashers' Company, made a similar bequest, providing for a donation of bread to thirteen poor parishioners of St Martin Ludgate every Sunday immediately after morning service 'at the place in the said church where I have lately caused a little monyment of me and my wives and daughter to be lately erected and sett up'.[24]

In both of these cases the association of charity with the communal act of worship and with the commemoration of the deceased is clear, yet the roots of such practices may be found before the Reformation, when charity had been closely linked with the doctrine of purgatory. Thus, in September 1526, we find Richard Hanchett, skinner, providing for a dole of one penny every Sunday, and a gown annually, for six poor householders of his parish, St Anthonine. These six were

to pray for my soule, my wifes soules, my father soule, my mother soule, all my kynsfolkes soules, and for all the soules that I have fared the better for in this worlde, and all Christian soules, and oons a weke at the lest to be in the church of Saint Antonines in their propre persones except they have a reasonable excuse.

[23] *The diary of Henry Machyn, citizen and merchant taylor of London, 1550–1563*, ed. J. G. Nichols (Camden Society, 42, 1848), pp. 217–18, 219–20; Public Record Office (PRO), PROB 11/43, fo. 65v.

[24] PRO, PROB 11/59, fo. 234r; 11/120, fo. 244v.

Similarly Alexander Plimley, mercer, made a will in 1532, establishing an annual obit for a period of seven years. An associated dole was provided for thirty poor children of the parish attending the obit, who were required to say the *pater noster* and *ave Maria* five times, and a creed for Plimley's soul, and in the same context Ralph Rowlett, goldsmith, made a bequest in February 1543 of twenty pence a week to the poor of his home town, St Albans. The recipients of his charity were to pray for Rowlett's soul 'and to say fyve tymes the holy prayour of the pater noster, fyve tymes the salutacion of Our Lady, callid Ave Maria &c, and oon tyme th'articles of our faithe callid Credo in deum &c. in honor of the fyve woundes of our Lord Jesus Criste'.[25] Such prayers for the dead, together with prayers in honour of the wounds of Christ, or the seven sorrows of the virgin, disappeared with the abolition of purgatory under Edward VI, and again under Elizabeth. However, the underlying continuities are clear enough: charitable benefaction remained closely linked to the celebration of divine service, and was articulated through a thoroughly traditional conception of the roles and duties of the social elite.

Such continuity in religious practice reflects the capacity of a religious world-view to adapt to change through a process of social discourse and practical revaluation. In order to retain its essential explanatory force, a world-view evolves to meet new circumstances through the simultaneous application and adaptation of the cultural ideas that are contained within it, with a consequent adaptation of practice to fit with shifting ideas. The very reapplication of a cultural idea strengthens it; by enabling it to alter its meaning it retains its function as part of a comprehensive system for interpreting the world.[26]

In this way, the traditional culture of public shaming rituals and popular festival adapted readily to the enforcement of older notions of the proper social order in an altered religious context. The various rituals and ceremonies employed in public celebration, termed the 'vocabulary of celebration' by David Cressy, formed part of a festive calendar which survived the abrogation of many long-established saints' days and simultaneously built upon a core of traditionally observed holidays to construct a new cycle of national celebration with a markedly Protestant slant. Newly established festive days commemorated the accession of Queen Elizabeth, the unmasking of the Gunpowder Plot, and various other events denoting the emergence of a distinctively post-Catholic national consciousness.[27] When Anthony Babington's plot to assassinate Elizabeth in favour of Mary Queen of Scots was discovered and thwarted in July 1586, the citizens of London lit bonfires and rang the church bells in celebration. Holinshed notes

[25] Ibid., 11/22, fo. 87v; 11/25, fo. 42v; 11/29, fo. 130r.

[26] M. Sahlins, *Islands of history* (Chicago, 1985), pp. 136–56; M. Bloch, 'The past and the present in the present', in idem, *Ritual, history and power, selected papers in anthropology* (London, 1989), pp. 1–18.

[27] D. Cressy, *Bonfires and bells, national memory and the Protestant calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England* (London, 1989); idem, 'The Protestant calendar and the vocabulary of celebration in early modern England', *Journal of British Studies*, 29 (1990), p. 52; Watt, *Cheap print*, pp. 178–253.

that none were more forward herein than the meaner sort of people, who rather than they would omit to ad little or much to a fire, being vnprouided of fuell, parted with a penie or two to buie a few sticks by retaile. Insomuch that now by common consent this action grew to be generall, for few places might a man see in the citie, of anie spaciousnesse or compasse, where a cleare fire was not made.

It is interesting to note that Holinshed ascribes to the London citizens a good dose of righteous indignation at the temerity of the conspirators in challenging the ordinances of God by plotting the assassination of Elizabeth, His anointed. Traditional festive affirmations of the divinely established social order were thus capable of absorbing the immediate changes of emphasis in the new religious context, and reattaching them into an overall view, shared from highest to lowest, of the correct ordering of society.[28]

II

Patterns of testamentary benefaction clearly reflect this process. Bequests to the poor were often restricted simply to 'the honest poore people', or 'such as be honeste poore householders and live in the fere of God', the notion of honesty excluding the 'notorious swearer, adulterer or drunkerd', and it is possible to find examples of testators displaying a particularly rigorous attitude towards the definition of honesty.[29] Yet a growing anti-Catholic bias becomes discernible among some members of the City elite towards the latter part of the sixteenth century, as all kinds of traditional practices began to acquire the taint of popery. For instance Walter Fish, merchant taylor, refused in his will of 1578 to permit the use of black mourning gowns 'and suchlike vain pomp or ceremony', since such customs did 'rather agree with popery and paganism than with the rule of the ghospell of God'. Indeed for some, like Alderman Sir Richard Goddard, the traditional distribution of alms at a burial could be seen as 'but a popish imytacion of such as were desirouse after their death to have their soule praied for',[30] while the undeserving pauper on whom no charity should be wasted might now be described as an 'unthrifte prodigall spender, papiste [or] dishoneste personn'.[31]

In a few cases a more explicit link is made between a particular confessional stance and 'sound religion', notably when particular testators exclude Catholics from inheriting their goods, insisting, for instance, that their heir be 'a professor of the Gospell accordinge to the profession of Englande or Geneva', as James Hewishe, grocer, did in 1590.[32] It is also possible to find

[28] *Holinshed's Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* (6 vols, London, 1808), iv, pp. 899–900.

[29] E.g. PRO, PROB 11/47, fo. 60r (1563); 11/55, fo. 182v (1573); 11/65, fo. 7r (1578). See D. Hickman, 'From Catholic to Protestant: the changing meaning of testamentary religious provisions in Elizabethan London' in Tyacke, ed., *England's long Reformation*, pp. 128–8.

[30] PRO, PROB 11/68, fo. 421v; 11/103, fo. 272v (1604).

[31] Ibid., 11/80, fo. 132Av (1590).

[32] Ibid., 11/76, fo. 185.

testators making a specific declaration of their identification of the true church with a particular doctrinal stance. John Jackson was a member of London's common council from 1561 to 1573, and when he made his will in 1579 he declared

> that to be the true Church onely wherein [God's] people are taught to serve and honour him accordinge to his will; whiche Churche retayneth and usethe two sacraments: the sacrament of baptisme, wherein our God dothe regenerate vs to himselfe, and the sacramente of Christe's bodye and bloude wherein by the inward operacion of his holye spirte wee are knytt to him, and he to vs accordinge to his promyse.[33]

It would be hard to find a clearer demonstration that a testator understood the theological implications of his faith and knew the theory behind the liturgy performed in his parish church. While these are evidently statements of a recognition that the exercise of the true religion involved a rigorous moral discipline and adherence to a particular set of doctrinal tenets, they are nevertheless comparatively rare. Indeed, James Hewishe was something of a radical, judging from this bequest of £20 to 'suche godly and zealous preachers as are or shalbe silenced and restrained from the publique exercise of theire ministerie'.[34]

Such extreme statements have often been regarded as elements of a peculiarly elite culture, which is frequently described as 'puritan', as if synonymous with actual puritan control of a corporation, or at least the control of a puritan ideology. Yet Hewishe's opinions existed within a broader context of widely shared attitudes. Indeed, it would seem to be as misleading to place a sharp divide between a 'puritan' world-view and that of their less zealous contemporaries, as it would be between popular and elite culture in general. Even in communities apparently riven by strife between 'godly' and 'conservative' groups it is far from clear that the parties in dispute held unswervingly to homogeneous religious positions. In some instances, as at Thetford in Norfolk, these conflicts seem to reflect pre-existing political and personal disputes rather than any deep-rooted divergence along religious lines.[35]

Equally, it is becoming increasingly clear that a basic consensus of opinion extended far beyond elite levels of society. Writing of the perception of puritanism as an exclusive, divisive cultural phenomenon, Patrick Collinson has commented that 'there is contrary evidence that in the Elizabethan and Jacobean town, the enforcement of strict but consensual moral codes enjoyed widespread support, and that the machinery employed itself amounted to a kind of popular culture, at once traditional and Protestant'.[36] The impetus to maintain this moral code came as often as not from a fairly broadly defined

[33] Ibid., 11/67, fo. 133v.
[34] Ibid., 11/76, fo. 186v.
[35] J. S. Craig, 'The ''godly'' and the ''froward'': Protestant polemics in the town of Thetford, 1560–1590', *Norfolk Archaeology*, 41 (1992), pp. 279–93.
[36] P. Collinson, 'Puritanism as popular culture', p. 43.

'middling sort' at the local level, including churchwardens of relatively humble origin.[37]

In London the civic government certainly took steps to enforce a moral code. A royal proclamation was issued in 1544 against the performance of plays and interludes at service time on Sundays and holidays. Civic legislation enforcing observance of the lord's day was enacted on numerous occasions, notably in 1549, 1550 (twice), 1553, 1574, 1581, 1583, and 1590, and was aimed particularly against the performance of plays and frequenting of alehouses on the sabbath. Indeed in 1614 the lord mayor complained that he had been 'much maligned' for his efforts to keep the sabbath day holy.[38] From the 1570s onwards the mayor and aldermen repeatedly asked the Privy Council to prevent the staging of plays and to close certain theatres. Such gatherings were believed to encourage disorder and the spread of plague, and to harm the City's traders by withdrawing servants and apprentices from their work. Moreover, it was often asserted that these gatherings were injurious to the moral health of their audience, particularly the apprentices, and hindered the service of God by drawing the people away from divine service. Numerous theological works expounding the need to suppress vice and ungodly entertainment were dedicated to successive lord mayors and aldermen.[39]

Observance of the sabbath, however, even in a fairly strict form, does not seem to have been associated with a specifically puritan style of piety until relatively late in Elizabeth's reign.[40] Similarly, it was not the civic elite alone who looked askance upon the theatre. In about 1600 the inhabitants of the lordship of Finsbury, within the large and relatively poor parish of St Giles Cripplegate, petitioned the Privy Council to permit the construction of a playhouse there by the earl of Nottingham's players. It helped that the proposed site was 'soe farr distant and remote from any person or Place of accompt, as that none cann be Annoyed thearbie', but more important in securing the inhabitants' toleration seems to have been the players' agreement to pay 'a very liberall porcion of money weekelie' towards the relief of the poor,

[37] J. S. Craig, 'The Bury stirs revisited: an analysis of the townsmen', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History*, 37 (1991), pp. 208–24; idem, 'Co-operation and initiatives: Elizabethan churchwardens and the parish accounts of Mildenhall', *Social History*, 18 (1993), pp. 357–80.

[38] P. L. Hughes and J. F. Larkin, *Tudor royal proclamations 1485–1603* (3 vols., New Haven and London, 1964), I, no. 240; CLRO, Journal (Jor.) 16, fos. 61v, 101v, 254v, 301r; 17, fos. 26r, 97r; 19, fo. 138v; 21, fos. 52v, 224v, 255v, 325r; 22, 315v; Remembrancia, III, no. 159.

[39] CLRO, Remembrancia, I, nos. 9, 295, 317, 319, 498, 553–4, 635, 646; II, nos. 6, 73, 103, 171, 187–8; S. Gosson, *The schoole of abuse, conteining a plesaunt invective against poets, pipers, plaiers, jesters, and such-like caterpillars of a commonwealth* (1579), dedicated to Alderman Sir Richard Pipe; G. Whetstone, *A mirrour for magistrates of cyties: representing the ordinaunces of the Emperour Alexander Severus to supresse vices* (1584), to Alderman Sir Edward Osborne; A. Gibson, *The land's mourning for vaine swearing: a sermon preached at Paul's crosse* (1613); and J. Taylor, *The nipping or snipping of abuses* (1614), to Alderman Sir John Swinnerton.

[40] P. Collinson, 'The beginnings of English sabbatarianism', in C. W. Dugmore and C. Duggan, eds., *Studies in Church History*, I (1964), pp. 207–21; K. L. Parker, *The English sabbath: a study of doctrine and discipline from the Reformation to the Civil War* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 41–91.

a financial burden which the increasingly crowded parish could no longer meet.[41] In less favourable circumstances theatres could arouse overt hostility; by the early seventeenth century it had become traditional for London apprentices to attack playhouses as well as brothels on Shrove Tuesdays.[42] At the same time the range of individuals we see excluded from the deserving poor in elite wills was not significantly different from traditionally discountenanced groups, such as vagabonds and travelling players, while the increasing hostility towards Catholicism exhibited in these wills reflects a more broadly based sentiment that was not located solely at the upper levels of society.[43]

Similarly, there existed a broad agreement that preaching was an integral element in maintaining the stability of the social order, and inculcating order and obedience among the people. In 1584 a petition was delivered to the mayor and aldermen requesting the reinstatement of Thomas Barbor, lecturer at St Mary-le-Bow, deprived for nonconformity during Archbishop Whitgift's drive for uniformity in doctrine and church ceremonial. 112 persons, a number of them common councillors and future aldermen, subscribed to the petition. A large majority lived in St Mary's parish, and a subsidy roll of 1589 reveals that nearly all those assessed for taxation in St Mary's and adjoining parishes had subscribed in 1584. As far as the petitioners were concerned, preaching encouraged the obedience of the queen's subjects, and 'the interruption of the former exercises is the most ready way to spread sin, destroy virtue, to raise contempt of God and the magistrates, and finally to disturb and disorder the quiet peace, good government and true obedience' of the realm.[44]

Preaching, of course, might have the opposite effect: the regular sermons at Paul's Cross led to several outbreaks of serious disorder during the mid-Tudor period, while John Stow attributed the Edwardian destruction of the maypole at St Andrew Undershaft by an iconoclastic crowd to the influence of the preacher there.[45] Yet such incidents also demonstrate the extent to which sermons could appeal to a popular audience. Even the more 'godly' preachers might borrow from the 'vocabulary of celebration' for their verbal imagery, while the very familiarity of the Sunday sermon made it an integral part of most parishioners' religious experience.[46]

Justification for preaching as a means of improving public morals and hence

[41] R. H. Tawney and E. Power, eds., *Tudor economic documents, being select documents illustrating the economic and social history of Tudor England* (3 vols., London, 1924), II, pp. 368–9.

[42] Archer, *Pursuit of Stability*, p. 6; Burke, 'Popular culture in seventeenth-century London', pp. 144–6.

[43] R. Clifton, 'Fear of popery', in C. Russell, ed., *The origins of the English Civil War* (London, 1973), pp. 144–67.

[44] A Peel, ed., *The second parte of a register; being a calendar of manuscripts under that title intended for publication by the puritans about 1593, and now in Dr. Williams's Library, London* (2 vols., Cambridge, 1915), I, pp. 219–21; Archer, *Pursuit of stability*, pp. 248–54; *The visitation of London 1568*, ed. S. W. Rawlins (Harleian Society, 109/110, 1963), pp. 148–64.

[45] Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, pp. 430–1.

[46] Collinson, 'Puritanism as popular culture', pp. 46–8; Byford, 'Price of Protestantism', pp. 67–72.

implanting obedience and good order among the people was not merely propaganda, but echoed conceptions of the proper order of the world that were deeply embedded in the religious consciousness of the laity. In the later sixteenth century, the ideal of 'good order' came to be linked with a growing emphasis upon the holiness of the sabbath, and an increasingly hostile description of many traditional customs as pagan, unchristian, or downright papist. Peter Burke has discussed this development, which he calls 'the triumph of Lent', in terms of a widening cultural divergence between the elite and the general populace, characterized by a growing hostility towards popular practice. In Elizabethan London the same development has been regarded as springing from a broad acceptance of puritan ideals among the elite in the interests of civic unity.[47] It is apparent, however, that moral reform was not the unique preserve of Protestants, and certainly not of puritans, nor was it restricted merely to the upper strata of society.

III

At one level the customary framework of religious benefaction could cut across significant religious divides. Indeed, the aldermen and common councillors were linked by extensive family and business ties, besides their common membership of parishes, companies, and the corporation itself. Sir Christopher Draper, alderman of London (1556–81) and lord mayor 1566–67, had three sons-in-law, of whom he appointed William Webb executor to his will in July 1580, while Wolstan Dixie and Henry Billingsley were made overseers. Dixie was already an alderman and would serve as lord mayor in 1585–6. Webb and Billingsley were both common councillors, but would rise to the court of aldermen in 1581 and 1585 respectively. Webb was to serve as lord mayor in 1591–2, Billingsley in 1596–7.[48] Draper himself, a parishioner of St Dunstan-in-the-East, provided for fifty-two sermons to be preached in his parish church following his decease by William Ashbold, rector of St Peter's Cornhill. Neither Draper nor his favoured clerical preacher were known for puritan inclinations in their lifetimes. Wolstan Dixie and Henry Billingsley, however, had extensive connections with the puritan element in London. Both were benefactors to the 'puritan seminaries' at Cambridge, Emmanuel and Sidney Sussex Colleges, and both seem strongly inclined towards a clearly puritan conception of religious conduct.[49] William Webb, a close friend of Alderman Sir John Harte, whom we shall discuss below, was also connected to Nicholas Fuller, the common lawyer who played an important role in the defence of the puritan movement in Star Chamber against the conformity drives of Archbishop Whitgift. Yet Webb was uncle to William Laud, the future Arminian

[47] Burke, *Popular culture*, 2nd edn, pp. 207–22; Foster, *Politics of stability*, p. 5; Archer, *Pursuit of stability*, pp. 45, 211.

[48] A. B. Beaven, *The aldermen of the city of London* (2 vols., London 1908–13).

[49] D. Hickman, 'The religious allegiance of London's ruling elite, 1520–1603' (Ph.D. thesis, London, 1996) pp. 263–4, 274.

archbishop, to whom he left £100, betraying no apparent hint of puritan sensibilities in his will.[50]

Other great merchants of strong religious convictions had close relationships with people of decidedly more rigorous views. Sir Humphrey Weld, alderman of London (1598–1610) and lord mayor 1608–9, and Sir Stephen Slaney, alderman of London (1584–1608) and lord mayor 1595–6, like Christopher Draper left large sums of money to provide for cycles of sermons, but appear to have had little in their religious lives that would mark them out as puritans. Nevertheless, both had close connections with puritan members of the City elite, and both were married to women who appear to have been rather more puritan in their religious attitudes than their husbands, to judge by the works of divinity dedicated to them by authors or editors. By the 1590s a network of puritans clearly did exist within the London elite, but it was closely interconnected by ties of marriage, residence, business, and friendship with the elite group as a whole.[51]

The perception of the utility of preaching in inculcating sobriety and obedience among the people crossed more boundaries than occurred between different kinds of Protestant. Sir Martin Bowes, a religious conservative, was alderman of London from 1536 to 1566, when he died. As lord mayor he had presided over the trial of the evangelical Anne Askew in 1546, and during Askew's examination had made clear his adherence to the Catholic doctrine of the real presence of Christ in the consecrated host.[52] A will he drew up towards the end of Mary's reign reflects a commitment to the doctrine of purgatory, despite the hiatus of Edward's Reformation, in the form of bequests for masses for his soul and the foundation of temporary chantries in London and York. His final will, drawn up in 1565, nearly six years after the Elizabethan dismantling of the Marian Catholic restoration, specified that twenty parish clerks should bear his body to burial attired in surplices. His gift of a gold cross adorned with pearls to hang on the lord mayor's chain of office marked him as anything but a stringent Protestant. Yet he requested the services of the popular preachers Robert Crowley, John Philpot, and John Gough in preaching a cycle of fifty-two sermons, one a week for a year following his decease. At that time all three were emerging as leading members of the early puritan movement among London's clergy, specifically in the context of their opposition to 'popish' clerical vestments.[53] Shared assumptions regarding the moral virtues of

[50] PRO, PROB 11/94, fos. 117r–18r; N. Tyacke, 'Archbishop Laud', in K. Fincham, ed., *The early Stuart church, 1603–1642* (London, 1993), p. 57.

[51] Hickman, 'Religious Allegiance', pp. 274–5; N. Tyacke, *The fortunes of English puritanism, 1603–1640* (London, 1990).

[52] C. Wriothesley, *A chronicle of England during the reigns of the Tudors, 1485–1559*, ed. W. D. Hamilton (2 vols., Camden Society, n.s. 11 and 20, 1875 and 1877), I, pp. 167–8; *Grey Friars' chronicle of London*, ed. J. G. Nichols (Camden Society, 53, 1852), p. 51; J. Foxe, *Acts and monuments*, ed. S. R. Cattley and G. Townsend (8 vols., London, 1837–41), V, pp. 538–9; *Narratives of the days of the Reformation*, ed. J. G. Nichols (Camden Society, 77, 1859), pp. 40–1.

[53] S. T. Bindoff, ed., *The House of Commons, 1509–1558*, s.n. Bowes, Sir Martin; *Diary of Machyn*, pp. 46–7; PRO, PROB 11/49, fo. 21r; J. Primus, *The vestments controversy: an historical study of the*

preaching extended across the whole spectrum of religious belief, and provided a framework within which even religious conservatives could invest, without hypocrisy, in the complex of religious practices that emerged in the 1560s.

Equally, the strength of the parish community as the central focus for the expression of elite religious beliefs is to be found across the devotional spectrum.[54] Sir John Harte, alderman of London from 1580 until his death in 1604 and lord mayor 1589–90, was an active puritan, having received the dedication of the 1582 edition of the *Short catechism* of the moderate Presbyterian divine Edward Dering. At his death, following the example of King Ezekias and 'beseching God so to assiste me with his holye spiryte that I may doe it to his glorye, the benefite of his poore Churche and to the good of all those that shal anyways be partaker of the same' he left £630 to the 'puritan seminary' of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, and real estate to the parson and churchwardens of his parish of St Swithin's to provide a two hour lecture every Good Friday in perpetuity, as well as an annuity to provide three sermons a year in his native parish of Coxwold, Yorkshire, where he had already founded a free school. Harte was one of the very few members of the civic elite to own the advowson of his own parish; in 1582 he presented the puritan Arthur Bright to the living, and in 1587 William Jackson, who was to be deprived for nonconformity in 1605. A number of the greater puritan rulers had gravitated to the parish and it would appear that Harte, supported by a group of like-minded fellow parishioners and rulers, worked to turn St Swithin's into a puritan stronghold almost from the beginning of his career on the court of aldermen. Yet Harte's bequests follow well-established patterns in providing for the poor of his parish, in focusing his pious expenditure upon the parish church, and in his conception of the parish community as the focus of religious activity.[55]

Some City puritans positively encouraged the use of ceremonial and ritual in inculcating godliness. Peter Simmonds, one of the City godly, insisted on limited use of mourning at his funeral, and requested burial in the same churchyard as Edward Dering before the outdoor pulpit. Simmonds founded a hospital in Winchester, whose inmates were supposed to be sober avoiders of alehouses and assiduous attenders of divine service. Those resorting to prostitutes risked the lash. Yet the communal act of worship, with a high level of ritual and ornamentation, was central to Simmonds's conception of sober churchgoing:

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earliest tensions within the Church of England in the reigns of Edward VI and Elizabeth (Amsterdam, 1960); P. Collinson, *The Elizabethan puritan movement* (London 1967), pp. 71–83.

[54] For a different emphasis see B. Kumin, *The shaping of a community: the rise and reformation of the English parish, c. 1400–1560* (Aldershot, 1996), pp. 201–59.

[55] E. Dering, *A short catechisme for householders, with prayers to the same adjoining*, ed. J. Stockwood (1582); PRO, PROB 11/103, fos. 1–6; R. Newcort, *Repertorium ecclesiasticum parochiale Londinense* (2 vols., London, 1708), I, p. 543; Hickman, 'Religious allegiance', pp. 261–2.

uppon everye Sainct Peter daye in the afternoone at eveninge servis, the poore men and children of this hospitall shall go in solemne order unto the greate church in that citye of Winchester, and there in the chauncell shall hear the divine servis of evensonge. And because I woulde have the same evensonge to be solemnelie used and both in song and uppon the organes musicke shewed, I will and devise that the conservator and governors shall give out of my landes everye yeare … for the pains of the singers in the quire sixe shillings and eighte pence … prayinge also that those poore men maie have sufficient place uppon that daie and time in the chauncell in the highe seates, and flowers laied before them.

And this at a time when church music was becoming one of the more prominent aspects of controversy between puritans and their less zealous contemporaries in London.[56]

Indeed, there is relatively little evidence for the development among London's Elizabethan elite of an established puritan grouping strong enough to impose a specifically puritan moral and social discipline upon the entire City, much less a different style of religious culture. Sir Wolstan Dixie of St Michael Bassishaw, and Sir William Elkyn of St Michael-le-Queren, two of the most prominent puritans among London's governing elite, belonged to parishes not noted for strong puritanism, and their contributions to propagating the gospel, substantial though they were, were above all those of individuals prominent in the local community, rather than indicating their membership of a self-conscious group of the godly. Elkyn, indeed, who left £100 to Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and provided for forty-six sermons in the Mercer's Chapel, expressed the exasperation of a religious man in profane company when he urged the 'wardens and company of the Mercers, with all the young men and preachers, their hearts to be willing to come and learn to please and serve God, and live in his fear, and then doubtless God will prosper the Company much better than presently they do'.[57]

More significant than such anecdotal evidence, perhaps, is the reluctance of the civic authorities to pursue a line which can be described as a coherent puritan programme of social control through godliness. In particular, despite the general agreement on the utility of preaching, the corporation of London made no attempt to fund preaching itself until 1622. Most of the sermons in London were provided at the parochial level, and the civic government proved resistant to attempts to place preaching on a corporate footing. In August 1581 Bishop Aylmer of London, Alexander Nowell, dean of St Paul's, and William Day, dean of Windsor, wrote to Lord Mayor Sir John Branch informing him that the Privy Council had required him to make a contribution for preachers in and about the City. Objecting that his office was already burdensome enough, and that he saw no reason why he should pay more than other parishioners, Branch insisted the matter be put before common council. There

[56] PRO, PROB 11/71, fo. 86v; H. G. Owen, 'Tradition and reform: ecclesiastical controversy in an Elizabethan parish', *Guildhall Miscellany*, 2 (1960–8), pp. 63–70.

[57] PRO, PROB 11/83, fos. 1–5; 11/82, fos. 241r–3r.

followed further delays, the City acknowledging letters from the Privy Council requesting action, but doing nothing to further the project. By January 1582 the mayoralty had passed to Sir James Harvey and the scheme lapsed, the bishop complaining that Mammon had triumphed over God.[58]

When the corporation did provide civic funding for preaching in 1622, it was in response to a petition from the parishioners of St Antholin's Budge Row for financial support of their morning lectures, previously funded by private donations and parish collections. The senior members of the committee appointed to examine the matter were all puritans: Sir Thomas Middleton, Sir Thomas Bennet, and Sir Thomas Lowe.[59] Even then the arrangement lapsed in 1630, when the Feoffees for Impropriations claimed the right to nominate and appoint candidates for vacancies in the lectureship, a right which the aldermen had claimed since 1627.[60]

Furthermore, it is clear that puritans would act on religious issues with their less zealous brethren when the civic interest was at stake. This is particularly clear with regard to the Cheapside Cross, which provided an important symbolic focus for iconoclastic activity in the latter years of Elizabeth.[61] The corporation resisted, as far as it could, royal instructions to make good the damage caused on various occasions by iconoclasts. After a serious incident in 1581 the lord mayor prevaricated over repairing the monument, insisting that the damage was light and had proceeded from 'light persons' pilfering lead rather than from iconoclastic fervour. Even so, many 'straungers and other susperstitious people, misliking the State and religion', knelt to the images on the monument as they passed by 'and daily gave idolatrous worship thereunto', so that refurbishment of the cross might encourage the papists, and give substance to the predictions of seminary priests of a forthcoming change in religion. The cross was eventually repaired, despite further attacks in 1600, by which time George Abbot, the future archbishop of Canterbury, had himself penned a tract condemning the monument.[62]

The City committees appointed to handle the matter included a number of prominent puritan aldermen, including Sir Richard Martin, Sir John Harte,

[58] CLRO, Remembrancia, I, nos. 248–50, 255–6, 291, 296–7. Harvey and Aylmer had a tense relationship, Harvey complaining of insults from Aylmer's chaplain, Aylmer of Harvey's unbecoming treatment of his clergy: CLRO, Remembrancia, I, nos. 250, 255, 301.

[59] CLRO, Repertory (Rep) 36, fo. 205v; H. G. Owen, 'Lectures and lectureships in Tudor London', *Church Quarterly Review*, 162 (1961), pp. 69–70; GL MS 1046/1, fos. 2v, 9v, 18r, 19r, 23r, 26r; Tyacke, *Fortunes of English puritanism*, pp. 6–7.

[60] D. A. Williams, 'Puritanism in the city government 1610–1640', *Guildhall Miscellany*, I (1952–9), pp. 3–14; I. M. Calder, 'The St Antholin lectures', *Church Quarterly Review*, 160 (1959), pp. 49–70; I. M. Calder, 'A seventeenth century attempt to purify the Anglican church', *American Historical Review*, 53 (1963), pp. 760–75.

[61] CLRO, Jor. 40, fo. 58v. I owe the following references to Dr Nicholas Tyacke. For detailed discussion of iconoclasm under Elizabeth see M. Aston, *England's Iconoclasts*, I: *Laws against images* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 294–342, and for the Cheapside Cross, idem, 'Iconoclasm in England: official and clandestine', in *Faith and fire*, esp. pp. 285–8.

[62] Stow, *Survey*, I, pp. 266–7; CLRO, Jor. 25, fo. 230v; Rep. 25, fos. 2v, 23v–4r; G. Abbot, *Cheapside crosse censured and condemned* (1641).

and Thomas Cambell, together with others like Humphrey Weld who were closely connected by marriage and through business interests with the puritans within the civic elite.[63] While the City rulers as a body clearly entertained serious reservations regarding the maintenance of so glaring a reminder of the Catholic past, as might be expected it was the puritan members of the elite who played the most active roles in resisting royal commands. Equally, when in 1582 the Privy Council recommended that a collection be held among London's wealthy citizens to aid Geneva, threatened by the duke of Savoy's army, the City entrusted the puritan John Bodley with receipt of the funds for dispatch abroad.[64]

IV

Puritan action, therefore, took place within a framework of widely held conceptions of civic responsibilities and obligations, while the forms of religious behaviour practised by the elite had developed within the framework of the mutual bonds and obligations binding rulers and ruled. We can see such bonds in operation in the early years of the Reformation in London through the surviving letters of Richard Hilles, a convinced evangelical since the early 1530s when he sought the patronage of Thomas Cromwell, and a correspondent of the great Zurich Reformer Heinrich Bullinger.[65] One of his letters describes his experiences in London between 1536 and 1539, when Henry VIII was beginning to move towards more intensive persecution of heresy. Hilles had refused to pay the customary sum for placing lights before the rood and the Easter sepulchre. In retaliation his neighbours threatened to report him to the bishop of London, and pressurized him through his parents and friends. In 1538 the churchwardens called him before them to explain his conduct, and their words as reported by Hilles are instructive:

> You tell us that you do not attempt to remove the holy lights from our churches, when yet you endeavour by your example to draw, if they dared, all men after you, (especially foolish boys, and young men like yourself;) refusing to do what your own and your wife's parents, grave and prudent persons, and what all your honest neighbours, do not disdain to do.

The heretic was thus a menace to the religious community of the parish, which might be contaminated by the failure of one of its members to perform the rites expected of a loyal Christian subject.[66] Yet the very socio-religious bonds that appeared threatened by Hilles could also provide a powerful means of sheltering and even, to some extent, integrating the religious dissident into the wider community. In 1539 Bishop Stephen Gardener of Winchester was

[63] Stow, *Survey*, I, p. 266; CLRO, Remembrancia, I, no. 234; Rep. 20, fo. 216r.

[64] CLRO, Rep. 25, fo. 262v; Remembrancia, I, nos. 460, 461; Jor. 22, fo. 359v.

[65] PRO, SP 1/74, fos. 107–8; *Original letters relative to the English Reformation*, ed. H. Robinson (2 vols., Parker Society, 1846–7), I, pp. 196–275.

[66] S. Brigden, 'Religion and social obligation in early sixteenth-century London', *Past and Present*, 103 (1984), pp. 67–112.

engaged in an examination of suspected heretics from London Bridge, where Hilles and his parents lived. Gardener already held Hilles in suspicion, about whose activities he questioned the local inhabitants closely. Yet as Hilles informed Bullinger, 'my most bitter enemies, who were men of wealth, were unwilling openly to inform against me of their own accord, in compliance with the last Injunction of the King, and to be regarded in the sight of all as guilty of treachery against their neighbours'.[67]

Such strong communal bonds found expression through a system of benefaction and obligation that took the religious community of the parish as its focus and *raison d'être*, and the continuing operation of that system had the effect of changing the meaning of such practices by retranslating them to accord with the shifting doctrinal environment. In this way the religious underpinning of the structure of local hierarchies retained its force through its capacity for adaptation, and in some senses aided in the establishment of the post-Reformation Church of England as the traditional setting for communal worship by the parish community. To that extent, while some Protestants certainly interpreted some cultural phenomena in strictly doctrinal terms, the basic patterns of religious practice expressed an understanding of the social order that was firmly embedded in the society's world-view, and was thus implicit in religious activity at all levels of society. Elite religious activity, especially when conducted through the traditional social roles of charity and pious investment in the context of the parish church – the traditional focus of the parish community – could not but reflect the constraining influence of deeply felt social norms upon the elite, which itself embodied the traditional social structure and cultural assumptions in enacting its own pattern of religious observance.[68]

This is the context of a remark made in 1588 by Richard Walters, girdler and common councillor of London, who refused to permit the customary preaching of a sermon at his funeral

> not for that I doe not allowe of preaching, for I am fullie perswaded it is the onelie waye declared in the Worde whereby we must atteyne to faithe, without the which we cannot be saved, but for that the funerall sermons are commonlie used for custome which in tyme maye growe to supersticion rather than for any profitable edificacion.[69]

If a custom, even so admirable a one as the funeral sermon, might in time be corrupted, how much more dangerous were pastimes and frolics that interfered with divine service, or threatened to bring down God's wrath on the whole community through the ungodliness of the participants. This was not elite manipulation of a popular belief system, but the operation upon the elite of a world-view so profoundly religious that no aspect of cultural practice could exist without reference to the divine.

[67] *Original letters*, I, pp. 232–3.

[68] M. Bloch, 'Symbols, song, dance and features of articulation: is religion an extreme form of traditional authority?', in idem, *Ritual, history and power*, pp. 19–45.

[69] PRO, PROB 11/72, fo. 156r.